



Okines Community House
540 Old Forcett Road, Dodges Ferry TAS 7173

*We are grounded in country and driven by connection - a safe space
for diverse ideas, shared action, and deep belonging*



Our People

Participants & Visitors

Child & Youth Safety Policy

<i>Authorised by:</i>	<i>Date authorised:</i>
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Scope

This policy applies to the Board; casual, permanent and contract staff; volunteers, students on work placement (students), and relevant contractors across any location in which OCH operates.

Ensuring the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people is a shared responsibility for everyone at OCH.

OCH will consider this policy when developing, designing and managing other policies, processes and programs to ensure they include relevant child safety considerations.

Purpose

All children and young people have the right to feel and be safe.

All children and young people have the right to be protected from all forms of child abuse and neglect.

All adults in our community have a responsibility to look out for children and keep them safe, regardless of how regularly or irregularly they interact with children.

OCH is committed to implementing [the Tasmanian Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework](#) to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people by providing a safe, inclusive and culturally safe environment.

Policy

Child abuse in any form is never acceptable at Anywhere Neighbourhood House (OCH). We are committed to fostering a safe, nurturing, and inclusive environment for all children and young people within our community. Recognising that the well-being and protection of children is fundamental to their development and the overall health of our community, we prioritise the rights of children and young people in every aspect of our work.

The primary purpose of a Neighbourhood House is community development: to connect the community; support people by supporting the NH Network; create opportunity; and provide local leadership. The needs of the community we serve will vary over time and we prioritise meeting them.

Definitions

Child / young person means anyone under the age of 18.

Child abuse or neglect can include:

- Sexual abuse
- Physical abuse (including neglect)
- Emotional and psychological abuse

It is the mistreatment of a child which:

- causes, is causing or is likely to cause detrimental harm to their physical or psychological wellbeing; or
- does, or is likely to, endanger their physical or psychological development.

This can be either through a:

- single act, omission or circumstance; or
- series of combination of acts, omissions or circumstances;

For a full glossary of terms, please see [Appendix 4 of the Tasmanian Department for Premier and Cabinet's Change for Children strategy](#).

Legislation applying to OCH

- [1924 Criminal Code Act](#)
- [1997 Children, Young People and their Families Act](#)
- [2013 Registration to Working with Vulnerable People Act](#)
- [2023 Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act](#)

The Neighbourhood House Network is also engaged with the Tasmanian government in the development of the [Change for Children](#) strategy and action plan for reform.

Standards of Behaviour when Interacting with Children and Young People

All Board members, employees, volunteers, students on placement, and relevant contractors must:

- Treat all children and young people with respect.
- Comply with child safe practices.
- Comply with Australian and Tasmanian Child Protection Legislation.
- Report any child-safety concern, allegation, disclosure or complaint to the Chair or Manager of OCH as soon as practicable. Where the report is made to the Manager, the manager must notify the Chairperson as soon as practicable. Where a report is made to the Chair, the Chair must notify the Manager unless the concern relates to the Managers. The Chair will ensure the Board, or an authorised Board subgroup, receives sufficient information to provide governance oversight while maintaining confidentiality, privacy and procedural fairness.

And must not engage in inappropriate conduct with a child or young person, such as:

- Child abuse in any form.
- Sexual behaviours either toward them, or in their presence.
- Bullying, discrimination, harassment, victimisation or vilification (this includes disciplinary action and/or physical punishment).

- Taking and/or sharing inappropriate photos or images.
- Using OCH technology or information to exploit or harass.
- Requesting or infer communications are kept secret (e.g. from parent, carer or other OCH staff member).
- Supplying alcohol or drugs.

A full list of expected behaviours can be found in Appendix 1.

All Board members, employees, volunteers and relevant contractors are expected to have a Working with Vulnerable People check. In addition, all volunteers working directly with children or youth must watch the [15-minute DECYP safeguarding video](#). **Please note, this video contains material that may cause an emotional reaction for some viewers. Please watch with caution.**

Breach of this Policy

If a person's conduct or behaviour does not meet these Standards of Behaviour, then OCH may take a range of action against the person. The potential action will be dependent on seriousness of the conduct and the position and manner of engagement of the person (e.g. volunteer, employee, Board member, etc).

