

Child protection

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You Connect is committed to providing a safe environment for all children and young people. This policy outlines the responsibility of all staff under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act (1998)* and *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act (2012)*.

Applicability

When
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> applies during all interactions between You Connect staff and children/ young people.
Who
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> applies to all You Connect staff and stakeholders including volunteers, trainees, students, apprentices and contractors.

Definitions

Term	Description
Working with Children Check (WWCC)	a requirement for people who work or volunteer in child-related work. It involves a national criminal history check and a review of findings of workplace misconduct.

Documents relevant to this policy

 Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW) 
 Children and young persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW) 
 Ombudsman Act 1974 (NSW) 

Defining significant risk of harm

- a child or young person is at a significant risk of harm when circumstances that cause significant concerns for their safety, welfare or well-being are present
- 'significant' means that circumstances are sufficiently serious to warrant a response by an authorised party
- if a response is required, it is made irrespective of a family's consent
- staff at You Connect can determine significant risk of harm by:
 - listening to the child/young person
 - observing the behaviour of the child/young person
 - observing the behaviour of family and/or authorised guardians.

Organisational responsibilities

- ensure all staff are informed of all legal and organisational expectations relating protection of children/young people
- ensure that a child/young person at risk of significant harm is safe and supported
- ensure that all staff are informed that they must notify and investigate child abuse allegations in accordance with the *Ombudsman Act 1974*
- ensure compliance with *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012* by maintaining evidence of current Working with Children Check clearance for all staff
- respond to reportable matters in accordance to all legislative requirements
- inform all staff of their obligations as mandatory reporters under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*
- protect all staff from false or unjust accusations of sexual abuse of minors
- ensure all staff have a current Working with Children Check and National Police Check.

Employee responsibilities

- plan safe and relevant activities with consideration for:
 - age
 - maturity
 - cultural factors
 - gender
- assess risks and implement effective risk minimisation strategies
- allocate the most relevant staff to respond to the specific needs of each child/young person
- be aware of signs of abuse and neglect in children
- undertake mandatory reporting of any possible risks of significant harm to children
- share private information only if it is absolutely necessary
- respect a child's right to privacy and comply with appropriate confidentiality policies
- follow relevant guidelines when providing information to external organisations and stakeholders
- have a current Working with Children Check and National Police Check.

Support worker responsibilities

- provide their WWCC number to key management personnel
- report to Family & Community Services any ongoing concerns about the circumstances of children/young people that are leaving YC.

Key management personnel responsibilities

- keep records of all staff that include their:
 - full name
 - date of birth
 - WWCC (or application number) and expiry date
 - date and outcome of online WWCC verification
- remove all staff that are barred from working with children
- enforce appropriate disciplinary measures.

National police checks

You Connect uses PRM Group (<https://secure.prm.net.au/>) to conduct national police checks.

Working with children checks

You Connect is committed to employing staff that do not have a conviction for a crime against a minor. Individuals with such criminal convictions will not be employed. If a conviction is discovered, the convicted staff member will have their employment terminated.

- a WWCC is needed:
 - before starting paid work in a child-related field
 - throughout a career in a child-related field
 - when undertaking new or continuing volunteer work, depending on industry standards and expectations
- [the application process should begin here](#)
- cleared applicants can use their WWCC for five years before renewal is required
- a cleared check must be provided with the surname and date of birth of the applicant for online verification purposes
- notification emails regarding the provision a WWCC will not be accepted as evidence of clearance
- once the online verification is completed, the staff member can start working with children immediately
- cleared applicants are still subject to record monitoring
- if required, relevant risk assessments of cleared individuals will be conducted by the Commission for Children and Young People
- breaches of law and policy could lead to a WWCC being revoked
- it is an offence for applicants without a WWCC to engage in any work with children/young people
- it is an offence to hire an individual that is not allowed to work with children in a child-related position
- staff will be reminded to renew their WWCC three months before expiry.

Mandatory reporting

- all staff, including volunteers, are considered Mandatory Reporters under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act (1998)* and *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act (2012)*
- it is mandatory to report concerns regarding significant risk of harm to children
- reporting significant risk of harm is not mandatory for unborn children or young people but should still be made if it is appropriate
- where possible, a young person should be involved in making the decision to report significant risk of harm
- it is not compulsory to tell a child under 16 about a report
- information about mandatory reporting is part of the induction process at You Connect
- all mandatory reporters are required to attend Child Protection Refresher Training, which is a part of the NSW AIS online module.

Recordkeeping

- keeping records ensures effective management and follow-up of reports relating to significant risk of harm to children/young people
- requests for records can be made in line with relevant registration
- paper copies of Form A and related documents should be placed in secure storage by the support worker and kept confidential
- records should be made available to future authorised support workers

- records relating to staff are kept in both electronic and paper formats
- records relating to staff are made available for audit and monitoring purposes.

Managing actions that cause significant harm

- Community Service Helpline should be consulted when reporting any individual that is under 18 years of age
- appropriate disciplinary measures must be considered if appropriate
- You Connect employees must contact Family & Community Services if they are concerned about risk of significant harm to a child/young person - to initiate proper contact, staff members must do the following:
 - notify key management personnel
 - utilise the online [Mandatory Reporter Guide](#)
 - a report must be made to the Child Protection Helpline (133 627)
 - if wait times exceed five minutes or if a phone call cannot be made, staff can use the [Significant Risk of Harm Report Fax Form](#)
- in cases of significant harm caused by a student, trainee or apprentice:
 - police should be notified if a student, trainee or apprentice engages in acts that could be viewed as sexual or physical assault
 - Community Service Helpline should be contacted if the reported individual is under 18 and at risk of significant harm
- in cases of significant harm caused by a staff member:
 - relevant management and authority personnel must be notified
 - the safety of the student must be ensured
 - Community Service Helpline should be contacted if risk of harm is associated with actions of any key management personnel.