

Mandatory – Quality Area 2

PURPOSE

This policy will provide a clear set of guidelines and procedures to:

- Ensure Goulburn Region Preschool Association Inc Services fosters a child safe culture by everyone in the organisation
- Ensure children are provided with a safe environment which protects their safety, health and wellbeing
- Promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children
- promote the cultural safety of children from culturally and / or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- safety of children with disabilities
- ensure equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in all policies and practice
- identify, reduce and remove risks of child abuse
- timely and effective intervention for children and young people who may be at risk of abuse or neglect.
- involve children in child safety including listening to children, families and the community and incorporating their views about how to provide a safe environment
- make staff aware of their legal and duty of care obligations to report child abuse and neglect
- abide by the child safe standards
- abide by the Commission of Children and Young People – Reportable Conduct Scheme
- complying with all requests under the information sharing and reporting obligations.
- Abide by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

GRPSA is committed to child safety and has zero tolerance to child abuse and is committed to children's best interests and keeping them safe and it actively works to listen to and empower children in the organisation.

We value diversity and do not tolerate any discriminatory practices, to achieve this we:

- abide by the child safe standards.
- abide by the Commission of Children and Young People – Reportable Conduct Scheme
- abide by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- abide the guidelines on information sharing and reporting obligations.

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children and their families.
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and / or linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and their families.
- welcome children with a disability and their families and act to promote their participation.
- consider equably all applications from people from diverse cultural backgrounds.
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- ensure that the health, safety and wellbeing of children at the service is protected at all times while also promoting their learning and development
- fulfil our duty of care (refer to Definitions) obligations under the law by protecting children from any reasonable, foreseeable risk of injury or harm
- ensure that people caring for children at the service act in the best interests of the child, and take all reasonable steps to ensure the child's safety and wellbeing at all times
- support the rights of all children to feel safe, and be safe, at all times
- develop and maintaining a culture in which children feel valued, respected and cared for
- encourage active participation from parents/guardians and families at the service, and ensuring that best practice is based on a partnership approach and shared responsibility for children's health, safety, wellbeing and development
- promote children's development and wellbeing.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisors, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Goulburn Region Preschool Association Inc Services, including during offsite excursions and activities.

3. PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

The Reportable Conduct Scheme

The Approved Provider must initially notify the Commission for Children and Young People of a reportable allegation (refer to Definitions) within three business days and update the Commission of progress within 30 calendar days. ‘

The Approved Provider must also investigate the reportable allegation and provide the findings of the investigation to the Commission. The service must also respond to the Commission when contacted for information.

In relation to child protection matters:

- ensuring that the Nominated Supervisors and staff members at the service who work with children are advised of current child protection legislation, its application, and any obligations that they may have under that law (Regulation 84)

- undertaking child safety reviews and developing and implementing effective prevention strategies in consultation with staff, parents/guardians and children to maintain Child Safe Standards (refer to Attachment 1 – Child protection risk assessment and Attachment 4 – Child safety review checklist)
- ensuring recruitment and induction processes for educators, staff and contractors are in line with this policy (refer to Attachment 4 – Guidelines for the recruitment of staff and volunteers)
- screening all educators, staff and students, including undertaking criminal history checks (if required), Working with Children Checks (except for individuals under the age of 18, registered teachers or police officers), reference checks and interviews (refer to Staffing Policy)
- ensuring that volunteers/students, parents/guardians and other visitors to the service are not left with sole supervision of individual children or groups of children
- ensuring that where the service has been notified of a court order prohibiting an adult from contacting an enrolled child, such contact does not occur while the child is on the service premises
- ensuring clear procedures are in place for reporting suspected child abuse and management of complaints (refer to Attachment 3 and the Complaints and Grievances Policy)
- ensuring educators, staff and students undertake appropriate training and education on child protection annually, including recognising the signs and symptoms of child abuse (refer to Definitions), knowing how to respond, and understanding processes for reporting and managing concerns/incidents (refer to Attachment 3 – Incident/concern management and reporting guidelines)
- offering support to the child and their family, and to educators and staff in response to concerns or reports relating to the health, safety and wellbeing of a child at Goulburn Region Preschool Association Inc
- developing co-operative relationships with appropriate services and/or professionals (including Child FIRST) in the best interests of children and their families
- identifying and implementing appropriate programs and practices to support the principles of a child safe organisation, in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor and educators/staff at the service (refer to Attachment 2 – Child safe organisations and the Safeguarding Children accreditation program (refer to Sources))
- notifying DET, in writing, within 24 hours of becoming aware of a notifiable complaint (refer to Definitions) or allegation regarding the health, safety and/or welfare of a child at Goulburn Region Preschool Association Inc Service
- maintaining confidentiality at all times (refer to Privacy and Confidentiality Policy).

