



North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House

Title	Child Safety Policy
Schedule Review Date	June 2018
Version	1

Background

This policy is designed to protect all children and young people who attend North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House. The policy defines children and young people as anyone under the age of 18 years and includes students attending to receive assistance with their study, tutors, young children attending a program, participants and visitors to North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House.

This policy is based on the The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1990 and the Victorian Child Safety Standards 2016

Child Protection Statement

North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people accessing our service. We support the rights of the child and will act without hesitation to ensure a child-safe environment is maintained at all times. We also support the rights and wellbeing of our staff and volunteers and encourage their active participation in building and maintaining a secure environment for all participants.

Definitions

Child abuse can take the form of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse or neglect. Child abuse can have long term and significant effects on a child or young person's development. North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House is committed to responding without delay to any suspicions of child abuse or neglect.

Types of Abuse

Physical Abuse

This abuse occurs when a person intentionally injures or threatens to injure a child or young person. The injury may involve: slapping, kicking, punching, shaking, burning, shoving, grabbing, pinching, biting, strangling or any other form of behaviour causing physical injury. Physical abuse can also involve a situation where a parent or caregiver is not adequately ensuring a child or young person's safety, leading to them being placed in situations of extreme physical danger.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is when a person uses their power over a child or young person to involve them in sexual activity. Sexual abuse covers a wide range of sexual activities including both contact and non-contact situations. Non-contact abuse can involve obscene calls or remarks made in any written form. It involves exposure to pornography or being photographed for pornography.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse involves a consistent attack on the child or young person's self-esteem to the extent that it is affecting the child or young person's physical, emotional, social and/or intellectual development. It can take the form of rejection, put-downs, intimidation, threats, frightening or isolating the child or young person.

Neglect

This is a situation where a child or young person's basic daily needs are not being met and this is risking their health and development. It can involve a lack of food, clothing, personal hygiene, shelter, medical treatment or appropriate supervision.

Policy coverage

This policy applies to all individuals involved with North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House, including:

- Paid and volunteer staff
- Committee of management members
- Children and young people participating in a program
- Visitors including parents and family members, program partners including facilitators, children and young people.

North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House expects that all those involved with the program will follow the policies and procedures outlined in this document. If breaches of these policies and procedures occur they will be dealt with by the Manager North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House

Legal requirements

North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House is aware of its legal and moral obligation to protect the children and young people in its care. It recognises that it could be legally liable for any abuse that may occur while a child or young person is in its care. Therefore, we are committed to keeping those individuals employed by, whether in a paid or voluntary capacity, aware of their legal obligations in relation to child protection.

Children, Youth and Families Act

In Victoria the Child, Youth and Families Act 2005 is the legislation which covers the protection of children and young people. Under Victorian law a child is regarded as being a person under 17 years of age.

Working with Children Check

Under the Working with Children Act 2005 a person who is performing 'child related work' needs to apply for a Working with Children Check. Particularly relevant to Railway House is section 9.3 under the Act that requires a check of all persons involved with "coaching or tuition services of any kind for children". All individuals over 18 years of age who are working in a paid or voluntary capacity will need to have a current Working with Children Check and Police Check. Any individuals over the age of 18 who are involved in North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House but are not involved in 'child related work' to have a current Police Check.

Child/Youth Safety Officer – Manager of Railway House

- Be the first contact point for anyone involved with North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House who has a concern about a child or young person.
- Confidentially document minor concerns about a child or young person that could build into an overall concerning picture. Make sure any records are kept strictly confidential and include date and signature.
- Report any concerns to police or Child Protection or support a fellow staff member/volunteer who is making a report.
- Ensure all those involved with North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House are aware of all policies and procedures connected the Child Protection Policy.
- Monitor any concerning emails, messages or images on the Internet or via other technology that arise in the course of the North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House program.

- Proactively promote a culture that is a welcoming, secure and supportive environment so children and young people will feel comfortable in expressing any difficulties or concerns they may have.
- Oversee the annual review and changes to the policies and procedures connected with Railway House Child Protection Policy.
- Arrange training needed in relation to child protection or protective behaviours for staff, volunteers, children or young people involved with North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House
- Coordinate follow up that may be required after a report of abuse to the police or Child Protection.
- Liaise with the Chairperson North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House or a nominated committee member.

Reporting Procedures

North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House has the following guiding principles in relation to responding to concerns about a child or young person's safety and welfare. It recognises that any allegation of abuse involves:

- The right of the child /young person to be listened to, protected and supported
- The right of the child/young person and their families to have their concerns acted on
- The right of the alleged perpetrator to a fair process
- Everyone's right to privacy
- The responsibility of North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House to ensure all concerns are dealt with promptly and in a respectful manner.

Procedures for all staff (paid or voluntary)

- The Child/Youth Safety Officer (the Manager) must be immediately informed:
- If a child or young person is displaying signs indicating they are being abused or may have been abused. This includes when a child or young person has disclosed any information that they have been abused/neglected or that they know of another child or young person who has.
- Of any behaviour by staff (paid or voluntary), parents, visitors to the program or between children/young people and their peers that is concerning e.g. someone seeking to be alone with a particular child or group of children.
- At all times the confidentiality and privacy of those involved must be respected.
- Debrief with the Child/Youth Safety Officer as required.
- It is the responsibility of any staff member paid or voluntary who has raised a concern about a child or young person's welfare to ensure their concerns have been acted upon.

Procedures for Child/Youth Safety Officer

Once notified of a concern the Child/Youth Safety Officer will then proceed to manage the case confidentially.

Steps should be taken to immediately ensure the child or young person's emotional and physical safety.

If appropriate the child or young person's parents or caregivers will be notified.

If necessary, prior to formally reporting the incident, the Child/Youth Safety Officer may consult with the Department of Human Services Child Protection Unit for advice and information.

