



Version Control

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1. Purpose

Ardoch Youth Foundation ('Ardoch') seeks to prevent the risk of exposing children and young people to inappropriate persons. The Ardoch Child Protection Policy ('Child Protection Policy') articulates a Code of Conduct (Appendix 1) and comprehensive processes (Appendix 2) to take all reasonable steps to facilitate and maintain a safe environment for children and all participants in our service.

The Child Protection Policy was developed in consultation with child protection experts in the community sector and government. Ardoch helped to establish the first framework to assess and accredit organisations working with children and young people to protect children. Ardoch was the first organisation accredited through this process by the resultant organisation, Australian Council for Children & Youth Organisations (ACCYO). Ardoch has undertaken whole of organisation training and review in Child Protection to align with best practice current child protection recommendations.

Ardoch recognises the Ministerial Order No 870 – Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and seeks to support this.

2. Scope

This Child Protection Policy applies to all Ardoch Staff, Board of Directors, Volunteers, and Students on Placement; including those who:

- ★ Work in Ardoch offices;
- ★ Regularly volunteer at Ardoch Partner Sites (schools and early childhood centres), and are directly supervised directly by staff from those Partner Sites; and
- ★ Volunteers in Ardoch programs where they have one-off contact with children (e.g. Literacy Buddies®, Numeracy Buddies and Broadening Horizons).

3. Definition of Child Abuse

Child abuse refers to any non-accidental behaviour by parents, caregivers, other adults or older adolescents (to 18 years of age) that is outside the norms of conduct and entails a substantial risk of causing physical or emotional harm to a child or young person. Such behaviours may be intentional or unintentional and can include acts of omission (i.e., neglect) and commission (i.e., abuse) (Bromfield, 2005; Christoffel, et al., 1992). Child abuse is commonly divided into five main sub-types:

- ★ Physical abuse;
- ★ Emotional abuse;
- ★ Neglect;
- ★ Sexual abuse; and
- ★ The witnessing of family violence.

(Taken from: *PROTECT Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools DET 2016*)

Under Victorian law, failure to report child sexual abuse to the police is a criminal offence. It is a requirement that any adult who holds a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child in Victoria must report that belief to police, unless they have a reasonable excuse (defined in the Act) for not reporting. The offence attracts a maximum term of three years' imprisonment.

4. Statement of Intention

Ardoch has a moral duty of care to ensure the safety and security of children and young people. This duty includes articulating a Code of Conduct (see Appendix 1), and taking all reasonable steps to promote safety and prevent all forms of abuse. Ardoch believes each of us has a responsibility to raise concerns of abuse, and has detailed an appropriate response when an allegation is made. Ardoch's intention is to maintain a safe environment for all participants including children, young people, staff and volunteers. We also recognise that well-intentioned people can hurt children if not provided the appropriate guidance, training and support.

Ardoch recognises that child sex offenders will target child related organisations as a means of approaching children and young people. Sex offenders will often seek out positions which not only provide them with victims but also a professional subterfuge to conceal their abuse.

Ardoch understands that abuse damages children and young people physically, emotionally and behaviourally. Ardoch believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount and is vigilant in carrying out the risk management process.

The Child Protection Policy is developed with participation of stakeholders, including:

- ★ Board of Directors;
- ★ Staff;
- ★ Volunteers, and;
- ★ Partner Sites (schools and early childhood centres).

This is achieved by a commitment to have Ardoch staff and Board of Directors review the Child Protection Policy annually, and by encouraging all stakeholders to participate in the annual Child Protection Policy evaluation and review.

The Child Protection Policy is presented to the Ardoch Board of Directors for ratification following any major alterations and reviewed annually. The Child Protection Policy is widely displayed, circulated and promoted as follows:

- ★ Ardoch's Education Support Coordinators present each site with a copy of the Child Protection Policy at the start of each year, and make the document available at the site.
- ★ The Child Protection Policy is prominently displayed at each Ardoch Partner Site (schools, early childhood centres).
- ★ The Child Protection Policy is distributed to staff, students on placement and volunteers during recruitment and training.
- ★ The Child Protection Policy is available on the Ardoch website.

5. Promoting Safety of Children and Young People

Ardoch is a community organisation providing education support for children and young people experiencing disadvantage. Our vision is that every child and young person's potential is realised through full participation in education.

Ardoch believes in the proactive empowerment of children and young people and is committed to the wellbeing and safety of all children, young people and families. Ardoch advocates for the rights of the child and young person as articulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, including the right to be safe, the right to food and shelter, the right to education and the right to protection from all forms of abuse.

