

E.7 Providing a Child Safe Environment

E.7.1 Introduction and Overview

Policy Statement

The safety of children is of the utmost importance to LOOSH. We want all children and young people to have a safe and happy experience at LOOSH. Child safety will be fostered through LOOSH's child safe culture, responsive relationships, engaging experiences and safe and healthy environment.

This policy shapes interactions between children and the service's employees, volunteers, and contractors. Our policy guides educators, volunteers and students on how to behave with children in our organisation and it focuses on how we can promote children's active participation at LOOSH and make it safer for them. We listen to children's views, respect what they say and involve them in decision making, especially about matters that will directly affect them.

Background

The Education and Care Services National Regulations require approved providers to ensure their services have policies and procedures in place for providing a child safe environment to minimise risk of harm and hazard to children attending education and care services.

LOOSH will ensure that a child safe environment is maintained and is committed to the 10 Child Safe Principles:

- Standard 1: Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance, and culture
- Standard 2: Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
- Standard 3: Families and communities are informed and involved
- Standard 4: Equity is upheld, and diverse needs are taken into account
- Standard 5: People working with children are suitable and supported
- Standard 6: Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse are child focused
- Standard 7: Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training
- Standard 8: Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur
- Standard 9: Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved
- Standard 10: Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe

Guiding Principles

- The health and safety of the children at LOOSH is our number one priority. All children attending our service are provided with a child safe environment.
- Children's wellbeing is paramount, and children will be actively involved in decision-making to provide an environment that encourages them to reach their potential.
- Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.
- At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.

- Procedures to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are in place and regularly rehearsed.

Scope

This policy applies to children, families, staff, educators, management, Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, volunteers and visitors of LOOSH.

This policy applies to all activities and practices taking place in our environments both physical, online, onsite and offsite during school term and vacation care.

This policy will be considered when developing, designing, and managing other policies and programs to ensure they include relevant child safety considerations.

E.7.2 Procedures

Child Safe Physical Environment

LOOSH is committed to providing a safe, inclusive and supportive environment where all children are valued, respected and protected from harm. Educators and staff at LOOSH are responsible for ensuring that our physical environment is safe, well maintained and supportive of the children's wellbeing. Children will be provided with an environment free from the use of tobacco, illicit drugs and alcohol.

Regular risk assessments, safety checklists and audits are conducted across both our indoor and outdoor spaces to identify and address potential hazards, with any issues promptly rectified. LOOSH environments are designed to enable clear lines of sight and effective supervision, supporting educators in maintaining constant awareness of children's whereabouts and activities.

Furniture, equipment, and resources are carefully chosen to be safe, age and developmentally appropriate, and inclusive of the children's varying needs. All resources will be kept clean and in good repair, with damaged or unsafe items removed from the children's use. Access to the service is controlled through our designated entry point and clear sign-in and sign-out procedures for children, families, visitors and staff.

The safe management of our physical environments are supported by and should be read in conjunction with policies and procedures B.2. *Managing the Facility*, and B.4. *Managing the Indoor and Outdoor Environment*, which outline more detailed processes for inspection, maintenance and hazard management.

Online and Digital Safety

Whilst LOOSH has limited use of digital technology, we recognise that children's safety extends into online spaces. Any use of our password-protected devices with the service, such as during sign-in or supervised learning activities, is carefully monitored by educators to ensure that children are engaging with safe, age-appropriate material.

LOOSH has strict protocols in place regarding photography, recording, and the storage and sharing of children's images or information. No photographs or digital content involving children will be taken or shared without appropriate consent from families, and educators must only use service-approved devices for this purpose. These practices are guided and supported by Policy

G.9: *Safe Use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments*, which outlines safe and responsible use of technology within the service.

Children are guided in understanding respectful and safe online behaviour through age-appropriate conversations and resources. Educators reinforce key messages about privacy, consent, and speaking up if something online makes them feel uncomfortable. By maintaining vigilance and embedding safe practices, the service extends its child safe culture to include digital environments.

Staff Recruitment and Training

LOOSH recognises that ensuring a child safe environment begins with the recruitment and training of educators who are committed to upholding our service's child safe values. All recruitment and induction processes are designed to attract educators who demonstrate integrity, professionalism, and a clear understanding of their responsibilities in maintaining a child safe environment.

