

Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy

STC's Commitment to Child Safety

Purpose

Superior Training Centre (STC) is committed to the safety of children and young people. Children and young people are valued and respected. STC runs apprenticeships which sometime includes high school students and apprentices under the age of 18 and STC must ensure the safety and wellbeing of these vulnerable students. STC does not accept international (CRICOS) students under the age of 18

A child safe culture is championed and modelled at all levels of the organisation. Bullying and harassment will not be tolerated.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, students and contractors referred to throughout the policy collectively as personnel.

All STC personnel are required to agree to accept and act in accordance with the policy as part of STC's induction processes.

All students under eighteen (18) years of age who are supported by STC have a right to feel and be safe. We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children. We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.

We promote diversity and tolerance, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. As a trade training provider in the West and Southwest of Sydney and an international student provider, STC has many culturally and linguistically diverse students We:

- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children,
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and
- Ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

We have zero tolerance of child abuse, harm and racism. All allegations and safety concerns are treated very seriously and consistently with STC policies and procedures. We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety and wellbeing, which we follow rigorously.

STC is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks. We have robust human resources and recruitment practices for all personnel.

This policy applies to all activities undertaken by STC which involve, result in or relate to contact with children, and is communicated widely and accessibly including in this policy, our **Student Handbooks** and via publishing on our website.

This policy applies to all individuals who conduct work for STC in a paid or unpaid capacity, including executive leadership, all RTO staff, volunteers, trainees, contractors and consultants.

Legislative Framework

Providing services nationally, STC has implemented a Child Safe framework to comply with national legislative requirements including, but is not limited to:

- *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.*
- *The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.*
- *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW),*

STC is committed to establishing and maintaining child safe environments and has designed services with a particular focus on:

- The *Keep Them Safe: A Shared Approach to Child Wellbeing* framework (NSW), As a child safe organisation, STC:
- Has established a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.
- Has embedded child safety and wellbeing in organisational leadership, governance and culture. Following RTO Standards 2025 Outcome Standard 4 – Safe and Supportive Learning Environment
- Informs and empowers children and young people about their rights, supporting participation in decisions affecting them.
- Informs and involves families and communities in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
- Upholds equity and respects diverse needs in policy and practice.
- Has inclusive approaches for children with a disability, Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Ensures people working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
- Maintains child-focused processes for services delivery and the management of complaints and concerns.
- Ensures staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
- Has actively considered risks of abuse within the organisation.
- Ensures physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
- Has well-articulated policies and procedures documenting how STC has implemented and maintains its child safe approach.
- Regularly reviews and improves processes used for the implementation of Child Safe Standards.

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

1. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
2. Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

3. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
5. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
6. Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.
7. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
8. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
9. Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

Child Safety and Wellbeing Governance

Management

STC *Child Safety and Wellbeing Management* is responsible for implementing or complying with all aspects of STC's child safety and wellbeing requirements including:

- This policy,
- Recruitment and screening practices,
- Staff induction, training, supervision and support,
- The policy and procedure for receiving and responding to complaints,
- Risk assessment and management processes,
- All policies and procedures on external reporting, record keeping and information sharing, and
- The Student Code of Conduct – Child Safety & Wellbeing.

The Management has the role of making sure that children's safety is prioritised, and that action is taken when anyone raises concerns about children's safety.

Management makes sure that staff and volunteers are conducting risk assessments and taking action to manage risks in accordance with this policy. And ensures that appropriate child safety training for staff and volunteers is identified and completed.

Management conducts an annual review of how effectively STC is delivering child safety and wellbeing.

Child Safety Officer

STC has appointed a child safety officer for its RTO operations, being the designated person to hear or be informed about all allegations or concerns and providing support to other personnel.

Child Safety Officer STC

Linda Hargreaves

Our designated child safety officer provides a single contact for children, parents and personnel to seek advice and support regarding the safety and wellbeing of children.

Valuing diversity

We value diversity and equity for all children. To achieve this, we:

- Provide training for all Management members, staff and volunteers on understanding diversity and how to support inclusion and cultural safety.
- Welcome and support participation of all children, including children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, LGBTIQ+ children and Aboriginal children and their families.
- Offer students and families through our application for enrolment process the opportunity to provide information about themselves, including any specific needs to participate fully in our programs.
- Have zero tolerance of racism and other forms of discrimination and take action when discrimination or exclusion is identified.
- Have a physical and online environment that actively celebrates diversity.
- Commit to ensuring our facilities and online activities promote inclusion of children of all abilities, including the implementation of processes in line with the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*.

