

Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy

Under the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (Qld)

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Purpose

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 prevent and minimise these risks. A well-developed strategy will help Leap In! achieve its objectives by providing a clear and consistent framework to guide and support children and young people who Leap In! provide services for.

In order to comply with the legislative framework, a Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy must address eight (8) minimum requirements. These requirements:

- address the organisation's commitment to creating a safe and supportive service environment
- strengthen the organisation's capability to provide such an environment
- assist an organisation in managing any 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

Commitment

1. A statement of commitment to the safety and wellbeing of children and the protection of children from harm.
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.
6. Risk management plans for high risk activities and special events.

Consistency

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

Framework

What does the Leap In! Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy look like?

Leap In! meets these eight requirements through our policies, procedures and practices across a number of key areas, including:

- Our Code of Conduct
- Our Code of Conduct for Protecting Children and Young People
- Our Statement of Commitment
- Our Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure
- Our Customer Incident Reporting and Investigation Policy and Procedure
- Our Employee Screening Procedure
- Our Employee Screening Checklist
- Our New Starter Checklist

Our contact with children

A child is any person under the age of 18 years.

Leap In! provides services to children with disability, through NDIS Plan Management and Support Worker services. Our contact with children is usually via their intermediary, usually a parent or guardian, however sometimes via the Public Guardian.

Leap In! provides services in a remote setting, that is, not face-to-face. Contact is usually via telephone, email, or SMS, but could include video calls.

Who does this framework apply to?

This framework applies to

- To all Leap In! staff, Board members, executives, volunteers and contractors.
- In relation to all children currently receiving services from Leap In!
- Where there is a suspicion of, or an allegation is made against, a current Board member, executive, member of staff, volunteer, carer, contractor, client or contractor.

Actions

Our organisational culture

Leap In! prides itself on the professionalism and ability of its employees to meet community needs. Leap In! strives to be a leading service provider and to provide a safe, healthy, and happy workplace. We recognise that a safe, healthy and happy workplace is key to building a positive work culture.

As a leading provider within the disability sector, Leap In! will provide its Members with the supports that promote, uphold and respect their legal and human rights. Leap In! recognises that children with disability are some of the most vulnerable in our society. Accordingly, we must hold ourselves to the highest standards of conduct.

Leap In! is committed to:

- Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people.
- Providing an inclusive and culturally sensitive and supportive environment for its staff, Members, and their support team.
- Responding promptly to allegations of harm or risk of harm to children and young people within our Member network.
- Protecting the privacy of its Members, particularly children who are at risk.
- Continuously improving its policies, procedures and systems to make things better every day.

We will ensure that we keep our policies, procedures and risk management framework up to date, in order to ensure we are responding to the needs of our members, as well as meeting our legal and ethical obligations.

Our people

We commit to:

- Our entire organisation being bound by our Codes of Conduct.
- Ensuring our people know the standards to which we hold them for their interactions with children and the consequences of any breaches of the framework, Codes of Conduct, legislation or related policy, procedure or practices;
- Requiring our staff, including any volunteers, Board, executive and contractors to commit to upholding our values, which are:
 - Keep you (our Member) at the heard of everything we do.
 - Never cut corners for profit.
 - Never treat you (our Member) like a number.
 - Provide the support you (our Member) need when you need it.
 - Help you (our Member) get the best value form your NDIS plan, year after year.
- Having robust recruitment and screening processes to ensure that our people are committed to the safety and wellbeing of children;
- Supporting people to make good decisions and providing staff with regular training, supervision and ongoing development;
- Ensuring staff meet record keeping and information sharing responsibilities.

Recruitment and selection

Leap In! will ensure that it's recruitment processes will reflect its commitment to child safety, in all child-related job advertisements and position descriptions.

Leap In! will ensure that it's Child and Youth Code of Conduct as well as its Statement of Commitment is part of new staff induction training and the importance of upholding child safety is part of regular staff training. All staff will confirm that they understand what is required of them by acknowledging they agree to abide by our Codes of Conduct.