6. Policy Evaluation and Review

Ardoch is committed to evaluating and reviewing the Child Protection Policy annually in accordance with the following evaluation/ review process:

- ★ Staff will review the Child Protection Policy on an annual basis.
- ★ The Child Protection Policy will be reviewed by identifying:
 - Significant experiences in the past year in reference to the Child Protection Policy.
 - Significant problems in the Child Protection Policy which arose in dealing with these experiences.
 - Significant functional issues in relation to the Child Protection Policy.
- ★ Staff will seek input from stakeholders including staff, schools/ Partner sites and Board Members.
- ★ The Child Protection Policy will be presented to the Board for ratification.
- ★ The Child Protection Policy will be widely displayed, circulated and promoted (as per 4. Statement of Intention).
- ★ Annual training on the Child Protection Policy will be conducted by the Child Protection Officer.

7. Document Management

7.1 Policy Manager: National Programs Manager

7.2 Policy Stakeholders: Board Members
CEO
Staff Members

7.3 Review Date: Annually from date authorised

7.4 Authorisation:

Signed:  Date: 12/07/2017

Name: Adele Stowe-Lindner Position: National Programs Manager

8. Appendices

- ★ Appendix 1: Child Protection Policy Code of Conduct
- ★ Appendix 2: Child Protection Policy Processes for Staff Recruitment, Support, Supervision and Training
- ★ Appendix 3: Child Protection Policy Processes for Volunteer Recruitment, Support, Supervision and Training
- ★ Appendix 4: Child Protection Policy Processes for Board Member Recruitment, Support, Training and Evaluation
- ★ Appendix 5: Child Protection Policy Processes for Reporting Concerns/ Disclosures of Child Abuse
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Appendix 1: Child Protection Policy Code Of Conduct

Ardoch details acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in order to minimise the risk of child abuse occurring within the organisation. Ardoch provides practical guidance to staff, the Board of Directors, volunteers and students on placement about the types of behaviour that are and are not acceptable within the organisation. The Code of Conduct outlined below is to be signed by all staff, Board of Directors, volunteers, and students on placement before commencing with Ardoch.

Acceptable – Do:

- ★ Dress and conduct yourself in a manner consistent with your position as a positive role model to children and young people, and as a representative of Ardoch and the school/early childhood community;
- ★ Follow organisational policy and guidelines relating to the safety and security of children and young people as outlined in the Child Protection Policy and as it pertains to a particular site;
- ★ Treat all children and young people with respect and take notice of their reactions to your tone of voice and manner to ensure a positive experience for them;
- ★ Always maintain contact with children and young people in a supervised area and within the parameters of the program;
- ★ Raise all concerns, issues and/or problems about a child or young person's wellbeing and safety with your supervisor as soon as possible; and
- ★ Make sure all allegations or suspicions of abuse are reported, recorded and acted upon in a confidential manner (as referred to in Appendices 7, 8 and 9 of the Child Protection Policy).

Unacceptable – Do not:

- ★ Do not engage in rough physical games;
- ★ Do not hold, kiss, cuddle or touch a child or young person in an inappropriate and/or culturally insensitive way;
- ★ Do not act in a sexually provocative manner or engage children or young people in any form of sexual activity;
- ★ Do not make sexually suggestive comments or actions, or use inappropriate language and behaviours to a child or young person, even as a joke;
- ★ Do not do things of a personal nature that a child or young person can do for themselves, such as going to the toilet or changing clothes,
- ★ Do not accompany children to the toilet;
- ★ Do not disclose any personal information of a controversial or sensitive nature;
- ★ Do not exchange personal contact details with, initiate or maintain unauthorised contact with children or young people outside of the parameters of the program;
- ★ Do not take photos, store images, or share details on social media without the explicit written permission obtained through Ardoch; and
- ★ Do not engage in social interactions with children or young people through social networking sites unless there is educationally valid context and with prior approval of Ardoch and Partner Site staff.

