



SAFEGUARDING POLICY

1 Context and Definitions

1.1 Context

St Vincent de Paul Society's work includes any form of help that alleviates suffering and promotes human dignity, especially for those that are most vulnerable. All people assisted by The Society have a right to feel and be safe. The Society recognises the personal dignity and rights of people it serves, particularly children and adults at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

This Policy forms part of a safeguarding framework that ensures The Society is compliant with relevant legislation, the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations for people who engage in work that is a regulated activity; interacts with or impacts on children or vulnerable people either directly or indirectly, by providing a framework for children and vulnerable people to be better protected and for people engaged with the Society to know their responsibilities.

This Policy has associated operational policies to administer Working with Children Checks and National Criminal History Record checks for people to engage in child and vulnerable persons-related work in Queensland.

2 Policy Statement

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

St Vincent De Paul Society in Queensland (The Society) commits to promoting and protecting the welfare and human rights of people that interact with, or are affected by, our work - particularly those that may be at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation. We have zero tolerance for abuse, neglect or exploitation. We will take a survivor-centric approach in all that we do.

All staff, members, volunteers, partners and business partners of The Society share responsibility for guarding against abuse, neglect or exploitation. Beyond this, particular people have specific responsibilities, and they must carry out their duties without exception.

The Society has a Complaint Handling Policy for managing incidents when one arises.

3 Principles

3.1 National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS)

The Society's Safeguarding Policy has been aligned with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards:

Standard 1 - Committed leadership, governance and culture.

Standard 2 - Children and adults are safe, informed and participate.



Standard 3 – Partnering with families, carers and communities.

Standard 4 – Equity is promoted and diversity is respected.

Standard 5 – Robust human resource management.

Standard 6 – Effective complaints management.

Standard 7 – Ongoing education and training.

Standard 8 – Safe physical and online environments.

Standard 9 – Continuous improvement.

Standard 10 – Policies and procedures support the safety of children and adults.

For further details see the Appendix to this Policy.

3.2 National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

The Society’s Safeguarding Policy has been aligned with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations:

Standard 1 – Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.

Standard 2 – Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

Standard 3 – Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.

Standard 4 – Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.

Standard 5 – People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.

Standard 6 – Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.

Standard 7 – Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.

Standard 8 – Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.

Standard 9 – Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved.

Standard 10 – Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.



4 Scope of Policy

Everyone, whether paid staff, members, volunteers, contractors or business partners, is responsible for working within the policy and reporting when safeguarding is not adequate.

5 Roles and Responsibilities

While the responsibility to protect people is shared by all who work at or with The Society, some individuals have specific obligations with which they must comply.

The State Council of St Vincent De Paul Queensland is responsible for:

- (a) Protecting all people that interact with, or are affected by, The Society;
- (b) Ensuring that there are appropriate and effective ways for The Society to do this;
- (c) Ensuring that The Society observes all relevant laws relating to safeguarding;
- (d) Ensuring that The Society takes a survivor-centric approach.

The Safeguarding Advisory Committee is appointed by State Council by charter to oversee:

- (a) the effective ongoing implementation of child safeguarding practices, including the Safeguarding Policy and related procedures and practices;
- (b) the development of safeguarding practices for vulnerable adults.

The Chief Executive Officer will:

- (a) Ensure The Society has effective and appropriate ways to manage safeguarding and legal compliance; and
- (b) Ensure the establishment of a Safeguarding Office suitably resourced with the appropriate skills and competency.

The Safeguarding Office will:

- (a) Develop, implement and maintain the safeguarding framework;
- (b) Manage reports of abuse, neglect or exploitation;
- (c) Develop practices and procedures to comply with the safeguarding framework;
- (d) Provide training to all staff, members, volunteers and contractors to ensure they are aware of their obligations to report suspected incidents of abuse, neglect or exploitation;
- (e) Monitor relevant laws and standards and make recommendations for any changes required to the safeguarding framework, including this policy;
- (f) Provide support for the work of the Safeguarding Advisory Committee and staff, members, volunteers and contractors in undertaking their responsibilities.



