

## 1. Purpose

Launceston City Mission (LCM) is committed to keeping children and young people safe and promoting their safety and well-being with a 'zero tolerance' approach.

This procedure describes the steps responding to concerns of child well-being and safety.

These steps are **mandatory** reporting requirements.

## 2. Scope

This procedure must be followed by prescribed persons (mandatory reporters). At Launceston City Mission (LCM) these are:

- Board of Directors
- staff
- contractors and
- volunteers

## 3. Procedure

### 3.1 Reporting Expectations

In order to support a culture of safeguarding children and young people, it is expected that even minor or low level breaches or concerns are reported according to the processes outlined below. Support in doing this is available from your manager or a member of the LCM leadership team.

### 3.2 Managing a Child's disclosure of abuse and neglect

A child may disclose information about their own or another child's abuse or neglect.

#### 3.2.1 Private Disclosure

Where a child discloses a situation of abuse or neglect directly to a worker, the worker must:

- support the child's decision to disclose
- offer assurance to the child that they have the right to feel safe
- actively listen to what the child is saying.

Disclosure of abuse and neglect can cause strong feelings for both the worker and the child. It is important for the worker to be aware of their feelings and control them.

Sometimes the child may ask the worker to promise not to share the disclose information. It is important that the worker does not make any such promise. This could compromise the worker's legal obligation:

- to make a Child Safety notification or
- report an offence to the police.

### **3.2.2 Public Disclosure**

If a child starts to disclose in a group setting, a worker could use a protective interruption technique. This could be:

- acknowledging that they have heard the child
- actively stopping further disclosure of information
- supporting and encouraging the child to continue the discussion in a more private situation
- arranging to see the child to continue the discussion as soon as possible in a safe space. If working in social enterprise, seek support from your supervisor / manager
- discouraging others to ask the child questions, making judgements about, or sharing with others what they have heard
- offering support as appropriate to others who are present and have heard the disclosure.

### **3.2.3 Listening to a Child's Disclosure**

**Do:**

- support the child in their decision to disclose and offer reassurance
- assure the child that it is their right to feel safe
- listen carefully to what the child is saying. Acknowledge their courage for talking about something that is challenging for them
- maintain calm body language and appearance. Engage a style of listening that is compassionate and reassuring
- be patient and allow the child to tell you their story in their own time. Ensure the child has your full attention
- let the child choose their own words to describe their situation

- ask the child if they are comfortable with you making notes. If able, do this in a way that maintains connection with the child
- be transparent with the child about the next steps you are going to take. Making sure that your explanation uses age-appropriate language
- Document the disclosure according to the procedure highlighted in this document.

**Do not:**

- display any obvious feelings or signs of shock, disgust or distress
- suggest blame or blame the child
- use any leading questions
- make promises to the child that you are unsure you will be able to keep
- make any attempt to confront or engage with the accused or suspected person
- undertake any investigation.

**Note:**

If the disclosure happens in a social enterprise environment, contact:

- the advice and referral hotline (1800 000 123) and / or
- the police (000).

In a critical situation, activate the duress systems.

### **3.2.4 Documenting a child's disclosure**

Document the disclosure as soon as practicable. Record the following information either during or after the disclosure conversation. Where possible include:

- the child's date of birth, residential address, school attended, details of siblings and the details of the child's parent/carer if known
- the date, time, place and circumstances of the disclosure
- the date, time, place and circumstance of the disclosed event(s)
- the nature of the neglect, abuse or harm
- recording the specific words spoken by the child (or as close to as possible)
- all details and information shared by the child. Avoid using emotive or selective language. Avoid making assumptions about the relevancy of details. Include any supportive actions provided to the child after this disclosure.
- any other relevant information (e.g. car registration)
- name and contact details of the reporter.

### 3.2.5 Support for those involved in disclosures

Workers involved in or affected by a disclosure can:

- debrief with their manager
- access the organisation's Employee Assistance Program
- contact LCM chaplains.

Please consider and respect the child's right to privacy when using any debriefing mechanisms.

Workers must immediately report any concern that a child (including an unborn child) or young person may be unsafe, harmed or at risk of being harmed, by:

- contacting the Advice and Referral Line (1800 000 123) and
- informing the supervisor that a report has been made
- filling out both an LCM incident report and Mandatory Report Notification.
- Attaching the email transcript from the Advice and Referral line to the incident report. Ask your supervisor / manager to assist where necessary.

