

Making education a reality



YOUTH SAFEGUARD POLICY

Staff & Volunteers

Policy Statement

Ardoch Youth Foundation seeks to minimise the risk of exposing children and young people to inappropriate persons. Ardoch Youth Foundation has comprehensive processes in place to take all reasonable steps to facilitate and maintain a safe environment for all participants in our service.

Ardoch Youth Foundation's Child/Young Person Protection Policy and Criminal History/Working With Children Check Policy are in compliance with standards set by The Australian Council for Children & Youth Organisations.

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1.1 Statement of Intention

Ardoch Youth Foundation has a moral duty of care to ensure the safety and security of children and young people. This duty includes taking all reasonable steps to prevent emotional, physical and sexual abuse. Ardoch Youth Foundation believes each of us has a responsibility to raise concerns of abuse, and has detailed an appropriate response when an allegation is made. Ardoch Youth Foundation's intention is to maintain a safe environment for all participants including children, young people, staff and volunteers.

Process

Ardoch Youth Foundation maintains that the Child/ Young Person Protection Policy is developed with participation of stakeholders, including:

- Sites;
- Staff; and
- Board of Directors

This is achieved by encouraging stakeholders to participate in the annual Policy Evaluation and Review. (See Section 1.9)

The Policy is presented annually to the Ardoch Youth Foundation Board of Directors for ratification.

The Policy is widely displayed, circulated and promoted;

- Ardoch Youth Foundation's Project Coordinators present each school with a copy of the Policy following the Annual Review, and make the document available at the school.
- Ardoch Youth Foundation's commitment to child/youth protection is featured in Ardoch Youth Foundation's newsletter annually.
- The Policy is referred to on the Ardoch Youth Foundation website.
- The Policy is prominently displayed at the Ardoch Centre.
- The Policy is distributed to staff and volunteers during recruitment and training.

1.2 Definition of Abuse

Ardoch Youth Foundation understands that children and young people can be exposed to physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse. Abuse can also include neglect, and harassing behaviours like bullying.

Ardoch Youth Foundation recognises that child sex offenders will target child related organisations as a means of approaching children and young people. Sex offenders will often seek out positions which not only provide them with victims but also a professional subterfuge to conceal their abuse.

Ardoch Youth Foundation understands that abuse damages children and young people physically, emotionally and behaviourally. The Foundation believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount and is vigilant in carrying out the risk management process.

1.3 Empowering Children and Young People

Ardoch Youth Foundation believes in the proactive empowerment of children/young people and is committed to the wellbeing and safety of all children/young people and families. Ardoch Youth Foundation advocates for the rights of the child/young person, ie. the right to be safe, the right to food and shelter, the right to education and the right to protection from all forms of abuse.

Alongside the Foundation's commitment to the wellbeing, safety and security of children and young people, Ardoch Youth Foundation is committed to educating children and young people in self-protection. As part of the school/centre-based early intervention and prevention programs, Ardoch Youth Foundation promotes the inclusion of Protective Behaviours programs.

Ardoch also encourages and trains staff and volunteers to focus on building the wellbeing and resilience of children and young people.

1.4 Code Of Conduct

Ardoch Youth Foundation seeks to clarify acceptable behaviour in order to minimise the risk of child abuse occurring within the organisation. Ardoch Youth Foundation seeks to provide practical guidance to staff, volunteers, parents and service users about the types of behaviour that are and are not acceptable within the organisation.

Code of Conduct For Staff and Volunteers

Do:

- Conduct yourself in a manner consistent with your position as a positive role model to children/young people, and as a representative of Ardoch Youth Foundation;
- Follow organisational policy and guidelines relating to the safety and security of children and young people as outlined in the Child/Young Person Protection Policy;
- Treat all young people with respect and take notice of their reactions to your tone of voice and manner;
- Maintain contact with children/young people in a supervised area;
- Raise all concerns, issues and/or problems about a child/ young person's wellbeing and safety with your supervisor as soon as possible; and
- Make sure all allegations or suspicions of abuse are reported, recorded and acted upon in a confidential manner.

Do not:

- Engage in rough physical games;
- Hold, kiss, cuddle or touch a child/young person in an inappropriate and/or culturally insensitive way;

- Make sexually suggestive comments or use inappropriate language to a child/young person, even as a joke;
- Do things of a personal nature that a child/young person can do for themselves, such as going to the toilet or changing clothes;
- Disclose any personal information of a controversial nature; and
- Exchange personal contact details with, initiate or maintain unauthorised contact with children/young people.

