

**Program:** Community Lifestyle  
**Date of Adoption:** 14 September 2022  
**Resolution Number:** ORD-2022-278  
**Review Date:** 14 September 2025

**Scope**

This policy applies to all Mackay Regional Council (MRC) Councillors and Staff to confirm Mackay Regional Council’s (MRC) commitment to the safety and wellbeing of all children or young people who use its services.

**Objective**

Our Elected members, Staff will treat all children or young people with respect and understanding at all times and listen to their concerns.

**Policy Statement**

It is a requirement that all Staff who meet the requirements to obtain a Blue Card and who work with Children or Young People have the appropriate statutory documentation including a Blue Card, issued by Blue Card Services as per legislative requirements.

This policy must be read in conjunction with its associated Corporate Standard 103.1 Children or Young People Risk Management.

Council considers that to the extent this policy engages and limits, or potentially limits, any human rights, that limitation is reasonable in that it is proportionate and justified.

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This process to remain in force until otherwise determined  
by Mackay Regional Council

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## 1.0 Principles

- 1.1 All Children or Young People who use or access MRC programs and services have a right to feel and be safe.

All Children or Young People have a right to an environment free from bullying and harassment, and to be treated with dignity and respect.

All Staff are responsible for actively intervening to prevent and stop any bullying, harassment and other behaviour that poses a mental, physical, sexual or emotional risk to Children or Young People occurring in MRC programs and services.

All Staff who sees or reasonably suspects that children or young people have been or are being harmed or abused, on MRC property or during a MRC program, activity, event or function, is to report it immediately to SafeLine and the relevant MRC Manager and Director. Where a child is in immediate danger, the Director must file a report with Queensland Police Service by calling 000. All other cases should be reported to Child Safety by calling 1300 706 147.

## 1.2 Expected Standards of Behaviour

To ensure conduct is appropriate and meets legislative requirement for child safety, the expected standards of behaviour in the workplace include:

- That all Staff act in the best interests of all Children or Young People;
- Respecting the rights of Children or Young People is enshrined in the "United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (1991)";
- Ensuring MRC's Code of Conduct, policies, procedures and guidelines, especially in relation to the interaction of Children or Young People with Staff, are enforced and reviewed.
- The creation and maintenance of safe / healthy environments, spaces and places, which enhance Children or Young People's learning, development, engagement, initiative, self-worth, dignity and show respect for their contributions;
- Ensure Children or Young People with additional needs can exercise their rights.

## 2.0 Complaints

Any complaints in relation to a decision or a service relating from this policy will be assessed and managed in accordance with MRC's Administrative Action Complaints Policy, a copy of which can be found on MRC's website.

When an individual feels that they are the subject of MRC's failure to act compatibly with human rights, they can make a complaint directly to MRC. These complaints will be assessed against the Human Rights Act 2019.

Complaints may be made as following:

In writing to  
Chief Executive Officer  
Mackay Regional Council  
PO Box 41  
MACKAY QLD 4740

Via Email - [complaints@mackay.qld.gov.au](mailto:complaints@mackay.qld.gov.au)

In person at the following Council Client Services Centres:

- MRC Mackay Office – 73 Gordon Street, Mackay
- MRC Sarina Office – 65 Broad Street, Sarina
- MRC Mirani Council Office – 20 Victoria Street, Mirani

### 3.0 Definitions

To assist in interpretation the following definitions shall apply:

**Councillors** shall mean the Mayor and Councillors of Mackay Regional Council.

**Staff** shall mean all persons employed by Mackay Regional Council on a permanent, temporary, or casual basis, or otherwise engaged by Mackay Regional Council including those under a contract of service or a volunteer program.

**MRC** shall mean Mackay Regional Council.

**Blue Card** shall mean a card issued by Blue Card Services.

**Children or Young People** shall mean any person under the age of 18

**Human Rights Complaint** shall mean a complaint about an alleged contravention of section 58-1 by a public entity in relation to an act or decision of the public entity

**Services** shall mean any service provided to the community by MRC, including but not limited to Mackay Libraries, Mackay Entertainment & Convention Centre, Artspace Mackay, Community Programs, Parks and Environment, Health and Regulatory Services, Water, Waste and Environmental Education.

