

## Background

---

Child abuse and neglect include any act of commission or omission that endangers or impairs a child's physical or emotional health and development. Given the number of children in early childhood education and care services, staff are likely to encounter a child they suspect has experienced harm or neglect. It is also possible that staff may suspect that harm has been caused by someone at the Service.

Under the Child Protection Act 1999, Early Childhood Educators are designated as Mandatory Reporters as of 1 July 2017. Section 13E(1) requires professionals to report any reasonable suspicion that a child:

(a) has suffered, is suffering, or is at unacceptable risk of suffering, significant harm caused by physical or sexual abuse; and

(b) may not have a parent able and willing to protect them from the harm.

This policy aligns with the National Quality Framework (NQF) and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, ensuring children are safe, respected, and supported in our care.

## Policy statement

---

The Service is committed to creating a safe, supportive, and culturally inclusive environment for all children and families. This policy outlines the processes and expectations that ensure all staff understand their legal and ethical obligations in child protection. It should be read alongside the **Child Safe Environment Policy** and other relevant procedures.

## Strategies and practices

---

- The Service is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for children where adults treat them with understanding, dignity, and respect at all times, and listen to their concerns. The Service's Statement of Commitment is displayed in the foyer and all educators have signed the Statement of Commitment acknowledging their understanding.
- The Service has developed and implemented its own Child Protection Training. The training applies to staff, educators, students, volunteers, and visitors to the Service, and each is given a copy of the training which is refreshed bi-annually. The training provides details of current child protection law and any obligations they may have under that law e.g. mandatory reporting and the procedures to be followed, as well as information such as abuse types and indicators. The topic is regularly discussed in team meetings.
- This Policy is explained to all staff, educators, students, and volunteers before they commence at the Service. At that time, they are given the opportunity to ask any questions needed to clarify their understanding.
- Child protection and child safety information is displayed on notice boards, and brochures are made available to parents, staff, and other interested parties.

- The Service has clear procedures for recruiting, selecting, and screening suitably qualified and experienced staff. No person commences at the Service without providing a current Blue Card (e.g. Blue Card Number, expiry date) to enable the Service to complete the online validation process. The Service and cardholder will then complete the 'Link an applicant/cardholder to this organisation' form. Note: When the cardholder ceases employment with the Service, the Service completes the 'Applicant/cardholder no longer with organisation (for organisations)' form and submits this to Blue Card Services.
- The Nominated Supervisor maintains a Staff Tool and a Blue Card Register Sheet which clearly indicates the expiry dates of Blue Cards for all staff members.
- Staff are informed that it is an offence not to notify the Service of any change in the criminal history or police information they have previously provided to Blue Card Services when obtaining their card.
- The Nominated Supervisor interviews all students and volunteers before agreeing to their placement at the Service and records their Blue Card details. Students and volunteers are informed that it is an offence not to notify the Service of any change in the criminal history or police information they have previously provided to the Blue Card Services when obtaining their card.
- All children are observed on arrival and any injury is recorded on the Injury on Intake form which is signed by the child's parent.
- Under the Child protection Act 1999, Educators of Sunkids Children's Centres are mandated by law to report child safety concerns to the department where there is a reasonable suspicion that the child has suffered, is suffering or is at unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm caused by physical or sexual abuse.
- If an educator suspects any other form of abuse is occurring to a child, it is their legal responsibility to objectively document observations about the child. This information must be reported to the Nominated Supervisor who will then advise the necessary departments. Children may disclose details of abuse – write this down as accurately as possible, respond with care but do not question the child or seek more detail. Refer to the Family and Child Connect website for further support.
- Any suspicion or allegation that physical and/or sexual abuse of a child has occurred or is occurring while the child is being educated and cared for in the Service is to be immediately reported to the Nominated Supervisor. If the Nominated Supervisor is the subject of the suspicion or allegation, the report is to be made to the Approved Provider or directly to the Regulatory Authority. The Nominated Supervisor/Approved Provider will report the incident to the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours of becoming aware of the incident. Reasonable grounds for suspecting harm include:
  - You witness the harm
  - A child tells you they have been harmed by someone at the Service
  - Someone else (e.g. another child, staff member, parent, outside person) tells you that a child has been harmed by a person at the Service.
- In the event of a child exhibiting sexualised behaviour beyond that considered by educators to

be age-appropriate and not-unexpected, the matter is to be reported to the Nominated Supervisor who will, in turn, report the concern directly to the Regulatory Authority.

- The Service has developed Harm – Guidelines for Handling Disclosure to help staff, educators, students and volunteers, when faced with a disclosure from a child, to respond professionally and in the best interests of the child. Any disclosure of harm must be immediately reported to the Nominated Supervisor who will ensure that correct procedures are followed.
- Staff who suspect that a child may be experiencing harm or neglect when not at the Service are to follow the Harm – Guidelines for Handling Suspicion. These Guidelines include immediately informing the Nominated Supervisor, completing an Expression of Concern Form, and maintaining confidentiality as detailed in the Service's Confidentiality Agreement.
- Educators intentionally teach children protective behaviours, after informing parents.
- The Service involves staff, educators and parents when compiling the Risk Management Plan for High-Risk Activity or Special Event.
- Any breach of this Child Protection and Risk Management Policy – action or inaction – will be investigated according to the Breach Management Plan.
- The Service's *Child Protection and Risk Management Policy* is reviewed annually. As part of the annual review, the policy is distributed to staff, educators and parents for their contributions and feedback.

