

Child Safety and Protection Policy

Introduction

Beanies Family Support, based in the Huon Valley, Tasmania, is committed to providing a safe and nurturing environment for all children and young people engaged in our services. Our diverse range of services includes child and young person advocacy, NDIS application support, NDIS support coordination, youth coaching, early intervention support, early childhood service consulting, counselling, and community event support. This policy outlines our commitment to child safety and protection, defining the standards for service delivery to ensure consistency, quality, and alignment with the Child and Youth Safe Organisation Framework.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Define the standards for child safety and protection across all our services.
- Ensure a consistent and high-quality approach to safeguarding children and young people.
- Outline the responsibilities and expectations of staff, volunteers, and contractors regarding child safety and protection.
- Establish procedures for identifying, responding to, and reporting concerns about child safety.
- Affirm our commitment to the Child and Youth Safe Organisation Framework.

Scope

This policy applies to all Beanies Family Support staff, volunteers, contractors, clients, and visitors involved in the delivery of services.

Child Safety and Protection Standards

1. Commitment to Child Safety

Beanies Family Support is dedicated to creating and maintaining a child-safe environment. We prioritise the safety and well-being of all children and young people who engage with our services. This commitment involves adhering to the principles and practices outlined in the Child and Youth Safe Organisation Framework, ensuring that all actions and decisions prioritise the best interests of children and young people.

2. Creating a Child-Safe Environment

We are committed to providing a safe physical and emotional environment for children and young people. This includes implementing comprehensive risk management strategies, ensuring that all facilities and activities are safe and child-friendly, and fostering a culture of openness, inclusivity, and respect. All staff and volunteers are trained to recognize and mitigate potential risks to child safety.

3. Code of Conduct

Beanies Family Support has established a clear code of conduct that outlines appropriate behaviour for interacting with children and young people. All staff, volunteers, and contractors are required to adhere to this code of conduct, which includes guidelines on maintaining professional boundaries, respecting the dignity and rights of children, and avoiding any actions that could be perceived as harmful or exploitative.

4. Recruitment and Screening

We ensure that all staff, volunteers, and contractors who work with children and young people are carefully screened and selected. This process includes thorough background checks, reference checks, and interviews to assess suitability for working with children. We prioritise the recruitment of individuals who demonstrate a strong commitment to child safety and have the necessary skills and experience.

5. Training and Education

All staff, volunteers, and contractors receive regular training on child safety and protection, including recognizing signs of abuse and neglect, understanding their responsibilities under this policy, and knowing how to respond to and report concerns. Ongoing education ensures that everyone is equipped with the knowledge and skills to maintain a safe environment for children and young people.

6. Reporting and Responding to Concerns

Beanies Family Support has established clear procedures for reporting and responding to concerns about child safety. All staff, volunteers, and contractors are required to report any suspicions or disclosures of abuse or neglect immediately. Reports can be made to designated child safety officers or through established internal reporting mechanisms. All reports are taken seriously, investigated promptly, and handled with sensitivity and confidentiality.

7. Supporting Children and Families

We recognize the importance of supporting children and their families, particularly when concerns about safety arise. Beanies Family Support is committed to providing appropriate support and resources, including counselling, advocacy, and referral to other services as needed. We work collaboratively with families to ensure the best outcomes for children and young people.

Commitment to the Child and Youth Safe Organisation Framework

Beanies Family Support fully endorses the Child and Youth Safe Organisation Framework (CYSOF) as stipulated in the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023. We ensure that our policies, procedures, and practices align with the CYSOF standards, promoting a safe and supportive environment for all children and young people we serve.

Child and Youth Safe Standards

Standard 1: Child Safety and Wellbeing in Leadership, Governance, and Culture

Child safety and wellbeing are embedded in our organisational leadership, governance, and culture. Our leaders prioritise child safety and integrate it into all policies and procedures. We ensure that child safety is a standing agenda item in board meetings and staff training sessions.

Standard 2: Informing and Involving Children and Young People

Children and young people are informed about their rights and are encouraged to participate in decisions affecting them. We actively seek their input and ensure they are taken seriously. Regular feedback sessions and child-friendly materials are used to facilitate understanding and participation.