Appendix 2: Child Protection Policy Processes for Staff Recruitment, Support, Supervision and Training

Ardoch has a comprehensive Employment Practices document which articulates Ardoch's Human Resource standards and processes. Ardoch takes the following steps when recruiting, supporting, supervising and training staff to increase the likelihood that the organisation provides a safe environment for children and young people accessing our service. Ardoch:

1. Develops written position descriptions and key selection criteria (including minimum qualifications) for all positions within the organisation. All position descriptions include the notification that a satisfactory Criminal History and Working With Children Check (naming Ardoch) is required as a prerequisite to employment.
2. Advertises vacancies widely and through various channels.
3. Assists applicants to self-assess their suitability for the position by providing applicants with further information regarding the position and organisation, and screening mechanisms utilised.
4. Selects applicants meeting key selection criteria for interview. Panel interviews are conducted with behavioural and situational based questions. Applicants are informed in interview that Ardoch is vigilant in the protection of children and works to achieve this through adhering to its Child Protection Policy and screening mechanisms.
5. Conducts a minimum of 3 reference checks for a preferred applicant (including verification of applicant's identity and employment history).
6. Conducts Criminal History and Working With Children Checks on all staff in accordance with existing National Criminal History Check and Working With Children Checks Standards.
7. Requires policy adherence from all staff as part of their Employment Agreement. New staff are required to read the Child Protection Policy, sign the Code of Conduct, and acknowledge they have both understood and agree to abide by the Child Protection Policy.
8. Orients all new staff during the probationary period of 6 months in relation to understanding, recognising and responding to abuse and neglect, understanding the Child Protection Policy and the rest of their role including protecting the wellbeing of children and young people. Under Victorian law, failure to report child sexual abuse to the police is now a criminal offence. It is a requirement that any adult who holds a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child in Victoria must report that belief to police, unless they have a reasonable excuse (defined in the Act) for not reporting. The offence attracts a maximum term of three years' imprisonment.
9. Continues to contribute to a working environment where the risks to children and young people are minimised. This is done by ensuring that all Ardoch staff have the opportunity to:
 - ★ Contribute to the annual development, evaluation and review of the Child Protection Policy as appropriate;
 - ★ Participate in a structured induction process;
 - ★ Participate in other workshops which promote the wellbeing of children/ and young people;
 - ★ Receive regular supervision in the form of regular staff meetings, and formal and informal one on one appointments with managers; and
 - ★ Participate in education and training programs to improve knowledge of child abuse protection and best practice in preventing abuse and neglect and responding to allegations.

Appendix 3: Child Protection Policy Processes for Volunteer Recruitment, Support, Supervision and Training

Ardoch has a comprehensive Volunteer Policy that documents the standards and process that Ardoch utilises to manage and support volunteers. Ardoch takes the following steps when recruiting, supporting, supervising and training volunteers to increase the likelihood that the organisation provides a safe environment for children and young people accessing our service. The following procedures pertain to volunteer recruitment, support, supervision and training for volunteers.

For those who regularly volunteer at Partner Sites (schools and early childhood centres), and are directly supervised by staff from those Partner Sites, Ardoch:

1. Provides prospective volunteers with an Application Form which includes Ardoch's screening processes and commitment to the protection of children and young people and enables applicants to assess whether or not they want to be a volunteer. The Application Form requires applicants to sign the form including a clause acknowledging having read, understood and agreed to abide by the Child Protection Policy. Finally, for volunteers who regularly volunteer at Partner Sites, it requests the names of 2 referees, details of a Working With Children Check and requests permission to undertake a National Criminal History Check.
2. Advertises vacancies widely and through various channels.
3. Assists applicants to self-assess their suitability for the position by providing applicants with further information regarding the position and organisation, and screening mechanisms utilised.
4. Selects applicants for interview who are willing to participate in screening mechanisms.
5. Utilises an interview process to understand volunteer motivations, screen applicants, and inform the prospective volunteer about Ardoch's activities, volunteer opportunities, screening mechanisms and compulsory volunteer training sessions.
6. Screens applicants by contacting 2 referees, processing a National Criminal History Check and requiring notification from The Department of Justice that Ardoch's details have successfully been added to a Working With Children Check. Even those exempt under the *Working With Children Act 2005* (for example those registered with VIT) must have a Working With Children Check (with Ardoch added) to volunteer with Ardoch. Requires satisfactory participation at Volunteers Training.
7. Gives applicants, upon commencement of training, a copy of the Volunteer Training Booklet, incorporating the Child Protection Policy.
8. Trains volunteers on the roles and responsibilities of being an Ardoch volunteer, the Child Protection Policy, and the Code of Conduct. Training also provides experiential learning opportunities on understanding, recognising and responding to abuse and neglect; and identifying and working with "at risk" children and young people. Volunteers also have the opportunity to participate in additional workshops and training to increase the wellbeing and protection of children and young people. Upon completion of the training, all volunteers are required to sign to acknowledge they have both understood and agree to abide by the Child Protection Policy and the Code of Conduct. Under Victorian law, failure to report child sexual abuse to the police is a criminal offence. It is a requirement that any adult who holds a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child in Victoria must report that belief to police, unless they have a reasonable excuse (defined in the Act) for not reporting. The offence attracts a maximum term of three years' imprisonment.
9. Requires policy adherence from all volunteers as part of their placement.
10. Displays the Volunteer Policy including the Child Protection Policy at the site at which volunteers work.
11. Nominates an Ardoch supervisor who provides support for volunteers through formal and informal support and

supervision mechanisms.