All managers of The Society will:

- (a) Promote a positive safeguarding culture;
- (b) Implement this Policy and related policies, practice and procedures, in their area of responsibility;
- (c) Ensure that the risks of safeguarding incidents have been considered in their area of responsibility;
- (d) Ensure that there are appropriate controls in place to prevent, detect and respond to incidents;
- (e) Facilitate the reporting of any suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation;
- (f) Take a survivor-centric approach to potential incidents and ensure that any incident is dealt with transparently and accountably.

All staff, members and volunteers of The Society will:

- (a) Familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, the Code of Conduct, policies and procedures for safeguarding, including reporting;
- (b) Comply with all requirements of the safeguarding framework, including reporting;
- (c) Report any incident to the appropriate authority when it is reasonable to suspect that a person's safety or welfare is at risk;
- (d) Report any suspicion that a person's safety or welfare may be at risk to the appropriate authority; and
- (e) Work together to create and continue a safe environment.

All partners and contractors of The Society must:

- (a) Implement this policy and The Society's procedures in their dealings with The Society;
- (b) Report any suspicion that an incident may have taken place, is taking place, or could take place.

6 Review

The Safeguarding Advisory Committee will undertake:

- an annual review of the safeguarding framework;
- a review of this policy not less than every two years from the date of approval by the State Council.

Any member, volunteer or staff who wishes to make any comments about this policy or the



safeguarding framework may forward their suggestions to the Safeguarding Office.

7 Related Policies and Procedures

This policy and the safeguarding framework depend upon implementation of the Code of Conduct and other relevant Society policies and procedures. Some of these are listed below.

- Community Services Protecting the Safety and Wellbeing of Children and Vulnerable Persons Harm Prevention and Response Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Screening and Selection Policy
- Privacy Policy
- WHS Risk Management Policy
- Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Occupational Violence and Aggression Policy
- Safeguarding Complaints Handling Policy
- Community Services Complaints Policy
- Grievance Resolution Policy
- Complaints and Compliments Policy
- Employee Performance Policy
- Hazard Manual – Children in the Workplace
- GRA-01 WHS General Workplace Part 1 Risk Assessment - Retail
- GRA-07 Risk Assessment – Youth Programs
- Welcome Handbook

8 Examples of Safeguarding Language and Terminology

The safeguarding framework will require a process of defining and adopting appropriate use of relevant language and terminology. Some indicative safeguarding terms are set out below for reference.

Child/ren	Any person/s under the age of eighteen years
Child-related Work or Regulated Activity	Work where an adult has contact with a child where the contact would be expected as a normal part of the activity or services
Contact	Is contact that can be reasonably be expected as a normal part of engaging i.e. physical, oral and written communication or making a decision about a child; including where people may have an opportunity to harm a child either directly through the misuse of information or a power imbalance
Emotional abuse	Emotional abuse is inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts toward a child or a pattern of



	failure over time to provide a child with adequate non-physical nurture and emotional availability. Such acts have a high probability of damaging a child's self-esteem or social competence
Grooming	Grooming generally refers to behaviour that makes it easier for an offender to procure a child or vulnerable adult for sexual activity. It often involves the act of building the trust of children and/or their carers or a vulnerable adult, to gain access to them in order to sexually abuse them. For example, grooming includes the provision of, or attention paid to a specific child or adult, providing gifts, money, drugs or alcohol to them, encouraging romantic feelings or exposing them to sexual concepts through conversation or exposure to pornography
Incidental Contact	When a person works in the same building where child-related work and/ or a regulated activity takes place but does not have any physical or face to face communication with children or vulnerable people
Mandatory Reporters	Mandatory reporters are required by law to report suspected child abuse and neglect to government authorities
National Catholic Safeguarding Standards	The National Catholic Safeguarding Standards have been developed by Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd to operationalise the commitment by all Catholic Church entities to ensure the safety of all who encounter the Church, with a focus on children and adults at risk.
National Principles for Child Safe Organisations	The National Principles have been developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission and are designed to build capacity and deliver child safety and wellbeing in organisations, families and communities and prevent future harm.
Neglect	Neglect is the failure to provide a child (where they are in a position to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their physical and emotional development and wellbeing
Physical abuse	Physical abuse occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child. This may for instance, take the form of slapping, hitting, punching, shaking, kicking, beating, burning, shoving or grabbing.



