



## Safeguarding Children Policy

### Purpose

This policy has been developed to ensure all parties are aware of their:

- Roles and responsibilities in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children.
- Responsibility for establishing controls and procedures to prevent child abuse.
- Obligations towards identifying and/or detecting possible occasions of child abuse.

### Scope

The policies and procedures in this document apply to Board members, employees, volunteers, contractors and visitors under the direction of 12 Buckets.

### Policy Statement

12 Buckets is committed to promoting and protecting at all times the safety and wellbeing of children with whom we come into contact.

12 Buckets values and respects the family unit although priority will always be given to the safety and wellbeing of children with whom we come into contact.

All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse.

12 Buckets has a zero-tolerance approach to abuse.

Everyone working at or with 12 Buckets is responsible for the care and protection of the children with whom we come into contact, and for reporting information about disclosed or suspected abuse.

Anyone making a report in good faith for the purpose of investigating child abuse will not be subject to any civil, criminal or disciplinary action.

All people involved in situations where abuse is suspected or disclosed will be treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect.

All employees, mentors or contractors who have access to information regarding suspected or disclosed abuse must observe strict confidentiality in relation to the matter and ensure that this information is kept secure.

### Definitions

*Child* means a person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

*Child abuse* means all forms of physical abuse, emotional or psychological ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, or commercial (e.g. for financial gain) or other exploitation of a child, including any actions that results in actual or potential harm to a child.

*Protection* means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm.



*Reasonable Grounds For Belief* is a belief based on reasonable grounds that abuse has occurred when all known considerations or facts relevant to the formation of a belief are taken into account and these are objectively assessed. Circumstances or considerations may include the source of the allegation and how it was communicated, the nature of and details of the allegation, and whether there are any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator.

A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person believes that:

- The child is in need of protection
- The child has suffered or is likely to suffer 'significant harm as a result of abuse'

A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation.

A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed if:

- A child states that they have been abused
- A child states that they know someone who has been abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves);
- Someone who knows a child states that the child has been abused;
- Observations of the child's behaviour lead to a belief that the child has been abused or is likely to be abused; and/or
- Signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been abused.

*Safeguarding* means protecting the welfare and human rights of children that interact with, or are affected by 12 Buckets, particularly those that might be at risk of abuse. This refers to any responsibility of measure undertaken to protect a child from harm.

*Sexual Abuse* is any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography. It includes child grooming, which refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child.

## Roles and Responsibilities

While the responsibility to safeguard children is shared by all who work at or with 12 Buckets, some individuals have specific obligations with which they must comply.

### **Board member**

- Protecting all children that interact with, or are affected by 12 Buckets.
- Ensuring that there are appropriate and effective ways for 12 Buckets to do this.
- Ensuring that 12 Buckets observes all relevant laws relating to safeguarding children.



### **Chief Executive Officer**

- Ensuring that appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place to prevent and detect abuse.
- Ensuring that appropriate policies and procedures are in place to protect children.
- Ensuring that all employees, volunteers, contractors and visitors are aware of:
  - Relevant laws
  - Relevant 12 Buckets policies, procedures and codes of conduct.
  - Their obligation to report suspected child abuse.
- Providing support for employees, volunteers, contractors and visitors in undertaking their protection responsibilities.
- Reporting any reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk to the relevant authorities (i.e. School Principal, WA Police, Department of Communities: Child Protection and Family Support) and fulfil their obligations of duty of care.
- Dealing with and investigating reports of abuse transparently and accountably.
- Securely storing copies of incident reports and investigations.

### **Operations Manager**

- Promoting a safeguarding culture at all times.
- Assessing the risk of abuse within 12 Buckets operational control and taking actions to eradicate or minimise any risk.
- Educating employees about the prevention and detection of abuse.
- Being familiar with the types of abuse that might occur within 12 Buckets operational control and be alert for any indications of such conduct.
- Facilitating reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities.
- Protecting the identity of an employee, volunteer or contractor reporting any suspicion(s) that a child's safety may be at risk.
- Reporting any suspicion(s) that a child's safety may be at risk to the Chief Executive Officer.