Child Abuse

Child / Children means a person who is under the age of 18 years.

Child abuse means:

- A sexual offence committed against a child.
- An offence committed against a child, such as grooming.
- Physical violence against a child.
- Causing serious emotional or psychological harm to a child.
- Serious neglect of a child.

Harm is damage to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, including as a result of child abuse by adults or the conduct of other children. It includes physical, emotional, sexual and psychological harm. Harm can arise from a single act or event and can also be cumulative, that is, arising as a result of a series of acts or events over a period of time.

Reporting child abuse is a community-wide responsibility. Child abuse includes any act committed against a child involving:

- Physical violence,
- Sexual offences,
- Serious emotional or psychological abuse, and
- Serious neglect.

Concerns and Complaints

A **concern** refers to any potential issue that could impact negatively on the safety and wellbeing of children.

A **complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction related to one or more of the following:

- Our services or dealings with individuals.
- Allegations of abuse or misconduct by a staff member, a volunteer or another individual associated with STC.

- Disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child or young person.
- The conduct of a child or young person at STC.
- The inadequate handling of a prior concern.
- General concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity.

Call the police on 000 if you have immediate concerns for a child's safety.

All STC personnel are required to report to police if they know or reasonably believe that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16. *It is a criminal offence (failure to disclose) to fail to comply with this obligation across jurisdictions.*

What is a 'Reasonable Belief'?

A 'reasonable belief' is not the same as having proof. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed when:

- A child states that they have been sexually abused,
- A child states that they know someone who has been sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves),
- Someone who knows a child states that the child has been sexually abused,
- Observations of the child's behaviour or development leads to a belief that the child has been sexually abused, or
- Signs of sexual abuse leads to a belief that the child has been sexually abused.

A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action.

If a person 16 years or older provided you with the information and they do not have an intellectual disability and they do not want the information reported to the police, an individual is then not required to report to police.

STC will not tolerate incidents of child abuse. All personnel understand their obligation to notify relevant authorities as soon as practicable if they have a reasonable suspicion that a minor has been, or is being, abused or neglected by a member of their family or any other individual:

- New South Wales Child Protection Line - **13 21 11**

Code of Conduct – Child Safety & Wellbeing

All STC personnel are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children and are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:

- Adhering to STC's child safe policy at all times upholding STC's statement of commitment to child safety and wellbeing at all times.
- Participating in all training and professional development including training on child safety and wellbeing.
- Treating all children and young people with respect, regardless of race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, cultural background, financial situation, disability or other characteristics.

- Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse.
- Listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another child.
- Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children.
- Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability.
- Ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child.
- Reporting any allegations of child abuse to the Child Safety Officer & STC management and ensure any allegation to reported to the police or child protection.
- Reporting any child safety concerns to the Child Safety Officer & STC management.
- If an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child(ren) is safe.
- Encouraging children to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.
- Reporting any conflicts of interest, I have (such as an outside relationship with a child) that may affect my ability to perform my role.
- Respecting the privacy of children and their families, including keeping all personal information confidential unless required by law to share it.
- Informing parents and carers if there are situations that need to be safely managed but are outside the boundaries of this Code of Conduct (such as undertaking one-on-one training sessions).
- Upholding the rights of the child and always prioritising their needs.

Personnel must not:

- Develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism.
- Exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical.
- Put children at risk of abuse.
- Do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves.
- Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children.
- Use inappropriate, hurtful or offensive behaviour or language in the presence of children.
- Express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children.
- Discriminate against any child, including because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability.
- Have organised contact with a child or their family outside of our organisation without our child safety officer's knowledge and / or consent.
- Have any inappropriate online contact with a child or their family.
- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.

- Condone or participate in illegal, unsafe, abusive or harmful behaviour towards children – this includes physical violence, sexual abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, grooming, neglect or sexual misconduct.
- Ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse or harm.
- Exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues.
- Fail to report information to police if I know a child has been abused.
- Touch children in a way that is unnecessary or unsuitable and falls outside what is reasonable for STC services delivery purposes.
- Persistently criticise and/or denigrate a child.
- Deliberately prevent a child from forming friendships.
- Verbally assault a child or create a climate of fear.
- Offer children and young people alcohol, cigarettes or other drugs.
- Show children pornographic images, share details of sexual experiences with a child or use sexual language or gestures in the presence of children.
- Have unauthorised contact with children and young people online, on social media or by phone.
- Take photographs, screenshots or share images of children involved in activities that are not authorised or required for STC service delivery activities.
- Be alone with a child when there is no professional reason for doing so.