As a general guideline, OCH may take any of the following actions:

- Follow the Grievance Resolution Procedure.
- Raise the relevant conduct with the person and request a response or explanation.
- Ask the person to leave premises and not return for an appropriate period of time.
- If necessary, seek more information on the conduct and how it has affected others.
- Report to the police and/or Strong Families Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line (ARL) on 1800 000 123.
- Take disciplinary action if necessary, including but not limited to:
 - a. Performance management, counselling and issuing written warnings.
 - b. Suspending the person from their engagement while the conduct is considered.
 - c. Restricting the person from OCH property and programs.
 - d. Terminating the person's role or employment with OCH.
- Conduct an investigation into the conduct if it is a serious breach of policy or law (see: reporting procedures).

Guests

Any OCH employee, volunteer or Board member who invites another person (the guest) to be present at any OCH related function or activity, at any location, is responsible for ensuring that the guest always acts in a manner consistent with these Expected Behaviours. If a guest or an event attendee is found to be in breach of the code, the same protocol above should apply.

OCH acknowledges the importance of events remaining open and accessible to all. Employees, volunteers and Board members should model exemplary behaviour, and prioritise the safety of children and young people throughout. Child and youth safety should

feature in event risk assessments¹.

Governance

The Board will review this policy at least every three years, in response to legislative changes, or as appropriate, to ensure that this policy continues to align with best practices and OCH values.

Responding to concerns, allegations and disclosures

If a child is at immediate risk and police or medical assistance is required, dial (triple zero) 000.

It is essential that the child or young person's needs and well-being remains the priority of all action that is undertaken.

Procedure

According to Tasmanian law, any adult who believes or suspects on reasonable grounds that a child is experiencing abuse or neglect has a legal responsibility to take steps to prevent the occurrence of that abuse or neglect.²

Furthermore, certain service providers within the OCH, such as childcare providers, are named as **Mandatory Reporters**. This policy does not replace existing mandatory reporting procedures.

Instances of abuse or neglect could include:

- Observed or reported instances of inappropriate, unwarranted or unwelcome physical touching of a child
- Physical abuse or explained injury to a child
- Threats of physical injury or death
- Cumulative harm, such that the child or young person's development has been compromised (such as the harm caused by ongoing exposure to family violence and chronic neglect)
- Persistent emotional or psychological abuse
- The presence of indicators that suggest the child is subject to chronic neglect or inadequate supervision
- Disclosure of sexual abuse by a child, or the presence of indicators that suggest sexual abuse (including grooming) may be occurring or likely to occur
- Observation or disclosure of concerning or abusive behaviour by an adult
- Observation or disclosure of concerning or abusive behaviour by another child or young person (including harmful sexual behaviour displayed towards a child, young person or adult)

¹ NHT are developing a suite of policy including around risk assessments and lost children. These will be made available to the Network in due course.

² [Children, Young People and Their Families Act 1997, Part 3](#)

Abuse can occur in many different settings, including online, and may be committed by:

- A parent, carer, or other household member
- Another child or young person
- Staff or volunteers
- Coaches, instructors or tutors
- Someone at a young person's workplace
- A stranger, or any other person.

Staff do not need to witness the abuse or neglect to make a report. They might be worried because a child has told them something themselves; another child or person has told them something; the staff member has personally observed things; or the staff member has come across information that makes them think a child might be unsafe.

While not all concerns will amount to child abuse, contacting the Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line (ARL) on 1800 000 123 with any concerns helps them to develop a more complete picture of a child's circumstances and risk factors to better protect them from harm. Making a report may prevent the occurrence, or further occurrences, of abuse.

If in doubt, it is always best to report to ARL.

In the case of a child disclosing:

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

When responding to a disclosure, while concerns maybe on a much smaller scale, the following should be used to guide your response:

- Actively listen, without interruption, giving the child or young person time to share their experience.
- Show that you believe what they are saying to you.
- Affirm that they have done the right thing in disclosing their experience.
- When responding to disclosures from children and young people, let them know how courageous they have been in coming forward and highlight their strengths.
- Take their fears or concerns seriously.
- Emphasise that they are not to blame for their experience.
- Be clear about the limits (if any) to confidentiality. For example, you may have a legal obligation to share some of this information with other people if you believe that there is an immediate risk of harm.
- Provide information about what you will do in response to the disclosure and how you will continue to support them in your role.
- Provide information about internal and external support services (including websites and phone numbers).

