

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

for Playgroup WA Member Community Playgroups

Commitment to Child Safety

Playgroup WA is committed to promoting the safety, wellbeing, and inclusion of all children. We believe every child has the right to feel safe, be safe, and be protected from harm at all times.

This policy affirms Playgroup WA and its Member Playgroups' commitment to child safety and wellbeing. We are dedicated to creating environments where children are respected, valued, and empowered to participate fully. Our decisions and actions relating to child safety will always be guided by the best interests of the child.

1. Purpose

Everyone has a responsibility to help protect children and promote their wellbeing. The purpose of this document is to outline Playgroup WA's expectations and requirements for members and volunteers in upholding child safety. It provides guidance on recognising, responding to, and reporting concerns that a child may be experiencing, or be at risk of, abuse or neglect.

2. Scope

The principles of this policy apply to all Playgroup WA members including:

- Parents/Carers
- Volunteers
- Visitors

3. Responsibility for children's safety

Keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility. When parents, carers, and community members work together to protect children, we help create a safer, more supportive environment where every child can grow and thrive.

4. Policy

The safety and wellbeing of children is of the highest priority to Playgroup WA. As the peak body to playgroups in Western Australia we are wholly committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of children and to respond appropriately to concerns of child abuse and neglect.

5. Objectives

This policy aims to ensure that:

- Everyone understands their responsibilities in relation to the protection of children attending Playgroup WA playgroups.
- Everyone knows the appropriate action to take if they have concerns that a child/ren is subject to or at risk of abuse or neglect.

6. Policy Implementation

6.1 Reporting

All reports and concerns about child abuse and neglect will be taken seriously and acted on immediately. Click here for [Child Safety and Wellbeing Reporting Flow Chart](#).

It is important to understand that when you report a concern to the Department of Communities- Child Protection and Family Support, you are providing one important piece of a larger puzzle.

Department of Communities- Child Protection and Family Support will consider the information you provide alongside any existing records or reports to assess whether further action, such as an assessment or investigation, is required. Your information may be the first piece of the puzzle, one of several connecting pieces, or even the final piece that helps complete the picture and ensures a child's safety.

Step 1: A person receives a *disclosure** of abuse or neglect (definitions listed in glossary in section 7 below) or *observes* indicators of abuse or neglect.

*(To learn how to respond to a disclosure click [here](#)).

Step 2: The person who received the disclosure or has concerns for the safety or wellbeing of the child will contact:

- Office hours: **The Department of Communities CPFS ☎ 1800 273 889**
- After hours: **Crisis Care Unit ☎ 08 9223 1111**
- Immediate safety concerns: **Police ☎000**

If a committee member is approached by a playgroup member, for a playgroup families' details to assist the member to make a report to the Department of Communities – Child Protection and Family Support due to child safety concerns, the committee should:

1. Ask the member to report to the Department of Communities- Child Protection and Family Support, with the information they currently have

available to them, including the name of the playgroup they attend in the report, so the department can follow up for child's details if required
and

2. The committee member who was approached about the concerns, is to make their own report to the Department of Communities- Child Protection and Family Support. When doing so, the committee member must clearly state that the information was reported to them and not personally observed.

Step 3: For non-urgent questions or information, contact your Playgroup WA Development Officer. Please be aware that Playgroup WA is not a crisis service and there may be a delay in our response.

6.2 Report allegation of abuse committed by a Playgroup WA staff member

Step 1: The person who observes the abuse or receives a disclosure about a staff member should report to the Department of Communities- Child Protection and Family Support (as listed in 6.1), **and**

Step 2: Report concern to the Playgroup WA CEO at CEO@Playgroupwa.com.au,
or

Step 3: If the CEO is the person alleged to have committed the abuse or may be biased towards the staff member alleged to have committed the abuse the person with a concern will instead inform the President of the Playgroup WA Board at Board.President@playgroupwa.com.au

6.3 Confidentiality

It is important that any concerns or reports remain confidential.

The person must not

- inform the parents or carers of the child, or any other person, that a report has been made
- inform the person alleged to be responsible for the abuse that a report has been made.

6.4 Protection from liability

There is legal protection for people who provide information in 'good faith' to the Department of Communities- Child Protection and Family Support.