In relation to providing a child safe environment at the service:

- ensuring children are adequately supervised and that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times (refer to Supervision of Children Policy and Interactions with Children Policy)
- ensuring parents/guardians have completed the enrolment form including details of authorised nominees, and permission forms for excursions and administration of medication (refer to Delivery and Collection of Children Policy, Excursions and Service Events Policy, Administration of Medication Policy and Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy)

- ensuring the physical environment at the service is safe, secure and free from hazards for children (refer to the service policies section of this policy)
- creating a physical environment that is respectful of Aboriginal culture, and has a positive image of a range of cultures, family units and LGBTIQ people
- ensuring all equipment and materials used at the service meet relevant safety standards (refer to service policies section of this policy)
- ensuring the service is up to date with current legislation on child restraints in vehicles if transporting children (refer to Occupational Health and Safety Policy)
- implementing and practicing emergency and evacuation procedures every 3 months (refer to Emergency and Evacuation Policy)
- ensuring there are appropriate procedures in place for the safe delivery and collection of children (refer to Delivery and Collection of Children Policy)
- ensuring that the Nominated Supervisors, educators and all staff at the service who work with children are aware that it is an offence to subject a child to any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable or excessive in the circumstances
- implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with the Nominated Supervisors, educators, staff, contractors and parents/guardians
- identifying and providing appropriate resources and training to assist educators, staff, contractors, visitors, volunteers and students to implement this policy (refer to Sources)
- protecting the rights of children and families, and encouraging their participation in decision-making
- ensuring the Nominated Supervisors, educators, staff, contractors, volunteers and students are kept informed of any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy.

All Early Childhood Staff are responsible for:

In relation to child protection matters:

- ensuring that they are aware of current child protection legislation, its application and any obligations that they may have under that law
- keeping up to date and complying with any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy
- arranging appropriate training and education for educators and staff on child protection, including recognising the signs and symptoms of child abuse (refer to Definitions), knowing how to respond, and understanding processes for reporting and managing concerns/incidents (refer to Attachment 3 – Incident/concern management and reporting guidelines)
- identifying the potential for child abuse at Goulburn Region Preschool Association Inc Services, and developing and implementing effective prevention strategies in consultation with the Approved Provider and educators/staff refer to Attachment 1 -Child Protection risk assessment
- identifying and implementing appropriate programs and practices to support the principles of a child safe organisation in consultation with the Approved Provider and educators at the service (refer to Attachment 2 – Child safe organisations and the Safeguarding Children accreditation program (refer to Sources))
- co-operating with other services and/or professionals in the best interests of children and their families

- ensuring that families are made aware of support services available to them (such as Child FIRST), and of the assistance these services can provide
- ensuring that no child is left alone (or is out of sight) with a contractor, visitor, volunteer, student or parent/guardian at the service
- implementing the procedures for reporting suspected child abuse and management of complaints (refer to Attachment 3 and the Complaints and Grievances Policy)
- notifying the Approved Provider immediately on becoming aware of a concern, complaint or allegation regarding the health, safety and welfare of a child at Goulburn Region Preschool Association Inc
- offering support to the child and their family, and to educators and staff in response to concerns or reports relating to the health, safety and wellbeing of a child at Goulburn Region Preschool Association Inc
- implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with the Approved Provider, educators, staff, contractors and parents/guardians
- maintaining confidentiality at all times (refer to Privacy and Confidentiality Policy).
- co-operating with other services and/or professionals (including Child FIRST) in the best interests of children and their families informing families of support services available to them (such as Child FIRST), and of the assistance these services can provide
- reviewing this policy in consultation with the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisors, educators, staff and parents/guardians.
- Notify the Approved Provider of any allegations of inappropriate behaviour of employees with children in any circumstances

