



# New Start Counselling And Psychotherapy

## Child Safe Environments Policy and Procedures

### Purpose of policy

New Start Counselling and Psychotherapy NSCP has a legal and ethical responsibility to provide a safe, friendly, and supportive environment where all children are respected, valued, and encouraged to reach their full potential. We aim to take all practical steps to protect children from harm by ensuring an accessible, trauma-informed and safe environment.

### Aim

NSCP will ensure the fundamental rights of children and young people are respected and protected. This will be achieved through establishing, promoting, and maintaining safe, child-friendly environments where the protection of children and young people is supported by appropriate principles, behaviours, and practices. This policy will support all persons working within NSCP to effectively respond and consistently apply legislative requirements in relation to the safety of children and young people.

### Scope of policy

This policy applies to children, families, staff, management and visitors to NSCP.

## Policy Principles

### Commitment to the safety of children and young people

NSCP understands it has a duty of care to act immediately to protect and preserve the safety and wellbeing of the children in its care. NSCP is committed to diversity and all children and young people are valued equally, regardless of their abilities, sex, gender or social-economic or cultural background and equity. NSCP values, respects, and encourages all children and young people. Above all, the safety and protection of children and young people is our priority.



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This policy complies with the child safe environment provisions of the following:

- *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*,
- *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016* and the
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

## Communication

NSCP will provide details of the existence of the child safe policy and procedures, for all children and young people, and parents/guardians, via reference to the website link, as part of the Counselling Agreement and any Service Agreement/Offer (for NDIS participants). Both these documents will be sent through, usually via email or post, and signed by the participant or parent/guardian, before the start of Counselling. By signing either document, the signatory will be indicating they have read, accept, and will comply with the policy.

NSCP will make the child safe policy and procedures available to employees, volunteers, children and young people, parents/guardians and families and the public:

via a link under '*policies and practices*' of the NSCP website at [www.newstartcounselling.net.au](http://www.newstartcounselling.net.au)

## Participation of families, children, and young people

NSCP understands it has a responsibility to all clients to defend their right to care and protection. To assist in strengthening this responsibility, NSCP will follow any procedures recommended by child protection authorities, when dealing with any allegations of abuse or neglect of children and will ensure that all staff undergoes appropriate professional development in this area. NSCP will also document any concerns where a child may be at risk of harm that may have occurred outside of NSCP and follow procedures to ensure the child is protected from harm.



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It is a firm commitment that any staff member will:

- promote children's self-esteem and positive self-image through their interactions and relationships with children,
- Always enact trauma-informed approaches and principles
- role model appropriate behaviour and language, and
- build relationships with all children based on trust and empower children to discuss and communicate their needs and concerns.

Families, children, and young people will be informed about their rights and encouraged to participate and provide feedback. The initial Counselling Agreement and any Service Agreement/Offer will give clear information about:

- the rights as participants of counselling, with information regarding links, via our website at [www.newstartcounselling.net.au](http://www.newstartcounselling.net.au), to our:
  - code of conduct for working with children and young people
  - the Australian Counselling Association's (ACA) code of conduct,
  - complaint procedures and
  - Feedback form

## Code of conduct

NSCP has a Working with Children and Young People: Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct covers standards, issues and risk factors including, but not limited to,

- standards of behaviour when working with children and young people in physical and online environments
- the commitment that all children and young people will be embraced regardless of their abilities, sex, gender, or social-economic or cultural background and equity
- The unacceptable conduct and the consequences of behaving outside expectations
- How to report any breaches of the code of conduct

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- The consequences for breaching the code of conduct

Access to the Code is available:

- via [www.newstartcounselling.net.au](http://www.newstartcounselling.net.au)
- via the electronic version of the Counselling Agreement and any Service Agreement/Offer made and sent to participants and families.

### Recruitment

NSCP meets the requirements of the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 and ensures that all staff provides a valid Working with Children Check from the Screening Unit of the Department of Human Services. NSCP will ensure a new working with children check is obtained every 5 years prior to expiry, or as required by the Department of Human Services.

All persons other than employed staff who perform duties during NSCP's hours of operation (paid or unpaid) will be required to present:

- a valid Working with Children Check.
- Responding to Risks of Harm, Abuse and Neglect Certificate (RRHAN-EC)
- Safe Environments – Through their eyes training
- Valid Working with Children Check
- Valued Police Check
- Australian membership into the appropriate association for example Australian Counselling Association, PACFA, etc

All staff will be oriented to NSCP's policies and procedures and code of conduct.



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## Supervision, training and support for employees and volunteers

NSCP requires all staff to participate in training on child protection organised by relevant child protection authorities or support agencies.

NSCP will:

- have regular supervision sessions that include a focus on child safety and wellbeing
- Adhere to the ACA's requirements for supervision as a member of the association
- Include an induction which includes new employees receiving a copy of this policy
- Support regular performance appraisals
- ensure that staff are knowledgeable about current legislation and reporting requirements related to child protection and maltreatment and that a system for reporting and recording suspicious incidents is in place
- understand their responsibility as mandated reporters
- provide access to current information about the procedures to be taken in relation to allegations of child abuse or neglect
- ensure a guidebook to recognising signs of abuse or neglect will be made available to all staff to remind them of the possible signs of child abuse, and the procedures they should follow if a child in their care displays behaviour or physical signs that could indicate abuse has taken place (Reporting Abuse and Neglect – Participants Handbook)
- regularly remind staff about NSCP's policies, procedures and confidentiality requirements in regard to child protection
- ensure staff complete the RRHAN-EC training followed by refresher training every 3 years or as required by the Department for Education.