12. Evaluates the volunteer experience regularly, and provides opportunities for volunteers to feed back to Ardoch via the End of Year Volunteer Survey.
13. Continues to contribute to a working environment where the risks to children and young people are minimised. This is done by ensuring that all Ardoch volunteers have the opportunity to:
 - ★ Contribute to the annual development, evaluation and review of the Child Protection Policy as appropriate;
 - ★ Participate in other workshops which promote the wellbeing of children/ and young people;
 - ★ Receive support and supervision in the form of regular formal and informal volunteer meetings; and
 - ★ Participate in education and training programs to improve knowledge of child abuse protection and best practice in preventing abuse and neglect and responding to allegations.

For volunteers in Ardoch programs where they will have one-off contact with children at the school site though regular communication via written letters or blogs (e.g. Literacy Buddies®, Numeracy Buddies), Ardoch:

1. Provides prospective volunteers with a Registration Form which includes Ardoch's screening processes and commitment to the protection of children and young people and enables applicants to assess whether or not they want to be a volunteer. The Registration Form requires applicants to read and acknowledge consent of the form (electronically) including a clause acknowledging having read, understood and agreed to abide by the Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct.
2. Provides training and/or a pre-briefing session ahead of each program visit.
3. Requires policy adherence from all volunteers as part of their volunteer experience.
4. Nominates an Ardoch supervisor, the Project Coordinator, who provides support and a contact point for volunteers.
5. Evaluates the volunteer experience regularly, and provides opportunities for volunteers to feedback to Ardoch via online surveys.
6. Requests that volunteers obtain a Working With Children Card with Ardoch named on the card
7. Aged Care home Literacy Buddy Big Buddies are considered co-participants as they are also beneficiaries. As such there will not be visits to the school and they do not require Working With Children Checks.

For volunteers and in Ardoch programs where they will have supervised contact with children outside of school grounds (e.g. Broadening Horizons, Learning Through Lunch), Ardoch:

1. Requires policy adherence from all volunteers as part of their volunteer experience.
2. Nominates an Ardoch supervisor, the Project Coordinator, who provides support and a contact point for volunteers.
3. Requires signed Code of Conduct
4. Individuals who are invited as guests by an Ardoch staff member and who are approved as such by the CEO or the National Programs Manager AND who will be accompanied at all times by the inviting staff member are not defined by Ardoch as volunteers and therefore do not require a Working With Children Check.

Appendix 4: Child Protection Policy Processes for Board Member Recruitment, Support, Training and Evaluation

Ardoch has a comprehensive Board Governance Charter which articulates Ardoch's governance of the foundation. Ardoch takes the following steps when recruiting and training Board members to increase the likelihood that the organisation provides a safe environment for children and young people accessing our service. Ardoch:

1. Develops written position descriptions and key selection criteria (including minimum qualifications). All position descriptions include the notification that a satisfactory Criminal History and Working With Children Check is required as a prerequisite to nomination to the Board.
2. Advertises vacancies widely and through various channels.
3. Assists applicants to self-assess their suitability for the position by providing applicants with further information regarding the position and organisation, and screening mechanisms utilised.
4. Selects applicants meeting key selection criteria for interview. Panel interviews are conducted with behavioural and situational based questions. Applicants are informed in interview that Ardoch is vigilant in the protection of children and works to achieve this through adhering to its Child Protection Policy and screening mechanisms.
5. Conducts a minimum of 3 reference checks for a preferred applicant (including verification of applicant's identity and employment history).
6. Conducts Criminal History and Working With Children Checks on all staff in accordance with existing National Criminal History Check and Working With Children Checks Standards.
7. Requires policy adherence from all volunteers as part of their nomination. New Board Members are required to read the Child Protection Policy, sign the Code of Conduct, and acknowledge they have both understood and agree to abide by the Child Protection Policy.
8. Orients all Board Members in relation to understanding, recognising and responding to abuse and neglect, understanding the Child Protection Policy and the rest of their role including protecting the wellbeing of children and young people. Under Victorian law, failure to report child sexual abuse to the police is now a criminal offence. It is a requirement that any adult who holds a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child in Victoria must report that belief to police, unless they have a reasonable excuse (defined in the Act) for not reporting. The offence attracts a maximum term of three years' imprisonment.
9. Continues to contribute to a working environment where the risks to children and young people are minimised. This is done by ensuring that all Ardoch Board have the opportunity to:
 - ★ Contribute to the annual development, evaluation and review of the Child Protection Policy as appropriate;
 - ★ Participate in a structured induction process;
 - ★ Participate in other workshops which promote the wellbeing of children/ and young people; and
 - ★ Participate in education and training programs to improve knowledge of child abuse protection and best practice in preventing abuse and neglect and responding to allegations.