**Bullying** shall mean repeated and unreasonable behaviour directed towards a child or young person, or a group of Children or Young People, that creates a risk to health, safety and well-being. It includes behaviour (generally a pattern of behaviour) that intimidates, offends, degrades or humiliates another child or young person, including by electronic means such as email, notice boards, blogs and social networking websites.

Examples of behaviours that may amount to bullying include:

- Intimidation;
- Verbal abuse or threats, including yelling, screaming or offensive language;

- Excluding or isolating a child or young person from activities;
- Spreading malicious rumours;
- Cyber bullying; and
- Physical abuse.

The following behaviours do not constitute bullying:

- Non-repetitive conflict
- Non-repetitive incidents

**Grooming behaviours** refers to instances where an adult takes particular interest in a child, under the age of 16, with the intent to form a bond to persuade or encourage the child to engage in sexual activity.

#### 4.0 Review of Policy

MRC's Children or Young People Risk Management Policy must be reviewed annually.

The review should consider:

- (a) Whether the 'Children or Young People Risk Management Policy' has been followed;
- (b) Whether any incidents relating to children and young people's risk management issues occurred;
- (c) The actual process used to manage any incidents;
- (d) The effectiveness of MRC's policies and procedures in preventing or minimising harm to Children or Young People; and
- (e) The content and frequency of training provided by MRC in relation to the child and youth risk management strategy.

Notwithstanding the above, this policy is to be reviewed at intervals of no less than three (3) years.

#### 5.0 Reference

- *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000*
- *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2020*
- *Child Protection Act 1999*
- MRC Code of Conduct
- MRC Youth Policy
- MRC Corporate Standard 103.1 – Children or Young People Risk Management.
- United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (1991)
- Anti-Cyberbullying Taskforce Report (2019)
- eSafety Commissioner

**6.0 Attachments**

- CS130.1 – Children and Young People Risk Management.

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Version Control:

Version	Reason / Trigger	Change	Endorsed / Reviewed	Date
1	New Policy		ORD-2022-278	14/9/2022

## Attachment 1

<b>Program</b>	Community Lifestyle
<b>Date of Adoption</b>	14 September 2022
<b>Resolution Number</b>	ORD-2022-278
<b>Review Date</b>	14 September 2025

### 1.0 Scope

The following Standard is to be used in conjunction with the Children and Youth Risk Management Policy and applies to all Mackay Regional Council (MRC) Councillors and Staff.

### 2.0 Objective

MRC is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people who use or access its services. MRC Staff will treat all children and young people with respect and understanding at all times and listen to their concerns.

### 3.0 Reference

- *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000*
- *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2011*
- *Child Protection Act 1999*
- MRC Code of Conduct
- COU103 Children or Youth People Risk Management Policy
- United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (1991)
- Anti-Cyberbullying Taskforce Report (2019)
- eSafety Commissioner

### 4.0 Definitions

To assist in interpretation the following definitions shall apply:

**Councillors** shall mean the Mayor and Councillors of Mackay Regional Council.

**MRC** shall mean Mackay Regional Council.

**Blue Card** shall mean a card issued by Blue Card Services

**Staff** shall mean all persons employed by Mackay Regional Council on a permanent, temporary, or casual basis, or otherwise engaged by Mackay Regional Council including those under a contract of service or a volunteer program

**Children and young people** shall refer to any person under the age of 18

**Services** shall mean any service provided to the community by MRC, including but not limited to Mackay Libraries, Mackay Entertainment & Convention Centre, Artspace Mackay, Community Programs, Parks, Environment and Sustainability, Health and Regulatory Services, Water, Waste and Environmental Education.

## 5.0 Standard Statement

It is a requirement that Staff that work with children and young people have the appropriate statutory documentation including a Blue Card, issued by Blue Card Services. Evidence of a Blue Card will be kept within the HRIS.

