



Section 1: Organisational Framework

Procedure 1.1a – Safeguarding Children and Young people from Abuse and Neglect

EdConnect's Procedure on Safeguarding Children and Young People from Abuse and Neglect details EdConnect's requirement for staff and volunteers, regarding their conduct and responsibilities to safeguard children and young people from abuse and neglect.

1 Roles and Responsibilities

1.1 Board

The Board is responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies and procedures are in place to:

- promote a safe environment for children and young people in all EdConnect programs and activities;
- reduce the risk of abuse and neglect to children and young people; and
- appropriately respond to any allegations that arise.

1.2 Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

The CEO will:

- ensure that the policy and procedure is developed, implemented, monitored and reported on in a timely manner;
- be accountable for ensuring all staff and volunteers work in accordance with the policy and procedure and have access to appropriate training and development.
- ensure any changes to relevant legislation, policies or regulations are incorporated into the policy and procedure, the Board are advised, and significant changes communicated to staff and volunteers.
- ensure that complaints relating to the policy and procedure are dealt with in accordance with EdConnect's complaints management process;
- act as the key contact for questions, comments or concerns raised by staff, volunteers or other external parties on any aspect of EdConnect's approach to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect.

1.3 Staff

EdConnect staff have a duty of care and responsibility to ensure that all who access EdConnect's programs, services and facilities are provided with a safe environment that protects children and young people and the volunteers who work with them. This extends to:

- EdConnect's programs, activities and events;
- participation in publicity, media and corporate events; and
- management of student and volunteer data, and personal and sensitive information in EdConnect's data management systems.

Staff will:

- Always adhere to EdConnect's Staff Code of Conduct;
- report concerns about any risk of harm or abuse to a child or young person, to the School Coordinator, Principal/Deputy Principal and EdConnect management;
- ensure allegations are managed quickly and sensitively according to the provisions of this document;
- respond appropriately to a child or young person where abuse or neglect is suspected or alleged;
- manage working or volunteering conditions of an alleged offender during investigation;



- manage any local requirements arising from reports and investigations; and
- review updates and attend appropriate training regarding child protection legislation and/or their requirements.

1.4 **Volunteers**

EdConnect volunteers will adhere to the policies, procedures and practices that apply to their engagement with EdConnect. EdConnect volunteers must:

- Always adhere to EdConnect's Volunteer Code of Conduct;
- in line with EdConnect training, be responsive to a child or young person where abuse or neglect is suspected or alleged;
- report concerns about any risk of harm or abuse to a child or young person to the School Coordinator, Principal or Deputy Principal and EdConnect management as soon as possible; and
- review updates provided by EdConnect and attend appropriate training regarding child protection legislation and/or their requirements.

1.5 **Supporters**

All supporters will adhere to the policies, procedures and practices that apply to their engagement with EdConnect. This includes:

- observing restrictions on contact with students;
- adhering to confidentiality and privacy requirements (including at events); and
- reporting concerns about any risk of harm or abuse to a child or young person to an EdConnect staff member.

Where a supporter is being considered for a volunteer role, staff are to ensure the applicant is informed about the different nature of the new role, and how issues of potential conflict of interest are resolved.

2 **Communicating with Staff and Volunteers**

EdConnect values discussion and feedback in relation to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. Communication will be undertaken in a manner sensitive to age, language, culture, religion and/or capability of those concerned.

EdConnect will:

- provide opportunities to discuss feedback at least annually or as needed;
- provide follow up and support in relation to issues or concerns raised;
- record identified issues and actions; and
- document implemented processes/improvements for discussion and feedback.

3 **Recruitment, Screening and Training**

All EdConnect recruitment, screening and training will be conducted in accordance with the staff and volunteer recruitment policies, volunteer security check policy, and staff and volunteer training and development policies.

A Position Description of the role outlining the key responsibilities will be provided, specifying but not limited to, accountability, responsibilities, duties, role specifics, person specifications, and their expected involvement with children and young people.

All applicants will participate in a recruitment interview, undertake full screening and complete EdConnect training prior to commencement.

People under the age of 18 years will not be engaged by EdConnect as volunteers for any unsupervised tasks. Volunteers under 18 will be supervised by an EdConnect staff member at all times.



3.1 Screening and Periodic External Checks

Screening consists of the following:

- Working with Children Check (WWCC) in all jurisdictions.
- In Western Australia a National Criminal History Records Check (NCHRC)
- If required by EdConnect or is the requirements of a jurisdiction, a Police Records Check (PCR); and
- Reference and identity check.

Security Checks

All staff and volunteers working with children and young people must undertake a periodic **WWCC**. In Western Australia volunteers require a periodic **NCHRC** to confirm the absence of convictions or charges that would pose a risk in working with children and young people.