Appendix 5: Child Protection Policy Processes for Reporting Concerns/ Disclosures of Child Abuse

Some professionals such as doctors, nurses, police and school teachers are legally obliged to report suspected child abuse under Mandatory Reporting legislation. In addition, any person who believes *on reasonable grounds* that a child needs protection can make a report to the relevant state Child Protection Service (either directly, or through an organisation or school).

All Ardoch staff and volunteers have an important role in the identification and reporting of child abuse. It is an organisation-wide shared responsibility.

The Child Protection Policy requires the reporting of all concerns, disclosures, indicators of abuse and inappropriate behaviour (as defined in the Code of Conduct) immediately to enable appropriate action to be taken to facilitate the wellbeing and safety of children and young people. Your identity will remain confidential unless you need to give evidence if the matter goes to court, and if you make a notification in good faith, you cannot be held legally liable – regardless of the outcome of the notification.

Under Victorian law, failure to report child sexual abuse to the police is a criminal offence. It is a requirement that any adult who holds a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child in Victoria must report that belief to police, unless they have a reasonable excuse (defined in the Act) for not reporting. The offence attracts a maximum term of three years' imprisonment.

The process outlined below is designed to ensure Ardoch responds to all allegations of abuse quickly, appropriately and fairly. There are slight variations for different parties which are articulated below. *Please note that if you need to report an offence that requires immediate police attention, call the police on 000.*

1. Procedure for Ardoch Volunteers and Students on Placement

- ★ Discuss concerns/disclosure with supervising teacher or school volunteer contact (person who did induction – might be Welfare officer or Deputy Principal) prior to leaving school premises and alert Ardoch staff that this has been done;
- ★ If this has not been done before leaving the school premises then contact the Child Protection Officer or volunteer coordinator at the Ardoch Head Office on (03) 9537 2414 within 24 hours of initial suspicion;
- ★ Work with the relevant supervisor at school and Ardoch to complete a Reporting Form for Disclosures, Observations of Child Abuse and Actions (refer to Appendix 7);
- ★ Respect the confidentiality and privacy of the child/young person, family and school;
- ★ Debrief with relevant Ardoch staff member as necessary; and
- ★ Follow up with the teacher or school volunteer contact to ensure concerns/disclosures are acted upon

Ardoch will then proceed to manage the case confidentially. Confidentiality is crucial to a fair and effective process. Management may include any of the following (as appropriate):

- ★ Taking appropriate steps to protect the child/young person;
- ★ Distancing the alleged perpetrator from the child/young person, including standing down a staff member or volunteer. Any staff member or volunteer will be recognised as entitled to a just process;
- ★ Notifying the school/early childhood site, and working with their leadership to follow the Department/Organisation's correct protocol;
- ★ Consulting the relevant child protection organisation for advice and information;
- ★ Notifying CHILD First and/or the Department of Human Services Child Protection Unit ('DHS');
- ★ Notifying Police;
- ★ Contacting parents/caregivers of child/young person under 18yrs;
- ★ Making an appointment/referral for child/young person at appropriate medical and/or counselling services; and
- ★ Provide feedback to the person who filed the concern, and de-briefing (and counselling support) as required.

2. Procedure for Ardoch Staff

- ★ Discuss concerns/disclosure (either first or second hand) with the Child Protection Officer within 24 hours of initial suspicion. If the Child Protection Officer is unavailable, contact a member of the Management Team at Ardoch's Head Office on (03) 9537 2414;
- ★ Complete a Reporting Form for Disclosures, Observations of Child Abuse and Actions (refer to Appendix 7);
- ★ Respect the confidentiality and privacy of the child/young person, family and school;
- ★ Debrief with relevant supervisor as necessary; and
- ★ Follow up with the relevant supervisor to ensure concerns/disclosure are acted upon.