As a child safe organisation, Leap In will:

- Implement measures to address allegations or suspicions of child abuse and neglect within our services, as they may be disclosed to us.

Child-related employment

Where recruitment is for a role where the staff member would or may have contact with children, or provide services for a child, there will be appropriate selection and screening processes in place, including:

- Criminal history checks.
- Reference checks.
- Ensuring the staff member has a Blue Card prior to commencing work.
- Exploring the person's values and suitability to work with children.
- Advertising that the role requires the successful applicant to be eligible for a Blue Card and must undergo appropriate pre-employment screening.

If there is any doubt about a person's suitability to work with children, that person will not be engaged.

Screening

Pre-employment screening must include:

- Working with Children check, with validation of the Blue Card.
- Criminal history checks, including overseas checks if the person has lived overseas.
- A Disability Worker Screening check, including the validation of the Yellow Card.

A Working with Children check only takes into account matters on a criminal history that are relevant to the care of children. Therefore, it should not be seen as a substitute for a broader national criminal history check where the commission of other criminal offences may be relevant to the position.

A Working with Children check is only one tool for screening the suitability for people to work with children. It is not of itself, any guarantee of the ongoing suitability and must be coupled with ongoing risk exposure assessments and child safe practice.

Risk mitigation strategies should be in place for anyone who may have contact with children, for example, supervision school students or tradespeople who have not undergone a Working with Children check.

The role of Human Resources

Human Resources (HR) must keep a central record of all child-related positions and will ensure that a Working with Children check (or exemption) is in place for all staff in child-related roles.

HR must ensure that employment contracts require all staff to have and maintain Working with Children cards and maintain any other relevant certification.

Our risk environment

We commit to:

- Creating spaces that are welcoming and safe for children and supporting staff and volunteers to provide safe services and environments.
- Undertaking regular risk exposure assessment and mitigation processes across all services, including consideration of physical and online environments, practices, and relationships.
- Regularly reviewing, at least on an annual basis, any high risk activities or services.
- Establishing work practices that encourage people to share experiences and information and learn from each other to promote continuous improvement of prevention activities.
- Ensuring our people have contemporary, evidence based knowledge of what constitutes grooming, abuse and neglect, and the signs to be aware of.

Understanding our risk environment

Risks will vary depending on the services that Leap In! is providing. If our service environment changes, we will undertake new risk assessments to ensure that we have appropriate controls and mitigation strategies in place.

Risks will be reviewed regularly to ensure that our strategies remain up to date. In the event a deficiency is identified in the control environment, new controls will be implemented and tested to ensure effectiveness.

Risk exposure assessments and mitigation strategies must take into account the specific circumstances of contact with children and service delivery goals.

Risk mitigation will take into account:

- The specific context of service delivery.
- Physical or virtual environments.
- The nature of interactions between children and adults.
- The vulnerability of children in each environment.

Those with overarching responsibility within the organisation, will ensure that their skills and knowledge are kept up to date, including on how to identify risks and put in place appropriate strategies to mitigate risks.

Our response

We commit to:

- Immediately taking steps to prevent known risks to any child.
- Taking prompt action regarding any disclosures, allegations, suspicions or incidents of child abuse or neglect.
- Immediately report per our legal and ethical obligations.
- Ensuring that there is a clear, widely known and consistently applied process for reporting and responding to disclosures, allegations, suspicions or incidents of child abuse and neglect.
- Any breach of policy or procedure under the strategy is to be managed in accordance with the Human Resource framework including, where necessary, in accordance with performance management and/or disciplinary guidelines. In instances where an employee has not conducted themselves in accordance with our codes of conduct, policies, procedures or practices, the conduct will be assessed and the employee will be subject to disciplinary action, including potential termination of employment.
- Supporting those who make a report.
- Communicating information to staff and others affected by a report, in conjunction with police and other authorities.
- Promptly, methodically, and appropriately addressing breaches of this framework, Codes of Conduct, legislation or related policies, procedures or

practices, including through providing increased training or disciplinary action if appropriate.

