Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy

CONTROL:

Policy Type:	Governance
Authorised by:	Council
Head of Power:	Working With Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000
Responsible Officer:	Community Sustainability Manager
Adopted / Approved:	Minute No. 2020.02.15-OM-6
Last Reviewed:	January 2021
Review:	January 2022
Version:	1

1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1   PURPOSE:

This policy seeks to detail the responsibilities and obligations Council has to the protection of children and youth accessing Council's children's services activities.

1.2   POLICY OBJECTIVES:

To identify potential risks of harm to children and young people and to implement strategies to minimise these risks.

If you or anyone you know is experiencing abuse, please contact Police on 000. You can also contact LifeLine on 13 11 14.

1.3   COMMENCEMENT OF POLICY:

This Policy will commence on adoption. It replaces all other specific [Policy Name] policies of Council (whether written or not).

2.   POLICY

2.1   CONTEXT:

The following is taken from page 4 of the Queensland Government Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy Toolkit[1] (emphasis added).

> *Under the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000, organisations regulated by the blue card system are legislatively required to develop, implement and maintain a child and youth risk management strategy. **The purpose of a child and youth risk management strategy is to help to identify potential risks of harm to children and young people and to implement strategies to minimise these risks.** A well-developed strategy will help your*

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[1] Available at file:///C:/Users/stephens/Downloads/201911-child-and-youth-risk-management-strategy-toolkit%20(1).pdf

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organisation achieve its objectives by providing a clear and consistent framework to guide and support the stakeholders who work or volunteer with your organisation or who benefit from your services.

Page 5 of the Toolkit[2] goes on to say,

The Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (the Act) and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2011 require regulated organisations to develop and implement a child and youth risk management strategy which aims to keep children and young people safe. To comply with the legislative framework, a child and youth risk management strategy must include eight minimum requirements. These requirements:

- *address an organisation's commitment to creating a safe and supportive service environment*
- *strengthen an organisation's capability to provide such an environment*
- *assist an organisation to manage any particular concerns with respect to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people who are involved with the organisation, and*
- *promote the consistency of an organisation's approach to risk management, both within the organisation and with respect to compliance with the requirements under the Act.*

The eight requirements are:
Commitment
1. *A statement of commitment to the safety and wellbeing of children and the protection of children from harm, and*
2. *A code of conduct for interacting with children.*

Capability
3. *Written procedures for recruiting, selecting, training and managing staff and volunteers.*

Concerns
4. *Policies and procedures for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm, including reporting guidelines*
5. *A plan for managing breaches of your risk management strategy, and*
6. *Risk management plans for high risk activities and special events.*

Consistency
7. *Policies and procedures for managing compliance with the blue card system, and*
8. *Strategies for communication and support.*

2.2   POLICY STATEMENT:

The Diamantina Shire Council provides many services that either are specifically for or as a matter of course interact with children. It is therefore both a moral and legal imperative for the organisation to have a strategy to manage risks associated with these services.

3.   STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES

3.1   SPECIFIC AND STANDARD

3.1.1   Commitment

3.1.1.1 Statement of Commitment

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[2] As above.

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The Diamantina Shire Council provides services that assist children to be happy, healthy and confident. Council is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children and youth on Council premises and/or attending Council operated services and events. Council is dedicated to keeping children and youth from harm.

At Diamantina Shire Council, we have zero tolerance for abuse. Council is committed to maintaining a safe and supportive environment for all children and youth.

3.1.1.2 Code of Conduct for interacting with children

Council's Code of Conduct includes the protection of children. See Policy 6 – Code of Conduct for more details.

3.1.2 Capability

3.1.1.3 Written human resources procedures

The following policies govern the recruitment, selection, training and managing of workplace participants. These policies can be found at https://www.diamantina.qld.gov.au/about-council/council-policies.
- Anti-Discrimination and Equal Employment Opportunity Policy (Policy 19)
- Code of Conduct (Policy 6)
- Complaints Process – Administrative Action and Human Rights Complaints (Policy 14)
- Confidentiality Policy
- Human Resources (Policy 21)
- Recruitment and Selection Policy (Policy 31)

In addition to these policies, forms relating to recruitment, selection, training and management of workplace participants can be found in the Diamantina Shire Council's Info Expert content management system. The path is Document Libraries/DSC Templates and Forms/Human Resources. Once a process is undertaken, the record of that is found at the document path Document Libraries/DSC Human Resources.

