

The last newsletter for 2023!

NEWSLETTER December 2023

Important Dates.....

- **Term 4 - last day is Thursday 14th December.**
- **Preschool Closed for Staff Training – Friday 15th December.**
- **School holidays - Mon 18th Dec 23 to Mon 29th Jan 24.**
- **Mon 29th January 2024 – ‘Stay & Play’ orientation for new children ONLY.**
- **Term 1 starts Tuesday 30th January 2024.**

New 2024 Fee Relief Declaration forms are required for ‘Fee Relief’ funding in 2024

The Department of Education have issued new 2024 forms for Fee Relief. These have been sent out to families by email. Please ensure you have returned it by close of preschool on Thursday 14th December 2023 to have fee relief funding applied for the start of Term 1, 2024.

***Start Strong Fee Relief funding means** that the first 15 hours of your child’s enrolment (2 days) each week is funded by the NSW Government under this program. In 2024 this funding covers all but \$5 of your daily fee which means that families will be required to pay \$5/day (\$10/week) for their child’s 2 day/week enrolment.

The \$5 daily fee only applies where families nominate Springwood Preschool on their 2024 Fee Relief Declaration form.

Thank you to everyone who has already returned them. Paper copies can be collected from preschool if you are unable to print it at home.

If you choose not to nominate Springwood Preschool for fee relief, please speak to the office asap regarding the applicable fees which will be payable from the beginning of Term 1, 2024.

Please contact us by phone **47513360** or email admin@springwoodpreschool.org.au if you have any questions.



Find us and ‘Like’ us on Facebook www.facebook.com/springwoodpreschool

Visit our Website for information & events www.springwoodpreschool.org.au



Gateway thank you for your generous donations



Gateway Family Services would like to pass on their huge appreciation for all of the donations from our preschool community. You will help make Christmas a little easier for some families struggling at this time of year.
Thank you and Merry Christmas!!!



❖ Thursday 14th December is the last day for children at Preschool in 2023.

❖ Preschool returns for Term 1, on Tuesday 30th January 2024.

We wish you all a safe and happy Christmas and look forward to seeing you in 2024.



Best wishes from everyone at Springwood Preschool.



Parenting Programs TERM 1, 2024



Program	Date/Time	Location	Register
Cool Little Kids Six week program that gives parents skills to help their 0-6 year old children manage their anxiety.	Every Friday 16th Feb – 22nd Mar 10:30am – 12:00pm ** Limited childcare ** Must register	Gateway Family Services cnr Station & Henry St PENRITH	Phone 4720 6500 groups@gatewayfamily services.org.au
Tuning in to Kids Six week program that teaches parents to help children understand and regulate their emotions.	Every Monday 19th Feb – 25th Mar 6:30pm – 8:30pm	Online via ZOOM	Phone 4720 6500 groups@gatewayfamily services.org.au
Circle of Security Eight week program that helps parents form secure relationships and stronger bonds with their children.	Every Wednesday 14th Feb – 3rd April 6:30pm – 8:00pm	Gateway Family Services 70 Old Bathurst Rd BLAXLAND	Phone 4720 6500 groups@gatewayfamily services.org.au
Circle of Security Eight week program that helps parents form secure relationships and stronger bonds with their children.	Every Tuesday 13th Feb – 2nd April 10:00am – 12:00pm ** Limited childcare ** Must register	Gateway Family Services 14 Oak Street KATOOMBA	Phone 4720 6500 groups@gatewayfamily services.org.au



Our parenting programs are funded by DSS and DCJ and are offered FREE to residents of Penrith and the Blue Mountains LGAs.

Phone 4720 6500 or groups@gatewayfamilyservices.org.au



We acknowledge and respect the Traditional knowledge holders and custodians of the land on which we work, the Darug and Gundungurra people.



Thrive presents

photos with Santa

Inviting Blue Mountains families to come along for a free photo print with Santa!

Thursday 14th December 2023 | 3:30pm - 5:30pm
Thrive Services | 2 Station Street, Katoomba

Collect your print on the 20th December 2023 from Thrive Services office





Term 1
2024
BLAXLAND

Circle of Security Parenting

8 week parenting program - FREE to register



Circle of Security Parenting helps parents develop secure relationships and stronger bonds with their children.