3. Procedure for Child Protection Officer

- ★ Discuss concerns/disclosure (either first or second hand) with the Chief Executive Officer within 24 hours of initial suspicion:
 - Where the alleged perpetrator is other than an Ardoch staff member/volunteer, the Child Protection Officer records the incident, reviews process undertaken and reports the incident to the Chief Executive Officer and Management Team;
 - Where an Ardoch staff member/volunteer is the alleged perpetrator, the Child Protection Officer immediately advises the Chief Executive Officer who forwards documented details to the Board and obtains legal advice;
- ★ Identify steps to be taken by all parties (including support to be offered and reports to police, CHILD First, DHS, family, alleged perpetrator etc);
- ★ Identify support services needed by child/young person, family and/ or school/ early childhood site;
- ★ Provide and organise appropriate referrals in partnership with school/early childhood site;
- ★ Document the concern/disclosure details, steps taken and planned and provide to the relevant manager (and school/site as appropriate) within 24 hours;
- ★ Make recommendations to the Chief Executive Officer on any further actions to be taken;
- ★ Debrief with Chief Executive Officer or request professional debriefing as necessary;
- ★ Follow up with the Chief Executive Officer to report outcomes of the concerns/disclosure and ensure the concerns/ disclosure is acted upon; and
- ★ Maintain all records securely and confidentially.

4. Procedure for Ardoch Chief Executive Officer

- ★ Document details and report any incident to the Board as appropriate;
- ★ Obtain legal advice as appropriate;
- ★ Monitor and follow-up outcome and report to the Board;
- ★ Chief Executive Officer may undertake any of the following:
 - Suspend Ardoch staff member/volunteer;
 - Notify the school/early childhood site;
 - Notify CHILD First and/or the DHS;
 - Notify Police;
 - Contact parents/caregivers of child/young person under 18yrs; and/or
 - Make an appointment/referral for child/young person at appropriate medical and/or counselling services.
- ★ Review and evaluate the incident and make recommendations to improve processes and policy and report to Board as necessary.

Guidelines/ advice on how to recognise and respond to disclosures of child abuse are provided in Appendices 8 and 9.

5. Complaints Resolution Process

The purpose of the Complaints Resolution Process is to clarify the rights and responsibilities of all parties to an allegation of misconduct. The relevant parties include the child or young person.

Ardoch's Complaints and Grievances Policy balances the following interests:

- ★ The right of the child/young person to be heard, to be protected and to be supported;
- ★ The right of the child/young person and their families to have their concern acted upon;
- ★ The right of the alleged perpetrator to a fair process;
- ★ The right to privacy; and
- ★ Ardoch's commitment to ensure allegations of abuse and suspected crimes are acted on and reported for proper investigation to the Police, and CHILD First and/or the DHS as appropriate.

Where an allegation is made and the alleged perpetrator is an Ardoch staff member, Student on Placement or volunteer, the Ardoch Child Protection Officer will manage the process. The Chief Executive Officer will together with the Board obtain legal advice. As appropriate the Child Protection Officer will notify the alleged perpetrator that a concern/disclosure has been raised and the course of action taken/ to be taken.

Appendix 6: National Criminal History and Working With Children Check Process

Ardoch seeks to minimise the risk of exposing children and young people to inappropriate persons.

A **National Criminal History Check** involves identifying and releasing any relevant Criminal History Information subject to relevant spent convictions/non-disclosure legislation and/or information release policies.

The **Working with Children Check** is a Victorian government scheme that assesses a person's suitability to work or volunteer with children. It involves an examination of relevant criminal offences and disciplinary findings across a person's lifetime. It reviews the national criminal history, findings of professional bodies including the Victorian Institute of Teaching and the out of home care Suitability Panel and relevant determinations of the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) under the Health Professions. It considers offences relevant to the safety of children, such as serious sexual, violent or drug-related crimes.

Ardoch maintains that no permanent offer of paid employment, voluntary placement, student placement or Board directorship will be made until satisfactory National Criminal History and Working With Children Checks have been received.

Until this time, Ardoch maintains that confirmation of an offer of paid employment, voluntary placement, student placement or Board directorship cannot occur until an applicant's National Criminal History Check and Working With Children Check has been completed. The applicant is obligated to disclose details of any charge or conviction, and Ardoch management proceeds to assess suitability. A minimum of 3 referee checks per applicant for all paid work (and 2 referee checks per applicant for voluntary work) is an essential part of this safety screening process. *Please note that this does not apply to volunteers engaged in one-off corporate volunteering opportunities, when they are supervised by Ardoch staff and/or school representatives.*

1. New Staff, Board of Directors, Volunteers and Students on Placement

Ardoch commits to having all new staff, Board of Directors, volunteers and students on placement whose work involves actual or potential access to children and young people undergo a National Criminal History Check and Working With Children Check.