Prior to employment, all prospective educators, staff, volunteers and providers are subject to screening processes including verification of NSW Working with Children Checks, reference checks from previous employers, and interviews that assess candidates' suitability to work with children (Refer to Policy D.1 *Recruitment and selection*).

All LOOSH Staff participate in inductions upon starting at LOOSH and refreshed as necessary, covering:

- Our child safe policies and procedures
- Active Supervision
- Child Protection, including legislative requirements, mandatory reporting obligations and responding to and reporting concerns.
- Online safety and the safe use of digital technology

In the training and induction process, educators are supported to recognise potential indicators of harm, abuse, or neglect, including physical, emotional, or psychological signs, changes in behaviour, or disclosures made by a child. Concerns may also arise from observations of interactions between children, or from information provided by families, staff, or community members. All concerns are treated seriously, and the child's safety and best interests are always the priority.

If educators suspect on reasonable grounds that a child is at risk of significant harm, they will respond immediately by notifying the Responsible Person and Nominated Supervisor. The incident will be documented and LOOSH will follow all relevant reporting requirements in accordance with our Policy E.6 *Child Protection*. Additionally, LOOSH will follow the guidelines for reportable conduct when reporting serious incidents to the Regulatory Authority.

Ongoing professional development is provided to ensure staff remain current in best practice, regulatory compliance, and emerging child safety strategies. Refresher training and opportunities for reflective practice support continuous improvement and a culture of vigilance.

The training of staff is supported by and should be read in conjunction with D.5 *Induction, training and professional development*, which outlines more detailed processes.

Children's participation and empowerment

LOOSH is committed to creating an environment where children feel valued, respected and empowered to participate in decisions that affect them. We recognise children as active contributors with the right to express their views, be heard, and have those views considered in a manner appropriate to their age and developmental stage.

LOOSH supports children to engage in all aspects of operations of the service, including but not limited to:

- Programming of activities
- Designing menus
- Purchasing of resources
- Sharing information with families
- Choices of fundraising and community projects.

Educators will actively seek children's feedback through conversations, group discussions, surveys, and creative expression. This input will be acknowledged, respected, and used to shape LOOSH, ensuring children's voices are visible in our decision-making processes. If we cannot action a children's request, educators will endeavour to explain the reasons behind this to children in line with our practice of open communication.

LOOSH Educators aim to foster an environment of trust and respect where children feel comfortable sharing their concerns or complaints without blame or dismissal. Feedback mechanisms are adapted to suit children's developmental needs, such as suggestion boxes, group meetings, or one-on-one conversations. Educators ensure that children understand how their feedback will be used and provide follow-up to demonstrate that their contributions lead to action.

Cultural Safety

LOOSH is committed to creating and maintaining a culturally safe environment where every child feels seen, respected and valued. Cultural safety recognises and affirms the diverse cultural identities of children and families, ensuring that no child experiences discrimination, racism, or exclusion. LOOSH upholds a zero-tolerance approach to racism in all forms. Any racist behaviour, comments or actions from children, staff, families or visitors will be addressed immediately.

At LOOSH, we acknowledge and pay respect to the Traditional Custodians of the land and honour the ongoing connection we hold with Country. We commit to honouring the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Child Safe Standards. LOOSH actively seeks and values the voices of First Nations children, ensuring their perspectives, experiences, and cultural identities are heard and respected in decision-making, planning, and daily practice. We commit to building genuine and respectful relationships with local First Nations communities, families and Elders, ensuring cultural knowledge and perspectives inform our service environment and practices.

LOOSH seeks to support children to develop their cultural competence, respect and empathy, promoting an environment where all children feel a strong sense of safety, belonging and empowerment, regardless of culture or race.

We endeavour to provide staff with ongoing, relevant training in cultural competency and inclusive practices supporting them to identify and respond effectively to racism, in line with our service Anti-Racism strategy and G.4 *Cultural Competency*.

Family and Community Involvement

Families and the wider community play a vital role in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children. LOOSH endeavours to build strong, respectful and open partnerships with families to create a supportive child safe environment.

Our service aims to provide clear information about our child safe practices and available supports to families. LOOSH connects families with community resources and support agencies where appropriate.