The Circle of Security course helps parents and carers of children aged 0-12 years learn:

- How to help your child feel more confident and secure
- How to help your child manage their emotional responses
- How to better understand your child's emotional needs



build stronger parent/child bonds



learn positive parenting skills



promote secure attachments

DATES:

Wednesdays 14th Feb - 3rd April

VENUE:

Gateway Family Services
70 Old Bathurst Road Blaxland

TIME: 6:30pm - 8:00pm

COST: FREE

REGISTER NOW



Register at 4720 6500 or groups@gatewayfamilyservices.org.au



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Term 1
2024
PENRITH

Cool Little Kids Program

6 week parenting program - FREE to register



Cool Little Kids is a 6 week program that gives parents skills to help their child manage and overcome anxiety.

If you have a 3-6 year old child with excessive shyness, anxiety or fears, this program will equip you with skills to help support them.

The program will cover:

- Understanding anxiety and shyness
- Causes and risk factors for anxiety
- How to respond to your child's anxiety
- Skills and strategies to deal with fear
- Dealing with setbacks and difficulties
- Maintaining resilience long term



Help your child manage anxiety, excessive shyness and fears



Learn simple Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) strategies

DATES:

Fridays 16th Feb - 22nd March

VENUE:

Gateway Family Services
Cnr Station and Henry Streets
Penrith

TIME: 10:30am - 12:00noon

COST: FREE



CHILDCARE LIMITED
Bookings required



Register at 4720 6500 or groups@gatewayfamilyservices.org.au



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Term 1
2024
ONLINE

Tuning in to Kids Parenting Program

6 week parenting program - FREE to register

Tuning In To Kids is a 6 week program that supports you to help your child understand and regulate their emotions.



The goal of the program is to help children to understand, regulate and work through their emotions so that they manage their behaviour and respond in socially appropriate ways.

The program will cover:

- Foundations of emotion coaching
- Regulating and working through emotions
- Identifying and validating emotions
- How to develop emotional intelligence
- Developing resilience and facing challenges



Parents and carers can learn the skills of emotion coaching



Help children develop emotional intelligence and resilience

DATES:

Monday evenings
19th February - 25th March

VENUE:

Online via ZOOM

TIME: 6:30pm - 8:30pm

COST: FREE

REGISTER NOW



Register at 4720 6500 or groups@gatewayfamilyservices.org.au



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Term 1
2024
KATOOMBA

Circle of Security Parenting

8 week parenting program - FREE to register



Circle of Security Parenting helps parents develop secure relationships and stronger bonds with their children.

The Circle of Security course helps parents and carers of children aged 0-12 years learn:

- How to help your child feel more confident and secure
- How to help your child manage their emotional responses
- How to better understand your child's emotional needs



build stronger parent/child bonds



learn positive parenting skills



promote secure attachments

DATES:

Tuesdays 13th Feb - 2nd April

VENUE:

Gateway Family Services
14 Oak Street Katoomba

TIME: 10:00am - 12:00noon

COST: FREE

Parking available onsite



CHILDCARE LIMITED
Bookings required



Register at 4720 6500 or groups@gatewayfamilyservices.org.au



We acknowledge and respect the Traditional knowledge holders and custodians of the land on which we work, the Darug and Gundungurra people.



NAVIGATING THE SPECTRUM

PARENT SUPPORT GROUP ∞



Are you a parent or carer who identifies as neurodiverse and/or are you parenting a neurodiverse child?



Are you seeking a safe space to connect with others on the parenting journey?



Are you wanting to share your experience, listen to others and access support from people who understand?

Be welcomed into a supportive and inclusive environment that will provide access to resources, information and an opportunity to connect with a community of parents and carers that are undertaking the unique journey of parenting through neurodiversity. Register now to join us!

For more information or to register your interest email **Angie Jackson** on angelaj@gatewayfamilyservices.org.au or phone 0491 072 762.

TIME & DATE

Thursday 10am - 12noon

- 8th February
- 7th March
- 4th April

VENUE

Katoomba Leura
Community Centre
81-83 Katoomba Street



A SPACE for Us

PARENT SUPPORT GROUP



Are you a parent or carer living with a child who requires additional support and care?



Do you struggle to find space in your busy schedule for you?



Are you looking for a safe space to share your experience, listen to others and access support from people who understand?