	Physical abuse can be a single or repeated act. It doesn't always leave visible marks or injuries
Reasonable grounds to suspect	<p>Is a situation where a person has some information that leads them believe that abuse, neglect or exploitation has taken place, is taking place, or may take place. It comes with a low burden of proof (in fact, no proof is needed at all), but is based on some information. Questions that may help a person to determine whether they have 'reasonable grounds to suspect' might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Could you explain to another person why you suspect something? This helps to make sure that your suspicion is based on information, even if you have no proof. (b) Would an objective other person, with the same information as you, come to the same conclusion? This helps to make sure that your suspicion is as objective as possible
Safeguarding	The measures we take to prevent, report and respond to harm or abuse and to protect the health, well-being and human rights of anyone that comes into contact with the Society, whether it is Society people, partners, program participants and communities
Safeguarding Advisory Committee	The Safeguarding Committee assists State Council by overseeing and monitoring policies, procedures and practices which safeguard children and vulnerable adults engaging with St Vincent De Paul in Queensland and ensure safeguarding functions are embedded in the governance structures and practices of St Vincent De Paul in Queensland.
Safeguarding Office	An office delegated by the CEO to develop and maintain The Society safeguarding framework
Sexual abuse	Sexual abuse means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions
Sexual Exploitation	Sexual exploitation means any actual or



	attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another
Sexual Harassment	Sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favour, verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature, or any other behaviour of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another, when such conduct interferes with work, is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment. While typically involving a pattern of behaviour, it can take the form of a single incident
Staff	Includes a person engaged by the Society to provide regulated activities/ services to children or vulnerable adults and receives monetary payment for providing these (includes sub-contractors)
Survivor-centric approach	Means considering and lawfully prioritising the needs, right and wishes of survivors
Volunteer	Includes a person providing regulated activities or services to children or vulnerable people and does not receive payment for work - volunteers, volunteer members, members and Board members
Vulnerable Person/People	Anyone 18 years or over who - • is unable to take care of themselves/ protect themselves from harm or exploitation; or • due to their gender, mental or physical health, disability, ethnicity, religious identity, sexual orientation, economic or social status, or as a result of disasters and conflicts, is deemed to be at risk; or • is in a situation of subordination and therefore experiencing a power differential putting them at risk of harm.
Workers	Paid staff, members, volunteers, contractors and business partners



Policy Version and Revision Information

Action	By whom	Version	Date
Created		1	
Authorised			
Reviewed		2	Aug 2021
Authorised			
Revised	TalentCode HR	3	Apr 2024
Reviewed	Safeguarding Advisory Committee		April 2024
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Appendix: NCSS Implementation

Through the safeguarding framework, the Society seeks to meet the ten NCSS standards, including through the measures set out below. This Appendix will be updated from time to time as required in line with relevant legislation, standards and reflecting the work of the Safeguarding Advisory Committee and the Safeguarding Office

8.1 Committed Leadership, Governance and Culture

Effective safeguarding begins with committed leadership, where leaders emphasise the importance of creating a safe environment for all individuals. The Society has established a safeguarding framework, demonstrating a clear commitment to protecting vulnerable members of the community.

Safeguarding is not just a set of rules; it becomes ingrained in the organisation's culture. A culture of safety and respect ensures that all individuals are informed, empowered, and supported in reporting concerns and seeking assistance. Through ongoing education and awareness initiatives, The Society promotes a culture where safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, fostering trust and collaboration among staff, members, volunteers and participants.

8.2 Children and Adults Are Safe, Informed and Participate

The Society recognises the unique insight, experiences and contribution of children and vulnerable people involved in our programs and provides opportunities for their feedback about people and services to be heard and incorporated into its policies and programs.

The Society will inform children and vulnerable people about the safeguarding behaviours expected from Society staff, members and volunteers and the Society's complaint handling policy for responding to concerns about children and vulnerable people, including who to contact if they are at risk, have been abused, or are concerned about another child or person.

Where appropriate, children and vulnerable people will be involved in making decisions that affect them.