## **Additional safe practices for babies**

---

- No additional practices required.

## **Responsibilities of parents**

---

- To report any suspicion of harm to a child occurring at the Service to the Nominated Supervisor immediately.

## **Procedure and forms**

---

- Abuse – Types and Indicators
- Blue Card Register Sheet
- Breach Management Plan
- Confidentiality Agreement
- Expression of Concern Form
- Harm – Guidelines for Handling Disclosure
- Harm – Guidelines for Handling Suspicion
- Injury on Intake form
- Risk Assessment/ Management Plan
- Staffing Tool
- Statement of Commitment – Foyer copy
- Statement of Commitment – Educator Acknowledgement
- Monitoring Staff Study
- Child Protection Procedure

## Links to other policies

- Child Safe Environments Policy
- Educator Professionalism and Ethics Policy
- Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
- Relationships with Children Policy
- Staffing Policy
- Students, Volunteers and Visitors Policy

## Links Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, National Quality Standard 2011

Regs	84	Awareness of child protection law
QA	2.2.3	Management, educators, and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to respond to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect
	4.2.2	Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships
	5.1.2	The dignity and rights of every child are maintained.
	7.1.2	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service
	7.1.3	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision-making and operation of the service.
	7.2.1	There is an effective self-assessment and quality improvement process in place.
	7.2.3	Educators, co-ordinators and staff members' performance is regularly evaluated and individual plans are in place to support learning and development.

## Sources

- ACECQA. (2017). *Reporting requirements about children*. <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/reporting-requirements-about-children> accessed 25 June 2025
- Blue Card Services (Queensland Government). <https://www.bluecard.qld.gov.au/> accessed 25 June 2025
- Blue Card Services (Queensland Government). Blue Card Services Learning Portal. <https://www.youtube.com/c/BlueCardQldGovAus> accessed 25 June 2025
- Child Protection Act 1999 (reprint current as at 1 December 2018). <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1999-010#sec.13E> accessed 25 June 2025
- Blue Card Services (Queensland Government). *Link an applicant/cardholder to this organisation*. <https://www.publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/blue-card-employment-changes/resource/7f263d63-3bf6-417f-8f68-24f1bb15b12a> accessed 25 June 2025
- Blue Card Services (Queensland Government). *Applicant/cardholder no longer with organisation (for organisations)*. <https://www.publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/blue-card-employment-changes/resource/b09d3a8a-f134-4273-bc27-c2de9b2c9da8> accessed 25 June 2025
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Guide to the National Quality Standard 2018
- NAPCAN. (n.d.). *Listening to children*. <https://www.napcan.org.au/napcan-brochures/> accessed 25 June 2025

## Further reading and useful websites

- Queensland Police – <http://www.police.qld.gov.au/> accessed 25 June 2025
- Family and Child Connect – <http://www.familychildconnect.org.au> accessed 25 June 2025
- Department of Children, Youth Justice, and Multicultural Affairs  
<https://www.legalaid.qld.gov.au/Listings/Organisations-directory/Department-of-Children-Youth-Justice-Multicultural-Affairs-Child-Safety> Accessed 25 June 2025

## Policy review

In accordance with the updated NQF requirements effective from 1 April and 1 September 2025, this policy has been revised to strengthen procedures for identifying and reporting child protection concerns, and to ensure staff training includes updated legal and regulatory obligations.

The Service encourages staff and parents to be actively involved in the annual review of each of its policies and procedures. In addition, the Service will accommodate any new legislative changes as they occur, and any issues identified as part the Service's commitment to quality improvement. The Service consults with relevant recognised authorities as part of the annual review to ensure the policy contents are consistent with current research and contemporary views on best practice.

## Version Control

Version	Date Reviewed	Approved By	Comments/Amendments	Next Review Date
1	8 January 2018	Kaylene Harper	Updated to changed NQF requirements 1 February 2018.	January 2019
2	6 February 2019	Kaylene Harper	Accessed sources and further reading/useful websites. Additional readings included.	February 2020
3	28 January 2020	Kaylene Harper	Accessed sources and further reading/useful websites. Additional readings included.	January 2021
4	25 September 2020	Kaylene Harper	Reviewed information. Accessed sources and further reading/useful websites.	September 2021
5	18 February 2021	Kaylene Harper	Policy Reviewed. Child Safe Environments Policy added to 'Links to other policies'.	February 2022
6	22 September 2021	Kaylene Harper	Policy reviewed	September 2022
7	29 September 2022	Linda Hollard	Reviewed Policy Accessed sources	September 2023
8	23 August 2023	Grace McKinstry	Reviewed Policy Accessed sources	August 2024
9	9 July 2024	Tiffany Boeske	Reviewed policy Accessed sources	July 2025
10	25 June 2025	Gen Mahaki	Updated to reflect changes to child protection requirements in the NQF effective 1 April and 1 September 2025.	June 2026