By observing these standards all personnel acknowledge individual responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to the Child Safety Officer & STC management.

All third-party contractors are also expected to abide by the **Child Safe Code of Conduct**, and where they are engaging with children will have to sign an agreement to comply with the code, prior to delivering any services.

STC enforces this policy. Potential breaches by anyone will be investigated and may result in restriction of duties, suspension or termination of employment or engagement or other corrective action. More information can be found in our misconduct procedure.

Some breaches of this Code of Conduct may need to be reported to the Police, or to the relevant Commission. Our complaint handling processes below provide more information about our reporting obligations to external authorities as well as describing protections and confidentiality provisions for anyone making a report.

If any person in a position of authority within our organisation becomes aware of a substantial risk that a child may become the victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with the organisation (for example, an employee, contractor or volunteer), and they have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, then they must take all reasonable steps to do so. A person in authority who negligently fails to take appropriate action to address the risk may be charged with the criminal offence of 'failing to protect' and may face a term of imprisonment. If an adult reasonably believes a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16, they must report it to Police by calling 000 or going to their local police station. Failure to disclose the information may be a criminal offence.

Breaches or suspected breaches of the Code of Conduct should be reported as soon as practicable to:

Child Safety Officer STC - Linda Hargreaves

Breaches or suspected breaches of the Code of Conduct will be taken seriously and dealt with quickly, fairly and transparently.

Any individual who breaches the Code of Conduct will face disciplinary action and depending on severity of the breach, the individual may have their employment terminated.

Risk Management

STC ensures the protection of children when a risk is identified. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments and online environments, without compromising a child's right to privacy, access to information and social connections.

Recruiting Staff and Volunteers

STC puts child safety and wellbeing at the centre of recruitment and screening processes for staff and volunteers. We only recruit staff and volunteers who are appropriate to engage with children.

We require a Working with Children Check, National Criminal Checks and referee checks for all staff and volunteers who have a role with children or have access to children's personal information. We require staff to have appropriate qualifications for their roles and check to make sure these qualifications are valid.

To ensure we engage the most suitable people to work with children and young people we have the following recruitment practices in place:

- Our commitment to child safety is included in all job advertisements.
- Clear position descriptions that include our commitment to child safety and wellbeing.
- Written applications from applicants.
- Face-to-face interviews that use behavioural questions to determine the applicant's knowledge of child safeguarding.
- At least two (2) referee checks and qualification checks.

Training and supervision

STC culture aims for all individuals to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.

STC has specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team and personnel to achieve these commitments. We support personnel through ongoing supervision to ensure they understand our organisation's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.

Recordkeeping

STC is committed to making and keeping full and accurate records about all child-related complaints or safety concerns. All child safety complaints, concerns, incidents and near misses are recorded in the incident reporting system.

Records that assist with the investigation of a complaint or safety concern are identified and kept as part of the record of an investigation. Records are kept even if an investigation does not substantiate a complaint. We record and keep the outcome of any investigations, and the resolution of any complaints. This includes findings made, reasons for decisions and actions taken.

Records are stored securely and kept by STC for at least forty-five (45) years.

Regular Review

STC reviews this policy regularly and following any significant incidents should it occur. Reviews inform our approach to continuous improvement of our child safety practices.

Complaints, concerns and safety incidents are analysed to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement.

Reviews are overseen by Management and are informed by consultation with children, families and staff. Reports on the findings of relevant reviews are accessible to staff and volunteers, community and families and children and young people.

Allegations, Concerns & Complaint Handling Processes

STC takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Personnel are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families and personnel know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour. We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place.

Fair procedures for personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions made by STC when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be personnel, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. STC has safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected.

If a child discloses an incident of abuse

- Try and separate them from the other children discreetly and listen to them carefully.
- Let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred.

