



**SouthEast Child Protection and
Safety Standards Policy
13 10 2016**

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SouthEast Child Protection and Safety Standards Policy

Introduction

SouthEast Housing Cooperative Ltd (SouthEast) is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. SouthEast has zero tolerance for and of child abuse.

Everyone working at SouthEast is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse.

Purpose

1. To facilitate the prevention of child abuse occurring within SouthEast.
2. To work towards an organisational culture of child safety.
3. To prevent child abuse within SouthEast.
4. To ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse and for establishing controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs.
5. To provide guidance to staff/volunteers/contractors as to action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside of the organisation.
6. To provide a clear statement to staff/volunteers/contractors forbidding any such abuse.
7. To provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

Policy

SouthEast is committed to promoting and protecting at all times the best interests of children that come into contact with SouthEast.

All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse.

SouthEast has zero tolerance of child abuse. Everyone working at SouthEast is responsible for the care and protection of the children that come into contact with us and reporting information about suspected child abuse.

Child protection is a shared responsibility between the SouthEast, all employees, workers, contractors, associates, and members of the community in which we work.

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SouthEast will consider the opinions of children and use their opinions to develop child protection policies where possible.

SouthEast supports and respects all children, staff and volunteers. SouthEast is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability.

If any person believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse, telephone 000.

Definitions

Child means a person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

Child protection means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm.

Child abuse means 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.

Child sexual assault is any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography. It includes child grooming, which refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child.

Reasonable grounds for belief is a belief based on reasonable grounds that child abuse has occurred when all known considerations or facts relevant to the formation of a belief are taken into account and these are objectively assessed. Circumstances or considerations may include the source of the allegation and how it was communicated, the nature of and details of the allegation, and whether there are any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator.

A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person believes that:

- (a) the child is in need of protection,
- (b) the child has suffered or is likely to suffer "significant harm as a result of physical injury",

- (c) the parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.

A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed if:

- a) a child states that they have been physically or sexually abused;
- b) a child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves);
- c) someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused;
- d) professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused; and/or
- e) signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.

Responsibilities

The Board of SouthEast has ultimate responsibility for the prevention and detection of child abuse and is responsible for ensuring that appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place. The Board is also responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies and procedures and a Conduct Code that deals with these issues are in place.

The CEO of SouthEast is responsible for:

- Dealing with and investigating reports of child abuse;
- Ensuring that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are aware of relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures, and the organisation's Conduct Code in relation to child protection;
- Ensuring that all adults within the SouthEast community are aware of their obligation to report suspected sexual abuse of a child in accordance with these policies and procedures;
- Ensuring that all staff, contractors and volunteers are aware of their obligation to observe the Conduct Code (particularly as it relates to child safety);
- Providing support for staff, contractors and volunteers in undertaking their child protection responsibilities.

All managers must ensure they:

- Promote child safety at all times;
- Assess the risk of child abuse within their area of control and eradicate / minimise any risk to the extent possible;
- Educate employees about the prevention and detection of child abuse; and
- Facilitate the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities.

Management should be familiar with the types of abuse that might occur within their area of responsibility and be alert for any indications of such conduct.

All staff/volunteers/contractors share in the responsibility for the prevention and detection of child abuse, and must:

- Familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, the Conduct Code, and SouthEast's policy and procedures in relation to child protection, and comply with all requirements;
- Report any reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk to the relevant authorities (such as the police and / or the state-based child protection service) and fulfil their obligations as mandatory reporters;
- Report any suspicion that a child's safety may be at risk to their supervisor (or, if their supervisor is involved in the suspicion, to a responsible person in the organisation); and
- Provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety.

Employment of New Personnel

SouthEast undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all workers (employees and contractors) and volunteers which aims to:

- promote and protect the safety of all children under the care of the organisation;
- identify the safest and most suitable people who share SouthEast's values and commitment to protect children; and
- prevent a person from working at SouthEast if they pose a risk to children.

SouthEast requires all workers and or volunteers to pass through the organisation's recruitment and screening processes prior to commencing their engagement with SouthEast.

SouthEast may require applicants to provide a police check in accordance with the law and as appropriate, before they commence working at SouthEast and during their time with SouthEast at regular interval. SouthEast will undertake thorough reference checks as per the approved internal procedure.

Once engaged, workers and volunteers must review and acknowledge their understanding of this Policy.

Risk Management

SouthEast will ensure that child safety is a part of its overall risk management approach.

SouthEast will have a risk and compliance sub-committee committed to identifying and managing risks at SouthEast. Risk and compliance sub-committee members will receive regular training in relation to child safety.

Reporting

Any staff member, volunteer or contractor who has grounds to suspect abusive activity must immediately notify the appropriate child protection service or the police. They should also advise their supervisor about their concern.

In situations where the supervisor is suspected of involvement in the activity, or if the person having the suspicion does not believe that the matter is being appropriately addressed or dealt with, the matter should be reported to the next highest level of supervision.