All children and young people who use or access MRC programs and services have a right to feel and be safe. Any Staff who sees or reasonably suspects that a child or young person has been or is being harmed or abused, on MRC Property or during an MRC activity, event or function, must report it immediately to the program Manager who in turn may direct a referral to Child Safety Services and/or Queensland Police Service for investigation. If Staff is alleged to have committed an offence, MRC's People & Culture and/or Governance & Safety Programs will be engaged for further investigation and possible disciplinary action.

This Standard must be read in conjunction with its association Council Policy 103 Children or Young People Risk Management.

### 5.1 Recruitment & Selection of Candidates who are to hold a Blue Card as a requirement for their role.

The working with *Children and Youth Risk Management Risk Management and Screening Act 2000 and Regulations 2011* requires paid Staff to hold a blue card or an exemption card if they work, or are likely to work with children and young people, for at least:

- eight consecutive days; or
- once a week for each week during a period of four weeks; or
- once a fortnight for each fortnight during a period of eight weeks; or
- once a month for each month during a period of six months.

### 5.2 Examples of people who require a Blue Card

- Paid Staff running sporting or recreational activities for children outside of a church, club or association
- Paid Staff providing information sessions, tours, activities specifically targeted at children i.e. school groups
- Paid Staff taking photographs of children at a sporting event
- Tutors providing learning assistance to one or more students under the age of 18
- Instructors employed to provide lessons or tuition for children
- Coaches employed to teach or tutor children



### 5.3 Examples of people who do not require a Blue Card

- Registered health practitioners, if the work they are doing with children and young people relates to their function as a registered health practitioner
- Paid Staff who are managing or supervising trainees or Staff, who are also children, and are only providing helpful advice as part of their work requirements
- Paid Staff providing information sessions, tours, activities not targeted at children but where children could attend
- Entertainers performing for children, but not interacting with them
- People providing classes directed towards the general public rather than children

#### 5.3.1 *Community & Client Services*

- Community Lifestyle
- Library Services
- Artspace
- Community Programs (Sport & Recreation, Youth Development, Community Development, Neighbourhood Centre and Museums)
- Mackay Entertainment & Convention Centre
- Communications & Marketing.

#### 5.3.2 *Development Services*

- Parks, Environment & Sustainability (Botanic Gardens, Natural Environment, Orchid House, Playgrounds, MRC Community Nursery)
- Economic Development & Tourism (Sarina Sugar Shed and Events)
- Health & Regulatory Services (Environmental Health & Education Services)

#### 5.3.3 *Organisational Services*

- Property Services (Aquatic Pools)

#### 5.3.4 *Engineering & Commercial Infrastructure*

- Waste Services (Environmental Education and Waste Management)
- Business Services (Water Education)

If there is uncertainty with whether a Staff member would require a Blue Card as a condition of their employment, Blue Card Services can be contacted on **1800 113 611**.

It is the responsibility of the relevant People & Culture Program Manager to ensure the above requirements are met.

### 5.4 Guidelines, Procedures and expected Standards of Behaviour when interacting with children and young people

Community expectations are such that Staff will maintain high standards in relation to their behaviour when interacting with children and young people who use or access MRC programs and services.

For an understanding of those behaviours refer to **Appendix 1**.

These are to be read in conjunction with MRC's Code of Conduct.

#### 5.5 Handling disclosures or suspicions of harm, including reporting guidelines

MRC requires that Staff who sees or reasonably suspects that a child or young person has been or is being harmed or abused, on MRC Property or during a MRC activity, event or function, to report it immediately to MRC's People & Culture Program who in turn may direct a referral to Child Safety Services and/or Queensland Police Service.

If Staff are alleged to have committed an offence, MRC's People and Culture and/or Governance & Safety Programs will be engaged for further investigation and possible disciplinary action.

**Appendix 2** outlines procedures that will help Staff identify or form a suspicion of harm, abuse or neglect, and provide clear guidelines for managing and recording a disclosure, observation, or suspicion of harm.

#### 5.6 Reporting a disclosure or suspicion of harm

Reporting of a disclosure or suspicion of harm involves a 3-step-process, namely:

- a) Considering whether the disclosure or suspicion needs to be reported to the Queensland Police Service, for example, where a child is at imminent risk of harm or a child has been the victim of a criminal offence (Contact Police Link on 131 444 if unsure).