### **Employees, Volunteers, Contractors, Visitors**

- Provide an environment that is supportive of the safety of all children.
- Be familiar with the relevant laws, codes of conduct and 12 Buckets policy and procedures in relation to safeguarding and comply with all requirements.
- Document and report any suspicion(s) that a child's safety may be at risk to the Operations Manager (or, if the Operations Manager is involved in the suspicion, to the CEO).
- Should not inform parents that a report has been made, interview the child, collect evidence or investigate the concern.



## Safeguarding Children Procedures

### Recruitment of Employees and Volunteers

As specified in the Recruitment Policy, 12 Buckets will:

- Develop a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all employees and volunteers which aims to:
  - Promote and protect the safety of all children with whom we work.
  - Identify the safest and most suitable people who share 12 Buckets' values and commitment to protect children.
  - Prevent a person from working at 12 Buckets if they pose a risk to children and vulnerable people.
- Require all employees and volunteers to pass through the recruitment and screening processes prior to commencing their engagement with 12 Buckets.
- Require all applicants to provide a National Police Clearance certificate and a Working with Children Check, before they commence working at 12 Buckets.
- Undertake thorough reference checks before engaging new employees and volunteers.
- Ensure new employees and volunteers review and acknowledge their understanding of this Safeguarding Policy and sign the Child Safe Code of Conduct Agreement, in accordance with our Staff Induction Policy and Mentor Induction Policy.

### Risk Management

12 Buckets will ensure that safeguarding children is a part of its overall risk management approach. This will include:

- Keeping its Risk Register and risk management plans related to safeguarding children current.
- Ensure all employees, volunteers, contractors and visitors understand this Safeguarding Policy and adhere to the Child Safe Code of Conduct Agreement.
- Conducting due diligence checks of employees, volunteers, contractors and visitors.
- Conducting awareness raising training for employees, volunteers, contractors and visitors.
- Encouraging reporting through the use of the Safeguarding Incident Response Form.
- Monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness and proportionality of its safeguarding approach.

### Managing Incidents

*Child Abuse* is considered serious misconduct and 12 Buckets reserves the right to:

- Take disciplinary action against those it believes are responsible, which may include dismissal.
- Take civil legal action.
- Report the matter to law enforcement.

