# Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

The Society is committed to being a Child Safe Organisation and working within our organisation and the broader community to prevent all forms of abuse against children and young people.

The Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy:

* explains the steps the Society takes to prevent harm to children and young people engaged with our organisation
* explains the responsibilities of Society Personnel (members, volunteers, and employees), and acceptable behaviour when engaging with children and young people
* gives direction of how to respond and report any concerns about children and young people.

## Supporting children and young people to have a say in decisions that affect them

The Policy states that as a Society, we will:

* protect the right of children to have a say in decisions, services, and policies that affect them
* tell children and young people about the behaviours required of our members, volunteers, and employees
* make sure children know how to report abuse or any concerns about themselves or another child.

## Actions we take to protect children and young people

The Society and its Personnel must take every step to prevent harm or abuse in our services, activities, and programs. We will:

* reduce or remove any risks on our programs and activities to reduce the possibility of harm to children
* when using children’s images or stories:
  + portray children respectfully and appropriately
  + ask for consent from the children/ young people and their parents/ guardians, including where, how, and for how long images and stories will be used
  + store all photos, videos, stories, and information securely and only allow Personnel access with appropriate permission
  + identify any child or young person (this include using their family name, community or school name).
* when recruiting new members, volunteers, and employees:
  + complete the required background checks including, a Working with Children Check, a Police Check, two reference checks, and an interview. This is to ensure only suitable people are engaged in our work, especially those working with children or young people
  + not allow any person *without* a Working with Children Check clearance to participate in child-related work.
* ensure that all members, volunteers, and employees attend the Society’s Child Safe training, when they first join the Society and do refresher training every two years
* Ensure that employees who are Mandatory Reporters must attend additional, advanced child protection training.

## Child safe behaviours- required behaviours of all members, volunteers, and employees

* Members, volunteers, and employees must follow the Child Safe Behaviours in the Society’s Code of Conduct.
* Behaviour that is not child safe will be treated seriously, and the member, volunteer, or employee may be temporarily or permanently removed from their role in the Society. Unlawful behaviour will be reported to relevant authorities.

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| **Child Safe behaviours**  **Member, volunteers, and employees required behaviour** | |
| **Do** | **Don’t** |
| * Follow the Society’s Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy * Treat all children and young people with respect and compassion * Value their ideas and opinions * Treat them equally and without favouritism * Encourage their safety and participation * Take steps to protect children and young people from harm or abuse * Set clear physical and emotional limits and appropriate behaviour * Tell the Society immediately if you have any old or current charges or convictions related to child exploitation or abuse. * Immediately tell us if you have any concerns about the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person. This includes if you see, hear, or are told anything. If you think someone has breached the Safeguarding Policy, please contact the Safeguarding Team. | * Don’t be alone with a child or young person * Don’t contact or spend time with a child or young person, outside of Society context. This includes face to face or using any form of phone, email, or social media. * Don’t have any unnecessary physical contact with children or young people, including kissing, cuddling, lap-sitting, tickling. * Don't do things of a personal nature for a child or young person that they could do for themselves. * Don’t photograph or video children or young people engaged with the Society without the written consent of a parent or guardian, and only on a Society mobile, camera, video camera. * Don’t use any computers, mobile phones, video, and digital cameras, or social media inappropriately or to control, exploit, abuse, or harass children. |

## Responding to and reporting child protection concerns

Physical and sexual abuse of children is a crime in all Australian states and territories. It must, by law, be reported to the NSW child protection authorities.

The Society views child abuse as unacceptable and will take all concerns and reports of child abuse seriously. We will act on and investigate all reports immediately. In our response, the rights of the child are a priority, and we will undertake a process that is confidential, fair, and professional.

Members, volunteers, and employees must only share information on a 'need to know basis,' including reporting to the Safeguarding Team, to your Manager or if required by law.

## How to report any concerns about a child or young person

## All members, volunteers, or employees must report:

## any concerns about the safety or wellbeing of a child and young person

* any concerns about the behaviour of Society Personnel (Members, volunteers, or employees)
* any breach of the Code of Conduct, Safeguarding Child and Young People Policy, or Child Safe Behaviours.

**In an emergency or after business hours:**

* Call Police on 000 immediately
* Alert your Manager
* Report to Department of Communities and Justice (previously known as FACS) Child Protection Helpline- 24-hour service (132 111)

**If it is not an emergency:**

1. Contact the Safeguarding Team on 1800 4 SUPPORT (1800 478 776)
2. Complete a Child Protection Notification Form attaching any relevant information and send to [childprotection@vinnies.org.au](mailto:childprotection@vinnies.org.au)

## Additional information for the people we serve

* This document gives you a summary of the behaviours required of our Personnel and the steps we take to protect children and young people from harm.
* As a parent/ guardian, we may ask you for information about your child. We will only collect and store the information required to assist you and your child. Any stored information is kept securely.
* We know that parents/ carers are responsible for the development, wellbeing, and safety of their children. We will give you and your child information about the services available and support you to decide on the best option.
* Any information about you or your child/ young person will be handled sensitively and treated as confidential.
* If you are concerned about something that has happened in our organisation, someone's behaviour or concerned about a child or young person, please contact the Safeguarding Team:

**Call 1800 4 SUPPORT (1800 478 776)**

*For questions or support, please contact your Central Council President, Regional Director, or the Safeguarding Team on 1800 4 SUPPORT (1800 478 776).*