If an individual believes a child is in immediate danger or is in a life-threatening situation, they should immediately contact the Queensland Police Service by dialling 000.

If a person reasonably suspects a child has been, or is likely to become, a victim of a criminal offence, individuals should contact Queensland Police Service in relation to their concerns.

- b) Considering whether the disclosure or reasonable suspicion of harm needs to be reported to Child Safety.

Where there is no immediate danger or life threatening risk of harm, the reporting will be coordinated by People & Culture and/or Governance and Safety Programs and will involve the following: -

Making a report

- Child protection is everybody's responsibility and every person SHOULD report to Child Safety if that person forms a reasonable suspicion that a child (including an unborn child) has suffered, is suffering, or is at unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm AND

does not have a parent able and willing to protect the child from the harm.

If an individual working within MRC needs to make a report to Child Safety Services, this can be done as follows:

- a) During normal business hours - contact the Regional Intake Service (Central Queensland) 1300 703762 or <https://www.csyw.qld.gov.au/contact-us/department-contacts/child-family-contacts/child-safety-service-centres/regional-intake-services> ;
  - b) After hours and on weekends - contact the Child Safety after Hours Service Centre on 1800 177 135 or (07) 3235 9999. The service operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week;
  - c) A person making a report is protected from liability under the Child Protection Act 1999 from civil or criminal legal actions and is not considered to have broken any code of conduct or ethics.
- c) Consider whether referral is required to other support services, including Family and Child Connect
- Anyone can contact Family and Child Connect for information, advice and support for connecting families with support services.
  - A mandatory reporter can refer a family without their consent, but others require the consent of the family to make a referral. (Staff are not mandatory reporters)
  - The criteria for Family and Child Connect service to work with the family is:
    - the referred family has a child from unborn to 18 years of age; and
    - the child is not currently in need of protection; and
    - without support the child, young person and family are at risk of entering or re-entering the statutory child protection system; and
    - the family would benefit from access to intensive and specialist support services; and
    - the family has multiple and complex needs.

The Family and Child Connect website provides useful materials, including training resources in relation to family support services, which can assist further:

<https://www.qld.gov.au/community/caring-child/family-child-connect>

#### 5.7 Managing breaches of the Child or Young People Risk Management Policy and Child or Young People Risk Management Guideline

Staff that exhibit or have been alleged to have breached or have exhibited conduct that breaches the expected standards or behaviours outlined in MRC's Code of Conduct, the

Child and Youth Risk Management Policy or this associated procedure, will be managed under the procedures outlined in MRC's Grievance Procedure and, where required, the Conduct of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure.

Contractors and Volunteers that exhibit or have been alleged to have exhibited conduct that breaches the expected standards or behaviours outlined in MRC's Code of Conduct for Staff, or the Children and Youth Risk Management Policy or this associated procedure will be disengaged from MRC activities and duties and will be managed under the relevant employer Policy, in conjunction with any Contractor agreement. Any return to duties will require authorisation from the CEO.

## 5.8 Risk Management plans for high risk activities and special events

Management of risks in MRC is in accordance with AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009, Risk Management. The risk management process is systematic whereby MRC policies, procedures and practices form the context to the tasks of communicating, establishing the context, identifying, analysing, evaluating, treating, monitoring and reviewing risk.

### 5.8.1 *What is a High Risk Activity or Event?*

High risk activity or special event will be dependent on the nature of the activities you provide to children and young people. For example, in a school a high risk activity could be an excursion or a fete. A high risk activity or special event due to their nature will require extra planning and supervision.

However, whether an event or activity is conducted with one child or young person or with many children or young people the risk of accident or incident is increased if no forethought, control/s or plan/s have been considered, developed and implemented.

When undertaking activities when 'working with children and youths' it is important to substantiate that the child and youth activity has been risk assessed. External operators who are the primary facilitators of the event are also to demonstrate compliance with the Queensland Government Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy Toolkit

## 5.9 How to make a Cyberbullying Complaint

If you are making a complaint about cyberbullying or seriously threatening, intimidating, harassing or humiliating online behaviour.

