

Foreword

Every day our health workforce provides essential services to children and young people across Tasmania.

From bringing new life into the world and aiding those precious first moments, to providing life-changing treatment, care, and support, our staff and volunteers are there every step of the way.

Working alongside families and caregivers to make a difference in the lives of children and young people is a privilege; ensuring they remain safe from harm is our duty.

While we each have a personal responsibility to uphold the rights of children and young people, it cannot be done alone. That is why the Department of Health is taking a systemic approach to enhance the way we work with children and young people.

Over the coming months, we will be prioritising the implementation of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. The National Principles are an ongoing commitment that will allow children and young people to grow and thrive in a health environment that is safe, welcoming, and supportive. This document provides a framework for how this will be done and importantly, how we can each contribute.

The action we take now as Tasmania's health agency will have a profound effect on the current and future generations in our State.

I am calling on each and every one of you to champion the safety and wellbeing of children and young people for a safer, brighter Tasmania.

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Kathrine Morgan-Wicks

Secretary, Department of Health, Tasmania

Month 2022

Statement of Commitment

All children and young people have the right to feel and be safe. Keeping children and young people safe is everyone's responsibility.

The Department is committed to improving the way we work with vulnerable people, with a specific focus on children and young people. Children and young people are particularly vulnerable, as they are dependent on adults to care for them, meet their basic needs, and make decisions for them. Adults are in positions of trust, and are responsible for the safety, wellbeing, and empowerment of children and young people. The Department has an opportunity to recognise the signs of harm to children and young people and respond accordingly, whether working directly with them or with their parents or caregivers.

The Department recognises that while all children and young people are vulnerable, some face additional risk of harm. The Department is committed to meeting the diverse needs and ensuring the cultural safety of:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds
- children and young people who are unable to live at home
- children and young people with disability
- lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender diverse, intersex, queer, asexual and questioning (LGBTIQA+) children and young people.

The Department will put in place strategies and actions to promote child safety and wellbeing, empower, and prevent harm to children and young people. It will work towards an environment where children and young people feel safe and are safe, have their voices heard, and are involved in the decisions that affect their lives.

Signed by Health Executive

Executive Summary

The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (the National Principles) were endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments in February 2019. [1]

The Child Safety and Wellbeing Framework for Implementing the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (the Framework) establishes a systemic approach to enhance the way the Department of Health (the Department) works with vulnerable people, specifically children and young people.

The Framework:

- ensures that structures, systems, and processes are in place to mandate and foster a child safe organisation and child safe culture. It recognises that effective leadership and governance must be embedded at all levels of the organisation to successfully foster this culture.
- establishes the National Principles as key priorities to be embedded into the Department's child safe approach. The National

Principles set out a nationally consistent rights-based approach to creating an organisational culture that fosters child safety and wellbeing. [2]

- applies to the entire Department, as well as organisations funded by the Department. While the operational practicalities of a child safe approach may differ across services, all services must uphold the Department's commitment to child safety and wellbeing. The Framework recognises that this commitment is an obligation of both the individual and the organisation and is a shared responsibility at all levels.
- details the responsibility and requirements to be met by all people engaged by the Department in protecting the health, safety, welfare, and wellbeing of children and young people. All workers must act in accordance with their legal obligations and relevant statutory directions, and the Department's child safe policies, frameworks, guidelines, and procedures.

About the Framework

The Framework was developed as part of the Department's response to implementing the National Principles. Organisation-wide implementation will provide the Department with the tools to contribute to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, meeting their specific needs, rights, and interests within a child safe culture.

The Framework provides a common understanding of child safety and wellbeing and ensures that children and young people's voices are heard, and that they and their families and caregivers are involved in the decisions affecting them.

The Department's existing safety and quality principles and practice lay a strong foundation for the promotion and protection of the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. The implementation of the National Principles requires a specific child-focused methodology to be applied to the Department's existing approach to meeting the National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards against which it is assessed and accredited. [3] They assist to provide a nationally consistent rights-based approach to creating organisational cultures that foster child safety and wellbeing.

The National Principles reflect a broad scope that spans beyond child sexual abuse to cover children and young people's rights and other forms of potential harm. They are intended to guide institutions to be child safe by setting out nationally agreed good practice, based on best available evidence. The principles also set benchmarks to assess an organisation's child safe capacity, and a structured framework to assess, and minimise or mitigate, the risks that contribute to institutional child abuse. [4] [5]

The National Principles outline at a high level the 10 elements that are fundamental for making an organisation safe for children and young people.

The National Principles are: [2]

- 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.

How does the Framework help?

The Framework establishes a formal rights-based approach to child safety and wellbeing. It enables the Department to demonstrate to consumers, the community, government, and peers that it is accountable for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

The Framework outlines the commitment of the Department to the promotion of child rights, safety and wellbeing, and the prevention of harm to children and young people. Critically, it demonstrates a commitment to the empowerment of children and young people as active participants in the institutions which are a part of their lives. The Framework supports the achievement of a culture that promotes child wellbeing and prevents harm to children and young people.