Also, what **not to do** when responding to a disclosure:

- Talk about your own experiences of violence.
- Ask a lot of questions to try and find out details.
- Judge or criticise their choices.

- Make comments that imply there's something they could have done to better protect themselves.
- Promise you will keep their confidence (you are not able to do so as a mandated reporter).
- Get angry or frustrated at the person or their experience.
- Try to 'fix' the problem for them.
- Tell them what to do.
- Talk negatively about the perpetrator.
- Try to force them to disclose information – let them guide what they tell you.
- Provide counselling.

It is also important you do not make promises that cannot be kept.

Disclosures can be upsetting for the person who is listening and responding, and you should discuss support needs and any ongoing impact with your supervisor.

Reporting Procedures

If a concern, allegation or complaint is made against a person outside of employment by OCH, such as a family member, sports coach or another child:

- The staff member should contact Tasmanian Government's **Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line (ARL)** on **1800 000 123**.
- A *Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP)* staff member will be available to talk through your concerns and explore what can be done to help. General business hours are 8:30am and 5:00pm, Monday to Friday. For urgent matters where a child or young person needs immediate protection, there are [after hours on-call services available](#).
- A decision should be made if the police are to be notified immediately or after discussing with the OIR or DECYP, via the ARL.
- If appropriate, the child or young person's parents or caregivers will be notified.

If a concern, allegation or complaint is made against an employee, volunteer or contractor of OCH:

- The previous procedures apply, and:
- the **manager of OCH must be informed**. The Manager must notify the Board Chair as soon as practicable. If the concern, allegation or complaint is about the manager, then the Board Chair must be informed directly. **The manager or Board Chair will coordinate processes relating to internal or external investigation processes as appropriate.**³ The Chair will ensure the Board, or an authorised subgroup, receives sufficient information to provide governance oversight while maintaining confidentiality, privacy and procedural fairness.

Any support required by the child, young person, their family, or staff of the House is to be

³ Further guidance on conducting investigation processes will be provided by NHT in due course.

arranged in consultation with the OIR or DECYP, via the ARL.

Document

As soon as practical, record as accurately as possible as many details as possible. Staff will keep confidential written documentation of any concerns raised including steps taken in follow-up.

Appendix 1: Guidelines for Expected Behaviour

OCH is committed to safeguarding children and young people, and prioritising the needs of young people within its community development work. OCH recognises that these needs will vary, and ensuring a child or young person feels as safe as possible should be the guiding principle for all behaviour. OCH also recognises the importance of safe and healthy attachment to adults as one of the primary needs of children. Safeguarding mechanisms are not intended to limit capacity to develop such relationships, but rather help adults know how to keep children safe.

These guidelines have been developed to identify and prevent behaviour that may be harmful to children and young people.⁴

All OCH Board Members, employees, volunteers and contractors must ensure they follow these guidelines. A failure to comply with the guidelines will be a breach of the Child Safety Policy.

Physical contact with children

You must ensure that any physical contact with children/young people is appropriate to the delivery of OCH programs or services, is undertaken with the child's permission, and is based on the needs of the child; such as:

- assisting with the use of equipment,
- assisting to develop sport or dance skills
- preventing an injury

⁴ This section is based on the [Australian Government's Australian Sports Commission: "Child Safe Policy"](#)

- treatment by a health practitioner
- administering first aid
- toileting assistance to children who cannot do this for themselves (as part of providing education and care services)

Examples of unacceptable physical contact with children/young people is contact that:

- would appear to a reasonable observer to have a sexual connotation;
- is intended to cause pain or distress to the child (e.g., corporal punishment);
- is overly physical (e.g., wrestling, horseplay, tickling or other roughhousing);
- is unnecessary (e.g., assisting with toileting when a child does not require assistance); and
- is initiated against the wishes of the child, except if such contact may be necessary to prevent injury to the child or to others.

You must report to your supervisor any physical contact displayed by a child that is sexual and/or inappropriate (e.g. of physical aggression), as soon as possible.

Professional boundaries

You must establish and maintain professional boundaries when working or interacting with children. This means acting within the scope of your role (as specified in your position description or contract) when working or interacting with children.