It is important to recognise and ensure that individuals named as alleged perpetrators also have their individual rights respected when handling reports, in relation to their:

- confidentiality
- privacy
- specific rights under employment conditions and laws

### 3.3 Assessing possible abuse and neglect other than by disclosure

Possible indicators of abuse, neglect or vulnerability in a child, could be:

- observation of physical, emotional, sexual or verbal abuse to a child
- general health and wellbeing (this may appear to be sub-standard)
- visible physical injuries in combination with the provided explanation. (The explanation may appear inconsistent with the nature of the injuries)
- sexualised behaviour that is not age appropriate. Knowledge of sex and sexual practices that are not age appropriate. Risk-taking or problematic sexual behaviour
- behaviour that is continuously withdrawn, anxious, nervous, or emotionally disturbed
- unexplained repeated presentation of injuries such as bruises, burns, cuts or broken bones

- risk taking behaviour such as abuse of alcohol and other drugs, hazardous substances or chemicals. Acts of self-harm, suicide ideation or intention.

This list is not exhaustive and some indicators may be quite general and inconclusive. If unsure, the worker should call the Advice and Referral Line (1800 000 123) to seek advice whether a formal notification is appropriate.

Please keep in mind:

There may be single incidents in relation to an allegation of abuse.

There might also be patterns, symptoms and / or concerning behaviour indicating that abuse or neglect may be occurring.

### **3.4 Making a mandatory report**

A worker is required by law to contact the Advice and Referral Line as soon as possible (1800 000 123) if they have:

- a suspicion
- a belief
- gained knowledge

that a child has been, or is at risk of being neglected or abused.

### **3.5 Suspected abuse or neglect by an LCM worker**

- A worker must notify their manager immediately if:
  - a child discloses abuse by a worker
  - you have a suspicion or belief that a worker may be responsible for the harm of a child.
- The manager determines a strategy ensuring the immediate safety of the child.
- The prescribed person (mandatory reporter) must follow mandatory reporting processes.
- The Manager People and Culture must initiate reportable conduct guidelines, including advising the worker that appropriate action will be taken following the disclosure which may include standing down the worker until an investigation has been completed.
- Failure to report any abuse or concerns to management could be considered as serious misconduct and ground for disciplinary action, which may include dismissal.

### 3.6 Four Critical Actions

- In summary of the above, there are 4 critical actions that must be followed in responding to incidents, disclosures, and suspicions of child abuse.
- Refer to Appendix 1.

## 4. Related documentation

Note that it is important to also read the following policies and documents.

### 4.1 Policies

- Child Safety Policy (GD01-016)

### 4.2 Procedures, guidelines and forms

- Accident, Injury, Incident or Near Miss Form WHS05-001
- Mandatory Report Notification Form DSP08-109

## 5. Definitions

Term	Definition
Child or Young person	Person under the age of 18.
Child Abuse	<p>Child abuse is a single incident or more than one incidents that take place over time. Under the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act, 1997.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has suffered harm, is suffering harm, or is at risk of harm;</li> <li>• Does not have a parent or guardian able and willing to protect the child from harm.</li> <li>• There are four different types of child abuse that lead to harm:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical abuse;</li> <li>• Sexual abuse;</li> <li>• Emotional abuse; neglect.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Child Safety Service	<p>The role of Child Safety Services is to protect children and young people who are at risk of harm, abuse or neglect. In Tasmania, the protection of children and young people is covered by the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1997.</p> <p>Under legislation Child Safety Services have the statutory responsibility for intervening where children are at risk of abuse and neglect. Child Safety Services activities include intake, assessment, case management and out of home care services.</p>
Emotional Abuse	Emotional Abuse occurs when abuse impairs or threatens a child's social, emotional, cognitive or intellectual development. It can include emotional deprivation due to persistent rejection, hostility and threats, teasing, bullying, yelling, criticism or exposure to domestic and/or family violence.