### 1. Collect evidence and information

Find out about the evidence and information you need in order to make a complaint. It is also a good idea to collect evidence before you report to social media services.

### 2. Report to the social media service where the bullying took place

If the abusive material is posted on social media services, you should report it to them first and wait 48 hours for a response.

3. Make a cyberbullying complaint to eSafety

Complete the online form, via the Australian Government eSafety Commissioner <https://submit.esafety.gov.au/Produce/wizard/ca3acccd-07bf-4a12-9c0e-f93e50a46ab6?portal=1>

## 6.0 Review of Standard

This corporate standard will be reviewed when any of the following occur:

1. When any related policy documents are amended or replaced.
2. Other circumstances as determined from time to time.

Notwithstanding the above, this Corporate Standard is to be reviewed at intervals of no more than three (3) years.

## 7.0 Attachments

- Guidelines, procedures and expected standards of behaviour when interacting with children and young people
- Identifying, forming a suspicion of harm, abuse or neglect, and recording a disclosure, observation, or suspicion of harm.

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Version Control:

Version	Reason / Trigger	Change	Endorsed / Reviewed	Date
1	New		ORD-2022-278	14/9/22

**Attachment 1**

Guidelines, procedures and expected standards of behaviour when interacting with children and young people.

- Language and gestures
  - use appropriate language – swearing, demeaning, insulting or non-supportive language is not permitted
  - use encouraging/positive words and a pleasant tone of voice
  - rude or insensitive gestures are not permitted
  - topics of conversation/jokes must be appropriate to your audience and comments should never include topics of a sexually suggestive nature
  
- Lost or missing child procedure
  - Raise alarm
  - Check and clear facilities such as pools
  - Two Staff to check any change room or toilet and to announce before entering
  - If there is no sign of child or young person, call the police on 131 444
  - Continue to sweep all areas
  - Take as much detail as possible from other facility users
  - Inform Program Leader and Manager and advise Workplace Health and Safety
  - Comply with police instructions
  - No comment is to be made to the media – refer any questions to MRC's Corporate Communications team
  
- Physical contact
  - Ensure any physical contact with children and young people is relevant and appropriate to the development of the skills required for the activity
  - Seek permission to touch when doing the above
  - Be careful about which part of your body and how much of it is in contact with a child's body
  - inappropriate physical contact includes:
    - violent or aggressive behaviour such as hitting, kicking, slapping, pushing; or
    - kissing; or
    - touching of a sexual nature
  
- One-on-one contact with a child or young person
  - Do not engage in any intimate, overly-familiar or sexual relationships with children or young people under the age of 18 years

- Avoid unaccompanied and unobserved activities with children
- Try not to separate yourself and a child from the line of sight of other people. If you need to have a private talk with a child about their ability or behaviour, do this in an open place near others. Invite another manager or supervisor to join the conversation or talk to more than one child at a time
- Do not invite or encourage children or young people to your home
  
- Relationships
  - Be a positive role model
  - Build relationships based on trust
  - Empower children to share in decision making
  - Do not portray favouritism or give gifts
  - Do not spend excessive amounts of time alone with children or young people
  - Avoid contact outside of working hours (either physical or via email/phone/text or social media)
  
- Behaviour management
  - If a child or young person is exhibiting inappropriate or challenging behaviours that is not consistent with MRC's Child and Youth Risk Management Policy, Code of Conduct, or this Corporate Standard, any management of these behaviours shall not be punitive, humiliating or aggressive. Any such behaviour should be reported to the child or young person's guardian to manage.
  
- Transport of children and young people
  - All children and young people should have their own transport to and from the program organised by their parent or guardian. Staff must never undertake to take a child home.
  
