

# Engagement Procedure to Support Equity and Diversity



## 1. Purpose

This procedure is designed to foster equitable and respectful treatment of all individuals associated with Little Dreamers, irrespective of their age, gender, race, language, disability, religion, political beliefs, sexual orientation, national or social origin.

Little Dreamers actively promotes inclusive practices to ensure that all children and young people engaged in our programs, services, and activities feel safe and supported. At the core of this approach are participatory engagement practices that integrate diversity into strategic planning, policy development, resource allocation, and reporting processes to deliver our programs, services, and activities.

A fundamental commitment lies in upholding values of inclusion, equity, and diversity in all interactions and communications with children, young people, their parents or caregivers. This commitment extends to supporting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, LGBTIQA+ youth, and those who are unable to live at home.

Little Dreamers is dedicated to honest and open communication with parents and guardians regarding the wellbeing and safety of their children. Whenever feasible, we strive to involve them in shaping the services provided to their children. Information about our commitment to safeguarding children and young people is shared with children, young people, and parents or guardians when accessing any of our services.

This procedure empowers all personnel to:

- Recognise and respect the rights of all children and young people to access and participate in quality programs, services, and activities free from harm and discrimination.
- Cultivate an environment that upholds and promotes equitable and inclusive behaviors and practices.
- Foster a sense of belonging for children, families, and personnel, valuing and providing opportunities for the expression and development of diverse identities, backgrounds, experiences, skills, and interests.
- Ensure that programs, services, and activities reflect and respond to the values and cultural beliefs of families utilising our services, as well as those within the local community and society at large.
- Enable all children and young people, recognising the uniqueness of each family, to access our programs.
- Continuously update and support the knowledge, skills, practices, and attitudes of personnel and children or young people to encourage and ensure inclusion and equity.
- Seek and incorporate input and feedback from children, young people, and their families to facilitate ongoing review and improvement of our services.

Little Dreamers adheres to the principles of the 'United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child' and firmly believes in the right of all individuals to feel safe and be free from discrimination. Our personnel are expected to uphold non-discriminatory actions and behaviors, always acting in the best interests of the child.

## 2. Related Policies

- ★ Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy
- ★ Code of Conduct
- ★ Reporting Policy
- ★ Complaints Management and Feedback Policy
- ★ Communications Strategy

## 3. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of every individual within our organisation to foster equity and demonstrate respect for diversity by:

- ★ Proactively anticipating the unique circumstances of children and young people, and effectively responding to those with additional vulnerabilities.
- ★ Educating children and young people about their rights and ensuring that all individuals have access to information, support, and complaints processes.
- ★ Respecting the rights of children and young people to participate in decision-making processes, with particular attention given to the needs of the following groups:
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.
  - Children and young people with disabilities.
  - Children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
  - LGBTIQA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, and A-Sexual) children and young people.
  - Children and young people who are unable to live at home.

Position	Responsibility
Board and CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Proactively cultivate and nurture stakeholder relationships that foster an inclusive and diverse culture.</li> <li>★ Enforce organisation-wide policies and procedures that exemplify diversity and inclusion.</li> <li>★ Guarantee that personnel can readily access and comprehend this policy and its associated procedures.</li> <li>★ Provide managers and supervisors with the necessary support and guidance to comprehend and implement policies and procedures effectively.</li> </ul>
People and Culture Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Conduct periodic reviews and revisions of this document and supporting materials in collaboration with relevant stakeholders.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Assist in coordinating the implementation of the Safeguarding Children and Young People framework.</li> <li>★ Deliver training and guidance on the practical application of policies and procedures.</li> </ul>
Senior Leadership Team	Ensure policies and procedures are followed and implemented
Employees and Volunteers	Comply with all policies and procedures

#### 4. Key Requirements

The primary objective of this Engagement Procedure is to establish a secure, inclusive, and supportive environment that prioritises the involvement and communication of children, young people, their parents, and guardians, while upholding principles of equity and diversity.

*All personnel are expected to promote equity and diversity in their engagement with children, young people, parents, caregivers, and fellow personnel.*

When possible, personnel should:

- Respect and uphold the rights and dignity of all individuals in society, encouraging children and young people to do the same and actively participate as responsible individuals.
- Ensure that their approach and interactions with children and young people are considerate, respectful, and inclusive of diverse backgrounds and abilities.
- Show respect for decisions made by individuals regarding their gender identity and provide consultation and support to help children and young people feel safe.
- Foster an organisational culture that embraces inclusivity and respect for various family structures and formations.
- Promote cultural safety, participation, and empowerment for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander individuals, those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, individuals with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and those who are unable to live at home.
- Demonstrate sensitivity to the needs and anticipate the requirements of children and young people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as well as diverse circumstances, and respond accordingly to individual needs and specific circumstances.
- Report any instances of discriminatory behavior, actions, or prejudiced attitudes to a Senior Leadership Team Member.

*We will prioritise participatory and inclusive practices.*

In order to ensure equal access, inclusive practices, and the right of every child and young person, regardless of their circumstances, to actively engage in our programs, services, and activities, Little Dreamers will:

- ★ Design and develop programs that offer equal access to a wide range of learning opportunities for all children, young people, and their families.