6.5 Recruitment and Screening of Volunteers

All Volunteers at Playgroup WA are required to have a valid:

- Working with Children Check (Western Australia)

The Volunteer recruitment process will include:

- Complete a Working with Children Check (WWCC) validation check on Volunteers WWCC here [Card Validation](#) (and complete this annually).
- Committee to enter Volunteer WWCC to Employee Registration, so the WWCC will notify them if the Volunteer's WWCC becomes invalid. [Employee Registration](#)
- Complete Referee checks on volunteers, including question relating to the applicant's general conduct and any concerns about applicant's conduct when working with or interacting with children.

6.6 Training

To ensure families understand the meaning and indicators of child abuse and neglect, Playgroup WA will provide up-to-date information on the 'Child Safety' page of its website and actively seek opportunities to offer training and education on child protection and abuse prevention.

7. Glossary

Child Abuse:

The deliberate act or failure to act that causes, or is likely to cause, harm to a child's safety, wellbeing or development. It includes all forms of physical, sexual, emotional or psychological abuse, as well as neglect.

Physical Abuse:

Physical abuse involves the use of force that results in, or is likely to result in, physical harm to a child. This may include hitting, shaking, burning or other violent actions.

Emotional or Psychological Abuse:

Emotional abuse includes behaviours that harm a child's self-worth or emotional wellbeing, such as persistent criticism, belittling, name-calling, humiliation, isolation, or exposing a child to domestic violence.

Sexual Abuse:

Sexual abuse includes any form of sexual activity with a child, whether by contact or non-contact. This includes indecent touching, exposing a child to sexual acts or materials, using sexual language, or involving a child in pornography. It may also involve coercion, grooming, or manipulation by an adult or older child.

Neglect:

Neglect occurs when a child's basic needs for safety, health, education, supervision, or emotional support are not met due to deliberate or careless failure by a caregiver. This may result in harm to the child's physical or developmental wellbeing.

Grooming:

Grooming is a deliberate process used by an adult (or sometimes an older child or young person) to build a relationship of trust with a child and, often, with the child's family or community. The purpose of grooming is to create opportunities to sexually abuse or exploit the child, or to reduce the likelihood that the child or others will report the behaviour.

Grooming can occur in person or online and may involve behaviours such as giving gifts, paying special attention to a child, isolating them from others, testing boundaries, or gradually introducing sexualised behaviour or conversations. It can also include manipulating adults around the child to gain their trust and lower their suspicions.

Child protection:

The term used to describe the responsibilities and activities undertaken to prevent or stop children being abused, neglected, exploited or maltreated. Often used to refer to a statutory authority responsible for investigating and responding to reports of child abuse in the community.

Code of Conduct:

A policy which specifies behaviours expected of all playgroup members, visitors, volunteers, and contractors of the playgroup.

Crisis Care:

Provides Western Australia's after-hours response to reported concerns for a child's safety and wellbeing and information and referrals for people experiencing crisis.

Department of Communities Child Protection and Family Support:

The Department of Communities– Child Protection and Family Support protects and cares for Western Australian children and young people who are in need, and supports families and individuals who are at risk or in crisis. Find out more [here](#)

Disclosure:

A disclosure is when a child, or someone on their behalf, conveys (verbally or non-verbally) that they are or have been subjected to abuse or other harm. This may occur when an adult, such as a parent or caregiver, speaks to a playgroup committee member to share concerns about a child’s safety or wellbeing.

Indicators of child abuse and neglect:

As signs, either physical, emotional, or behavioural—that may suggest a child is experiencing harm or is at risk of harm. These indicators can be observed in the child, in their interactions with others, or in the behaviour of adults responsible for their care. While a single sign may not confirm abuse or neglect, the presence of multiple indicators or a pattern of concerning behaviours may warrant further attention or reporting. Further information can be found [here](#)

Playgroup Member:

A family member or caregiver who participates in a community playgroup with a playgroup aged child. Parent participants may take on leadership or support roles within a playgroup.

Volunteer:

Attends a Playgroup WA playgroup without children and assists at playgroup. Volunteers must have a current Working with Children Check