



Child Safe Policy

Purpose

LINK Community Transport is committed to the safety of all people accessing our service. We support children's rights and believe that people who care for children must always act in their best interest, taking all reasonable steps to ensure children's safety. We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome.

Definition of Child Abuse: The Victorian Department of Human Services outlines that it is an act by parents or caregivers which endangers a child or young person's physical or emotional health development. Child abuse can be a single incident, but usually takes place over time.

Objectives

Link Community Transport is committed to child safety. We support and respect all children, as well as our employees and volunteers.

- We have zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to preventing abuse and identifying risks early, removing and reducing these risks,
- We are committed to the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability, and
- We have measures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff, and volunteers to prevent child abuse and identify risks early and achieve these commitments including a designated Child Safety Officer.

Responsibilities

This policy is intended to empower children and their families to be active participants in our organisation. LINK Community Transport (LINK) employees and volunteers listen to and involve children, carers/families when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them.

LINK is committed to all employees and volunteers, parents/carers and children feeling confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns (for more detail refer to Child Safe Procedure). This includes:

- Training new employees and volunteers regularly to ensure they understand LINK's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate,
- Reporting any inappropriate behaviour through suitable channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter,
- Taking all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children and encourage applications from people from diverse backgrounds including people with a disability,

- Ensuring that
 - all employees are required to hold a Working with Children Check and provide evidence of this Check, and
 - all volunteers engaged in child-related work to hold a Working with Children Check and provide evidence of this Check.
- Training employees, volunteers and students to minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

Rick Lawford
Chief Executive Officer
April 2018

Child Safety Procedure

1. Purpose

To outline the application of LINK Community Transport's Child Safe Policy. LINK aims for all employees and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.

2. Procedure:

2.1 Detection & Prevention	
2.11	Everyone has the responsibility to report to the police a reasonable belief that an adult has committed an offence or is at risk to commit an offence against a child under 16 years of age.
2.12	All our employees, volunteers and students must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children, people with a disability and working with people from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds.
2.13	Recruitment & Checks New employees, volunteers and students will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand LINK's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behavior towards children is safe and appropriate.
2.14	LINK applies all reasonable steps in the recruitment process to all appointments for roles that involve working with children, actively encouraging applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.
2.15	LINK ensures appropriate Working with Children, Police Checks, Statutory Declarations and Reference Checks have been conducted.
2.16	LINK provides training to employees, volunteers and students to ensure that they understand the ways to identify, assess, and minimize risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

3.0 Reporting

3.10 Allegations, concerns, and complaints	If an adult has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred, then they must report the incident. Notify the appropriate child protection service: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Department of Health & Human Services Child Crisis protection line 131278 or• The police on 000. If there are reasonable grounds of belief of abusive activity and that a child is in immediate danger. This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)• behavior consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed• someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it• observing suspicious behavior.
	The relevant Manager/ Child Safety Officer (HSEQRC Coordinator) about concerns. The Child Safety Officer will advise the Chief Executive Officer of any suspected child abuse.
3.11	The relevant Manager/Child Safety Officer will record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using LINK's incident reporting form, including investigation updates, and securely store records. LINK works to ensure all children, families, employees and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behavior.

Investigation

3.20	The Child Safety Officer will review any allegations and reports of suspected child abuse and advise DHHS or Police as necessary to investigate.
3.21	Regarding a report of suspected child abuse by an employee or volunteer, they will be suspended from all duties until an investigation is conducted.

Responding

3.30	The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.
3.31	Ensure support is provided to a child/family member or person who reports abuse or safety concerns and ensure that a child never is blamed or interrogated. Ensure ongoing support is provided to all participants in an investigation and ensure all participants are aware of counselling services available for them. Child Safety Officer will provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions taken by LINK.
3.32 Privacy	Ensure safeguards and practices are in place so that all personal information is protected. All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone's safety.

3.33	Ensure individuals involved with the proceedings are advised on how personal information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will be able to access it.
3.34	Ensure LINK's Risk Management Plan identifies and evaluates risks posed to children, considering LINK's activities and the types of children we work with.

4.0 Definitions:

Child Safety Officer	An adult who is responsible to help prevent child abuse and ensure the reporting, liaising between parties, and investigating of any suspected child abuse.
Aboriginal Child	A person under the age of 18 who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent • Identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and • Is accepted as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community.
Child	A person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.
Child Protection	Any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm.
Child Abuse	All forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect, or negligent treatment, commercial (e.g. for financial gain) or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that results in actual or potential harm to a child.
Children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD)	A child or young person who identifies as having cultural or linguistic affiliations by their place of birth, ancestry or ethnic origin, religion, preferred language, or language spoken at home or because of their parents' identification on a similar basis.
Neglect	The failure to provide a child with the necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter, medical attention, or supervision to the extent that the child's health and development is or will likely cause significant harm
Reasonable belief	A 'reasonable belief' is different from having proof. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.
Grooming	Grooming refers to actions deliberately undertaken to befriend and influence a child including out of hours' friendship with child and activities (buying gifts, physical touch food etc.) with the intention of achieving a criminal objective of sexual activity with a child.

5. Context and/or Reference Documents

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability Principles 2014 – (Commonwealth) • Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) • Crimes Amendment (Grooming) Act 2014 • Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015. (Vic) • Child Protection Manual • CHSP Home Care Common Standards 1.6: Risk Management • DHHS Funding Agreement Terms & Conditions (Vic) • Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic) • Ministerial Order No 870 – Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools • Children Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)

- An Overview of the Victorian Child Safe Standards State of Victoria Department of Health and Human Services November 2015
- Privacy Act 2000
- Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Act 2012 – (Commonwealth)
- [Working with Children Act 2005](#) – (Vic)
- [Working with Children Regulations 2006](#) – (Vic)
- Home Care Common Standards-Standard 1.2-Regulatory Compliance, 1.7-Human resource management, 3.2 Privacy & Confidentiality
- LINK's Privacy & Confidentiality Policy
- LINK's Police Check and Statutory Declaration Policy
- LINK's Health, Safety and Environment Policy
- LINK's Community Transport's Code of Conduct

Version History

Version Number	Date	Summary of Changes
1.1	November 2016	A new Child Safety procedure
1.2	February 2018	Amended Child Safety Officer role
1.3	April 2018	Amended procedure to reflect current practice

Authorisation

Authorisation	Date	Next Review Date
Author: Miranda Blok, HSEQRC Coordinator	April 2018	April 2019
Authorised by: Rick Lawford, CEO	April 2018	April 2019