- Change rooms/toilets
  - If required to enter change rooms knock and announce that you will be coming in and to have at least one other adult with you. Do not isolate yourself and a child or young person from others in the change room
  
- Managing injuries or illnesses associated with Children or Young People
  - Injuries and illnesses that occur to a child or young person will be managed within the abilities of Staff training, whilst taking reasonable measures to ensure the child or young person's safety
  - If required, an ambulance should be called
  - Any application of first aid should be undertaken by two adults where reasonable

- The child or young person's parent or guardian should be notified of the injury or illness as soon as practicable
- A [Safety Event Notification Form](#) shall be completed for any injury or illness event associated with a child or young person on any MRC facility or event
- Visitors to MRC premises
  - Visitors to MRC facilities or events shall abide by the procedures put in place for that particular facility or event
  - Where possible, all visitors should be accompanied by MRC Staff
  - In the event that a visitor is involved in an incident/accident, they are to report it to a MRC representative they are visiting or MRC Reception immediately
- Children left unattended
  - If a child or young person is left unattended at a MRC facility Staff should immediately advise a supervisor who will attempt to find the parent or guardian and deal appropriately with the issue. The supervisor should record a time log of all conversations and actions taken
  - While attempts are being made to find the parent or guardian the child should be under the supervision of Staff
  - The supervisor may decide to contact the police if they have any concerns at any stage
  - Staff should not give a child food of any description
  - Staff are advised not to physically touch a child except for the need to take reasonable measures to ensure the child's safety
  - If all reasonable attempts to contact the parents/carers have failed then the police should be contacted. **Do not ring 000, ring the local Police Link on 131 444.** Never go to the child's home. If in the worst case situation the police cannot come, and they direct you to come to them, two Staff must be in the same car to accompany the child or young person to the police station
  - At least two Staff should wait with the child or young person until the police arrive. An incident report will need to be completed no later than the next day and relevant staff advised
  - Staff will not leave an unattended child or young person at the exterior of the building at close of business
- Programs for young people
  - Staff cannot provide child care for children and are not responsible for supervising children
  - if a child is under eight years of age a parent or carer must attend the activity to supervise the child
  - if a child is over eight years of age the parent or carer should be present (unless specifically excluded by the program), at the activity or in the facility at the time of the activity



- All activities should be conducted in a safe and open manner where activities can easily be observed by other patrons and Staff. Staff supervising the event should be aware of evacuation and emergency procedures and the names/s of First Aid Officers at the venue
  - One Staff member must be in attendance during activities/presentations which include performances made by a guest or paid performers. Presentations conducted at the MRC facility when young people are supervised by their parent or guardian require only one Staff member to be in attendance or acting as presenter
  - Two Staff members must be in attendance during MRC workshop events where participants are undertaking an active role in the event such as using equipment or craft materials and where children or young people might not be in direct supervision of their parent or carer.
- Appropriateness of photographing or videotaping children or young persons and publishing these images

In Australia, generally speaking, there is no law restricting photography of people (including children) in public spaces as long as the images are not considered as:

- indecent (such as “up skirt” or “down blouse”, or photographs taken covertly in change rooms, toilets or other invasions of privacy)
- being used for voyeurism or made for the purpose of observing and visually recording the other person’s genital or anal region
- protected by a court order (e.g. child custody or witness protection)
- defamatory
- being for commercial purposes (person’s likeness is used to entice people to buy or it appears they are endorsing a product). This may require a Model Release/Consent Form to be signed

Photos of a child taken with consent, including Staff children, also contravene Criminal Codes and censorship laws if the child is photographed in a provocative or sexual manner.

Where a sporting event is held on a club’s private property, privately owned land, a school or MRC owned facilities, the owners of private property or venues are able to restrict or ban photography (e.g. some facilities will not allow mobile phones or cameras in change rooms or toilets).

If a person is taking photographs inappropriately (e.g. breaching the above restrictions or a ban in place for that private property or venue), then venue management can request the person to stop. If the person refuses, the police or security may be called to escort them off the property (without threatening violence, detention, or confiscation of the camera or film).