When a decision is being made to report to the police or the Department of Human Services Child Protection Unit, the Child/Youth Safety Officer, if feasible, will do so in consultation with the Chairperson or nominated committee member. Any notification must happen promptly and the child or young person's safety/welfare should be the top priority.

The Child/Youth Safety Officer will keep confidential written documentation of any concerns raised including steps taken in follow up. All documentation should be dated and signed.

Any support required by the child, young person, their family or staff of the Railway House is to be arranged by the Child/Youth Safety Officer.

If the alleged perpetrator of the abuse is a staff member (paid or voluntary), the Child/Youth Safety Officer must initially remove this person from contact with the children and young people. This may include “standing down” the person until investigations are complete.

Consultation with the Chairperson or Representative needs to occur prior to the “standing down” or as soon as possible afterwards. Formal follow up in relation to a staff member being stood down is to be managed by the Manager.

Throughout the whole process the Child/Youth Safety Officer must keep the Chairperson or Representative informed of any developments in the situation.

The Child/Youth Safety Officer must ensure their concerns about a child or young person’s welfare are being acted upon, this may mean in some circumstances reporting again to police or the Department of Human Services Child Protection Unit.

Recruitment, Screening, Training and Supervision of Staff and Volunteers

North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House is committed to ensuring all staff and volunteers undergo comprehensive screening to create a safe environment for the children and young people accessing its services.

Recruitment Procedures

In all advertisements and material promoting positions, the organisation’s commitment to child protection and screening mechanisms should be made clear.

Written position descriptions must be developed for all positions, which include key selection criteria and promote North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House commitment to child protection.

All volunteer applicants must complete a volunteer application form, which includes a requirement to provide at least one professional and one personal referee.

Disclosure

If a child or young person discloses abuse, the person should:

- Say they believe them
- Praise them for having shared the information
- Reassure them the abuse is not their fault.
- Inform them you will be talking to the authorities to get help for them.
- Listen carefully to what they say but do not directly question the child or young person as this will not help with future investigations by police or the Department of Human Services Child Protection Unit.
- Be very aware how distressing disclosing the information could be for the child or young person and be supportive.

If allegations involve the child or young person’s parents or caregivers the Child Protection Unit or police will inform you when and how to inform the parents/caregivers.

To report abuse: contact the Police on 000 or the Department of Human Services Child Protection Crisis Service on 131278 (available 24 hours a day)

Interview and Background Check Procedures

STAFF: Applicants meeting key selection criteria will be selected for interview. Panel interviews should be conducted with behavioural and situational based questions. The organisation’s commitment to child protection should be reiterated, including mention of the Child Protection Policy and outlining of screening mechanisms.

VOLUNTEERS: Face to face interviews must be conducted on prospective volunteers to understand volunteer motivations and to inform prospective volunteers about the volunteer role, program operations, screening mechanisms and compulsory training.

Two forms of identity must be checked at volunteer and staff interviews, including one with a photograph.

Working With Children Checks must be conducted on all staff and volunteers – receipt should be sighted before volunteers commence and volunteers must only work under direct supervision until check arrives.

- Police Checks must be conducted on all staff and volunteers
- All applicants must be provided with a copy of the Child Protection Policy.
- Two reference checks should be conducted by phone for preferred applicants (volunteer and staff) and should include verification of applicant's identity and employment history.

Procedures for Induction, Training and Supervision of Staff

Adherence to the Child Protection Policy is required by all staff as part of the Contract of Employment. New staff must be given a copy of the Child Protection Policy and asked to sign a clause acknowledging they have read, understood and agreed to abide by the policy. During the probationary period of 3 months all new staff will be oriented in relation to:

- understanding, recognising and responding to abuse and neglect;
- understanding the Railway House Child Protection Policy; and
- other important aspects of their role related to protecting the wellbeing of children and young people

Staff should participate in education and training programs to improve their knowledge of child protection and best practice in responding to allegations of abuse and neglect.

Staff should be supported and supervised as positive role models to children and young people. Any concerns in relations to their suitability to work with children and young people should be addressed in the performance management process.

Induction, Training and Supervision of Volunteers

As part of the induction process, Railway House will discuss the Code of Conduct with volunteers and ensure the volunteer understands the responsibilities and boundaries of the role. The Code of Conduct includes a clause acknowledging the volunteer has read, understood and agreed to abide by Railway House Child Protection Policy.

Internet Safety

North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House recognises that the internet, mobile phones and other forms of information technology can be used as an avenue for child abuse. At the same time information technology can have a wonderfully positive, informative and creative part to play in a child or young person's education.

Any indication of inappropriate activity either against a child or young person or initiated by them, in any form of media must be reported to the Child/Youth Safety Officer immediately.

Drug and Alcohol

North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House recognises that the use of alcohol and drugs by staff and volunteers can impact on:

- the safety and well-being of the children and young people accessing the program
- the integrity and professionalism of the program, and
- the degree to which staff and volunteers behave as appropriate role models

As such staff and volunteers should not attend North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House under the influence of alcohol or any recreational drugs. North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House acknowledges that the use, supply and possession of recreational drugs, and the use of alcohol for people under the age of 18 is against the law.

Code of Conduct

North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House seeks to clarify acceptable behaviour in order to enhance the safety and wellbeing of the children and young people accessing its programs and activities, and to protect staff, volunteers and the organisation. The code of conduct must be explained and discussed with all new staff and volunteers, who need to read and sign the code before commencing.

Review and monitoring

The policies and procedures outlined in this document are to be formally reviewed at least annually

The review will assess:

- whether all parts of this policy and related procedures are being successfully adhered to and
- whether any alterations are necessary
- any training needs for the coming year
- changes or updates in information and/or law related to Child Protection