1.5 Staff Recruitment, Support, Supervision and Training

Ardoch Youth Foundation has a comprehensive Employment Policy and Procedures Manual to document Human Resource standards and processes. Ardoch takes the following steps when recruiting staff to increase the likelihood that the organisation provides a safe environment for children and young people accessing our service. Ardoch Youth Foundation:

1. Develops written job descriptions and key selection criteria (including minimum qualifications) for all positions within the organisation - All job descriptions include the notification that a satisfactory Criminal History/Working With Children Check is required prior to any offer of paid employment.
2. Advertises vacancies widely.
3. Assists applicants to self-assess their suitability for the position by providing applicants with further information regarding the position and organisation, and applicants are informed of screening mechanisms utilised.
4. Selects applicants meeting key selection criteria for interview. Panel interviews are conducted with behavioural and situational based questions. Again applicants are informed that Ardoch Youth Foundation is vigilant in the protection of children and works to achieve this through adhering to its Youth Safeguard Policy and screening mechanisms.
5. Conducts 2 reference checks for a preferred applicant (including verification of applicant's identity and employment history).
6. Conducts Criminal History/Working With Children Checks on all staff in accordance with existing DHS Police Checks/Working With Children Checks Standards.
7. Requires policy adherence from all staff as part of the Contract of Employment. New staff are given a copy of Ardoch Youth Foundation's Youth Safeguard Policy and subsequently asked to sign a clause acknowledging having read, understood and agreeing to abide by the Policy.
8. Orientates all new staff during the probationary period of 3 months in relation to understanding, recognising and responding to abuse and neglect, understanding the Youth Safeguard Policy and the rest of their role including protecting the wellbeing of children/young people.

To continue to contribute to a working environment where the risks to children and young people are minimised, all Ardoch Youth Foundation staff have the opportunity to:

- Revisit the Youth Safeguard Policy annually;
- Contribute to the annual development, evaluation and review of the Youth Safeguard Policy;
- Participate in a structured induction process;
- Participate in other workshops which promote the wellbeing of children/young people;
- Receive regular supervision in the form of regular staff meetings, and formal and informal one on one appointments; and
- Participate in education and training programs to improve knowledge of child abuse protection and best practice in responding to allegations of abuse and neglect.

1.6 Volunteer Recruitment, Support, Supervision and Training

Ardoch Youth Foundation has a comprehensive Volunteer's Policy to ensure the organisation provides a safe environment for children and young people accessing our service. Ardoch Youth Foundation values the support, supervision and training of volunteers as a mechanism for both volunteer development and as a tool to protect children and young people. The following procedures pertain to volunteer recruitment, support, supervision and training. Ardoch Youth Foundation:

1. Provides prospective volunteers with an Application Form which requests the names of 2 referees, includes Ardoch's screening processes and commitment to the protection of children and young people and enables applicants to self-select.
2. Selects applicants who are willing to participate in screening mechanisms.
3. Utilises the interview process to understand volunteer motivations and inform the prospective volunteer about Ardoch's activities, volunteer opportunities, screening mechanisms and compulsory volunteer training sessions.
4. Gives applicants, upon completion of the interview, a copy of the Volunteer Policy Booklet, incorporating the Youth Safeguard Policy.
5. Requests applicants provide permission for a Policy Check, and complete and sign a Volunteer Placement Contract. The volunteer contract includes a clause acknowledging having read, understood and agreed to abide by the Youth Safeguard Policy.
6. Screens applicants by contacting referees, processing the Police Check/Working With Children Check and requiring satisfactory participation at Volunteers Training.
7. Trains volunteers on the Youth Safeguard Policy including appropriate conduct and provides experiential learning opportunities on understanding, recognising and responding to abuse and neglect. Volunteers also have the opportunity to participate in additional workshops and training to increase the wellbeing and protection of children and young people.
8. Displays the Volunteer Policy including the Youth Safeguard Policy at the site at which volunteers work.

9. Evaluates the volunteer experience regularly.

1.7 Process for Reporting Concerns/ Disclosure

The Ardoch Youth Foundation Youth Safeguard Policy encourages all adults to report all concerns, disclosures, indicators of abuse and inappropriate behaviour (as defined in the Code of Conduct) immediately to enable appropriate action to be taken to facilitate the wellbeing and safety of children and young people. There are slight variations for different parties which are articulated below:

Procedure for Ardoch Volunteers

- Discuss concerns/disclosure with the relevant supervisor within 24 hours of initial suspicion. If the relevant supervisor is unavailable, contact the Volunteers Coordinator at the Ardoch Centre on (03) 9537 2414;
- Respect the confidentiality and privacy of the child/ young person, family and school;
- Debrief with relevant supervisor as necessary;
- Follow up with the relevant supervisor to ensure concerns/disclosure are acted upon.