In relation to providing a child safe environment at the service:

- ensuring that all educators and staff who work with children are aware of this policy, and are supported to implement it in the service
- protecting the rights of children and families, and encouraging their participation in decision-making at the service
- ensuring that all children are adequately supervised at all times (refer to Supervision of Children Policy and Interactions with Children Policy)
- ensuring learning environments are established that provide sufficient space, and include carefully chosen and well-maintained resources and equipment that will help enhance the quality of children's learning and experiences
- organising/facilitating regular safety audits of the following:
 - emergency equipment
 - playgrounds and fixed equipment in outdoor environments
 - cleaning services
 - horticultural maintenance
 - pest control
- ensuring that all cupboards/rooms are labelled accordingly, including those that contain chemicals and first aid kits, and that child-proof locks are installed on doors and cupboards where contents may be harmful
- ensuring that all contractors/visitors sign in to the visitor's log book
- ensuring the physical environment at the service is safe, secure and free from hazards for children (refer to the Services policies section of this policy)

- conducting risk assessments for excursions and considering children’s safety when leaving the service premises
- ensuring all equipment and materials used at the service meet relevant safety standards (refer to the Service policies section of this policy)
- ensuring the service is up to date with current legislation on child restraints in vehicles if transporting children (refer to Occupational Health and Safety Policy)
- implementing and practising emergency and evacuation procedures (refer to Emergency and Evacuation Policy)
- ensuring there are appropriate procedures in place for the safe delivery and collection of children (refer to Delivery and Collection of Children Policy)
- ensuring that all educators and staff at the service who work with children are aware that it is an offence to subject a child to any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable or excessive in the circumstances
- implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff and parents/guardians
- identifying and providing appropriate resources and training to assist educators, staff, contractors, visitors, volunteers and students to implement this policy (refer to Sources)
- keeping up to date and complying with any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy.
- maintaining learning environments that provide sufficient space, and include carefully chosen and well-maintained resources and equipment to ensure a safe environment
- maintaining a regular cleaning schedule for all equipment to avoid cross-infection (refer to Hygiene Policy)
- maintaining a clean environment daily, and removing tripping/slipping hazards as soon as these become apparent (refer to Occupational Health and Safety Policy)
- conducting a daily check of the building, ensuring all children are signed out of the service, doors and windows are closed and locked, and appliances are switched off etc.
- educating and empowering children to talk about events and situations that make them feel uncomfortable
- ensuring all equipment and materials used at the service meet relevant safety standards (refer to the Service policies section of this policy)
- ensuring there are appropriate procedures in place for the safe delivery and collection of children (refer to Delivery and Collection of Children Policy)
- protecting the rights of children and families, and encouraging their participation in decision-making

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- reading and complying with this policy
- reporting any concerns, including in relation to potential for child abuse, to the Nominated Supervisor
- abiding by the service’s Code of Conduct.

Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness, particularly in relation to identifying and responding to child safety concerns
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures (Regulation 172(2)).

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Child protection risk assessment
- Attachment 2: Child safe organisations
- Attachment 3: Incident/concern management and reporting guidelines
- Attachment 4: Guidelines for the recruitment of staff and volunteers

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Goulburn Region Preschool Association Inc on 3rd September 2012

Reviewed and Approved: 15th May 2016

Reviewed: 8th March 2019

Reviewed: August 2021

REVIEW DATE: AUGUST 2024

ATTACHMENT 1

Child protection risk assessment

A child protection risk assessment process helps in the identification of the potential for child abuse in the service, and enables appropriate strategies to be developed to minimise risk.

It is important to create awareness among employees, contractors, visitors and volunteers of possible risks to children from abuse, and how to implement a range of strategies to protect children from these risks.