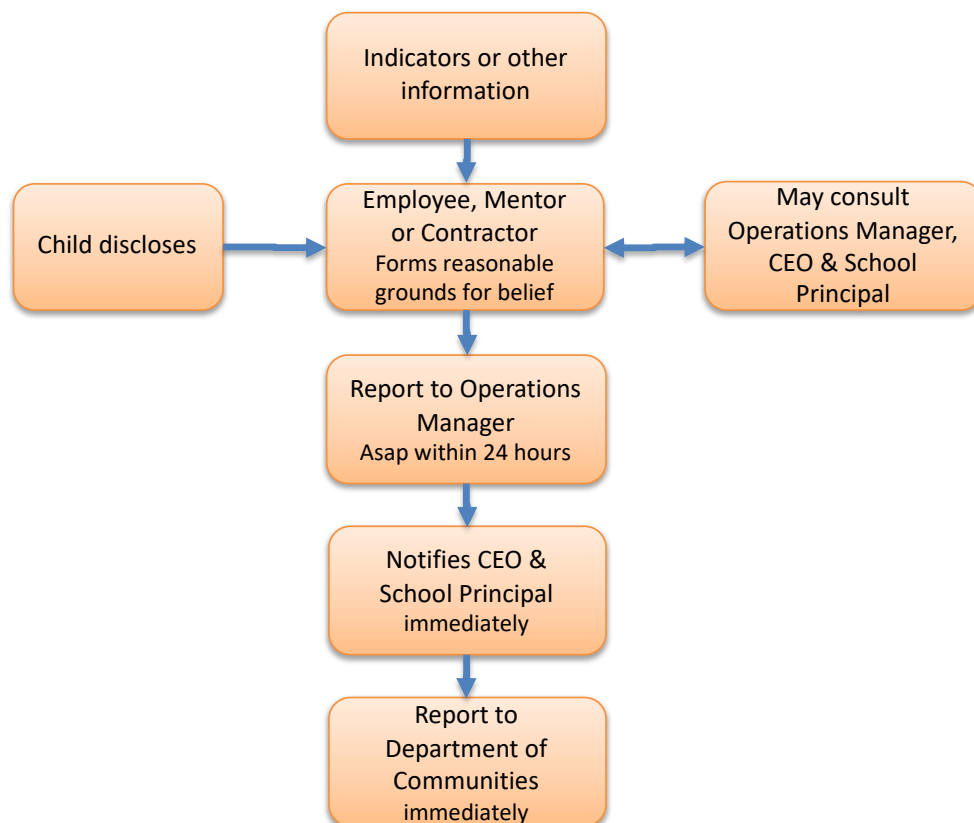
### Reporting Incidents

- Any employee, volunteer or contractor who has grounds to suspect Child Abuse must report this to the Operations Manager as soon as practicable and within 24 hours, using a Safeguarding Incident Reporting Form.



- In situations where the Operations Manager is suspected of involvement in the abusive activity, or if the person having the suspicion does not believe that the matter is being appropriately addressed or dealt with by the Operations Manager, the matter should be reported directly to the Chief Executive Officer.
- The Operations Manager must report all suspected abusive behaviour to the Chief Executive Officer and to the Principal of the school in which the child(ren) are enrolled immediately.
- The Chief Executive Officer or School Principal must report all suspected abusive behaviour to the relevant authorities (Department of Communities: Child Protection and Family Support and/or WA Police) immediately.
  - Child Protection and Family Support: Mandatory Reporting Information System

## SAFEGUARDING INCIDENT REPORTING PROCESS



### Investigating Incidents

#### External Investigation

- If the child protection service or the WA Police decide to conduct an investigation of this report, all employees, volunteers, contractors and visitors involved must co-operate fully with the investigation.
- The Chief Executive Officer will notify the Board of a State Authority's decision to investigate.
- The Chief Executive Officer will collaborate with the relevant State Authority and the School Principal to ensure that a full investigation is undertaken.



- The Chief Executive Officer will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other people who were directly involved may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation.
- The Chief Executive Officer will notify the Board, the Operations Manager, the School Principal and the people concerned of the outcome of the investigation in a timely manner, including any action to be taken.

### **Internal Investigation**

- Whether or not State Authorities decide to conduct an external investigation, the Chief Executive Officer will consult with those authorities to determine whether an internal investigation is appropriate.
- If it is decided that such an investigation will not conflict with any proceeding of the authorities, the Chief Executive Officer will conduct an internal investigation, in collaboration with the School Principal.
- Any such investigation will be conducted according to the rules of natural justice.
- All employees, volunteers and contractors involved must co-operate fully with any internal investigation.
- The Chief Executive Officer will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other people who were directly involved may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation.
- After an initial review and a determination that the incident warrants additional investigation, the Chief Executive Officer will coordinate the investigation with the appropriate investigators and/or law enforcement officials.
- Internal or external legal representatives will be involved in the process, as deemed appropriate.
- The Chief Executive Officer will notify the Board, the Operations Manager, the School Principal and the people concerned of the outcome of the investigation in a timely manner, including any action to be taken.
- The findings of the investigation will also be reported to any professional accreditation body as required.

### **Responding to Incidents**

- If it is alleged that an employee, volunteer, or contractor may have committed an offence or have breached 12 Buckets' policies or its Child Safe Code of Conduct, the person concerned may be stood down (with pay, where applicable) while an investigation is conducted.
- If the investigation concludes that there are Reasonable Grounds For Belief that an offence, or a breach of the 12 Buckets' policies or its Child Safe Code of Conduct, has occurred then disciplinary action may follow, up to and including dismissal or cessation of involvement with 12 Buckets.

### **Privacy and Data Protection**

- All personal information considered or recorded while managing and responding to an incident will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, unless there is a risk to someone's safety.
- The people involved are entitled to know how their personal information is being recorded, what will be done with it, and who will be able to access it.