Join a "Supportive Parent and Carer Environment" that provides access to resources, information and guest speakers. You'll have the opportunity to connect with others who can relate to the unique journey and challenges parents face.

DATE & TIME

Thurs 12:30pm - 2:30pm

- 15th February
- 29th February
- 14th March
- 26th March
- 4th April

VENUE

Uniting Church Hall

72 Old Bathurst Rd
Blaxland 2774

Afternoon tea provided



For enquiries and registration contact **Angie Jackson** on 0491 072 762





Policies currently under review.....

Child Protection Policy

Legislation:

Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 Section 11A, 23, 27
Children's Guardian Act 2019
Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998
Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
Education and Care Services National Regulation 2018
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989

Quality Area 2: Children's Health & Safety

LEGISLATIVE APPLICATIONS

Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998, s.27; s.245A; s.248(1)(b) Education and Care Services National Law Act (2010) Part 6 Section 166-167; s.174 Education and Care Services National Regulations (2018) Part 4.2, 84 Part 4.7, 168

Statement:

Our service is committed to providing an environment that fosters health, development, spirituality, self-respect and dignity, that is free from violence and exploitation. Under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998, children and young people must receive the care and protection necessary to ensure their safety, welfare and wellbeing. All educators and volunteers of our service are Mandatory Reporters and are required to report to the Child Protection Helpline (Phone: 132 111) if they have reasonable grounds to suspect a child or young person is at risk of significant harm and have current concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child or young person where the concerns arise during or from their work. We are committed to ensuring all educators and staff have a full understanding of their responsibilities as a Mandatory Reporter and are supported in fulfilling these. The Head of Relevant Entity at Springwood and District Preschool Kindergarten must notify the Office of Children's Guardian should a relevant allegation be made against an employee.

Rationale:

Springwood and District Preschool Kindergarten is committed to the NSW Government goal of 'Childstory' <https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/> in that 'all children in NSW are healthy, happy and safe, and grow up belonging in families and communities where they have opportunities to reach their full potential'. All children have the right to be safe and to receive loving care and support. Children also have a right to receive the services they need to enable them to succeed in life. Parents have the primary responsibility for raising their children, and ensuring that these rights are upheld." *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*

The Education and Care Services National Regulations state:

Chapter 7 Part 7.3 Division 3 Regulation 273

273 Course in child protection

Regulation 174 2(c)

it is an offence to fail to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority

The approved provider of an education and care service must ensure that the responsible person of the service and any certified supervisor in day to day charge of the service has **successfully completed a course in child protection** approved by the New South Wales Regulatory Authority.

Chapter 4 Part 4.2 Division 1 Regulation 84

84 Awareness of child protection law

The approved provider of an education and care service must ensure that the nominated supervisor and staff members at the service who work with children are advised of—

- (a) the existence and application of the current child protection law; and
- (b) any obligations that they may have under that law.

Aims:

- To provide a model of best practice for young children's care safety and wellbeing.
- To promote the safety and wellbeing of children as a shared community responsibility enabling Springwood and District Preschool Kindergarten to be a valuable partner in this community.
- To provide a safe environment where employees adhere to the ECA Code of Ethics, professional standards and accepted community responsibility.
- To provide a support and resource for the community in relation to child safety and wellbeing of all children.
- To provide a child safe environment in which staff can interact freely and securely with children.
- To prevent risk of harm to young children both within the preschool and in the general community.
- To provide staff with knowledge, attitudes and skills to appropriately handle situations related to child abuse under the Care and Protection Act 1998.
- To integrate protective behaviours into existing program curriculum and routines.
- To raise awareness of children's safety and wellbeing through training and support materials for both staff and the community.

