

Child Safety Policy

Version 4.1

This policy has been adopted by:

Name of Company	Adoption Date
Community Housing Ltd (CHL)	June 2023
Community Housing (Vic.) Ltd (CHVL)	June 2023
Community Housing (TAS) Ltd (CHTL)	June 2023
Community Housing (QLD) Ltd (CHQL)	June 2023

And any other entities within CHL which adopt this policy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Community Housing Limited Group of Companies (CHL) is committed to promoting and protecting the safety and wellbeing of all children. We have zero tolerance for child harm or risk of harm. Everyone working at CHL is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child harm and complying with our responsibilities to do so in each jurisdiction that we operate.

This Policy applies to all employees, volunteers and contractors of CHL.

If any person believes a child is in immediate risk of harm, contact the appropriate authority in your State.

Refer to the Child Safety Procedure in your State

2. AIM

The purpose of this policy is to:

- comply with all Federal and State legislation in relation to child protection

- prevent child harm or risk of harm occurring within all CHL environments
- work towards an organisational culture of child safety
- ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible risk of harm to a child, detecting such harm when it occurs and establishing controls and procedures for preventing such harm
- provide guidance on actions that should be taken where a person suspects any child harm within all CHL environments
- provide a clear statement to employees, volunteers and contractors preventing any such child harm
- provide assurance that all suspected harm will be reported to, and fully investigated by the relevant State authorities

3. DEFINITIONS

Term	Meaning
Child	A person under the age of 18 years unless otherwise stated under the law applicable to the child. Collective term for child is children.
Child harm	(a) any act committed against a child involving: (i) a sexual offence; or (ii) an offence under section 498(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming); and (b) the infliction, on a child, of- (i) physical violence; or (ii) serious emotional or psychological harm; and (c) serious neglect of a child.
CHL Environment	Any physical or virtual place made available or authorised for use by a child, including: • the offices of CHL • online CHL Environments (including email, portals and intranet systems), and • other locations provided by CHL for a child's use.
Mandatory reporting	Describes the legislative requirement imposed on selected classes of people to report suspected cases of child harm and risk of harm to government authorities and/or the police.

4. PRINCIPLES OF CHL'S CHILD SAFETY POLICY

4.1. Guiding principles

This Policy is based on the following principles:

- CHL has zero tolerance for child harm
- the best interests of the child are paramount
- child protection is everyone's responsibility
- all children have a right to feel safe and be safe, and have rights to protection from harm
- CHL will consider the opinions of children and may use their opinions to develop child safety policies and procedures

- CHL is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability
- everyone who is required to abide by this Policy must also comply with CHL's Code of Conduct, which sets stringent standards for personal behaviour

4.2. Responsibilities

In the first instance of suspected child harm, CHL will seek advice from the relevant statutory authority.

In practice, the Managing Director's responsibilities will be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive Officer. If the complaint is about the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, the complaint will be dealt with by the Managing Director.

4.2.1. All employees, contractors and volunteers

All employees, contractors and volunteers share in the responsibility for the prevention and detection of child harm, and must:

- familiarise themselves with the relevant laws in relation to child safety, this National Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct, and the applicable Child Safety Procedure, and comply with all requirements
- report any reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk to the relevant authorities (in accordance with the applicable Child Safety Procedure)
- provide a safe environment for all children

4.2.2. The Board of CHL

Notwithstanding the above, the Board of CHL has ultimate responsibility for the prevention and detection of child harm and for ensuring that appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place. The Board is also responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies, procedures and code of conduct that deals with these issues are in place.

4.2.3. Managing Director of CHL

The Managing Director of CHL is responsible for:

- seeking advice from the relevant statutory authority in dealing with reports of child harm
- ensuring that all employees, contractors and volunteers are aware of relevant laws, the National Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct, and the applicable Child Safety Procedure
- monitoring compliance with the Child Safety Procedures
- ensuring that all employees, contractors and volunteers are aware of their obligation to comply with the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and
- providing support for employees, contractors and volunteers in undertaking their child safety obligations

4.2.4. All managers

All managers must ensure that they:

- promote child safety at all times
- assess the risk of child harm within their area of control and eradicate/minimise any risk to the extent possible
- educate employees, contractors and volunteers about the prevention and detection of child harm, and
- facilitate the reporting of any concerns of child safety

5. HOW CHL AIMS TO ACHIEVE THESE POLICY PRINCIPLES

5.1. Recognising child harm

Child harm includes:

- any act committed against a child involving
 - a sexual offence; or
 - grooming; and
- the infliction on a child of:
 - physical violence; or
 - serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- serious risk of harm to a child

5.2. Reporting obligations

Employees, volunteers and contractors at CHL must comply with all applicable mandatory reporting laws. All Australian States and Territories have enacted mandatory reporting laws however, the laws are not the same across all jurisdictions.

Therefore, employees, volunteers and contractors must comply with the Child Safety Procedure (in particular, the procedure tailored to the specific State they are in). These State-based procedures set out the applicable reporting obligations you owe in your role at CHL.

Notwithstanding the above, if any person believes a child is in immediate risk of harm, contact the appropriate authority in your State immediately.

5.2.1. Encouraged to report

CHL supports and encourages employees, volunteers and contractors to make a report to the relevant government agency if they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child needs protection, or they are concerned about the safety, health or wellbeing of a child.

As set out in the Child Safety Procedure, if a person would like internal guidance or support with addressing their concerns, they are encouraged to speak with their supervisor.

5.2.2. Protection of reporters

Any employee, volunteer or contractor that makes a report in good faith and in accordance with their reporting obligations will be supported by CHL and will not be penalised by CHL for making the report.

5.2.3. Reportable conduct scheme

In practice, the Managing Director's responsibilities will be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive Officer. If the complaint is about the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, the complaint will be dealt with by the Managing Director.

In addition to the reporting obligations discussed above, New South Wales and Victoria also place specific obligations on the Managing Director to make reports under the applicable reportable conduct schemes.

Under both schemes, the Managing Director is required to make reports to a specific external authority once they become aware (or are notified) of child harm allegations being made against an employee, volunteer or contractor.

The Managing Director is also required under the schemes to provide updates to the applicable external authority. The timeframes and notice requirements differ between the States and so the required steps are set out in detail in the Child Safety Procedures.

Depending on the State in which the incident occurs, the Managing Director may be required to disclose the report to the State Housing Registrar.

Further guidance on when the Managing Director must make a report (and to whom) is found in the Child Safety Procedures.

Refer to the Definitions section of this Policy.

5.3. Prevention

5.3.1. Recruitment

CHL undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all employees, volunteers and contractors which aims to:

- promote and protect the safety of all children within all CHL environments
- identify and recruit the safest and most suitable candidates who share CHL's values and commitment to protect children; and
- prevent a person from working at CHL if they pose an unacceptable risk to children

Each job (or category of jobs) for CHL employees, volunteers and contractors that involves child-connected work will have a clear statement that sets out:

- the job's requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding child safety; and
- the job occupant's essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety

All applicants for jobs that involve child-connected work for CHL will be informed about CHL's child safety practices (including the National Child Safety Policy and CHL's Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Procedures).

All employees, volunteers and contractors that have direct contact with children are required to have a current Working with Children Check (WCC) prior to being engaged by CHL (or where allowed under the relevant State legislation and as appropriate, at least applied for a WCC). CHL's Human Resources Manager records all WCCs on a spreadsheet that is checked annually to see who requires a renewal.

CHL will conduct thorough reference checks to ensure the suitability of all candidates prior to their engagement. This will include CHL making reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the following information about a person whom it proposes to engage to perform child-connected work:

- WCC status, or similar check
- proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications
- the person's history of work involving children; and
- references that address the person's suitability for the job and working with children

The type of evidence that an applicant is required to provide to CHL will vary depending on the type of position that they are applying for and the State in which they will be working. For example, in South Australia it is required that individuals engaged by CHL that have direct contact with children obtain a WCC check prior to commencing work with children (and not simply have just applied). CHL will not offer any applicant a position at CHL until they provide the required evidence to the People and Culture Team.

CHL will exercise discretion and may require applicants to provide a police check in accordance with the law and as appropriate, before they commence working at CHL and during their time with CHL in regular intervals.