All staff, Board Directors, Volunteers and Students on Placement are required to list Ardoch as the current employer or voluntary agency via the "Update Your Details" section of the Working With Children Check website: www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au. They will also need to update these details should their circumstances change (i.e. if they move from a volunteering role to a paid role within Ardoch).

2. Continuing Staff, Board of Directors, and Volunteers

Ardoch recognises that the Criminal History Check is a time-specific check of criminal convictions. The Working With Children Check is a live check therefore any charges pending and/or convictions of any criminal offence will be communicated to Ardoch by the Department of Justice.

If a volunteer does not volunteer for more than a year, then they will need to undertake a new Criminal History Check before being placed again.

3. Written Notification Prior to Interview

Ardoch maintains that all applicants for paid and voluntary work involving actual or potential unsupervised access to children/young people are to have a satisfactory National Criminal History Check and Working With Children Check and are provided with written notification of the need for this prior to interview. This may be stated in the:

- ★ Job advertisement;
- ★ Position description; and/ or
- ★ Application form.

4. Receipt of the National Criminal History Check and Working With Children Check Results and Process for Approving Employment and/or Placement

- ★ In relation to a staff application, the HR Assistant and/or CEO views the results and proceeds accordingly.
- ★ In relation to a volunteer application or student placement, the relevant Volunteer Coordinator and/or Program Coordinator views the results and proceeds accordingly.
- ★ In relation to a Board Director application, the Chairman, Chair of nominations committee or CEO views the results and proceeds accordingly.
- ★ National Criminal History Checks and Working With Children Checks are regarded as strictly confidential, only the above persons and members of the Management Team are authorised to access or view completed checks. National Criminal History Check and Working With Children Check results are not forwarded to any other individual or organisation. Where there are no disclosable outcomes Ardoch will record the date of issue and reference number on the database and destroy the documents. Any disclosable outcomes will not be incorporated into any manual, electronic database or filing system. National Criminal History Check results are not available for access by staff or volunteers; however Ardoch can issue individual clearance numbers.
- ★ Placement of any form will not be permitted where any information given is falsified either verbally, or in writing, and/or where a charge and/or conviction in any way involves the harm of a child.
- ★ An applicant may be excluded from a paid or voluntary position on the basis of having a criminal history record. Such a decision is based upon the nature of the criminal history in reference to children and young people, and upon the discretion of Ardoch management. As appropriate, Ardoch may provide the opportunity to discuss the criminal history record and the reasons for preclusion with the person in question.
- ★ Where a conviction is disclosed which does not relate to the harming of children, Ardoch management will consider the offence history as part of the overall assessment of the applicant's character and reputation, as well as the following factors:
 - The nature of the offence/s;
 - The frequency of offences/s;
 - An extended criminal history or accumulation of individual minor offences;
 - The length of time since the offence/s took place;
 - Whether the offence was committed as a juvenile or an adult. i.e. assess what level of maturity influenced judgement at the time;
 - Any mitigating or extenuating circumstances which might be revealed in relation to the offence/s committed. e.g. provocation, effect of alcohol etc., which may or may not be favourable to the applicant;
 - The general character displayed since the offence was committed. e.g.: steady employment record and favourable reports by past employers; and
 - The relevance of the type of crime to the nature of work with children and young people.
- ★ Based on this assessment, Ardoch will decide whether the applicant represents an unacceptable risk to children and young people as a result of their convictions for certain offences, and proceed accordingly.

Appendix 7: Reporting Form for Disclosures, Observations of Child Abuse and Actions

Under Victorian law, failure to report child sexual abuse to the police is now a criminal offence. It is a requirement that any adult who holds a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child in Victoria must report that belief to police, unless they have a reasonable excuse (defined in the Act) for not reporting. The offence attracts a maximum term of three years' imprisonment.

Do NOT print your name on this form. Provide to Ardoch's Child Protection Officer for secure storage.

Location:	
Date and time:	
Name of child/ children affected:	
Witness/s name/s and contact details:	
Incident / Observations:	
Who Needs to be Advised:	
Any Notification to Agencies (e.g. Police, Child Protection service, etc.) if applicable:	
Any Corrective Action Taken:	
Any recommendations to improve child safety:	

Appendix 8: Guidelines When Concerned About Possible Child Abuse

Under Victorian law, failure to report child sexual abuse to the police is now a criminal offence. It is a requirement that any adult who holds a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child in Victoria must report that belief to police, unless they have a reasonable excuse (defined in the Act) for not reporting. The offence attracts a maximum term of three years' imprisonment.