EdConnect Board members must undertake a periodic PRC. Volunteers in other jurisdictions may be required to complete a periodic PRC if requested by EdConnect.

Any person found to be prohibited from working with children will be:

- rejected as an applicant; or
- terminated from employment or volunteering with EdConnect.

EdConnect will:

- require mandated WWCCs prior to commencing in the role;
- in WA require mandated NCHRCs prior to commencing in the role;
- require PRC's if requested by Edconnect prior to commencing in the role;
- revalidate WWCCs every twelve months and/or according to specified conditions whilst complying with any obligation under WWCC legislation;
- in WA renew WWCCs and NCHRC'S at three-year intervals;
- in Victoria and New South Wales renew WWCCs at five-year intervals;
- where a conviction is identified during the WWCC/NCHRC/PRC process, which is not directly related to children, the CEO will assess the applicant's suitability to work with children . For WA volunteers the Department of Education's screening unit determines the course of action; and
- undertake random checks of WWCCs, NCHRC/PRCs of staff , volunteers and Board members.

Reference and Identity Checks

- Reference checks on preferred applicants for paid or volunteer positions with EdConnect will be conducted in accordance with EdConnect's Recruitment Policy.
- Referees must have no familial/kin relationship with the applicant, and have known the applicant for at least two years. Where possible, at least one referee should have relevant knowledge of the applicant's paid or unpaid work with children and young people.

3.2 Training

- All volunteers are required to successfully complete EdConnect training prior to commencing in their role as a volunteer and complete a refresher training session every three years.
- Training will include information on the Volunteer Code of Conduct, including confidentiality requirements, understanding and establishing boundaries with students, and how to manage a disclosure of abuse or neglect by a child or what to do if a belief is formed that a child is at risk of harm or neglect.

4 Managing Child Safety Concerns including Notifications of Abuse and Neglect

The safety of children and young people is of the utmost importance to EdConnect.

Any person involved with EdConnect is expected to report any **reasonable concerns** about the safety, welfare and wellbeing of a child or young person as soon as practicable after they form the suspicion



of abuse or neglect. A person making a report voluntarily will be acting lawfully if the person acts honestly and the report is formed on a belief in good faith and based on reasonable grounds.

Forming a belief means that you are more likely, rather than less likely, to believe there is a significant harm for the child or young person. A report should be made despite any gaps in the information available to the reporter. The reporter does not have to prove significant abuse and neglect but needs to be able to describe the *'reasonable grounds'* for their belief about the child/young person being at *'risk of harm'* and in need of protection.

4.1 What are Reasonable Grounds?

Reasonable grounds are likely to exist when:

- a child states that they have been abused or neglected;
- a child states that they know someone who has been abused or neglected (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves);
- a relative, friend, acquaintance or sibling of the child states that the child has been abused or neglected;
- professional observations of the child's behaviour or development lead to the belief that the child has been abused or neglected; and/or
- signs of abuse and neglect lead to the belief that the child has been abused or neglected.

4.2 What is Risk of Harm?

'Risk of harm' means you have current concerns about the safety, welfare and wellbeing of a child or young person for any of the following reasons:

- the child or young person's basic physical or psychological needs are not being met, or are at risk of not being met (neglect);
- the parents/caregivers have not arranged necessary medical care for the child or young person, and are either unable or unwilling to do so;
- the child or young person has been, or is at risk of being, abused or neglected;
- the child or young person is living in a household where there have been incidents of domestic violence, and therefore, is at risk of serious harm;
- a person has behaved in such a way towards the child or young person that they have suffered, or are at risk of suffering, serious harm; and/or
- a child or young person is homeless and at risk of harm.

4.3 Steps to Manage Child Safety Concerns including Notifications of Abuse and Neglect, and Recording and Reporting

Staff and volunteers are required to:

- if uncertain whether reasonable grounds exist, discuss the situation with the School Coordinator, Principal or Deputy Principal who will determine the appropriate follow up and who will take responsibility for reporting, then advise the EdConnect Liaison Officer of the outcome;
- where serious allegations have been made, questioning should be kept to a minimum. Listen to the disclosure and take notes. It is the role of the relevant authority to investigate the complaint, and not that of EdConnect staff or volunteers. Asking too many questions may confuse the child and compromise any formal investigation;
- maintain confidentiality: only people involved in the complaints process should know about the complaint. While EdConnect staff and volunteers cannot promise to keep complaints and disclosures secret, they can ensure that only those who need to act will be informed.