Risk factors	Level of risk to children	Strategies to reduce risk	Evaluation
e.g. Appointment of a sex offender	High	Recruitment processes	Recruitment processes have been developed that include running all relevant criminal history and working with children related checks.
Opportunities for a child to be isolated within the program/premises			
Opportunities for a child to be taken away from the program/premises			
Close physical contact with an adult other than an educator			
Physical environment			
High staff turnover			
Limited staff turnover (with little outside scrutiny of the program)			
Unauthorised access by other people to the service (such as strangers or non-custodial parents)			
Staff not recognising signs of abusive behaviour			
Staff not raising concerns/suspicions of abuse			
Low levels of awareness of child protection issues			

Low levels of commitment to preventing abuse by management/staff			
Lack of appropriate incident management procedures			
Access to multimedia and information technology			

ATTACHMENT 2

Child safe organisations¹

This table provides some examples of practices that may be implemented to support the principles of a child safe organisation.

Child safe principle	Practices
The organisation welcomes children, their parents/guardians and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Educators, staff, volunteers and students readily interact with children in an age-appropriate and respectful way• Children are treated as individuals: educators and volunteers strive to understand each child's particular interests and needs• Educators, staff, students and volunteers listen to children and encourage their participation
The organisation recognises that children are vulnerable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Educators, staff, students and volunteers accept it is their role to protect children involved with their organisation• Educators, staff, students and volunteers accept there is a difference in power between a child and an adult• The service maintains appropriate educator-to-child ratios• Policies are in place to minimise risk involved in one-to-one situations between a child and an adult• Equipment and activities are appropriate for the ability and age of the children• Children are supported and comforted in an appropriate way, consistent with the child's wishes• Information about children is treated confidentially
The organisation recognises and responds to children with additional needs, including disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The service is accessible to all children• Educators, staff, students and volunteers relate to all children in a respectful and developmentally-appropriate manner• Policies are in place to guide the physical and psychological care requirements of all children
The organisation actively encourages the participation of Aboriginal children	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Educators, staff, students, volunteers and other children acknowledge and show respect for Aboriginal culture

¹ Attachment 2 is based on principles for creating child safe organisations, as developed by the Office of the Child Safety Commissioner, Victoria.

Child safe principle	Practices
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies acknowledge that an Aboriginal child's cultural identity is fundamental to their overall wellbeing
<p>The organisation recognises, and responds to, the particular needs of children from diverse cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural diversity is welcomed and celebrated • Activities offered are representative of the cultural and religious mix of the local community • Educators, staff, students, volunteers and other children acknowledge and show respect for diversity
<p>The organisation encourages children to participate in decision-making</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are asked their views, and these views are respected and taken into consideration in decision-making • Children are involved in discussing appropriate behaviour
<p>The organisation carefully recruits and manages its employees, contractors and volunteers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service has policies on staff and volunteer recruitment and management, covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – recruitment processes, including skills and qualifications required – background-checking and screening processes for all employees, contractors and volunteers – Working with Children Checks and police checks • The service has a <i>Code of Conduct</i> that outlines acceptable behaviour by educators, staff, students, volunteers and contractors • There is a clear and accessible complaints procedure for use by children, parents/guardians and employees • any allegations of inappropriate behaviours by employees in any circumstances is reported to the Approved Provider who will lodge it with the Commission of Children and Young People • Parents/guardians can access the service policies on request
<p>The organisation ensures that its commitment to child safety is clear and shared by all</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A child protection policy (such as this <i>Child Safe Environment Policy</i>) is in place and accessible • Educators, staff, students, volunteers and parents/guardians are aware of the service's child protection policy
<p>The organisation ensures employees, contractors and volunteers are informed about child safety and receive training, where appropriate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service has a clear staff development policy that includes areas of child development, child protection, risk management and safety

ATTACHMENT 3

Process for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse

Individuals working with children or young people have a duty of care to support and protect them. Where there is a belief, on reasonable grounds, that a child/young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm, adults in contact with or working with that child/young person are ethically bound to act to maintain their safety and wellbeing.