All activities or programs where children or vulnerable people attend without their parents, carers, or school, must have a designated staff member present for the duration of the activity. Any exemptions to this requirement, must be approved in writing by the Safeguarding Office in consultation with the CEO.

8.3 Partnering with Families, Carers and Communities

Families, carers, and communities play crucial roles in promoting the safeguarding of children and adults by being actively informed and involved in various initiatives.

Educational programs and workshops will be used to disseminate information about recognising signs of abuse, reporting procedures, and available support services, ensuring that families, carers, and communities are well-informed.

Awareness campaigns will be conducted to engage community members in discussions about safeguarding, encouraging active participation and collective responsibility in creating safe environments.



8.4 Equity is Promoted and Diversity is Respected

The Society acknowledges and accommodates diverse circumstances and backgrounds of vulnerable people, including factors such as ethnicity, race, gender, age, sexual orientation and disability, as well as other factors.

The Society recognises the additional challenges and vulnerabilities for some communities including:

- (a) culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- (b) First Nations Peoples
- (c) Children and people who identify as part of the LGBTQI community
- (d) Children and people with a disability

The Society will ensure that all staff, members, volunteers and participants will be treated equally and respectfully by:

- (a) promoting inclusive practices
- (b) fostering an environment where everyone feels valued and supported
- (c) ensuring equal access to resources, opportunities and support services
- (d) promoting and understanding, acceptance and celebration of diverse cultures, beliefs and perspectives
- (e) safeguarding measures are applied equitably to all individuals, taking into account their unique needs and circumstances

8.5 Robust Human Resource Management

The Society is committed to a robust recruitment and screening process for staff, members and volunteers to attract people who share our values and prevent the engagement of those who may seek to abuse or exploit children or vulnerable people.

The Society will not knowingly employ or engage anyone who poses a risk to the safety or wellbeing of children or vulnerable people.

The Society will apply strict recruitment and screening processes which will be reviewed and updated regularly to accurately reflect appropriate child-safe recruiting and screening standards. The following practices apply to the recruitment and screening of all staff, members and volunteers:

- (a) A statement that confirms The Society's commitment to safeguarding in all job advertisements and job descriptions.
- (b) Candidates will be provided with access to The Society Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct during the recruitment and onboarding process.
- (c) All interviews will include targeted safeguarding questions.
- (d) Documented verbal reference checks must be conducted for all positions which involve contact with children or vulnerable people. Referee interviews will include targeted behavioural and safeguarding questions.



- (e) All candidates must disclose whether they have been charged with harm, abuse or exploitation offences, and must notify The Society in the event of future allegations, charges and convictions.
- (f) Suitability screening including but not limited to criminal history checks and other suitability assessments.

Criminal Record Checks

Criminal record checks are an important mechanism in the The Society's safeguarding approach. Criminal record checks will be conducted for all staff, members and volunteers prior to engagement, as part of our suitability assessment.

All Australian criminal history checks must be undertaken through the Australian Federal Police, or an approved provider. Checks must also be conducted for each country in which the individual has lived for 12 months or longer over the previous 5 years, and for the individual's countries of citizenship.

Criminal record checks will also be undertaken for existing staff, members and volunteers every 3 years as a means of ongoing suitability assessment. Staff, members and volunteers must immediately inform the Safeguarding Office in writing if:

- (a) they are alleged to have committed or been charged with, or convicted of, criminal offences, including those relating to child abuse (including accessing, making or distributing child abuse material, including online) or exploitation, and/or
- (b) is the subject of disciplinary procedures or legal proceedings relating to exploitation and abuse (which they must also declare to The Society – and when they apply for positions internally).

Working with Children Checks

A Working with Children Check (WWCC) must be provided by The Society staff, members and volunteers working directly with children, having access to child-sensitive data, or having ongoing contact with children.

8.6 Effective Complaints Management

Harassment, abuse, neglect and exploitation are all serious misconduct and The Society reserves the right to:

- (a) Take disciplinary action against those it believes are responsible, which may include dismissal
- (b) Report the matter to law enforcement

All complaints will be treated seriously, confidentially, and immediately with due regard for the rights of the alleged survivor/victim, the notifier and the accused person/people, using the Complaints Handling Policy.