A child protection concern may occur over a period of time or may be formed immediately due to a disclosure or presence of clear indicators. When deciding if you need to report a child protection concern you should have a belief that results in concern for the physical safety, health, psychological or emotional wellbeing of a child. This belief should be based on reasonable grounds such as:

- ★ information the child discloses;
- ★ someone else such as a relative or friend of the child provides information;
- ★ a child discloses that they know someone who has been abused (often a child is referring to him or herself);
- ★ observation of indicators; and
- ★ the child's writing or drawing depicts abuse.

When reporting:

- ★ proof is not required;
- ★ note if the injury from physical abuse is considered to be non-accidental; or
- ★ note if the indicators are not typical for the age and gender of the child.

If you are unsure, discuss this confidentially with your:

- ★ relevant supervisor;
- ★ line manager;
- ★ Ardoch's Child Protection Officer;
- ★ school or early childhood centre staff; and/or
- ★ Child Wise National Child Abuse Prevention Helpline (1800 99 10 99).

If you remain unsure, continue to document observations, information and consultations on the Reporting Form for Disclosures, Observations of Child Abuse and Actions (see Appendix 7).

Ardoch understands that if an allegation of abuse concerns an Aboriginal child, culturally and/or linguistically diverse child or child with a disability, particular measures should be taken to support the child upon instruction of Child First

Key Contacts / Further Support

Below are some key contacts for further information and support.

- ★ Ardoch Youth Foundation (Head Office): **03 9537 2414**
- ★ Child Wise Helpline: **1800 99 10 99** (Toll Free)
- ★ Child Protection Crisis Line: **131 278** (24-Hours, 7 days, Toll Free within Victoria)
- ★ Kids Help Line: **1800 55 1800** (24-Hours, 7 days, Toll Free)
- ★ Lifeline: **13 11 14** (24-Hours, 7 days, Toll Free)
- ★ 1800 RESPECT: **1800 737 732** (24-Hours, 7 days, Toll Free)

*Please note that if you need to report an offence that requires immediate police attention, call the Police: **000**

Appendix 9: Guidelines for Responding to Disclosures of Child Abuse

All staff and volunteers must be aware of the immediate needs of children making disclosures and respond accordingly. Below are some guidelines as listed in the *Department of Education WA's Child Protection Policy*, that provide some advice and guidance about dealing with and responding to disclosures.

When responding to a disclosure staff and volunteers are advised to:

- ★ reassure the child that telling was the right thing to do;
- ★ allow the child to tell the story in their own words;
- ★ use protective interrupting if their disclosure is in an inappropriate situation;
- ★ find a quiet place to talk;
- ★ let the child know what will happen next;
- ★ assess the child's immediate safety; and
- ★ complete documentation as soon as possible.

Staff and volunteers are advised to not:

- ★ dismiss or ignore the disclosure;
- ★ put words in the child's mouth, push for details or conduct an investigation as this could jeopardise the interviewing process of the relevant Child Protection Authority (e.g. DHS) or Police;
- ★ make the child repeat the disclosure to a third party;
- ★ stop the child from talking once there are reasonable grounds for forming a belief that abuse occurred;
- ★ promise not to tell when there are clear limits on confidentiality;
- ★ confront the person believed to be the abuser; or
- ★ engage in general staffroom discussion about the disclosure.

Protective interrupting is a strategy to prevent students disclosing in front of other students and providing them with the opportunity to disclose in a safe and confidential manner using the following steps:

- ★ acknowledge that the child has been heard and stop further disclosure;
- ★ be supportive and gently indicate that they can talk in a more private situation;
- ★ quietly arrange to see them as soon as possible; and
- ★ listen attentively in a private location within the school.

Staff and volunteers should be aware that a disclosure can arouse personal feelings of shock, anger and helplessness. It is important to conceal these feelings; they can be worked through after the disclosure.

Key Contacts / Further Support

Below are some key contacts for further information and support.

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- ★ Lifeline: **13 11 14** (24-Hours, 7 days, Toll Free)
- ★ 1800 RESPECT: **1800 737 732** (24-Hours, 7 days, Toll Free)
- ★ Child First: <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/family-and-parenting-support/family-services/child-first-child-and-family-information,-referral-and-support-teams>

*Please note that if you need to report an offence that requires immediate police attention, call the Police: **000**