

Child Safe Code

If there is immediate danger to a child or young person, urgently call the Police on 000 for advice

All Administrators and/or Councillors, employees and other representatives at City of Whittlesea (Council) are required to observe child safe principles and to meet organisational expectations of appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, in accordance with this Child Safe Code and the Child Safe Policy.

This Child Safe Code is a Corporate document established under the Child Safe Policy and is also incorporated into the Code of Conduct for Staff and Others.

All Administrators and/or Councillors, employees and other representatives at Council are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:

General

- Adhering to the Child Safe Policy and actively supporting Council's commitment to child safety at all times.
- Treating all children with respect, equality and dignity, and actively promoting the participation and empowerment of children and young people.
- Placing the importance of child safety above the interests of Council as an organisation or its staff, and upholding the rights and best interests of children in all planning and decision-making.
- Being vigilant, proactive and taking all reasonable steps to protect children from harm, including grooming and abuse.

Specific groups

- Promotion of the cultural safety of Aboriginal and culturally and/or linguistically diverse children, same sex attracted and/or gender diverse children, and the safety of children with a disability.
- Ensuring that children will be supported to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights, and demonstrating zero tolerance to racism.

Incident management

- Treating all concerns or allegations of child abuse seriously, and responding in accordance with the Child Safe Policy and procedures.
- Listening to and treating the safety concerns of children seriously, particularly if they tell you that they or another child has been harmed, or is at risk of being harmed.
- Reporting any suspected or disclosed child abuse or child safety issue to either the Police in an emergency, or your supervisor or a child safe key contact (details below) in a non-emergency situation.

Date of Adoption	Date of Review	Directorate Responsible	Department Responsible
9 August 2022 V2	9 August 2025	Customer & Corporate Services	People & Culture

- Ensuring the immediate safety of a child, when a report of suspected child abuse is made to you.
- Reporting any breach of the Code or Child Safe Policy by any person associated with Council, to your Supervisor (or next level Manager where the concern involves your Supervisor) or the Child Safe Officer immediately.

Participation

- Ensuring children are aware of their rights and have access to this information.
- Providing welcoming, safe and accessible environments that protect children from violence, bullying, teasing, threatening, and discriminatory remarks.
- Providing opportunities that reflect the diverse needs of children and empower them to fully participate in the community, including our services and programs.
- Recognising children as active citizens, agents in their own lives and encouraging them to 'have a say' on issues that directly affect them.

Specific actions

- Completing relevant training and other professional development activities as required.
- Adhering to risk mitigation strategies and safe work practices (identified by and relevant to your work area) when interacting with children in person or online.
- Ensuring wherever practicable all individual or groups of children are supervised by more than one adult at once.
- Managing dual relationships (a situation where you have prior relationship with a child/family who you are then required to work with) appropriately, and disclosing these to your supervisor as soon as possible.
- Being a positive role model for children, for example by supporting children to learn protective behaviours, and empowering children to speak up if they have concerns for their safety or wellbeing.
- Adhering to appropriate 'safe touch' behaviours with children that are considered appropriate to your role, or where otherwise necessary (i.e. comforting a child in distress, administering first aid).
 - Appropriate safe touch with a child should at all times:
 - Be appropriate to the developmental needs of the child.
 - Be strictly in line with the types of child contact necessary to perform your duties.
 - Be open, non-secretive and culturally sensitive.
 - It is important to be attuned to the child's cues and what they are comfortable with.
 - Where possible or age appropriate, you must seek consent; for example, ask a child in distress if it is ok to give them a hug; when performing first aid or duties of a personal nature tell the child where you need to touch them, why, and ask if it is ok.

Date of Adoption	Date of Review	Directorate Responsible	Department Responsible
9 August 2022 V2	9 August 2025	Customer & Corporate Services	People & Culture

- Where a parent/guardian is present and the child is incapable of giving consent (for example very young children being examined in a medical context), the parent/guardian should be informed of the intention to touch the child, the purpose of this and any implications of not proceeding, and consent should be obtained from the parent before proceeding.

Administrators and/or Councillors, employees and other representatives will not:

Inappropriate relationships

- Develop a 'special' relationship with a child to the exclusion of others or show favouritism, i.e. by offering a child gifts or special treatment.
- Provide children with gifts/free items that are not in line with a program/service.
- Establish a personal relationship with a child and/or their family that you have met through work.
- Solicit, conduct or accept requests from children and/or their families for private services (i.e. babysitting, non-authorised home visits, or private lessons) delivered outside of your work.
- Provide personal contact details (i.e. phone number, home address, email/social media addresses) to children and the parents of children you interact with at work.
- Provide transport to children that is not in line with service provision. (e.g. Allowing or asking children to ride on tractors, lawnmowers, trucks, or in a worker's personal vehicle)
- Use social media/online platforms to contact or befriend a child, or have online contact with a child that is not transparent to Council and part of an approved program or activity.