Reporting suspected incidents

All staff, members, volunteers and third parties must, as soon as practicable, report any



suspicion, belief, disclosure or allegation of:

- (a) Risk of potential or actual child harm, abuse or exploitation due to the actions or behaviour of staff, members, volunteers or third parties
- (b) Breaches of the Child Safeguarding Policy or Code of Conduct for the Protection of the Child, including misconduct which relates to or has impact on safety of children or vulnerable adults
- (c) A criminal offence being committed
- (d) Arrests and/or convictions for offences

They may do this through direct reporting to:

- (a) Any member of the State Council
- (b) The Chief Executive Officer
- (c) The Safeguarding Office
- (d) Their Manager or Supervisor

If a person believes that another person is at risk of immediate harm or the victim of a criminal offence, they must dial 000.

Responding to suspected incidents

All suspected, perceived, potential or actual incidents will be managed through the Complaints Handling Policy.

External reporting

The Society will report any suspicion of a criminal offence to the police or the relevant criminal judicial body.

8.7 Ongoing Education and Training

All staff, members and volunteers will receive information relating to The Society's Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct as part of the orientation/induction process.

All staff, members and volunteers must participate in mandatory safeguarding training which covers the following topics:

- (a) The Society's safeguarding approach and policies
- (b) understanding the nature and impacts of exploitation and abuse and the factors that can increase vulnerability and therefore risks
- (c) identifying and responding to indicators of harm
- (d) responding to concerns, disclosures and allegations
- (e) reporting concerns and disclosures
- (f) community/project accountability and feedback mechanisms and how these link to



internal reporting processes

- (g) building a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults.

All staff, members and volunteers must regularly participate in refresher training (every 2 years or earlier as required). Where a role has been assessed as either being high risk, or involves contact with children or vulnerable adults, The Society may direct that additional training, increased supervision and mentoring be provided as part of developing competency and capability and reducing risk.

8.8 Safe Physical and Online Environments

The Society has a Risk Appetite of zero-tolerance regarding harm to children and vulnerable people.

The Society will manage the risk of safeguarding by:

- (a) Having up-to-date and documented risk assessments;
- (b) Maintaining a register of The Society's legal obligations for safeguarding and workplace health and safety in all the jurisdictions in which it operates;
- (c) Having an action plan that sets out how it will manage safeguarding;
- (d) Adhering to this Safeguarding Policy and its Code of Conduct;
- (e) Doing due diligence checks of staff, members, volunteers and third parties;
- (f) Implementing policies, procedures and systems that introduce controls to reduce the likelihood and consequence of incidents;
- (g) Conducting awareness-raising for stakeholders on risks, expectations, and individual responsibilities;
- (h) Maintaining two reporting processes: the confidential reporting process, and the overt reporting process;
- (i) Having an incident response plan;
- (j) Monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness and proportionality of its safeguarding approach.

8.9 Continuous Improvement

To ensure continuous improvement in Safeguarding policies and procedures, The Society will implement the following strategies:

- (a) Conduct periodic reviews of safeguarding policies and procedures to assess their effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. Solicit feedback from stakeholders, including staff, volunteers, and service users, to gain insights into their experiences and perspectives on the existing safeguarding measures.
- (b) Stay informed about emerging risks and trends related to safeguarding by monitoring relevant industry developments and updates in legislation and regulations. This proactive approach will allow The Society to anticipate and



address potential challenges before they escalate.

- (c) Actively seek and incorporate feedback from external audits, inspections, or regulatory bodies to ensure compliance with safeguarding standards and regulations. The Society will implement recommendations and lessons learned from these evaluations to enhance Safeguarding policies and procedures.

8.10 Policies and Procedures Support the Safety of Children and Vulnerable Adults

The Society will ensure that safeguarding policies, procedures and resources are implemented effectively across the organisation and to all participants and community members.

Documentation and records of safeguarding related activities will be maintained, including training sessions, risk assessments, incident reports and any interventions/actions taken. This documentation provides evidence of The Society's commitment to safeguarding and helps track compliance with policies and legal requirements.