

# Safeguarding Guideline to Prevent Physical and Sexual Abuse

## *Effective Policies and Procedures and Code of Conduct*



Perpetrators have exploited our reluctance to speak about sexual abuse. They've manipulated rules and systems to get access to vulnerable people. And they've taken advantage of social norms that make it difficult to intervene.

### **How can you make it difficult for someone to do that in your organisation?**

Instead of silence, we need to speak frankly and factually about sexual abuse. We need to remove the ambiguities and vagueness that gives cover to perpetrators and make the rest of us uncertain about what to do.

It needs to be crystal clear to everyone that you will watch for the signs of sexual abuse in your organisation and act to protect the interests of people in your care.

The following two documents are the source of your accountability to the people in your care and to the community. They should be the foundation of your governance, processes, and culture. They must demonstrably

reduce the risk of perpetrators getting a foothold in your organisation.

- **A policy on safeguarding people** from sexual abuse that describes how every part of the business is designed to produce that outcome.
- **A code of conduct** that describes what behaviours are acceptable and what will not be tolerated.

Each organisation must develop a policy and code that will do that effectively. Within this guide are 7 steps on how to do that.





**1. MAKE IT SPECIFIC TO YOUR ORGANISATION**

Make the policy and code of conduct unique to you. This will take more than swapping in the name of your organisation into a template.

Examine your business structure and scan your context. Assess risks, near misses or incidents. Whose trust do you need to maintain? What sort of organisation do you want to be?

When you write the policy, refer specifically to individuals with important responsibilities or business units that will do the work of carrying out the policy. This will mean that you'll need to update the document as things change, but you should do that anyway.

**2. BE DIRECT**

Everyone needs to know what's at stake and what they need to do. Use plain language to talk about the harm you are acting to prevent. Make it clear that this is about the people in your care.

We also suggest that you don't use abstract ethical or managerial jargon—it draws attention away from the unique harm a person can suffer. If you need to use specialised language, then make its meaning clear in the text so people can pick it up as they go.

State clearly and directly what you want people to do. Use the active voice as much as you can so everyone knows who is responsible for the actions being described in the policy and code of conduct.

Test your policy and code with staff to discover where there's a risk of misinterpretation. Give people time to do it and make it an active, face-to-face process, rather than sending an email asking them to give feedback.

**3. START WITH THE FACTS**

Convene a special meeting for directors and executive team to find out more about sexual abuse, how perpetrators find opportunities, and the impacts on people who've suffered the abuse.

Run workshops and an active learning program in your organisation, so that everyone knows the facts, can recognise signs of abuse, and respond as they should if someone discloses abuse

Directors and the executive team in the organisation need to take the lead on this. However, make sure everyone in the organisation from the board to your volunteers gets the same investment in learning and training—after all, everyone is equally obliged to follow your code of conduct.

**4. DEVELOP THE POLICY AND CODE WITH STAFF, VOLUNTEERS AND EVEN REPRESENTATIVES FROM YOUR COMMUNITY**

Policies that are co-created are policies that people commit to. Managed well it increases trust and builds in accountability. It's also an excellent way to draw on the collective knowledge and experience of the people who provide care and people who receive it.

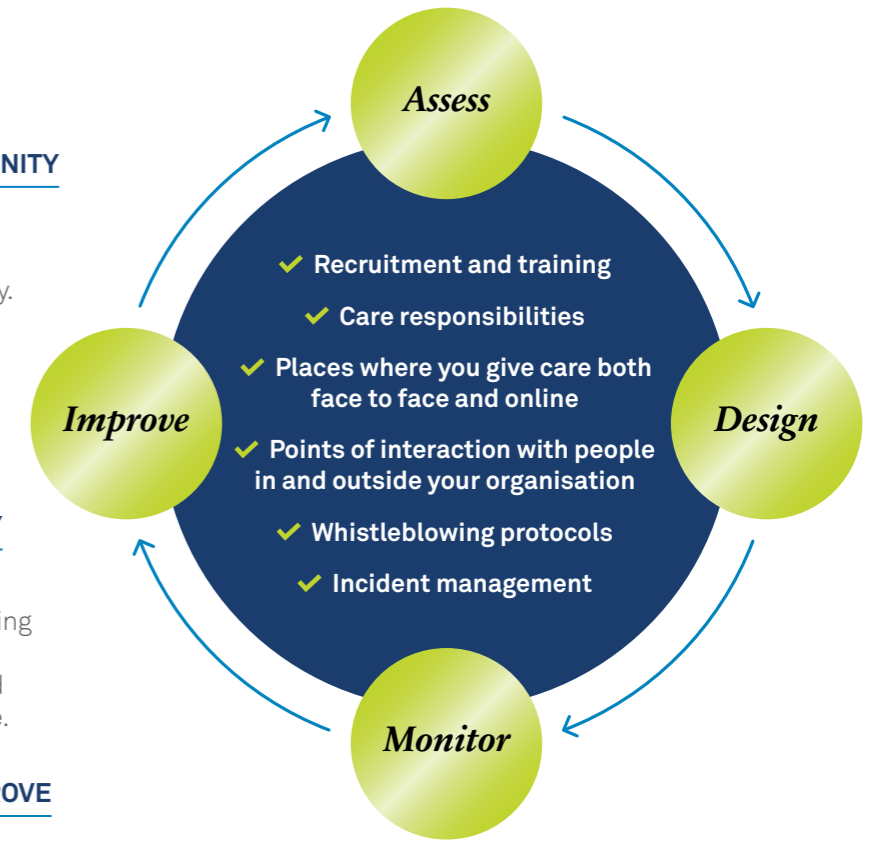
**5. COMMUNICATE THEM TO STAKEHOLDERS AND YOUR COMMUNITY**

We mean face-to-face engagement, public announcements and directors seeking opportunities to spread the word, not just publishing it on your website. People need to know. Directors need to be accountable.

**6. ASSESS, DESIGN, MONITOR AND IMPROVE**

Do your governance, processes and culture effectively put your policy into action? Do they help directors, staff and volunteers to abide by the code of conduct?

Make sure the governance and processes you refer to in the policy are fit for purpose. Ask whether your culture really motivates the behaviour you demand in the code.



**7. TAKE THE LEAD**

Whether you are on the executive team or one of the directors, you must face up to the risk that someone could be sexually abused in your organisation—and take steps to prevent it. This is your responsibility and no one else's.





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