Families are invited to contribute their knowledge, cultural practices and perspectives to programming and service-decision making. We respect family diversity, values and cultural backgrounds, ensuring that practices are inclusive and supportive. LOOSH provides opportunities for families to give feedback to our service through suggestion boxes, meetings, emails and informal conversations.

Families and community members are supported to work in partnership with educators to identify and manage risks to child safety. Families will also be encouraged to echo the above procedures at home and have important discussions surrounding child safety with their children. This collaborative approach ensures that protective strategies are consistent across home, service, and community contexts.

Review and Continuous Improvement

LOOSH strives to maintain a culture built on continuous reflection and improvement, ensuring that child safety remains a central focus of our operations.

Policies, procedures, and operations are regularly reviewed to ensure they remain effective, compliant with legislation, and aligned with the 10 Child Safe Standards.

Whilst reviews of our child safe policies, procedures and practice can be done at any time, they may be prompted by:

- A concern expressed by a child, family member, staff member or community member.
- A complaint or confirmed incident of harm to a child or children.
- A change to National Law or Regulations
- Discovering that LOOSH educators or volunteers are not aware of our child safety policies, or not implementing child safety policies and procedures as intended.

LOOSH encourages families, children, educators and community stake holders to share feedback on the effectiveness of our child safe practices and environment. Feedback will be documented, discussed at staff meetings as necessary, and considered during policy updates.

E.7.3 Roles and Responsibilities

Approved provider
• ensure that obligations under the <i>Education and Care Services National Law</i> and <i>National Regulations</i> are met

- ensure that the ***Providing a child safe environment policy*** and ***procedures*** are implemented, the appropriate risk assessments and action plans are completed, and all identified actions are taken to minimise the risks to children's health and safety (also known as a risk minimisation plan)
- ensure all educators and staff have undertaken current child protection legislation training, including mandatory reporting requirements and obligations in their state/territory. If not, develop a plan to ensure training is undertaken in a suitable timeframe
- provide an environment that is free from the use of tobacco, illicit drugs and alcohol and ensure no educators or staff are affected by alcohol or drugs (including prescription medication) so as to impair their capacity to supervise or provide education and care to children in the service
- take reasonable steps to ensure that nominated supervisors, educators and staff follow the ***Providing a child safe environment policy*** and ***procedures***
- ensure that copies of the policy and procedures are readily accessible to nominated supervisors, coordinators, educators and staff, and available for inspection
- notify families at least 14 days before changing the policy or procedures if the changes will:
 - affect the fees charged or the way they are collected or
 - significantly impact the service's education and care of children or
 - significantly impact the family's ability to utilise the service

Nominated supervisor

- implement the ***Providing a child safe environment policy*** and ***procedures*** and ensure that any plans developed from risk assessments are in place for individual children and are carried out
- ensure all educators and staff are aware of current child protection legislation, including the mandatory reporting requirement and obligations in their state/territory
- meeting staff to child ratios to ensure adequate supervision
- ensure all educators and staff know where to access the ***Providing a child safe environment policy*** and ***procedures***
- ongoing communication with educators and staff about their responsibilities and any changes to policies, procedures and legislation
- Regularly monitor child protection training schedules and ensure all educators and staff are up to date with their training
- When required, work collaboratively with appropriate services and/or professionals to support children's access, inclusion and participation in the program
- ensure the safety and wellbeing of children attending the service by keeping a visitors' record, including signatures and arrival/departure times (a mandatory requirement for FDC services).

Educator Responsibilities

- be aware of current child protection legislation, including the mandatory reporting requirements and obligations
- Report potential risk to child safety including any breaches of this policy.
- implement the ***Providing a child safe environment policy*** and ***procedures*** and ensure that any action plans for individual children are carried out
- Assist in promoting and implementing the Child Safe Standards.
- know the individual needs and action plans for the children in your care
- maintain current accredited child protection, first aid and approved CPR, asthma and anaphylaxis training

• monitor and maintain staff to child ratios to ensure adequate supervision of children • provide an environment that is free from the use of tobacco, illicit drugs and alcohol (FDC educators) • keep a visitors' record, including signatures and arrival and departure times (mandatory requirement for FDC services)
Parent/carer Responsibilities
• Adhere to the <i>Providing a Child Safe Environment</i> Policy and associated procedure • Indicate as required whether they consent to photos or videos of their child to be taken for the purpose of documenting learning. • Report any concerns related to child safety to the approved provider or nominated supervisor