You must not:

- provide any form of support to a child or their family unrelated to the scope of your role (e.g. using your own money to provide financial assistance, babysitting outside of OCH);
- use a personal phone, camera or video to take images or video footage of children unless specifically approved in writing;
- wear uniform or identification outside of authorised activities;
- exhibit any type of favouritism towards a child, such as giving individual gifts/presents to children other than the provision of official awards or OCH programmes;
- transport children unless specifically approved in writing;
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children, or share overly personal information with a child;

- use inappropriate language in the presence of children (e.g. swearing, sexually explicit language);
- discriminate against any child, including on the basis of gender identity, culture, race, or disability;
- have one on one contact with a child outside of authorised activities (includes in-person as well as by phone or online); or
- where there is no pre-existing social, personal or family relationship, accept an invitation to attend any social function at the request of a child or their family.

If you become aware of a situation in which a child requires assistance that is beyond your role, or in the case of emergency, you must undertake any or all of the following at the earliest opportunity:

- refer the matter to an appropriate support agency;
- refer the child to an appropriate support agency;
- contact the child's parent, guardian or carer; and/or
- seek advice from your supervisor or the *Office of the Independent Regulator (OIR)*.

Use of, possession or supply of alcohol or drugs

You must not:

- use, possess or be under the influence of an illicit drug in the presence of a child or young person;
- use or be under the influence of alcohol while supervising a child or young person;
- be impaired by any other legal drug such as prescription or over-the-counter drugs while in the presence of a child or young person; or
- supply alcohol or drugs (including tobacco) to children or young people.

You must not supply or administer medicines, except with the consent of the parent/guardian/carer of the child and under a valid prescription for that child and at the prescribed dosage.

Photographing and filming of Children

You may only photograph or film a child or young person if:

- The child is not identifiable in the photo;
- the context directly relates to OCH or activities on OCH site;

- the child/young person is appropriately dressed and posed

You must not distribute images or footage (including as an attachment to an email) to anyone outside OCH other than the Child photographed or their parent, guardian or carer, without OCH management knowledge and written approval.

You must not publish any images or footage online or in publications (eg. annual report), where the child is identifiable (even if parental consent is obtained) This includes no publication of photos provided by 3rd parties where children are identifiable. Photos where the child is not identifiable (ie back of head) are permissible.

Digital communication

Careful consideration is required before engaging in any electronic or online communication with children and young people. If you are unsure discuss with your supervisor. If appropriate, always copy in a supervisor and a parent/guardian/carer in all communication.

When communicating with children, you must ensure that content is:

- directly associated with delivering *OCH* services, such as advising that a scheduled event is cancelled;
- concise with personal or social content limited only to convey the message in a polite and friendly manner;
- devoid of any inappropriate language or language that is sexual or threatening violent in nature; and
- not promoting unauthorised social activity or contact.

You must not:

- befriend a child or young person on your personal social media; or
- request that a child keep online communication secret from their parents /guardian /carer or other *OCH* employees.

You must report to *OCH* any online contact initiated by a child or young person that is outside of your official role.

Appendix 2: Resources

Policy Context

Department for Premier and Cabinet: [Change for Children strategy and action plan](#)

Tasmanian Government: ['It Takes a Tasmanian Village': Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy](#)
[Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings](#)

[Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse](#)

CYSOF Compliance

Australian Government: [Practical tools for implementing the National Principles](#)

Office of the Independent Regulator: [Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework](#)

Resources for help

[Strong Families Safe Kids](#): phone line and online contact form

[Tell Someone Tas](#)

[Sexual Assault Support Service, Laurel House](#)

[Arch, Hobart & Launceston](#)

Reporting Guidance

Tas Justice: [Information Sheet: The Reportable Conduct Scheme](#)

Australian Institute of Family Studies: [Responding to children and young people's disclosures of abuse](#)

Australian Institute of Family Studies: [Mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect](#)

Safe + Equal: [Guidance on responding to disclosures](#)

LegalAid: [Information for Mandatory Reporters](#)

Other

Australian Human Rights Commission: [What are Children's Rights?](#)

Berry Street: [Guidance on appropriate sexualised behaviour in children and young people](#)

Blue Knot: [Trauma-informed conversations](#)