The Approved Provider or staff must act when they form a reasonable belief or have a suspicion that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused.

Acting on a belief that child abuse has occurred, or is occurring, can be the first important step in stopping the abuse and protecting the child from further harm.

It is a Child Protection worker's role to investigate and prove significant harm, so other professionals need only provide reasonable grounds for their belief.

General guidelines

- The best interests of the child should always be the primary consideration, with due regard to confidentiality and fairness to the person against who the allegation is made.
- Children should be encouraged to approach any person in the service to express concerns about their treatment, and should be made to feel confident that they will be taken seriously.
- It is very important to validate a child's disclosure, by listening to the child, taking them seriously and responding and acting on the disclosure by implementing GRPSA reporting procedures.
- Employees and volunteers must be clear about who they are expected/permitted to approach when expressing concerns.
- Staff must seek advice from the Approved Provider or Person with Management or Control or DHHS Child Protection, Child First and/or Victoria Police if they are uncertain about whether they have sufficient grounds to form a reasonable belief.
- Any investigation undertaken by the service must ensure procedural fairness and natural justice for a person suspected of abusing a child.
- Records must be kept about any child safety concern or complaint, and stored in accordance with the service's Privacy and Confidentiality Policy. These records must contain information about the action taken, including any internal investigation and any reports made to statutory authorities or professional bodies.
- Everyone at the service must be made aware of the need to report serious matters involving child protection to external authorities.
- Privacy must be maintained, and information must only be disclosed on a need-to-know basis.
- Instances of physical and sexual abuse of children are crimes and must be reported to the police. If a child discloses any such abuse, the service must listen, respond and report to both the police and child protection authorities.
- A report to the appropriate authorities can be made even if educators/staff and others working with children at the service do not have all the necessary information.
- Permission is not required from parents/guardians of a child where abuse is suspected, and parents/guardians do not need to be notified that a report has been made.

Forming a professional judgement

Forming an objective and professional judgement can be based on:

- warning signs (or indicators) of harm or potential harm, that have been observed or inferred
- knowledge of child development
- knowledge of cultural backgrounds
- knowledge of any difficulties experienced or support currently being received by a family
- consultation with colleagues and other professionals
- professional obligations and duty of care responsibilities
- established service protocols
- individual service procedures
- legal requirements, such as mandatory reporting.

Gathering information

Action	Details
Make notes	Record your observations, and date and sign the entries
Continue to observe	Record your observations, and date and sign the entries
Consult colleagues	Access support and advice from your colleagues, compare notes and brainstorm possible strategies to address areas of concern
Develop action plans based on service procedures	Understand and consult the policies and procedures of Goulburn Region Preschool Association Inc when determining what action to take
Talk to other agencies about helping the family	Collaborate with or engage community health services, local government services, Child FIRST, regional Department of Human Services/Child Protection officers and disability services. You may wish to instigate a case meeting
Talk to the child	Do this with respect for the child or young person's need for privacy and confidentiality
Talk to the parents/guardians	Only do this when it will not jeopardise the safety of the child or young person

Signs or indicators of harm

- Physical signs of abuse or neglect may include, but are not limited to, bruises, burns, sprains, bites, cuts, fractures, frequent hunger, malnutrition, poor hygiene and inappropriate clothing.
- Behavioural signs of abuse (physical, sexual and emotional) or neglect may include, but are not limited to, wariness or distrust of adults, fear of parents/guardians and of going home, fear when other children cry/shout, excessive friendliness to strangers, being very passive and/or compliant, having/claiming to have headaches and/or stomach pains, displaying

sexual behaviour that is unusual for the child's age, frequent rocking, sucking and biting, having difficulty sleeping, being withdrawn, aggressive and/or demanding, being highly anxious, having delayed speech, acting like a much younger child, and often being tired and falling asleep.

- Disclosures by the child concerned, or by other parties.