Supervisors must report complaints of suspected abusive behaviour or misconduct to the CEO and also to any external regulatory body such as the police.

Investigating

If the appropriate child protection service or the police decide to conduct an investigation of this report, all employees, contractors or volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Whether or not the authorities decide to conduct an investigation, the CEO will consult with the authorities to determine whether an internal investigation is appropriate. If it is decided that such an investigation will not conflict with any proceeding of the authorities, the CEO may decide to conduct such an investigation. All employees, contractors or volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Any such investigation will be conducted according to the rules of natural justice. The CEO will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other members of staff may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation. After an initial review and a determination that the suspected abuse warrants additional investigation, the CEO shall coordinate the investigation with the appropriate investigators and / or law enforcement officials. Internal or external legal representatives will be involved in the process, as deemed appropriate.

Responding

If it is alleged that a member of staff, contractor or a volunteer may have committed an offence or have breached the organisation's policies or its Conduct Code the person concerned may be stood down (with pay, where applicable) while an investigation is conducted.

If the investigation concludes that on the balance of probabilities an offence (or a breach of the organisation's policies or Conduct Code) has occurred then disciplinary action may follow, up to and including dismissal or cessation of involvement with the organisation. The findings of the investigation will also be reported to any external body as required.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone's safety. SouthEast will have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how the personal information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will be able to access it.

SOUTHEAST CONDUCT CODE – CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFETY

For employees, volunteers and contractors working with children and young people

All people that come into contact with children on behalf of SouthEast will:

1. Work towards the achievement of the aims and purposes of the organisation.
2. Be responsible for relevant administration of programs and activities in their area.
3. Maintain a duty of care towards others involved in these programs and activities.
4. Establish and maintain a child-safe environment in the course of their work.
5. Be fair, considerate and honest with others.
6. Treat children and young people with respect and value their ideas and opinions.
7. Act as positive role models in their conduct with children and young people.
8. Be professional in their actions.
9. Maintain strict impartiality.
10. Comply with specific organisational guidelines on physical contact with children.
11. Respect the privacy of children, their families and teachers/carers, and only disclose information to people who have a need to know.
12. Maintain a child-safe environment for children and young people.
13. Operate within the policies and guidelines of SouthEast.
14. Contact the police if a child is at immediate risk of abuse, phone 000.

No person shall:

1. Shame, humiliate, oppress, belittle or degrade children or young people.
2. Unlawfully discriminate against any child.
3. Engage in any activity with a child or young person that is likely to physically or emotionally harm them.
4. Initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person, or do things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves.
5. Be alone with a child or young person unnecessarily and for more than a very short time
6. Develop a 'special' relationship with a specific child or young person for their own needs.
7. Show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention.
8. Arrange contact, including online contact, with children or young people outside of the organisation's programs and activities.
9. Photograph or video a child or young person without the consent of the child and his/her parents or guardians.
10. Work with children or young people while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
11. Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children.
12. Use inappropriate language in the presence of children.
13. Do anything in contra the organisations policies, procedures or this Conduct Code.

What happens if you breach the Conduct Code?

If you breach this component of the Conduct Code you will face disciplinary action, including and up to termination of employment or cessation of engagement with the organisation.

If you have any concerns either ring 000 or report the matter with your supervisor or call SouthEast on 03 9706 8005 in office hours all call Jim on 0400 313 948 or after hours on 0401 722 157 or the CEO Steve Morrissey on 0438 798 182.

CHILD SAFETY STANDARDS

Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational **culture** of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements.

Standard 2: A child safe **policy or statement of commitment** to child safety.

Standard 3: A **code of conduct** that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children.

Standard 4: **Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices** that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel.

Standard 5: Processes for **responding to and reporting** suspected child abuse.

Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove **risks** of child abuse.

Standard 7: Strategies to promote the **participation and empowerment of children**.



SouthEast Child Protection and Safety Standards Declaration

I understand it is an offence to abuse or harm children and I have a statutory obligation to protect children and prevent them from abuse or other forms of harm and I am legally obliged to report any breaches of this code its governing policy and any other related state or national laws.

I have read and understand the Child Protection Policy (Child Safety Standards) its procedures and conduct code and agree to abide by all the code and policy and practices therein. Furthermore, I am willing to undergo criminal records checks as required and declare I am not and never have been in any way unfit to work with children.

I understand the reporting process and the supervisor to whom I must report my concerns.

Printed full name

Date of Birth

Role

Address

Signature

Date

If under 18, signature of Parent or Guardian

Printed name in upper case.

Signature

Date

Contractor Declaration

I have read and understand this Child Protection Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct and will abide by the code. I understand the reporting process and the supervisor to whom I must report my concerns.