- ★ Provide necessary modifications or adjustments to enable full participation of all children and young people, ensuring they can engage alongside their peers in our services, activities, and programs.
- ★ Conduct assessments of any new or significantly revised policies, programs, or services to evaluate their impact on individuals from diverse circumstances before making any decisions.
- ★ Involve individuals from diverse backgrounds in the development of new or substantially revised policies or programs that may affect them, whenever possible, through consultation processes.
  - Additionally, our organisation will allocate sufficient resources to effectively communicate these changes to individuals from diverse circumstances or relevant cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- ★ Appropriately communicate our policies and procedures, ensuring that publicly available resources and accessible information reach individuals from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- ★ Provide information in languages other than English, utilising print, electronic media, and communication methods suitable for individuals with disabilities when necessary.
- ★ Establish a complaints and reporting mechanism and policy that enables individuals, regardless of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, to address issues and voice concerns about Little Dreamers' personnel and performance.
- ★ Whenever feasible, cater to the specific needs of children and young people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds by offering language assistance through interpreters or facilitators.
- ★ Develop outreach and community liaison arrangements to address the additional needs of children and young people in remote areas.
- ★ Consider diversity, cultural sensitivity, and inclusivity when designing and delivering training programs.
- ★ Provide regular and relevant diversity and cultural sensitivity training to personnel, enabling them to acquire knowledge and skills in cultural competency.
- ★ Promote diversity in the composition of our board, committees, and working groups.
- ★ Ensure equal access for all individuals to advertised positions, interviews, equipment, office accommodation, training, and promotion opportunities.
- ★ Offer children, young people, and their families the opportunity to provide information about themselves, including any specific needs for their full participation in our programs, through our intake forms.

In our commitment to the principles of participation, we will ensure that:

- ★ Children and young people are actively listened to.
- ★ Children and young people are supported in expressing their views.
- ★ Children and young people's views are taken into account.
- ★ Children and young people are involved in decision-making processes.
- ★ Children and young people are given the opportunity to share power and responsibility in decision-making.

*We will ensure that all forms of communication are accessible and child friendly.*

These principles encompass the following:

- ★ Listen to young people: Providing opportunities for young people to express their views and communicate their wants, needs, and preferences.
- ★ Understand the audience: Taking the time to understand the target audience, including children, young people, parents, and guardians, considering their diverse backgrounds, needs, and behaviours.

- ★ Encourage participation: Actively involving young people in the development of communication materials that are directed towards them.
- ★ Create appropriate, relevant content:
  - Keep messages concise: Present information in a straightforward, brief, and clear manner that resonates with young people.
  - Convey positive and aspirational messages: Avoid an overly negative tone and focus on rules and logistics, instead respecting and uplifting the individuals being addressed.
  - Assess language and imagery: Pre-test communications to ensure understanding, appropriateness, and cultural sensitivity of the language and images used.
  - Establish value for young people: Highlight that the communication is intended for young people and create opportunities for two-way conversations. Consider involving young people in the creation of content to foster an honest and respectful dialogue.
  - Empower the audience: Encourage children and young people to take ownership of the issue and engage in conversations in an age-appropriate manner. Explore the use of technology and digital tools to support safe and positive communication.
- ★ Evaluate all communications through an inclusive, equitable, and diverse lens, allocating resources to support the needs of diverse groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, LGBTI individuals, and those unable to live at home.

The methods employed to communicate with children, young people, parents, and guardians include:

- ★ Policies and procedures
- ★ Organisation website
- ★ Posters displayed at service delivery sites
- ★ Welcome Packs and information booklets
- ★ Surveys, complaint forms, or feedback mechanisms
- ★ Formal and informal verbal communication through events, discussions, webinars, etc.
- ★ Conversations facilitated by Intake and Support coordinators

These communication methods will convey information about our commitment to safeguarding children and young people, including our Code of Conduct. Reporting policies will be made available to children, young people, and their families, using language appropriate to their age and developmental stage, as well as the languages spoken by the communities accessing our services.

At a minimum, we will provide:

- ★ Information to parents and caregivers outlining our commitment and approach to safeguarding children and young people, including references to our
  - Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy;
  - Code of Conduct; and
  - Reporting Policy.
- ★ A Parents/Guardians Code of Conduct that outlines expected behaviors when engaging with our organisation.
- ★ Child-friendly versions of our Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, tailored to the age, developmental stage, diversity, and abilities of the children and young people we serve. These versions will inform children and young people of their rights, including the right to:

- Feel safe;
  - To report any situations in which they do not feel safe; and
  - The assurance that their disclosures will be taken seriously.
- ★ Child-friendly information that educates children about their rights, the expected behaviors of personnel, and the behaviors our organisation expects from them. This information will be adapted to the age, developmental stage, diversity, and abilities of the children and young people we serve.

## **5. Monitoring, Review and Communication**

This document will undergo a comprehensive review at least once every three years, with input from relevant stakeholders. Certain circumstances, such as legislative changes, organisational shifts, incident outcomes, and other pertinent matters determined by the Board and/or CEO, may trigger an earlier review. We maintain records that document each review, including meeting minutes and documentation of policy and procedure amendments resulting from the review.

An external audit and verification, conducted by the Australian Childhood Foundation, will be conducted every three years based on a representative sample.

We ensure the effective communication of our Engagement Procedure and its requirements to children, young people, their families, and our personnel. New personnel receive comprehensive information and support to fully understand our organisation's safeguarding children and young people policies and procedures, with specific emphasis on the practices outlined in this Engagement Procedure.

Personnel receive direct copies of this Engagement Procedure, our organisation's Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, and Code of Conduct. These documents are also made publicly accessible and available in child-friendly versions.

## **6. Supporting Resources**

- ★ Information for parents and guardians - posters and brochures
- ★ Information for children and young people - posters and brochures
- ★ Keeping our Kids Safe: Cultural Safety and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- ★ LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Practice