Managing a disclosure

Strategies include:

- Let the child talk about their concerns in their own time and in their own words
- Give them your full attention, the time and a quiet space in which to do this and be a supportive and reassuring listener
- Remain calm and use a neutral non-judgmental tone
- Comfort the child if they are distressed
- Record the child's disclosure using the child's words.
- Tell the child that telling you is the right thing to do and that what has happened is not their fault
- Let them know that you will act on this information and that you will need to let other people know so that they can help the child
- It is the role of DHHS Child Protection and Victoria Police to investigate. DO NOT take any steps to investigate. Avoid asking investigative or invasive questions which may cause the child to withdraw and may interfere with an investigation. Avoid going over information repeatedly.

Reporting

- There are two types of notifications to be made in relation to significant concerns for the safety or wellbeing of a child: a referral to Child FIRST (Family Services) or a report to Child Protection.
- To report concerns that are life threatening, ring Victoria Police on 000.
- If there is an allegation of abuse by a proprietor, staff member, contractor, volunteer, student or visitor within the service, the matter must be immediately reported directly to Victoria Police.
- If there is an allegation of abuse or misconduct in relation to a child by the Head of Organisation (GRPSA CEO) the matter must be reported to the Goulburn Region Preschool Association Board, board@grpsa.com.au
- To report concerns about the immediate safety of a child within their family unit, call the nearest DHS office in your region during business hours. To report concerns after hours or on weekends, call the Child Protection Crisis Line on 13 12 78 (24 hours, 7 days a week and toll free within Victoria). Note: this is an emergency service for weekends and after hours only, and cases reported to the Child Protection Crisis Line will be referred to the relevant DHS office on the following working day.
- Provide the following information:
 - the child's name, age and address
 - the reason for believing that the injury or behaviour is the result of abuse or neglect
 - the reason why the call is being made at this point in time
 - an assessment of immediate danger to the child/ren (the person making the report may be questioned regarding knowledge of the current location of the alleged abuser/s)

- a description of the injury or behaviour observed
- the current location of the child
- knowledge of other services that support or are involved with the family
- any other information about the family
- any specific details that will help the child, such as cultural background, need for an interpreter or disability support requirements.

A notification should still be made, even if the notifier does not have all the necessary information.

- The Approved Provider or Person with Management or Control must notify DET (through the NQA IT System portal (www.acecqa.gov.au)) of any circumstance arising at the service that poses a risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or children attending the service (Regulation 175 (2) (c) including:
 - occurrences of sexualised play between children
 - where children are being or may be at risk of being subjected to physical, emotional or sexual abuse including instances where children are observed displaying concerning behaviour that may indicate they are being subject to abuse
- Report to the Commission for Children and Young People in line with the requirements of the Reportable Conduct Scheme (see below).

Making a report to Child FIRST

A report to **Child FIRST** should be considered if, after taking into account the available information, the staff member has significant concerns for a child's wellbeing and that the immediate safety of the child will not be compromised. This may include circumstances when there are:

- significant parenting problems that may be affecting the child's development
- family conflict, including family breakdown
- families under pressure, due to a family member's physical or mental illness, substance misuse, disability or bereavement
- young, isolated and/or unsupported families
- families experiencing significant social or economic disadvantage that may adversely impact on a child's care or development.

Child FIRST provides a consolidated intake service to Family Services within sub-regional catchments. Child FIRST ensures that vulnerable children, young people and their families are linked effectively into relevant services, and this may be the best way to connect children, young people and their families with the services they need.

Making a report to Child Protection

A report to **Child Protection** should be made if, after taking into account all of the available information, the staff member forms a view that the child is in need of protection because:

- the harm or risk of harm has a serious impact on the child's immediate safety, stability and/or development
- the harm or risk of harm is persistent and entrenched, and is likely to have a serious impact on the child's safety, stability and/or development

- the child's parents/guardians are unwilling or unable to protect the child or young person from harm.

Upon receipt of a credible report, Child Protection will seek further information, often from professionals who may already be involved with the child or family, to determine whether further action is required. In determining what steps to take, Child Protection will also consider any concerns previously reported with regard to the child or young person. In most circumstances, Child Protection will inform the notifier of the outcome of investigations.