E.7.4 Legislation and Related Service Documentation

Legislative requirements:

- Education and Care Services National Regulations R82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 89, 103, 105, 107, 108, 109, 110, 114, 115, 122, 123, 145, 149, 155, 165, 166, 168, 170, 171, 172, 174, 175, 176
- National Quality Standards, 1.1, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2, 7.1, 7.2
- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
- Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000 (NSW)
- Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)
- Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)
- Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulations 2013

Related Service Documentation and Policies:

- Family Handbook
- Emergency and evacuation Policy
- Child protection Policy
- Delivery of children to, and collection from an education and care service premises Policy
- Safe arrival of children Policy
- Transportation Policy
- Excursions Policy
- Water safety Policy
- Interactions with children Policy
- Volunteers, students and visitors Policy
- Administration of first aid Policy
- Injury, incident, trauma and illness Policy
- Safe transportation of children Policy
- Induction, training and professional development Policy
- Recruitment and selection Policy
- Conditions of employment Policy
- Supervision Policy
- Management of hazards Policy

- Inclusion Policy
- Physical environment Policy
- Managing the indoor and outdoor environments Policy
- Safe use of digital technologies and online environments Policy

E.7.5 Key Terminology

Term	Meaning	Source
ACECQA – Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority	The independent national authority that works with all regulatory authorities to administer the National Quality Framework, including the provision of guidance, resources and services to support the sector to improve outcomes for children.	acecqa.gov.au
Mandatory reporting	The legislative requirement for selected classes of people to report suspected child abuse and neglect to government authorities.	State/territory-based child protection legislation
National Law	The applied law system sets a national standard for children’s education and care across Australia.	Guide to the NQF
National Regulations	The Regulations support the National Law by providing detail on a range of operational requirements for an education and care service.	Guide to the NQF
Nominated Supervisor	In relation to an education and care service means, a person who: • Is nominated by the approved provider of the service under Part 3 to be a Nominated Supervisor of that service; and • Unless the individual is the approved provider, has provided written consent to that nomination	National Law
Online Environments	The digital space facilitated by the internet or a local network where users can interact, learn, and share information	NQF Child Safe Culture and Online Safety Guide
Reasonably believes	Believes on grounds that are reasonable in the circumstances.	Schedule 3, Child Protection Act 1999 (Queensland)
Reasonable grounds	Suspect that a child may be at risk of significant harm based on your observations of the child or what has been reported to you about a child.	Schedule 3, Child Protection Act 1999 (Queensland)
Reasonably suspects	Suspects on grounds that are reasonable in the circumstances.	Schedule 3, Child Protection Act 1999 (Queensland)
Regulatory Authority	A person declared by a law of a participating jurisdiction to be the regulatory authority for	National Law

	that jurisdiction or for a class of education and care services for that jurisdiction	
Reportable conduct	Certain organisations or entities have legal obligations under Reportable Conduct Schemes. Under these Schemes, certain organisations or entities are required to notify and investigate certain allegations (reportable allegations) of abuse involving a child, when the allegation is against someone they employ, engage or contract in circumstances outlined by the legislation.	Child protection legislation
Responsible person	In relation to an education and care service, means a person referred to in section 162(1)(a) to (c) of the Education and Care Services National Law.	National Law
Rights of the child	Human rights belonging to all children, as specified in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.	Guide to the NQF
Risk assessment	Assessing the risk means working out how likely it is that a hazard will harm someone and how serious the harm could be.	ACECQA
Wellbeing	Sound wellbeing results from the satisfaction of basic needs – the need for tenderness and affection; security and clarity; social recognition; to feel competent; physical needs and for meaning in life. It includes happiness and satisfaction, effective social functioning and the dispositions of optimism, openness, curiosity and resilience.	Guide to the NQF
Working directly with children	A person is working directly with children at a given time if at that time the person: • is physically present with the children, and • is directly engaged in providing education and care to the children.	National Regulations
Working with children / working with vulnerable people check (WWCC/WWVP)	A notice, certificate or other document granted to, or with respect to, a person under a working with children's law to the effect that: • the person has been assessed as suitable to work with children; or • there has been no information that if the person worked with children the person would pose a risk to the children; or • the person is not prohibited from attempting to obtain, undertake or remain in child-related employment.	National Law

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