3.1.3 Concerns

3.1.1.4 Policies and procedures for handling disclosures

The following policies relate to and/or influence Council's child protection values.
- Child Protection Policy (Policy 52)
- Complaints Process – Administrative Action and Human Rights Complaints (Policy 14)
- Risk Management Policy (Policy 35)
- Risk Register
- Workplace Health and Safety Policy (Policy 33)
- Workplace Health and Safety Policy Statement

Disclosures of abuse are to be acted upon immediately. If a child is in immediate danger or in a life-threatening situation, workplace participants are to call 000 immediately and report the situation to Police. To make a report about general child safety concerns, call the Regional Intake Service on 1300 703 762 if calling during business hours, or call the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre on 1800 177 135 if the call is outside of business hours.

The Queensland Government 'Reporting Child Abuse' online information page provides details on the questions the personal calling will be asked[3].

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[3] See https://www.qld.gov.au/community/getting-support-health-social-issue/support-victims-abuse/child-abuse/reporting-child-abuse.

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When making a report about child safety concerns, you will be asked to provide information that can help officers decide how best to respond. It is still vital you call even if you don't have all the information.

The information includes:

- *details about the child or young person (e.g. name, age, address)*
- *details about the parents or other relevant persons*
- *the reasons you suspect the child or young person may have experienced or is at risk of experiencing harm*
- *whether or not the child, young person or family has support*
- *the immediate risk to the child or young person*
- *contact details for the family.*

When you make the report, your details are kept confidential. You are able to make the report anonymously if you wish; however, it is preferable to provide these details so that the officer can call you if further information is needed. Due to privacy and confidentiality rights of any child or parent brought to the attention of Child Safety, you will not be provided with the outcome for the report you make.

Once the child is out of harm's way and the appropriate reports have been made to the authorities, the incident must be registered in the Diamantina Shire Council's Altus Incident Management Database, along with details of actions taken. See https://www.qld.gov.au/community/getting-support-health-social-issue/support-victims-abuse/child-abuse/reporting-child-abuse for more information on the reporting process.

There are behaviours that can indicate child abuse or neglect, as outlined page 32 of the Toolkit[4].

Some general indicators of child abuse include:
- *showing wariness and distrust of adults*
- *rocking, sucking or biting excessively bedwetting or soiling*
- *demanding or aggressive behaviour*
- *sleeping difficulties, often being tired and falling asleep*
- *low self-esteem*
- *difficulty relating to adults and peers*
- *abusing alcohol or drugs*
- *being seemingly accident prone*
- *having broken bones or unexplained bruising, burns or welts in different stages of healing*
- *being unable to explain an injury, or providing explanations that are inconsistent, vague or unbelievable*
- *feeling suicidal or attempting suicide*
- *having difficulty concentrating*
- *being withdrawn or overly obedient*
- *being reluctant to go home*
- *creating stories, poems or artwork about abuse.*

Some indicators of neglect include:
- *malnutrition, begging, stealing or hoarding food*
- *poor hygiene, matted hair, dirty skin or body odour*
- *unattended physical or medical problems*
- *comments from a child that no one is home to provide care*

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[4] file:///C:/Users/stephens/Downloads/201911-child-and-youth-risk-management-strategy-toolkit%20(1).pdf

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- *being constantly tired*
- *frequent lateness or absence from school*
- *inappropriate clothing, especially inadequate clothing in winter*
- *frequent illness, infections or sores*
- *being left unsupervised for long periods.*

3.1.1.5 Managing breaches

Diamantina Shire Council workplace participants are required to sign the Code of Conduct for interacting with children. Potential breaches of the Code of Conduct will be investigated using Council's existing 'Complaints Process – Administrative Action and Human Rights Complaints' (Policy 14).

3.1.1.6 Risk management plans for high risk events and activities

The Diamantina Shire Council does not usually run/operate activities and events that could be deemed high risk. Some events and activities that take place in the district may meet the criteria of being high risk, and it is incumbent on the event/activity organisers to mitigate these risks through their risk management strategy. If a high risk activity is considered by Council, then a risk management strategy must be developed for that event.