- Reassure the child that you take what they are saying seriously, and it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing.
- Explain to them that this information may need to be shared others, such as with their parent/carer, specific people in your organisation, or the police.
- Do not make promises to the child such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe.
- Do not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.
- Provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together, if you think the child is able to do this.
- As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child's words and report the disclosure to the Child Safety Officer and STC management as well as police or child protection as relevant.
- Ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

If a parent/carer says their child has been abused or raises a concern

- Explain that STC has processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously.
- Ask about the wellbeing of the child.
- Allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in their own words.
- Advise the parent/carer that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details.
- Explain to them the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as the STC management or Child Safety Officer, the police or child protection.
- Do not make promises at this early stage, except that you will do your best to keep the child safe.
- Provide them with an incident report form to complete or complete it together.
- Ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be.
- Ensure the report is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.
- Be aware that:
 - Individuals from Aboriginal, culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers in reporting allegations of abuse.
 - Individuals with a disability may experience barriers disclosing an incident.

You need to be sensitive to these issues and meet individuals' needs where possible.

Personnel must follow the Critical Actions below every time you become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes reporting new information to authorities.

If personnel believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but still hold significant concerns for their wellbeing they must still act.

YOU MUST TAKE ACTION

Personnel play a critical role in protecting children in our care.

You must act, by following the Four Critical Actions below, as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief that a child has, or is at risk of being abused.

You must act if you form a suspicion/reasonable belief, even if you are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g., if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse).

You must use an incident reporting form to keep clear and comprehensive notes.

ACTION 1: Responding to an emergency

If there is no risk of immediate harm, go to ACTION 2.

If a child is at immediate risk of harm, you must ensure their safety by:

- Separating alleged victims and others involved.
- Administering first aid.
- Calling 000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance to respond to immediate health or safety concerns.
- Identifying a contact person in your organisation for future liaison with Police.

Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

Action 2: Reporting to authorities

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you must report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

You must report all instances of suspected child abuse or suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Police.

You must also report internally to the Child Safety Officer and STC management.

If the source of suspected abuse is from within the family or community, you must report the suspected abuse to the relevant Child Protection Authority in the State or Territory jurisdiction.

This includes if a child is considered to be:

- In need of protection from child abuse
- At risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has had, or is likely to have, a serious impact on the child's safety, stability or development.

Action 3: Contacting parents / carers

The Child Safety Officer and STC management must consult with Child Protection and or Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers. They may advise:

- Not to contact the parents/carers (e.g. in circumstances where the parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse, or the child is a mature minor and does not wish for their parents/carers to be contacted), or
- To contact the parents/carers and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion).

Action 4: Providing ongoing support

STC must provide support for children impacted by abuse. This includes the development of a Student Support Plan developed in consultation with wellbeing professional and/or counselling staff.

Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals.

Additional support mandatory reporting

STC management uses appropriate tools to inform decision making, such as the online *Mandatory Reporter Guide*, professional judgment or specialist advice, where there are concerns about risk of harm.

The mandatory reporter guide is available at:

<https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/>

Working with Children Checks

Starting in 2025, all STC personnel are required to undertake, as a component of the recruitment process, a National Criminal Check to ensure suitability in meeting STC's legislative and contractual obligations. National criminal checks are valid for and must be renewed every three years.

<https://www.nationalcrimecheck.com.au/>

All personnel providing services in New South Wales must undertake screening in accordance with the requirements of the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)*. Checks are valid for five years.

<http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/working-with-children-check>

It is the responsibility of each individual to register for and obtain the required check(s). Potential personnel with adverse findings in these checks undertaken at the time of recruitment will not be employed by within a student service role.

Communicating this Policy

This and related documents are available on our website, on request and provided as part of our Student Handbook.

This policy and related documents are provided to all personnel as part of their induction following recruitment.

We provide clear age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate explanations to children and young people including their right to safety, their right to be listened to and that they can provide feedback or make a complaint if they have a concern, to any worker or ask their parent/guardian to do this on their behalf. We will listen to and act upon any complaints or concerns that a child or young person raises with us.

Policy Review

STC at a minimum, reviews this policy and the related procedures once every 5 years as required. We also review this policy when:

- New or added risks are identified for children or young people, which may require a change in the policy or procedures.
- A critical incident where a child or young person has experienced harm through involvement in the organisation.
- Concerns are raised by anyone involved in our organisation about child safety or welfare in the organisation.
- Awareness or compliance to the child safe policy and/or procedures is considered to be low.
- Legislative changes/requirements are identified.

Policy Date: 03/02/2025

Review Date: 03/02/2027