- Having clear processes for responding to child abuse and neglect.
- Reviewing, on at least an annual basis, our policies, procedures, and practices annually and implementing any identified improvements.
- Taking a continuous improvement approach to child safety.

Principles underpinning our response

The following principles underpin our response to disclosures, allegations, suspicions or incidents of child abuse and neglect:

- A child making a disclosure is to be believed.
- The safety and wellbeing of the child is paramount.
- Leap In! will comply with all reporting obligations and immediately make a report to authorities.
- Information will be treated confidentially to protect the privacy of the child, and the forensic integrity of information.
- Despite the above, Leap In! will be transparent and communicate openly with those impacted by a report.
- Leap In! will cooperate with Police, Child Safety and other authorities.
- Staff should interact with authorities according to their level of delegation and legislative requirements.
- Staff and others should report to their line manager in the first instances, to support internal and external responses, information flow and client and staff confidentiality.

- If there is any doubt about whether a matter should be reported, it should be reported.
- Leap In! will work with family, carers and guardians, where appropriate, in order to support a child.
- The identity of the person making the report must be kept confidential, except as required by law or for the organisation to assess the circumstances surrounding the report.
- People making reports are to be supported and protected from recrimination.

What must be reported?

Reporting and responding to disclosures, allegations, suspicions or incidents of abuse and neglect will be undertaken per this framework and any mandatory reporting obligations.

Mandatory reporting obligations will be clearly outlined in business units/functions guidelines or procedures.

An employee or volunteer must report the following:

- A disclosure of abuse or neglect made by a child or another person where the abuse or neglect relates to a Leap In! staff member, volunteer, carer, another Member, contractor, or other person engaged by Leap In! staff member, volunteer, carer, another client, contractor, consultant or researcher
- A suspicion or allegation that child abuse or neglect is occurring or a child's safety is at risk from a Leap In!
- A suspicion or allegation that a Leap In! staff member, volunteer, carer, another client, contractor, consultant

or other person engaged with Leap In! is engaging in behaviour associated with grooming.

- A suspicion or allegation that a Leap In! staff member, volunteer, carer, another client, contractor, consultant or any adult associated with the institution, conducts targeted behaviour that ignores or hides the sexual abuse of children.
- Any suspected or actual breach of this framework, Code of Conduct, Statement of Commitment, legislation, or related policy, procedure, practice or risk mitigation strategy related to the safety of children.

How must reports be made?

Any concern raised under this framework should be treated as a formal concern. No matter should be treated as being raised 'informally' and therefore not actioned.

The Executive must:

- Provide the CEO advice within 24 hours, of all matters as they relate to the report (i.e., what has happened and what is being done in response).
- Ensure that there are appropriate processes in place to enable appropriate skilled staff to receive and action reports under this framework.
- Provide updates to the CEO with the details of the response and outcomes at the conclusion of the investigation/review of each report, including any systemic issues or patterns identified, opportunities for improvement or procedural issues.

The Child Safe Contact Officer

An officer shall be appointed to support the CEO in governance matters related to child safety. The officer will have knowledge or experience in child safety, human resources or complaints handling and an understanding of the work of Leap In!. For this framework, this includes:

- Receiving reports on any child safety concerns from any person who wishes to make a report.
- Supporting the CEO to develop reports to the Board or its nominated committees regarding child safety.
- Liaising with service streams/support services in relation to specific reports made under this framework.
- Providing feedback to Executives, CEO and Board on child safe practice within Leap In! and opportunities for systemic improvement.
- Assisting the CEO to undertake an annual review of this framework.
- Other tasks as requested by the CEO.

Figure 1. Reporting Flow Chart