Once engaged, CHL will provide employees, volunteers and contractors with access to the National Child Safety Policy, Code of Conduct and the Child Safety Procedures. Employees, volunteers and contractors must review and acknowledge their understanding of the National Child Safety Policy, Code of Conduct and the Child Safety Procedures.

All successful applicants engaged at CHL will be assessed on an ongoing basis including during any scheduled performance review and after any concern is raised regarding their conduct with children to ensure that they remain suitable for child-connected work.

5.3.2. Risk Management

CHL will ensure that child safety is a part of its overall risk management strategy approach.

State Managers will be responsible for identifying and managing child safety risks within all CHL environments. All employees, contractors and volunteers must comply at all times with the CHL Child Safety Code of Conduct which forms part of this policy.

The State Managers will be open to receiving feedback from all members of the community on how to improve its risk management approach and better protect the safety of children. Feedback should be directed to the State Managers in writing.

If State Managers identify a risk of child harm occurring in one or more CHL environments, they will make a record of that risk and specify the action(s) CHL will take to reduce or remove the risk (i.e. risk controls).

As part of its risk management strategy and practices, State Managers will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls.

The State Managers will report any risks to child safety to the Head of Risk and Compliance.

CHL will ensure that there are appropriate human resources policies to assess staff in relation to compliance with their child safe obligations and continued suitability for child-connected work.

CHL will ensure that appropriate training is conducted for all employees, volunteers, and contractors.

5.3.3. Communication

CHL will communicate where applicable the National Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Procedures. The Chief Operations Officer is responsible for ensuring the dissemination and communication of the National Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Procedures, as outlined in Columns A and B in the following table, the Chief People Officer as outlined in Column C: and the Chief Governance Officer as outlined in Column D in the following table:

Column A Chief Operations Officer	Column B Chief Operations Officer	Column C Chief People Officer	Column D Chief Governance Officer
Tenants, customers and residents of supported programs	Parents, guardians, community, sponsors, partners,	Employees, volunteers, contractors	External service providers
- Terms and conditions of CHL's programs - Website	- Terms and conditions of CHL's programs - Website - CHL newsletter	- Website - Letters of appointment/contracts - New employees, volunteers and contractor's induction and refresher training - One-off training sessions as required	- Website - Terms and Conditions of Contract/Purchase Orders - Contract and Purchase Order Documents - Service Provider training requirements.

CHL will ensure that its child safety practices, and child safety code of conduct are communicated in an accessible manner for:

- younger children, by discussing the documents in-person (and/or any other method deemed appropriate and effective for the age of the child); and
- children living with a disability, by discussing the documents in-person (and/or any other method deemed appropriate and effective for the disability that the child is living with)

5.4. Responding and reporting

In practice, the Managing Director's responsibilities will be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive Officer. If the complaint is about the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, the complaint will be dealt with by the Managing Director.

In the case of an allegation being made against an employee, volunteer and/or contractor at CHL, the Managing Director (or the Chair of the CHL Board/Subsidiary Board if the allegations involve the Managing Director) will follow CHL's Child Safety Procedures. CHL will take all steps to ensure that the safety of the child is paramount.

The first step is to withdraw the accused person from active duty, which could entail standing down (with pay, where applicable), re-assignment to other duties that do not have direct contact with children, or to work under increased supervision while the matter is being investigated.

The Managing Director will also comply with any applicable reportable conduct schemes and report the allegation to the appropriate external authority when required.

5.4.1. Case management

In the event of a child disclosing an incident of abuse to someone they trust; it is essential that it is dealt with sensitively and professionally.

5.4.2. Allegations

CHL will appropriately manage all allegations relating to an incident of child harm in accordance with its obligations and to the extent reasonably practicable. In some circumstances, it may be necessary for CHL to

actively assist other investigations conducted by authorities (e.g. the Police). CHL will at all times co-operate with appropriate authorities as required.

All people covered by National Child Safety Policy, Code of Conduct and the Child Safety Procedures, must co-operate fully with any investigation by a Government Department, the Police or CHL.

The Managing Director (or the Chair of the CHL Board/Subsidiary Board if the allegations involve the Managing Director) will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time-to-time other employees, volunteers and/or contractors may need to be consulted as part of the allegation management (e.g. to provide witness statements).