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In relation to ongoing training NSCP will ensure all staff and volunteers:

- read and understand the [Mandatory Notification Information Booklet \(see: www.dhs.sa.gov.au/cse\)](http://www.dhs.sa.gov.au/cse)
- complete the online SMART (Strategies for Managing Abuse Related Trauma) training (see: <https://professionals.childhood.org.au/prosody/2015/07/smart-online>)
- to attend a 'Safe Environments: Through Their Eyes' training course
- to view the resources Keeping our kids safe at developed by SNAICC at <https://www.snaicc.org.au/policy-and-research/child-safety-and-wellbeing/keeping-our-kids-safe/>
- include child safety as a standing item on meeting agendas
- access to web-based resources about issues concerning child safety and wellbeing
- have access to professional development opportunities to build knowledge and skills regarding the wellbeing and development of children and young people
- update specific training as per requirements or every 3 years.

### Reporting and responding to harm or risk of harm

Mandated notifiers have a legal obligation to notify the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) as soon as practicable if they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child is or may be at risk of harm. All NSCP employees are mandated reporters and are supported and encouraged to report the reasonable belief that a child or young person is or may be at risk of harm and in need of protection, and the child's parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child. Children and Young People are listened to, believed, and always supported



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## **Reporting concerns**

1. In the course of work hours, if the NSCP staff member forms the view that they have a reasonable belief that a child or young person is, or may be, at risk of harm — they, as soon as possible, must contact the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78 or if at immediate risk, report to South Australia Police (SAPOL) on 000. For mandated notifiers, these are legal obligations
2. Any report will be made by the staff person directly. It is a requirement that the individual who identifies the harm or risk of harm is the person who makes the report to CARL and this is not reported internally for another staff member to determine if it is a reportable matter
3. No other staff will be given identifying information about the family unless the authorised person feels that they need to know.
4. An authorised person may be present while the staff person makes the report if required. Note that a Counsellor or any other person may independently make a report, regardless of whether the authorised person decides to do so.
5. An authorised person or staff person has discretion whether and if so when to notify the family involved that they are making a report. When the suspected abuse involves severe physical injury or sexual abuse, the family will generally not be notified before a report is made. NSCP will in these cases be guided by Child Protection as to when (or if) to notify the family.
6. NSCP has a right to take any action to ensure that children and staff are always safe. This may involve contacting the police if any person or family makes threats against staff.
7. As part of the standard procedure, staff, the authorised person, will make careful documentation of concerns and any action taken.

## **Supporting children, young people, and their families**

NSCP understands that we still have a role in supporting the child or young person after a report has been made. This could include:

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- referring the child, young person or their family to other appropriate services
- continuing to provide a service to the child or young person and their family and monitoring their circumstances
- displaying information about services that can assist children, young people and their families (such as the Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800 and Youth Helpline on 1300 13 17 19) in areas accessed by them.

NSCP will act thoroughly and quickly, with top importance placed on ensuring the safety and protection of children and young people.

### Reporting and responding to complaints or feedback

Client feedback, both positive and constructive, is an essential part of helping NSCP continuously improve its service quality. Clients and staff can lodge a complaint in person, over the phone, by email or in writing. Access to the complaints and feedback form can be found at <https://www.newstartcounselling.net.au/policies-practices>

NSCP will:

- Address complaints promptly, sensitively, and fairly
- listen to the complaint/feedback and make a record of it
- respond to the complainant with an outcome
- clearly document and securely store decisions and actions taken in response to complaints and feedback
- make sure that procedural fairness is always followed.
- acknowledge that we have received the complaint or feedback in writing.
- investigate complaints by reviewing the incident in depth.
- if appropriate, encourage discussion of concerns openly with the relevant staff member(s) to resolve the complaint,
- communicate the outcome of investigations to the complainant and ensure that any recommended improvements or changes are implemented effectively.

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Resolving complaints amicably gives NSCP the opportunity to improve services and to understand the areas that need changing. NSCP takes complaints very seriously and will work hard to address and resolve them efficiently and effectively.

## Risk management

NSCP will ensure clear observation of child-occupied areas through the following means:

- Inclusion of parent/guardian or primary support person, at all times, in relation to any other child or young person present on the premises

NSCP will not:

- Transport children from one place/environment to another
- take images of children and young people
- supervise children and young people that are not counselling clients
- have physical contact
- allow children unsolicited use of internet or internet images while the child or young person is in the counselling or support room
- Friend a child or young person on social media or any other social platform.

NSCP will

- Always protect privacy and confidentiality, with an exception, of the mandatory reporting requirements
- conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner
- adhere to trauma-informed approaches
- Always listen and believe a child or young person.



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## Related policies and procedures

[Code of Conduct for Working with Children and Young People](#)

[Code of Ethics and Practice - ACA](#)

[Counselling Agreement](#)

[Example of Service Agreement/Offer in relation to working with NDIS clients](#)

[Mandatory Report Procedures](#)

[Complaint Processes](#)

[Feedback Form](#)

## Policy review

This policy will be reviewed at least once every five years in accordance with Section 115 of the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 or sooner should a new risk, critical incident, or concern require a review of this policy.

Last date of review: 27 April 2022