Ardoch Youth Foundation will then proceed to manage the case confidentially. Confidentiality is crucial to a fair and effective process. Management may include any of the following:

- Taking appropriate steps to protect the child/ young person;
- Distancing the alleged perpetrator from the child/ young person, including standing down a staff member or volunteer. Any staff member or volunteer will be recognised as entitled to a just process;
- Consulting the relevant child protection organisation for advice and information;
- Notifying the school/ early childhood site;
- Notifying the Department of Human Services Child Protection Unit;
- Notifying Police;
- Contacting parents/caregivers of child/young person under 18yrs; and/or
- Making an appointment/ referral for child/young person at appropriate medical and/or counselling services.

Procedure for Ardoch Staff

- Discuss concerns/disclosure (either first or second hand) with the relevant manager within 24 hours of initial suspicion. If the relevant manager is unavailable, contact the Ardoch Executive Director at the Ardoch Centre on (03) 9537 2414;
- Respect the confidentiality and privacy of the child/ young person, family and school;
- Debrief with relevant supervisor as necessary;
- Follow up with the relevant supervisor to ensure concerns/disclosure are acted upon.

Procedure for Ardoch Management

- Discuss concerns/disclosure (either first or second hand) with Executive Director within 24 hours of initial suspicion;
- Identify steps to be taken by all parties (including support to be offered and reports to police, DHS, family, alleged perpetrator etc);
- Identify support services needed by child/ young person, family and/ or school/ site;
- Provide and organise appropriate referrals in partnership with school/ site;
- Document the concern/ disclosure details, steps taken and planned and provide to the relevant manager (and school/ site as appropriate) within 24 hours;

- Debrief with Executive Director or request professional debriefing as necessary;
- Follow up with the Executive Director to report outcomes of the concerns/disclosure and ensure the concerns/ disclosure is acted upon.

Procedure for Ardoch Executive Director

- Where the alleged perpetrator is other than an Ardoch Youth Foundation staff member/volunteer, the Executive Director records the incident, supports process undertaken and reports the incident to the Finance & Governance Sub-Committee.;
- Where an Ardoch Youth Foundation staff member/volunteer is the alleged perpetrator, the Executive Director forwards documented details to Finance & Governance Sub-Committee. who will obtain legal advice.;
- Management via Finance & Governance Sub-Committee who will obtain legal advice;
- Debrief with professionals as necessary;
- Executive Director to monitor and follow-up outcome and report to Finance & Governance Sub-Committee.;
- Executive Director may undertake any of the following:
 - Suspend Ardoch Youth Foundation staff member/volunteer; and
 - Notify the school/ early childhood site;
 - Notify the Department of Human Services Child Protection Unit;
 - Notify Police;
 - Contact parents/caregivers of child/young person under 18yrs; and/or
 - Make an appointment/ referral for child/young person at appropriate medical and/or counselling services.

1.8 Complaints Resolution Process

The purpose of the Complaints Resolution Process is to clarify the rights and responsibilities of all parties to an allegation of misconduct. The relevant parties include the child or young person.

Ardoch Youth Foundation's Complaints Resolution Procedure balances the following interests:

- The right of the child/young person to be heard, to be protected and to be supported;
- The right of the child/young person and their families to have their concern acted upon;
- The right of the alleged perpetrator to a fair process;
- The right to privacy; and
- Ardoch Youth Foundation's commitment to ensure allegations of abuse and suspected crimes are acted on and reported for proper investigation to the Police and the Department of Human Services as appropriate.
- Where an allegation is made and the alleged perpetrator is an Ardoch staff member or volunteer, the Ardoch Executive Director will manage the process. The Executive Director will together with the Finance & Governance Sub-Committee; obtain legal advice. As appropriate the Executive Director will notify the alleged perpetrator that a concern/disclosure has been raised and the course of action taken/ to be taken.

1.9 Policy Evaluation and Review

Ardoch Youth Foundation is committed to evaluating and reviewing the Youth Safeguard Policy annually in accordance with the following evaluation/review process:

- Staff will evaluate the Policy on an annual basis. The Policy will be reviewed by identifying:
 - Significant experiences in the past year in reference to the Policy.
 - Significant problems in the Policy which arose in dealing with these experiences
 - Significant functional issues in relation to the Policy.
Staff will seek input from stakeholders including staff, schools/ sites and Finance & Governance Sub-Committee Members;
 - The Policy will be presented to the Finance & Governance Sub-Committee.;
 - for ratification;
 - The reviewed Policy will be widely displayed, circulated and promoted (as per Section 1.1 above); and
 - Annual training on the Policy will be conducted.

2.1 Policy Objective and Statement

Ardoch Youth Foundation seeks to minimise the risk of exposing children and young people to inappropriate persons.