It articulates the professional and legal responsibilities that employees, consultants, contractors, and

volunteers (workers) engaged by the Department must follow, whether directly or indirectly involved with children and young people to provide a child safe culture where children and young people feel safe and are safe, and able to actively participate in the decisions that affect their lives.

The Framework guides and informs workers on safe ways to behave, interact and engage with children and young people. It also references the tools, and resources available and the interagency arrangements in place to assist workers to meet their responsibilities. The Framework aims to ensure a consistent and best practice Departmental approach that promotes the health, safety, empowerment, and wellbeing of children and young people in accordance with the guidance and obligations as referred to throughout.

Aim

The Framework aims to empower and improve the wellbeing of children and young people, their families and caregivers, ensuring equitable, inclusive practice. It pays particular attention to groups of children and young people for whom equity and inclusion is a particularly critical safeguard, including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children and young people who are unable to live at home
- children and young people with disability
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender diverse, intersex, queer, asexual and questioning (LGBTIQ+) children and young people.

It aims to minimise any risks that may impact the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and strengthens the Department's capacity to detect and respond effectively to harm in line with the principles of trauma-informed care. [6] [7]

The Framework:

- promotes a child safe culture where the Department works collectively to improve the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people in its care
- enables the Department to empower and better anticipate the diverse needs of children, young people, their families and caregivers and universally adapt environments, communication and ways of working to ensure equitable, inclusive practice

- outlines the requirements the Department must meet in relation to the National Principles, statutory obligations, and relevant standards and accreditation processes
- details structures, systems, and processes that enable compliance with the principles and accountability for child safety and wellbeing to be demonstrated, and
- requires prevention and risk mitigation strategies, monitoring and continuous quality improvement systems and processes to be embedded and supported at all levels to improve the wellbeing of children and young people.

Scope

The Framework applies to all services provided by the Department, and funded by the Department

(including those delivered by community service organisations (CSOs).

Concepts

Safeguarding children and young people

Safeguarding children and young people involves the duty of care and responsibility of the Department and its workers to promote the human rights and welfare of children and young people and protect them from harm.

It encompasses the adoption of proactive, preventative, and responsive systems, policies, and practices that ensure that children and young people do not come to harm as a result of any direct or indirect contact with the Department. [8] [9]

Child and youth wellbeing

The *Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework*, developed in partnership with people who work with children, young people, and their families, defines wellbeing as:

‘... the state where a child or young person feels loved and safe; has access to material basics; has their physical, mental and emotional health needs met; is learning and participating; and has a positive sense of culture and identity.’ [10]

Tasmania’s definition of wellbeing is based on six domains inspired by The Nest, a national evidence-based initiative on child and youth wellbeing developed by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY). [11]

Safeguarding concerns to children and young people

The Department considers a safeguarding concern to children and young people to encompass any actual or potential harm, loss or damage to any child or young person’s rights, or psychological, physical, or cultural safety and welfare.

Concerns may arise from any event, circumstance, act, or omission that may have occurred while they were accessing, visiting, or receiving health services, or where a duty of care is owed.

A safeguarding concern to a child or young person does not include harm, loss or damage resulting from safety events in the course of evidence-based service provision or clinical care in line with accepted norms or from the normal or expected progression of their clinical condition.

Document background and structure

Document background

This Framework underpins a range of child safe policies, protocols and guidelines set out in the Department's child safe approach. It describes the components and requirements of the National Principles, and how each requirement enables the Department to assure the public and the government that the organisation provides a child safe service to the Tasmanian community.

The Department acknowledges the significant contributions of everyone involved in the development of the Framework. The contributions of all involved have helped and continue to help shape a health environment that is dedicated to the protection of the rights, safety, and wellbeing of all children and young people.

Structure

The requirements of the National Principles are included throughout the document. They are

The relevant section provides the linkage between the National Principles and the actions that the Department will take, and already has in place, to meet the requirements of each Principle.

reflected in a tabled snapshot of each principle that leads into each document section.

Context

Integral to compliance with this Framework is an understanding and application of whole-of-government and inter-agency requirements and strategic priorities that relate to the Department's child safety and wellbeing approach.

This Framework is informed by and must be read and implemented parallel to national and best practice standards, regulatory, legislative, and statutory requirements, including but not limited to those mentioned throughout this document.

The Framework is supported by:

- a set of supporting policies, protocols and guidelines that are specific to the Department's child safe approach
- national and best practice standards, regulatory, legislative, and statutory requirements, and
- existing policies and protocols that are accessible to staff within the Department's Strategic Document Management System.

This Framework is a dynamic document. Continuing codesign, co-development, evaluation and feedback will be used to refine this Framework over time.