Support and protect the child

- explain what will happen next: let the child know exactly who will be told about the matter, i.e. the School Coordinator, Principal or Deputy Principal and EdConnect Liaison Officer, who will decide what the next steps to take are;
- the child may feel frightened after making the disclosure so reassure the child that their concerns will be taken seriously;
- children can be asked directly what can be done to keep them safe;
- Following disclosure, do not leave the child alone, ensure they are in the care of their teacher or staff member.

Notify the school and EdConnect

- notify the School Coordinator about your concerns or the disclosure. If the School Coordinator is unavailable contact the Principal or Deputy Principal, then notify an EdConnect Liaison Officer.
- the Liaison Officer will then notify EdConnect management;
- complete a Child Safety Report documenting observation, information, disclosures and the follow up action taken, then forward to EdConnect management;
- EdConnect management will provide advice on the appropriate next steps including guidance regarding further management of the situation;

The investigative process

- EdConnect staff and volunteers are not mandatory reporters, this responsibility resides with the School Principal. The Principal is responsible for reporting the situation to the Department of Communities, Child Protection and Family Support.
- EdConnect management will communicate with the Principal to ensure that appropriate follow up steps have been taken, to protect the safety and wellbeing of the child involved.
- EdConnect volunteers and staff do not have direct contact with the students' family members. Therefore, it is at the discretion of the school and/or relevant authority to manage contact with the family; and
- inform EdConnect management of any need for additional support required, post-report.

4.4 CEO or Managers Responsibilities

Upon receipt of a Child Safety Report, the CEO/ Manager should:

- contact the staff member or volunteer who submitted the report immediately to acknowledge receipt, or seek advice from child protection authorities on the need for a report, if uncertain of reasonable grounds;
- Seek advice from child protection authorities to determine the action required if the person reporting and the CEO/Manager cannot agree on the need to report;
- Contact the school Principal to discuss what follow up actions have been taken including submitting a report to the Department of Communities, Child Protection and Family Support;
- finalise the Child Safety Report and forward to the Department of Communities, Child Protection and Family Support if this matter is not being progressed through the school Principal; or through a mandatory reporter;
- offer support to the person during and after the reporting process;

4.5 Allegation of Abuse or Neglect made against an EdConnect volunteer or staff member

The CEO or Manager must:

- contact the volunteer immediately and suspend their membership with EdConnect pending a full investigation. The volunteer will be notified in writing of the CEO's/Manager's decision;
- contact the staff member immediately and stand them down from their employment duties with EdConnect pending a full investigation. The staff member will be notified in writing of the CEO's/Manager's decision;



- on conclusion of the investigation, notify the volunteer or staff member of the outcome in writing; and
- contact the school and advise them of the situation, as well as what action has been taken and any proposed further action.

5 Marketing, Publicity and Events

- children aged less than 18 years of age will not be asked to speak at public events, media presentations or corporate partnership events, provide or be the subject of video footage and photographs, unless there is signed permission giving informed consent from their parent/guardian. The School Coordinator or teacher must ensure that the child has provided informed consent and must give supportive supervision at the event. EdConnect staff will provide information about the event itself, their role, the nature and extent of the publicity, and guidance on keeping their personal and sensitive information safe;

What is informed consent?

'Informed Consent' is related to the legal concept of 'failure to warn'. A person can be said to have given voluntary consent upon a clear appreciation and understanding of the facts, implications and future consequences of an action. In order to give informed consent, the individual concerned must have adequate reasoning faculties and be in possession of all relevant facts at the time consent is given.

Children who do participate will receive support and guidance from EdConnect employees to ensure that they do not disclose personal or sensitive information that may identify them in such a way as to provide an opportunity for inappropriate contact from anyone listening to the presentation or reading the media material. This includes giving the student the opportunity to clearly set the boundaries for what they are comfortable in disclosing.

5.1 Health and Safety

All activities associated with EdConnect will support local health and education policy in relation to alcohol, tobacco and drug use. This includes safe use of medications, no exposure to tobacco, minimising exposure to alcohol and compliance with drug legislation.

School staff or the child's parent is responsible for the transportation of the child to and from the event.

6 Working with Other Organisations

EdConnect Australia works with a wide range of government, corporate and not-for-profit organisations. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will ensure that staff are conversant with the policies of other organisations with respect to child protection. Any inconsistencies in approach will be raised and addressed as relevant.

7 Record storing

All records relating to schools, children and volunteers, including Child Safety Reports, will be stored confidentially on EdConnect's online data management system as per the IT Data and Management policy. Copies of WWCCs of applicants hired for positions or volunteers will not be kept on any local files or records, as this may breach privacy legislation.

8 Monitoring & Review of Procedure

Every two years and following every reportable incident, a review shall be conducted to assess whether EdConnect's child protection policy or procedure requires modification in order to better protect the children participating in EdConnect's program.



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Signed 

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Name: Elena Mogilevski / Chairperson