Ardoch Youth Foundation maintains that no permanent offer of paid employment or a voluntary placement will be made until a satisfactory National Records Check has been received.

Until this time, Ardoch Youth Foundation maintains that confirmation of an offer of paid employment or voluntary placement cannot occur until an applicant's Police Check/Working With Children Check has been completed.. The applicant is obligated to disclose details of any charge or conviction, and Ardoch Youth Foundation management proceeds to assess suitability (See Section 2.6). A minimum of 2 referee checks per applicant for all paid and voluntary work is an essential part of this safety screening process.

2.2 New Staff, Volunteers and Students on Placement

Ardoch Youth Foundation commits to having all new staff, volunteers and students on placement whose work involves actual or potential access to children and young people undergo a Police.

Exceptions to the above include when Ardoch recognises that some volunteers due to their role are not involved directly with children/ young people or are only involved in a one-off supervised group activity. In this instance, Ardoch may not undertake the same screening mechanisms. However, should the status of these volunteers change, Ardoch will undertake all screening mechanisms.

2.3 Continuing Staff and Volunteers

Ardoch Youth Foundation maintains that all continuing staff and volunteers should complete a Statutory Declaration stating that they have "never been charged and/or convicted of any criminal offence nor have any criminal charges pending" every 2 years.

2.4 Written Notification Prior to Interview

Ardoch Youth Foundation maintains that all applicants for paid and voluntary work involving actual or potential unsupervised access to children/young people are to be police checked/Working With Children Checked and are provided with written notification of the need for this prior to interview. This may be stated in the:

- Job advertisement;
- Position description; and/ or
- Application form.

2.5 Receipt of the National Police Certificate and Working With Children Certificate

Ardoch Youth Foundation requests direct receipt of the National Police Certificate/Working With Children Certificate.

- In relation to a staff application, the Operations Manager views the results and proceeds accordingly;
 - In relation to a volunteer application, the Volunteers Coordinator views the results and proceeds accordingly; and
 - In relation to a student placement, the Ardoch Centre Project Coordinator views the results and proceeds accordingly.
1. National Police Certificates/Working With Children Checks are regarded as strictly confidential, only the above persons and senior management are authorised to access or view completed police checks/Working With Children Checks. National Police Certificates/Working With Children are not forwarded to any other individual or organisation. Where there are no disclosable outcomes Ardoch will record the date of issue and reference number on the foundation's computer database. Any disclosable outcomes will not be incorporated into any manual, electronic database or filing system. A copy of the police certificate/Working With Children Certificate is under no circumstances provided to the person concerned, although it may be shown upon request (See 4) below). Police certificates remain the property of Ardoch Youth Foundation although may be viewed by a volunteer upon request within 7 days of receipt. Thereafter, Police certificates will be securely destroyed.
 2. Placement of any form will not be permitted where any information given is falsified either verbally, or in writing, and/or where a charge and/or conviction in any way involves the harm of a child.
 3. An applicant may be excluded from a paid or voluntary position on the basis of having a police record. Such a decision is based upon the nature of the criminal history in reference to children and young people, and upon the discretion of Ardoch Management. As appropriate, Ardoch Youth Foundation may provide the opportunity to discuss the police record and the reasons for preclusion with the person in question, and in this case the National Police Certificate may be shown upon request.
 4. Where a conviction is disclosed which does not relate to the harming of children, Ardoch management will consider the offence history as part of the overall assessment of the applicant's character and reputation, as well as the following factors:
 - The nature of the offence/s;
 - The frequency of offences/s;
 - An extended criminal history or accumulation of individual minor offences;
 - The length of time since the offence/s took place;
 - Whether the offence was committed as a juvenile or an adult. i.e. assess what level of maturity influenced judgement at the time;
 - Any mitigating or extenuating circumstances which might be revealed in relation to the offence/s committed. e.g. provocation, effect of alcohol etc., which may or may not be favourable to the applicant;
 - The general character displayed since the offence was committed. e.g: steady employment record and favourable reports by past employers; and
 - The relevance of the type of crime to the nature of work with children and young people.

Where an employee/ volunteer is not excluded following the above assessment, the employee/ volunteer will be advised that their placement will not proceed without the approval of the relevant site/ school. This will involve the employee/ volunteer providing written permission for Ardoch Youth Foundation to discuss the matter with the Principal/ Coordinator of the relevant school/ site/ family. Once the school/centre or family has been advised of the situation and has made

a decision, their written approval of the placement or otherwise is provided.

5. Where the placement is precluded, Ardoch Youth Foundation will endeavour to provide appropriate alternative opportunities for community involvement and/ or volunteering.
6. When the selection/ recruitment process is complete, the National Police Certificate is securely destroyed.