CHL will handle all allegations in a confidential manner to the greatest extent possible.

In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for CHL to engage a person (or persons) from outside CHL to conduct an independent investigation in relation to allegations that do not involve criminal activity.

The outcome will depend on the findings of the investigation, but if substantiated, may include withdrawal from active duty, re-assignment to duties with no contact with children, increased supervision, disciplinary action, dismissal or criminal prosecutions.

5.5. Record keeping

An Incident Report must be completed in Protecht of any allegations of risk or harm to a child and include the place, time, date, names of people involved, observed behaviour and/or evidence of harm. Reports must be reviewed by the Deputy Chief Executive Officer.

5.6. Privacy and confidentiality

CHL will collect, use, disclose and hold personal information in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988 (Cwlth) and the Privacy Policy.

5.6.1. Principles

There are two guiding principles in respect to a child's privacy:

- CHL operates on a best interests' principle
 - All employees, volunteers and contractors will act in the best interest of the child. This principle supersedes all others
- CHL will respect a child's confidentiality, except in situations where it conflicts with the best interests' principle

As much as is reasonably possible, an individual's confidentiality is to be protected. Both those who are making reports and those about whom accusations are made are entitled to confidentiality. Where there is suspected abuse or misconduct, employees, volunteers and contractors must not disclose or make use of the information in a manner that breaches confidentiality, other than to report and act consistently with the National Child Safety Policy, Code of Conduct, Child Safety Procedures and relevant statutory requirements.

6. CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT

6.1. Introduction

Employees, volunteers and contractors at CHL are required to abide by this Code.

The purpose of this Code is to promote child safety within all CHL Environments. We believe everyone should have equal opportunity to access good quality, affordable, sustainable and safe housing.

The following list includes examples of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours when staff or Directors have contact with children within their role with CHL. Staff and Directors must be mindful that appropriate behaviour, care and attention needs to be always exercised beyond their role.

6.2. Acceptable behaviours

All people during the course of undertaking their duties in connection with or on behalf of CHL, involved in the care, supervision or in contact with children, must:

- contact the appropriate authority if a child is at immediate risk of harm
- adhere to the Child Safety Policy and Procedures and uphold CHL's statement of commitment to child safety at all times
- take all reasonable steps to protect children from harm
- conduct themselves in a manner consistent with their position as an employee, volunteer, or contractor of CHL and as a positive role model to children
- work towards the achievement of the aims and purposes of the organisation
- be responsible for the relevant administration of programs and activities in their area
- maintain a duty of care towards others involved in these programs and activities
- establish and maintain a child-safe environment during their work
- be fair, considerate and honest with others
- treat children with respect and value their ideas, opinions and backgrounds
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children (for example, by not questioning an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child's self-identification)
- promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination)
- promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children with disability
- listen and respond to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been harmed, or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child
- attempt as far as possible to ensure that one adult other than a CHL employee, contractor or volunteer is in the company of a child in the conduct of day-to-day business
- comply with all applicable reporting obligations (as set out in the Child Safety Procedures)
- raise concerns about suspected child harm with their supervisor or the Managing Director as soon as possible
- record and act upon all allegations or suspicions of harm, discrimination or harassment
- if an allegation of child harm is made, ensuring authorities are aware as quickly as possible to secure the safety of the child(ren)
- be professional in their actions

- maintain strict impartiality
- respect confidentiality when sharing information about children in accordance with the Child Safety Policy and Procedures and your reporting obligations
- operate within the policies and guidelines of CHL

6.3. Unacceptable behaviour

All people during the course of undertaking their duties in connection with or on behalf of CHL, involved in the care, supervision or in contact with children, must not:

- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child harm
- put a child at risk of harm (for example, by locking doors for an improper reason)
- speak to a child in a way that is, or could be construed by any observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Some examples are:
 - swearing or using inappropriate language in the presence of a child
 - yelling at a child, except in an emergency where their safety may be in danger
 - dealing with a child while the adult is angry with the child; and
 - using hurtful sarcasm
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality that may cause offence or make the child uncomfortable
- discuss sexual activities with a child
- have contact with a child or their family outside of CHL activities. Except in cases of accidental/incidental contact, such as:
 - seeing children in the street
 - attending a friend's BBQ in which children are present
 - any other incidental contact that is outside of your professional relationship with the child and that is not for an improper purpose
- have any online contact with a child (including by social media, email, instant messaging etc.) or their family (unless necessary e.g. by providing e-newsletters)
- use any personal communication channels/devices such as a personal email account to communicate with a child
- exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking sites or email addresses with a child
- use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol while in the presence of, or while supervising a child
- use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs while in the presence of, or while supervising a child
- provide or allow a child to consume alcohol
- provide or allow a child to consume illegal drugs
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person, or do things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves

- engage in rough physical games, hold, massage, kiss, cuddle or touch a child in an inappropriate and or/culturally insensitive way
- engage in any sexual contact with a child
- other than in an emergency, to take a child to their home or transport a child
- encourage meetings outside program activities
- be naked in the presence of a child
- possess sexually explicit printed materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.) in the presence of a child
- sleep in the same bed, sleeping bag or room as a child
- discriminate against any child, including because of age, gender identity, sex, race, culture, sexuality, or disability
- engage in any activity with a child that is likely to physically or emotionally harm them
- develop a 'special' relationship with a specific child for their own needs
- show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention
- photograph or video a child without the written consent of his/her parents or guardians
- do anything that contravenes CHL policies, procedures or this Code of Conduct

6.4. Confidentiality

6.4.1. Disclosing information to employees, volunteers and contractors

When children are having a written or verbal interaction with employees, volunteers and/or contractors of CHL, that interaction is confidential to the organisation, not to the individual. This means that an employee, volunteer or contractor can talk with other employees, volunteers or contractors in a way that identifies the child. However, where possible the privacy of the child should be always respected. When considering breaching their privacy, who and how many people are told should be based on what is believed to be in the best interests of the child.

6.4.2. Disclosing information to people external to the organisation

Employees, volunteers and contractors should not discuss confidential matters about children with people outside the organisation in a way that identifies that child. Exceptions in this case are when the express permission of the child or their guardian is given, or it complies with CHL's National Child Safety Policy, Code of Conduct and the Child Safety Procedures. In circumstances where employees, volunteers and/or contractors believe that there is not enough knowledge within the organisation to provide the best possible assistance to a child, they are able to seek expertise external to CHL. When communicating with people outside CHL, the child's identity should be protected.

6.5. Breaches of this Code

The behaviours listed in this Code reinforce our values and provide employees, contractors and volunteers with an expected standard of behaviour. Behaviours which are contrary to the spirit or the stated requirements of this Code may result in disciplinary action (including up to termination of employment and/or reports being made to external authorities).

7. RELATED RESOURCES

7.1. CHL Group References

ACHL Code of Conduct, CHL Code of Conduct, CHVL Code of Conduct
Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Bullying Policy
Child Safety State Based Procedures
Child Safety Incident Report Form

7.2. External References

Federal and State Based Child Protection Legislation and Regulations
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8. MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy is maintained and managed by the CHL Group's Chief Operations Officer.

This document should be reviewed and revised periodically and/or as required. The period between reviews must not exceed two years. This document remains valid until such time that a new version is published

Review History

Document reference	Date Approved	Version	Reason for review	Review frequency	Owner	Approver(s)
POLABUAUSNATCHS202404	March 2024	4.1	Reformat	Existing	Chief Operations Officer	Executive
POLABUAUSNATCHS202304	December 2023	4.0	Scheduled Review	Every two years	Chief Operations Officer	Managing Director Chief Operations Officer
POLABUAUSNATCHS202103	November 2021	3.1	Update requirements*	Every two years	National Manager Operations	Managing Director National Manager Operations
POLABUAUSNATCHS202103	February 2021	3.0	Scheduled Review	Every two years	National Manager Operations	Managing Director National Manager Operations
POLABUAUSNATCHS202002	March 2020	2.0	Scheduled Review	Every two years	National Manager Operations	Managing Director National Manager Operations
POLABUAUSNATCHS201801	February 2018	1.0	New policy	Every two years	National Manager Operations	Managing Director National Manager Operations

* SA state update requirements including terminology change.