3.1.4 Consistency

3.1.1.7 Blue Card system compliance

Who needs a blue card?

Diamantina Shire Council operates several services and facilities that cater for children and have children visit periodically. Workplace participants operating these services and facilities may be required to hold a current Blue Card.

As a general rule, any workplace participant who is likely to be alone with a child during the course of their duties should have a Blue Card. Particularly, those in the Community Sustainability team, for example those operating the libraries and playgroups, must have a Blue Card. For guidance on who requires a Blue Card in a Council setting, see the Local Council Blue Card Fact Sheet[5].

Blue Card Contact Person

The Diamantina Shire's Governance and Environment Manager is the person who manages Blue Cards and Blue Card exemptions. This is the only person in Council who can discuss an employee's Blue Card status.

Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy Review

This strategy will be reviewed by the Community Sustainability Manager annually, in January and/or February. Consultation with the Council CEO and Governance and Environment Manager, along with the Community Sustainability Team, is an important element of this review.

3.1.1.8 Communication and support

Communication of the plan

With accountability one of the core values of the Diamantina Shire Council, communication of this plan to provide transparency is critical. This plan, once adopted, will be displayed in the Council Publications section of the Diamantina Shire Council website[6]. Carers of children attending playgroups will also be made

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[5] Available at https://www.publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/blue-card-system-changes/resource/e594495e-058f-4f41-a463-3580814e621e.

[6] See https://www.diamantina.qld.gov.au/about-council/council-publications.

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aware of the plan, and directed to the website to read the document. A copy of the document will also be available at each playgroup and library.

Workplace participant support

The following is taken from page 61 of the Toolkit[7].

> *Staff may require support to deal with issues such as behaviour management, stress, conflict, bullying including cyberbullying, child protection concerns, breaches of the risk management strategy and dealing with disclosures or suspicions of harm. If staff concerns are not addressed effectively, your organisation's ability to provide a safe and supportive environment for children and young people may be affected.*

Council is keen to ensure a safe, healthy and happy work environment for its team, and so the following supports are available to workplace participants:

- An internal Health and Safety Representative is available at both Bedourie and Birdsville to discuss any concerns in this area. Any incidents or hazards can be reported using Council's Altus Risk Management database.
- Council employs a Safety and Quality Coordinator to whom matters can be escalated if a workplace participant feels it has not been adequately addressed.
- For those requiring counselling and similar support, Council has a partnership with a Counsellor as part of its Employee Assistance Program. Health and Safety noticeboards across the Shire display the contact details of this Counsellor, and these confidential sessions are paid for by Council.
- An annual performance review system is in place, where workplace participants are able to discuss their training needs with their manager. This can also be discussed at other times.

If you or anyone you know is experiencing abuse, please contact Police on 000. You can also contact LifeLine on 13 11 14.

4.   REFERENCE AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

4.1   DEFINITIONS:

To assist in interpretation, the following definitions shall apply:

Word / Term	Definition
Council	means Diamantina Shire Council.
Workplace participants	Means any full-time, part-time, temporary or casual employee of the Diamantina Shire Council, as well as contractors, volunteers and any other people appointed by Council to achieve its goals.

4.2   RELATED POLICIES, LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS:

Links to supporting documentation

• Council Policies
  ○ Anti-Discrimination and Equal Employment Opportunity Policy (Policy 19)
  ○ Code of Conduct (Policy 6)
  ○ Complaints Process – Administrative Action and Human Rights Complaints (Policy 14)

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[7] See file:///C:/Users/stephens/Downloads/201911-child-and-youth-risk-management-strategy-toolkit.pdf.

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- o Confidentiality Policy
- o Human Resources (Policy 21)
- o Child Protection Policy (Policy 52)
- o Complaints Process – Administrative Action and Human Rights Complaints (Policy 14)
- o Risk Management Policy (Policy 35)
- o Risk Register
- o Workplace Health and Safety Policy (Policy 33)
- o Workplace Health and Safety Policy Statement
- o Recruitment and Selection Policy (Policy 31)

- Legislation

  - o Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000

- Other Documents

  - o Blue Card Local Government fact sheet, available at https://www.publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/blue-card-system-changes/resource/e594495e-058f-4f41-a463-3580814e621e

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4.3 VERSION CONTROL:

Previous Version Number	Adopted/Approved Date