

Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

MercyCare is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. MercyCare has zero tolerance for child abuse.

It is the responsibility of all MercyCare people:

- Protect children and young people from all forms of abuse, bullying and exploitation
- Be alert to incidents of child abuse and neglect occurring outside the scope of our operations that may have an impact on the children and young people to whom we provide a service
- Report any abuse or neglect of which they become aware to our management and/or to external authorities responsible for child protection - regardless of whether that abuse is being perpetrated by people within or outside our organisation
- Create and maintain a child safe culture that is understood, endorsed and put into action by all of our people.

Commitment

- MercyCare is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people
- Safeguard children and young people from abuse and neglect, and communicate this commitment to all of our people
- Ensure our people know safeguarding behaviour expectations through our Safeguarding Children and Young People Procedure
- Employ people who keep our children and young people safe through our Recruitment and Selection Procedure that ensures appropriate checks/screening is taken
- Ensure that we vet, monitor and supervise all contractors, subcontractors and agency staff who will be involved with children and young people through our Contractors, Subcontractors and Agency Staff Onboarding Procedure
- Induct people on the safeguarding policies and ensuring they undertake the safeguarding children and young people online training according to our Mandatory Training Policy.
- Support ongoing education and training for our people to maintain best practice in child safety
- Encourage the involvement of children, young people and their carers in developing a safe, inclusive and supportive environment.

- Provide information and services about safeguarding to children, young people and carers, in a manner that is culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with disabilities and the LGBTQIA+ community
- Ensure our people understand their responsibility for reporting child abuse and follow the Responding to Child Abuse Reports and Allegations Policy
- Maintain and review Safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure the documents continue to represent best practice – as outlined through the Safeguarding Children Internal Review Procedure and the Policy Management Policy.

Responsibility

- Board – Approve and endorse MercyCare's commitment to Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and note all related procedures
- CEO – responsible for MercyCare's organisational adherence to this policy including the delegation of operational responsibilities as appropriate
- Executive Leadership Team – approves policy; monitors compliance; use data to inform service delivery, planning and improvement at a strategic level

- Safeguarding Officer – Review and update policies and procedures. Embed a child safe culture within the organisation.
- Managers – promote and provide a child safe environment and positive reporting culture to service user’s, employees, volunteers and contractors; ensure compliance to this policy and use data to inform service delivery, planning and improvement at a service level
- People Services – provide a robust recruitment framework for line managers to ensure suitable employment and volunteer selections are made; monitor and ensure ongoing screening requirements and reviews occur
- Employees, volunteers and students – understand and comply with this policy; seek guidance from a line manager if there is any lack of clarity about commitments; take action to protect children and young people from all forms of abuse, bullying and exploitation; assist to create and maintain a child safe culture and a culture of inclusion and safety.

Consultation

MercyCare will consult with appropriate stakeholders in the development and review of Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures.

MercyCare will communicate this policy to:

- Service users - via the MercyCare website, in accessible formats and as part of enrolment information
- Employees, volunteers and contractors – during recruitment and induction processes, mandatory training, via the MercyCare policy centre and whenever there are changes.

Abuse types

MercyCare will record and report on the following types of abuse-

- **Sexual abuse** - Sexual abuse is any interaction between a child and an adult (or another child) in which a child is forced or enticed to take part in sexual activities that they do not fully understand or are unable to give informed consent to. Sexual abuse can include both touching and non-touching behaviours.
- **Physical violence** - Physical violence is the intentional or reckless use of physical force against, with, or in the presence of a child, which has the ability to cause injury or harm to the child.
- **Family Violence** – Family violence is any threatening, coercive or abusive behaviour that occurs between family members or intimate and domestic partners, that causes fear in the person experiencing the behaviour.
- **Emotional or psychological abuse** - Emotional or psychological abuse refers to isolated or persistent emotional maltreatment that impacts on a child’s emotional development.
- **Serious neglect** - Serious neglect occurs when there is a significant, deliberate or reckless failure to meet the basic needs of a child in circumstances where the adult understood the needs of the child and had the opportunity to meet those needs but failed to do so.
- **Other conduct of a sexual nature** - Other conduct of sexual nature can be unwelcome behaviours, which are considered sexual harassment, can be of verbal, non-verbal, physical, or visual nature including grooming. Grooming involves predatory behaviour designed to facilitate sexual activity with a child. Perpetrators purposely create relationships with children, their families or carers to create a situation where abuse could occur.

Evaluation and Improvement

To assess compliance to the requirements of this policy and continually improve, MercyCare will undertake evaluation processes and consider:

- Best practice requirements
- Results of audits, reviews and surveys
- Incident outcomes
- Feedback from service users, employees and volunteers
- Identified risks and how they are managed
- Performance against objectives and targets.

Internal References

- Mandatory Training Policy
- Policy Management Policy
- Incidents: Internal Escalation Requirements
- Contractors, Subcontractors and Agency Staff Onboarding Procedure
- Recruitment Selection and Appointment Procedure
- Responding to Child Abuse Reports and Allegations Policy
- Safeguarding Children and Young People Procedure
- Annual Review Procedure – Safeguarding Children and Young People
- Guidelines for Engaging with Parents, Carers, Children and Young People – Safeguarding Children and Young People
- Service User’s Rights and Responsibilities

Legislation and Standards

- Children and Community Services Act 2004
- Children and Community Services Regulations 2006
- Children and Community Services Legislation Amendment and Repeal Act 2015
- Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004 (WA)
- Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Regulations 2005
- Child Care Services Act 2007
- Disability Services Act 1993 (WA)
- National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013
- Aged Care Act 1997
- Quality of Care Principles 2014 – Aged Care
- Privacy Act 1988
- Service level accreditation and non-accreditation standards.

Approved by:
MercyCare Board
Date Approved: 04/08/2022