Standard 3: Engaging Families and Communities

Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing. We maintain open communication channels with families and community members, providing them with the information needed to support child safety initiatives. Community events and forums are organised to foster collaboration and awareness.

Standard 4: Upholding Equity and Respecting Diverse Needs

Equity is upheld and the diverse needs of children and young people are respected in policy and practice. We are committed to inclusive practices that accommodate the varied backgrounds, abilities, and experiences of all children. Policies are reviewed regularly to ensure they reflect our commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Standard 5: Supporting Suitable Staff and Volunteers

People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice. We conduct rigorous background checks and provide ongoing support and training to ensure our staff and volunteers are well-equipped to maintain a safe environment.

Standard 6: Child-Focused Complaint and Concern Processes

Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child-focused. We have clear, accessible procedures for reporting and addressing any concerns related to child safety. All complaints are taken seriously and handled with sensitivity and confidentiality.

Standard 7: Ongoing Education and Training

Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training. Regular training sessions cover topics such as recognizing and responding to abuse, legal obligations, and best practices in child safety.

Standard 8: Promoting Safe Physical and Online Environments

Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed. We implement stringent security measures and provide guidance on safe online practices to protect children in all our settings.

Standard 9: Regular Review and Improvement

The implementation of the child and youth safe standards is regularly reviewed and improved. We conduct periodic audits and seek feedback from children, families, and staff to continually enhance our practices and policies.

Standard 10: Documented Policies and Procedures

Policies and procedures document how the entity is safe for children and young people. Comprehensive documentation ensures clarity and consistency in our approach to child safety, providing a clear framework for all staff and volunteers to follow.

Specific Guidelines for Service Areas

1. Child and Young Person Advocacy

In our advocacy services, we are committed to promoting and protecting the rights of children and young people. Advocates are trained to support children in expressing their views and making informed decisions. All advocacy activities are conducted in a manner that prioritises the safety and well-being of children and young people.

2. NDIS Application Support

Staff providing NDIS application support are trained to handle personal and sensitive information with confidentiality and care. They ensure that children and young people understand the application process and their rights, providing support in a way that is respectful and empowering.

3. NDIS Support Coordination

Support coordinators work closely with children, young people, and their families to develop and implement personalised support plans. They ensure that all services and supports are safe and appropriate, and that the voices of children and young people are heard and respected throughout the process.

4. Youth Coaching

Youth coaches are trained to create a supportive and safe environment for young people to explore their goals and develop their skills. Coaching sessions are conducted with clear boundaries and safeguards in place to protect the well-being of young participants.

5. Early Intervention Support

Early intervention support is provided in a way that is sensitive to the developmental needs and vulnerabilities of young children. Staff are trained to recognize and respond to signs of developmental concerns, and to work closely with families to create safe and nurturing environments for children.

6. Early Childhood Service Consulting

Consultants work with early childhood service providers to enhance their practices and ensure that they meet high standards of child safety and protection. This includes conducting risk assessments, providing training, and supporting the implementation of child-safe policies and procedures.

7. Counselling

Counsellors provide a safe and confidential space for children and young people to express their feelings and concerns. They are trained to recognize signs of abuse and neglect and to respond appropriately, ensuring that the safety and well-being of their clients are always prioritised.

8. Community Event Support

Community events are planned and conducted with a focus on creating safe and inclusive environments for children and young people. This includes implementing safety protocols, providing adequate supervision, and ensuring that all activities are appropriate and respectful.

Monitoring and Evaluation

To ensure the effectiveness of our child safety and protection practices, Beanies Family Support will conduct regular monitoring and evaluation. This includes reviewing our policies and procedures, gathering feedback from children, families, and staff, and assessing our compliance with the Child and Youth Safe Organisation Framework. Findings from these evaluations will inform continuous improvements to our child safety practices.

Conclusion

Beanies Family Support is dedicated to maintaining the highest standards of child safety and protection. By adhering to the guidelines outlined in this Child Safety and Protection Policy, we aim to provide a safe and nurturing environment for all children and young people engaged in our services. Our commitment to the Child and Youth Safe Organisation Framework ensures that we prioritise the well-being of children and young people in all our actions and decisions.