Name (print in upper case):

Signature:

Date:

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Policy end notes contents

- Electronic resource and knowledge centre links including documents

Documents available upon request

- Standards
- Risk Plan and Continuous Improvement Reviews
- Policy Draft
- Exclusive Moores CHFV guide and policy and code templates
- Moores NFP Child Protection Tool-kit
- Contractors Contracts of Agreement
- Contractors Letters
- SouthEast Conduct Code (Child Protection)
- SouthEast Conduct Code (General Principles)
- Statutory Acts

Implementations Plan Parts

- Board
- Staff
- Members
- Volunteers
- Contractors
- Web site
- Housing Futures

| Version | Reason for Change | Current location/file name |
|-------------------|--|---|
| (01 – 23 02 2017) | All CHFV members must be aware of the changes made to the Crimes Act and the Child Wellbeing Act (as set out in detail below) to ensure compliance with the legislation in relation to child safety. | Author: Dale Carroll Approved: CEO Date authorised by Board: 26 08 2016 Controlled Document - Uncontrolled Copy When Printed |

Authorisation: Board

Date adopted: 26 08 2016

Review period: Annual

Date Reviewed:

Next Review: 23 02 2018

Resources: Moores Legal and Our Community Child Protection Kit (website links)

<http://www.moores.com.au/not-for-profit-assist-legal-membership-service>

<https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/icda/tools/?articleId=6737>

Child safe standards resources

Victorian Department of Health and Human Services Resources link:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/child-safe-standards-resources>

- [Print](#)

Victoria has introduced compulsory minimum standards for organisations that provide services for children to help protect children from abuse.

The **Child Safe Standards** form part of the Victorian Government's response to the **Betrayal of Trust Inquiry** (the 2013 Parliamentary Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations).

Education, awareness raising and helping organisations to create and maintain child safe environments will be the initial focus of the Child Safe Standards.

More information about the organisations in scope can be found on the [In scope organisations for Child Safe Standards](#) page on this site.

The Child Safe Standards do not alter any existing requirements to hold a **Working with Children Check**.

The **Commission for Children and Young People** will be the oversight body for the Child Safe Standards from 1 January 2017.

For organisations funded or regulated by government, it is intended that monitoring of organisations' implementation of the Child Safe Standards will be undertaken through existing mechanisms.

Consultation to inform the development of the Child Safe Standards occurred from late 2014 to early 2015 with approximately 160 government and community sector stakeholders.

Download the consultation report:

- [Betrayal of Trust implementation: Child safe standards and capacity building - Consultation report 2015 \(doc, 222.0 KB\)](#)

Overview of the Victorian Child Safe Standards

An overview of the Victorian Child Safe Standards has information to assist organisations understand the requirements of each of the Child Safe Standards, including examples of measures they can put in place and a self-assessment tool:

- [An overview of the Victorian child safe standards \(doc, 433.0 KB\)](#)

Child Safe Standards toolkit

The Child Safe Standards toolkit for organisations includes tools and templates that organisations can download, and use and adapt:

- [Resource 1: Good leadership and governance in child safe organisations \(doc, 55.5 KB\)](#)
- [Resource 2: Child safe policy and statement of commitment \(including sample child safe policy and statement of commitment to child safety\) \(doc, 70.5 KB\)](#)

- [Resource 3: Code of conduct \(including sample code of conduct\) \(doc, 59.0 KB\)](#)
- [Resource 4: Human resources practices for child safe organisations \(doc, 61.5 KB\)](#)
- [Resource 5: Recruitment practices for child safe organisations \(doc, 83.0 KB\)](#)
- [Resource 6: What to do when an allegation of child abuse is made \(doc, 65.5 KB\)](#)
- [Resource 7: Sample incident report template \(doc, 68.0 KB\)](#)

Information sessions about the Child Safe Standards

Information sessions about the Child Safe Standards were delivered in 2015 and 2016. A PowerPoint presentation from the information sessions is available for download:

- [Child Safe Standards presentation \(PPT, 1.3 MB\)](#)

Further information

For further information about the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry response, please visit:

- the [Betrayal of Trust implementation](#) page of the Department of Justice and Regulation website or
- the [Child sexual abuse prevention and response](#) page on this site.

Further information about the Child Safe Standards, including a range of advice, resources and templates and information on the scope of the Child Safe Standards is available from the [Child Safe Standards](#) page of the **Commission for Children and Young People** website.

Contact

Tel. (03) 8601 5281

Email childsafestandards@ccyp.vic.gov.au

Schools and education providers

Information for schools and education providers is available from the [Protect](#) web page on the **Department of Education and Training** website.

Contact

Email child.safe.schools@edumail.vic.gov.au

Early childhood services operating under the National Quality Framework or the **Children's Services Act 1996** should contact:

Licensed children's services enquiry line: 1300 307 415

Email: licensed.childrens.services@edumail.vic.gov.au

Organisations funded or regulated by the Department of Health and Human Services

Queries from organisations funded or regulated by the Department of Health and Human Services can be directed to:

Contact

Tel. (03) 9096 0000

Email childsafeargs@dhhs.vic.gov.au

[Request more information](#) about this topic.