**Considerations for Staff**

- Consider using models or illustrations for promotional/advertising purposes
- Permission needs to be obtained from the child or young person's parent/guardian prior to using their image. Ensure that they are aware of the way in which the image is to be used and how long the image will be displayed if used on a website
- If the child or young person is named in a document, article, website etc. avoid using their image in association with this
- If an image of a child or young person is used with permission, avoid naming the participant. If this is not possible avoid using both a first name and surname
- Do not display information about hobbies, likes/dislikes, school etc. as these can be used as grooming tools by pedophiles
- Only use appropriate images of the child or young person relevant to the activity, and suitably clothed. Images of children or young people in an activity that involves minimal clothing or unusual body positions/poses, which could potentially be misused, should focus on the activity not on a particular person and avoid full face and body shots
- Reduce the ability for the direct copying of pictures from a website to another source (i.e. disable the 'right mouse click' function)
- Provide details of whom to contact if concerns or complaints of inappropriate image use are raised

**Attachment 2**

Identifying, forming a suspicion of harm, abuse or neglect, and recording a disclosure, observation, or suspicion of harm.

- Identifying Harm against a Child or Young Person

This is not a complete list of the types of abuse that may be experienced by children or young people, however it is to be used as a predictive tool for potential signs of harm. Each child's experience is different and depends on a range of factors, including the child or young person's age, the nature of harm, how long the abuse has been occurring, their relationship to the abuser, and their support networks.

- Indicators of Child Abuse

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

- Indicators of Neglect

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
- 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

- What is a 'disclosure' of harm?

A disclosure of harm occurs when someone, including a child, tells you about harm that has happened, is happening, or is likely to happen to a child.

Disclosures of harm may start with:

- 'I think I saw...'
- 'Somebody told me that...'
- 'Just think you should know...'
- 'I'm not sure what I want you to do, but...'

It is important to act quickly and in the best interests of the child or young person after a disclosure of harm is received, irrespective of the alleged source of harm.

- What is a 'suspicion' of harm?

A suspicion of harm is when there is a reasonable suspicion that a child has suffered, is suffering, or is at an unacceptable risk of suffering, significant harm. This includes circumstances which relate to an unborn child who may be in need of protection after he or she

is born. A child who has been, or may be experiencing, abuse may show behavioural, emotional or physical signs of stress and abuse.

Staff have a duty of care to follow up any suspicions of harm or potential risk of harm to children and young people in their care. This is done by observing and recording the actions of children who might be at risk, and reporting your concerns.

You can suspect harm if:

- a child or young person tells you they have been harmed
- someone else, for example another child, a parent, or Staff, tells you that harm has occurred or is likely to occur
- a child or young person tells you they know someone who has been harmed (it is possible that they may be referring to themselves)
- you are concerned at significant changes in the behaviour of a child or young person, or the presence of new unexplained and suspicious injuries, or
- you see the harm happening

Managing and recording a disclosure or suspicion of harm

- remain calm and listen attentively, actively and non-judgementally
  - ensure there is a private and appropriate place to talk
  - encourage the person to talk in their own words and ensure just enough open-ended questions are asked to act protectively (e.g. 'Can you tell me what happened'...or 'Can you tell me more about that'). Don't ask leading questions which tend to suggest an answer.
  - ensure the person is advised that the disclosure cannot remain a secret and it is necessary to tell someone in order to get help
  - reassure the person they have done the right thing by telling you
  - document the disclosure clearly and accurately, including a detailed description of:
    - the relevant dates, times, locations and who was present
    - exactly what the person disclosing said, using "I said," "they said," statements
    - the questions you asked
    - any comments you made, and
    - your actions following the disclosure
  - do not attempt to investigate or mediate an outcome, and
  - follow any relevant process for reporting a disclosure of harm and consider whether there are requirements to report matters to the Queensland Police Service or Child Safety.
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- Suspicion of harm (or other concern for a child's welfare)

In relation to a 'suspicion' of harm, you should:

- remain alert to any warning signs or indicators
- pay close attention to changes in the child's behaviour, ideas, feelings and the words they use
- make written notes of observations in a non-judgemental and accurate manner

- assure a child that they can come to talk when they need to, and listen to them and believe them when they do, and
- follow any relevant process for reporting a suspicion of harm and consider whether there are requirements to report matters to the Queensland Police Service or Child Safety, or consider what support services could be offered to the family if the concern does not meet the relevant threshold to make a report