When reporting concerns of child abuse and/or neglect, it is important to remember that:

- a failure to notify the Department of Health and Human Services is an offence under section 182 of the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
- Child Protection must be notified as soon as practicable
- it is not necessary to prove that abuse has taken place, only to provide reasonable grounds for the belief
- permission from parents/guardians or caregivers is not required to make a notification, nor do they need to be informed that a notification is being or has been made
- if a notification is made in good faith, the notifier cannot be held legally liable for any consequences, regardless of the outcome of the notification
- the identity of the notifier will remain confidential unless the notifier chooses to inform the child and/or family, or if the notifier consents in writing to the disclosure of their identity, or if the court decides that this information must be disclosed
- the notifier may have an ongoing role, including:
 - acting as a support person in interviews with the child or young person
 - attending a case conference
 - participating in case-planning meetings
 - continuing to monitor the child's behaviour and their interactions with others
 - observing/monitoring the conditions of a protective court order that may relate to access or contact with a parent/guardian and following GRPSA procedures where the conditions are breached
 - liaising with other professionals and child protection officers in relation to a child or young person's wellbeing
 - providing written reports for case-planning meetings or court proceedings in relation to the child's wellbeing or progress.

Support when making a report

Making the decision to report can be a challenging and it is important to make use of available supports to guide your practice. Support is available from:

- Approved Provider, Person with Management or Control, Nominated Supervisor or Person in day to day Charge
- DHHS Child Protection and Child First
- Department of Education and Training staff
- Commission for Children and Young People
- Early Learning Association Australia for member organisations

Resources

Department of Education and Training PROTECT Portal: www.education.vic.gov.au

The Department of Education and Training's PROTECT portal provides tools and resources to assist professionals and early years services to respond to child abuse or potential child abuse, including:

- Early Childhood Guidance: This section supports early childhood providers to take action if they suspect, or are witness to, any form of child abuse.
- The flowchart: Four critical actions for early childhood services: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse, provides a summary of the critical actions to take:
- Early Childhood Online Learning: This eLearning Module supports all professionals in early childhood settings to increase their capacity to respond effectively to children whose safety, health or wellbeing may be at risk.

Commission for Children and Young People: www.ccyp.vic.gov.au

Attachment 4

Guidelines for the recruitment of staff

The processes for the recruitment and selection of employees demonstrate our commitment to maximising the safety of children and deterring unsuitable and inappropriate persons from attempting to work at Goulburn Region Preschool Association Inc. Goulburn Region Preschool Association Inc is committed to the following processes.

Preparation for recruitment

An explicit statement of our commitment to child safety is included in all advertising promotion for the organisation.

- Job advertisements clearly state our commitment to child safety.
- Job descriptions include a statement about our commitment to maintaining a child safe environment and clearly outline responsibilities and accountability.
- The selection process includes:
 - consideration of a Working with Children Check (and a criminal history record check, where appropriate)
 - confirmation of identity, which can include sighting an original birth certificate or extract, a driver's licence or a passport
 - verification of qualifications
 - thorough reference checks: at least two referees are contacted (including the current or most recent employer, if applicable) in person or via telephone and at least one referee must have observed the applicant working with children first-hand.

Interview process

- At least two people are on the interview panel.
- Questions are behavioural-based and ask the interviewee to provide examples of their past behaviour in specific situations relevant to the job being applied for.
- Questions regarding relationships with children, professional boundaries, resilience and motivation, teamwork, accountability and ethics are values-based.
- Questions are asked specifically focussing on knowledge of child safe standards
- Questions are based on key selection criteria.
- Candidates are asked about their attitudes, aspirations and motivations.
- More detail is asked for when answers seem incomplete.

Ongoing management

- Information provided to the employee on commencing work at the service includes the *Child Safe Environment Policy, Code of Conduct Policy, Complaints and Grievances Policy* and *Staffing Policy*.
- The letter of offer includes a statement about what is expected of the staff member in terms of commitment and responsibilities for child safety.

- Orientation and induction covers information about values, attitudes, expectations and workplace practices in relation to maintaining a child safe environment.
- Training and education with regard to child safety is provided for all employees.
- Resources and support are provided for all employees to ensure a child safe environment.