Term	Definition
Family Violence	Conduct, whether actual or threatened, by a person towards, or towards the property of, a member of the person’s family that causes that or any other member of the person’s family to fear for, or to be apprehensive about, his or her personal well-being or safety. Witnessing / being exposed to family violence is a type of abuse.
Harm	Harm to a child is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child or young person’s physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. Harm can be caused by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect; or</li> <li>• Sexual abuse or exploitation;</li> <li>• A single act, omission or circumstances; or</li> <li>• A series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.</li> </ul>
Incident Report	A form for the purpose of reporting when a mandatory report to external authorities is made.
Mandatory Report	A report to DHS Child Protection or the Police by a mandated reporter (nurse, teacher, school principal, police, medical practitioner, midwife) that is based on a reasonable belief that a child (up to the age of 18 years) is in the need of protection from harm. Under the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act, 1997.
Mandatory Reporter	Person required to report, under the Act. See ‘Prescribed Person’ below.
Neglect	Neglect occurs when a child’s needs are not met, affecting their health and development. Basic needs include: food, housing, health care, clothing, personal hygiene, and adequate supervision.
Physical Abuse	Physical Abuse occurs when a child has suffered, or is at risk of suffering, non-accidental physical trauma or injury. Physical abuse can include: hitting, punching, kicking, strangling, shaking, throwing, burning, biting, poisoning, smothering. Physical abuse does not always leave visible marks or injuries. Regardless of marks or injuries, the act itself causes trauma to the child.
Prescribed Person	A person from a professional occupation that is listed under the Act and is required to report significant harm to children to child protection or the police.
Reportable Suspicion	A Reportable Suspicion about a child is a reasonable suspicion that the child: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has suffered, is suffering, or is at unacceptable risk of suffering, significant harm caused by physical or sexual abuse; and</li> </ul> Does not have a parent able and willing to protect the child from the harm.
Sexual Abuse	Sexual Abuse in relation to a relevant (child/young person), includes sexual behaviour involving the relevant person and another person in the following circumstances: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The other person bribes, coerces, exploits, threatens or is violent toward the relevant person</li> <li>• The relevant person has less power than the other person</li> <li>• There is a significant disparity between the relevant person and the other person in intellectual capacity or maturity.</li> </ul>



<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Strong Families Safe Kids Advice & Referral Line	A first point of contact for everyone with a concern about child wellbeing and safety. 1800 000 123.  Parents and children can also call to ask for help for themselves.

<b>Quality context</b>			
<b>Date Approved</b>	21/04/2022	<b>Approved by</b>	R Green
		<b>Version Number:</b>	1
<b>Date for Next</b>	21/04/2025	<b>Please ensure any related documents listed are reviewed at</b>	
<b>Responsibilities</b>			
<b>Implementation</b>	CEO	<b>Maintenance</b>	Quality Manager
<b>Currency and communication of updates to Quality</b>		Relevant Operations Manager	



**Appendix 1: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures, and Suspicions of Child Abuse – Four Critical Actions**

**You Must Take Action**  
As a staff member at City Mission you play a critical role protecting children and young people. You must follow the four actions below.

**1 Responding**

If there is no immediate harm go to Action 2.

- If a child is at risk of immediate harm you must ensure their safety by:
1. Separating alleged victims and others involved.
  2. Administering first aid (if required).
  3. Calling 000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance to respond to immediate health or safety concerns.
  4. Identifying a contact person for future liaison with Police.

**2 Reporting**

Report to the Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice & Referral Line  
On: 1800 000 123 and Police if instructed to do so.  
Ensure that a transcript of the report is received for both phone and electronic notifications.  
Any reportable incident must also be reported to City Mission by completing an Accident, Injury, Incident or Near Miss Form WHS05-001 and Mandatory Report Notification Form DSP08-109 and send to [office@citymission.org.au](mailto:office@citymission.org.au) and the Operations Manager of relevant area.

**3 Contacting**

The Child Protection Officer and senior staff will then work with effected staff. The organisation will also work with the Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice & Referral Line and local police to determine what and how information can be shared with others (if required).  
This can include:  
1. Not to contact the parents or carers in circumstances where they have alleged to have engaged in the abuse or the child is a mature minor and does not wish their parent/carer to be contacted.  
2. To contact the parents/carers and provide agreed information as soon as possible.

**4 Supporting**

Any ongoing support offered to those impacted (children and youth) will be dependent on appropriateness and determined in conjunction with key internal and external contact.

**Key Internal Contacts:**  
Child Protection Officer  
Quality & Risk Manager  
People and Culture Manager  
Operations Manager of relevant area(s)