Physical behaviours

- Exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical.
- Hit, physically assault, restrain, or engage in inappropriately rough play with a child, except in circumstances where the child is in immediate danger or is posing an immediate threat to others, in which case appropriate physical intervention may be used to maintain the safety of the child and others.
- Speak to a child in an angry, intimidating or threatening manner.
- Touch intimate areas or have any other physical contact with a child (i.e. kiss, hold, cuddle) not deemed to be appropriate to your role, or necessary safe touch.
- Do things of a personal nature (i.e. toileting or changing clothes) that you could reasonably expect a child to do for themselves, unless performing personal care duties or a medical assessment or examination as part of your role, or in unavoidable situations (i.e. preventing an accident or administering first aid).

Risk management

- Place a child at risk of abuse (for example, leaving the child with an unknown adult).
- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.

Date of Adoption	Date of Review	Directorate Responsible	Department Responsible
9 August 2022 V2	9 August 2025	Customer & Corporate Services	People & Culture

- Put a child at risk of abuse or harm through negligence or inaction.

Illegal or age-inappropriate behaviour

- Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature with or in the presence of children.
- Condone or make self-disclosures about past or present participation in illegal or unsafe behaviours when speaking to or in the presence of a child.
- Consume tobacco, alcohol or take illicit drugs, or be substance-affected when working with children, or purchase alcohol, cigarettes, sexually explicit material or illegal substances on behalf of a child.

Discriminatory practices

- Use inappropriate, discriminatory, prejudicial, oppressive, harassing, abusive, sexually explicit, demeaning or culturally insensitive language when speaking to, or in the presence of a child.
- Discriminate against any child on the basis of age, gender, race, culture, religion, disability, vulnerability, sexuality or other protected attributes, or express personal views on such attributes when speaking to or in the presence of a child.

Images

- Use or publish unauthorised images of children.
- Use personal devices to take images of children, unless:
 - this would be deemed appropriate to the role and is explicitly authorised by a Council procedure or supervisor (for example a nurse taking a photo of a child's health condition to forward to another medical professional); or
 - in an emergency situation; or
 - where documenting evidence regarding suspected abuse or a risk to child safety and it is not practicable to obtain authorisation in advance.

Definitions

Accessible: Refers to the design of products, devices, services, or environments so as to be usable by all people especially Aboriginal, from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, with a disability and same-sex attracted and/or gender diverse children.

Allegation: A claim that someone has done something illegal or wrong.

Child: A person who is under the age of 18 years.

Child abuse: Child abuse comes in many forms including physical, sexual, emotional or psychological, grooming and neglect.

- **Physical abuse** is the non-accidental infliction of physical injury or harm of a child. Visible signs and examples of physical abuse may include bruises, welts, burns, fractures, multiple new and old injuries, bald patches on the head.

Date of Adoption	Date of Review	Directorate Responsible	Department Responsible
9 August 2022 V2	9 August 2025	Customer & Corporate Services	People & Culture

- **Sexual abuse** is when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve them in sexual activity and does not always involve physical contact or force. Visible signs and examples of sexual abuse may include injury to the genital/rectal areas, breast, thighs, discomfort during toileting.
- **Emotional or psychological** harm occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated or frightened by threats or by witnessing family violence. Visible signs and examples of emotional or psychological abuse may include language delays, stuttering, delays in emotional, mental or physical development.
- **Grooming** is when a person engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time. Visible signs and examples of grooming may include giving gifts, special attention, close physical contact, exposure to sexual content.
- **Neglect** is the failure to provide for the development and wellbeing of the child. It can be an isolated incident or an ongoing pattern. Visible signs and examples of neglect may include a child being inappropriately dressed for weather, hungry, tired, listless, not having adequate shelter.
- **Family violence** against a child or a child's parent is child abuse, and can include physical violence or threats, verbal abuse, emotional and psychological abuse, sexual abuse and financial and social abuse.

Cultural safety: An environment that is safe for children of all backgrounds, where there is no challenge to, or denial of, who they are or what they need. This environment promotes shared respect, shared meaning and shared knowledge and experience; learning, living and working together with dignity; and truly listening.

Key contacts

Council's Child Safe key contacts are the Director Community Wellbeing, the Unit Manager Human Resources and the nominated Child Safe Officer/s. These officers may be contacted with any queries or concerns regarding child safety at childsafety@whittlesea.vic.gov.au or by contacting Customer Service on (03) 9217 2170 and requesting to speak to the relevant officer.

The contact details for these officers are publicly available on the Council website and documented in Council's Child Safe procedures.

Review

This document will be reviewed by 9 August 2025 (earlier if required).

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