Section A of the policy is in regards to the procedure of notification of Risk of Significant Harm to the Department of Communities and Justice/Child Protection Helpline

Section B of the policy is in regards to Employees of the service

Section A- Procedure of notification of Risk of Significant Harm to the Department of Communities and Justice

Implementation:

- **All Springwood and District Preschool Kindergarten educators are mandatory reporters.** A mandatory reporter in NSW is an individual required by under Section 27 of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 to report to the Child Protection Helpline **when he/she has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child, or a class of children, is at risk of significant harm from abuse or neglect, and those grounds arise during the course of or from the person's work.**



- All educators are expected to adhere to all policies and procedures within the preschool including Springwood and District Preschool Kindergarten's Code of Conduct, Job descriptions and supervision of others.
- All educators, volunteers, students will be cleared through the Working with Children Check and visiting shows will provide a copy of their certificate 'for self employed people working with children' before having access to the service. See Child Safe, Child Friendly Policy.
- Educators observing visitors, students and strangers at the service will approach them to determine the nature of their visit and, if appropriate, the nature of the visit will be confirmed with the Responsible Person.
- Educators will follow the supervision policy at all times.
- Visitors will be brought to the rooms by the Responsible Person or delegate and introduced to staff. Visitors shall leave a record of date, name, phone contact, Working With Children Check Number and reason for visit in the Visitor's Book.
- Preschool educators, students or volunteers will never be alone with children, or without ready access or visibility by staff members.
- Individuals or groups of children will not be withdrawn into areas where they are not visible by other staff members, or taken into rooms that can be locked
- Springwood and District Preschool Kindergarten will adhere to the child: educator ratios at all times
- All behaviour of children will be guided with the use of positive interactions and positive reinforcement. Sometimes children's ongoing needs can be very challenging. Springwood and District Preschool Kindergarten staff will support each other by sharing the responsibilities and providing release time from the child if necessary.
- Preschool uses electronic picture taking tools to record children's learning etc. these images are NOT stored in the cloud but on a hard drive or on a room computer. These images are then deleted from sources by the end of a term and those that are required for later recordings are then deleted at the end of a preschool year.

Springwood and District Preschool Kindergarten will promote open practices with parents by:

- Ensuring all families are aware that staff are Mandatory Reporters and their legal obligations to ensure children's wellbeing.
- This includes the Exchange of Information laws allowing Mandatory Reporters to access services without parent permission for child wellbeing.
- Children with additional needs may need more physical contact and physical guidance than other children. Work with parents to record appropriate procedures for managing these needs.
- All visitors, students and daily relief staff will be introduced to the parents and children.
- In the case of a child being left at the preschool after the service has been closed for example, if parents and emergency contacts cannot be reached, staff must contact the Department of Communities and Justice and the Police. Under no circumstances are staff members to place child in their own car and transport.

Springwood and District Preschool Kindergarten will promote protective behaviours for children by:

- Promoting self help skills in young children at all times
- Involving children in their own routines to minimise the risk of harm and to promote the view of children as able and capable and agencies in their own development and care.
- Taking into account the ages and developmental stages of the children when delivering a preschool educational program with protective behaviours as a focus
- Encouraging the use of correct terminology for all body parts.
- Encouraging children to identify and discuss feelings in a variety of situations.
- Encouraging questioning and decision making skills.
- Respecting children's decisions and choices about touch and encouraging them to respect other children's choices.
- Encouraging children to distinguish between situations where they feel safe and don't feel safe.
- Providing an environment where children know that their questions and concerns are listened to.
- Keeping up to date developmental records on all children. Note relevant conversations with parents that may relate to a child's behaviour change.

Procedures:

The Approved provider will ensure that persons placed in day to day charge of the service have a current qualification in Child Protection

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/working-in-early-childhood-education/child-protection-training-requirements>

Ensure that any adult working or volunteering directly with children completes a Working with Children Check prior to employment and is renewed every 5 years and verify the Working With Children Check prior to employment;

https://www.kidsq Guardian.nsw.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/316/WWCC_brochure.pdf.aspx

Ensure every adult working with children is made aware of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 and Keep Them Safe: A shared approach to child wellbeing and of their obligations under this law and action plan (Education and Care Services National Regulation, Regulation 84, National Quality Standards QA 2);

Orientate every working and volunteering adult to this child protection policy, Keep Them Safe protocols and Mandatory Reporter responsibilities and ensuring their regular review of these;

Notifying procedures for staff in the case of suspected risk of significant harm to a child:

- Significant Risk of Harm – is that which is sufficiently serious to warrant a response by a statutory authority **irrespective of a family's consent**. Significant harm is something that is not minor or trivial. It may reasonably be expected to produce a substantial and demonstrably adverse impact on the child or young person's safety, wellbeing or welfare and it can result in a single act or omission or an accumulation of these.
- A child or young person is 'at risk of significant harm' if current concerns exist for the safety, welfare or well-being of the child or young person because of the presence, to a significant extent, of any one or more of the following circumstances:

(a) the child's or young person's basic physical or psychological needs are not being met or are at risk of not being met,

(b) the parents or other caregivers have not arranged and are unable or unwilling to arrange for the child or young person to receive necessary medical care,

(b1) in the case of a child or young person who is required to attend school in accordance with the [Education Act 1990](#) - the parents or other caregivers have not arranged and are unable or unwilling to arrange for the child or young person to receive an education in accordance with that Act,

(c) the child or young person has been, or is at risk of being, physically or sexually abused or ill-treated,



(d) the child or young person is living in a household where there have been incidents of domestic violence and, as a consequence, the child or young person is at risk of serious physical or psychological harm,
 (e) a parent or other caregiver has behaved in such a way towards the child or young person that the child or young person has suffered or is at risk of suffering serious psychological harm,
 (f) the child was the subject of a pre-natal report under section 25 and the birth mother of the child did not engage successfully with support services to eliminate, or minimise to the lowest level reasonably practical, the risk factors that gave rise to the report.

Physical-

- Physical abuse is a non-accidental injury or pattern of injuries to a child caused by a parent, guardian or any other person.
- It includes but is not limited to injuries which are caused by excessive discipline, severe beatings or shakings, cigarette burns, attempted strangulation and female genital mutilation.
- Injuries include bruising, lacerations or welts, burns, fractures or dislocation of joints. Hitting a child around the head or neck and/or using a stick, belt or other object to discipline or punishing a child (in a non-trivial way) is a crime.

Sexual –

- Sexual abuse is when someone involves a child or young person in a sexual activity by using their power over them or taking advantage of their trust.
- Often children are bribed or threatened physically and psychologically to make them participate in the activity.
- Child sexual abuse is a crime.

Neglect –

- Child neglect is the continued failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child with the basic things needed for his or her proper growth and development, such as food, clothing, shelter, medical and dental care, educational and adequate supervision.

Psychological/Emotional –

- Serious psychological harm can occur where the behaviour of their parent or guardian damages the confidence and self esteem of the child or young person, resulting in serious emotional deprivation or trauma.
- Although it is possible for 'one-off' incidents to cause serious harm, in general it is the frequency, persistence and duration of the parental or guardian behaviour that is instrumental in defining the consequences for the child.
- This can include a range of behaviours such as excessive criticism, withholding affection, **exposure to domestic violence**, intimidation or threatening behaviour.

Steps to take if a staff member suspects the child is at risk of harm:

Document:

Document and provide evidence or transcripts to the Responsible Person (Document on form 'Report for Risk of Significant Harm').

Together with the Responsible Person consult the MRG and Decision Tree and print a copy of findings.

Make a record of the indicators observed that have led to the belief that there is a current risk of harm to a child or young person. Information on indicators of risk of harm are outlined in the NSW Mandatory Reporter Guide which is accessible at <https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/mrg>

Discuss any concerns with the Responsible Person of the service.

Together with the Responsible Person follow the advice of the MRG. At this time, you would also notify the Head of Relevant Entity if they are not already aware.

Together with the Responsible Person you may need to report the Risk of Significant Harm to the Child Protection Helpline (132111) or online. It may be to document and continue relationship, or other.

Advise the Head of Relevant Entity when a report has been made to the Child Protection Helpline.

The Approved Provider/Responsible Person will:

Provide all staff and educators working directly with children with a copy of this Child Protection Policy and a copy of the Mandatory Reporter Guide to assist them in their reporting;

Provide all staff and educators working directly with children with access to the Child Wellbeing and Child Protection NSW Interagency Guidelines; and

Provide annual workshops to all staff to support knowledge of current information.

Display the Child Protection Helpline number (132 111) on all phone and lists of emergency contact number in the interests of timely reporting.

Report:

1. Report your concerns to the Responsible Person
2. The Responsible Person acts as the Case Manager and will keep case notes, names of those spoken to and dates.
3. Ensure that the child is not in immediate danger.
4. Ensure support is provided to the child (and family if needed)
5. The Responsible Person and Employee will consult the Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG) with the final decision report printed.
6. The Responsible Person and Employee will follow the outcomes stated in the report
7. If there is some doubt about whether reporting should occur, the Responsible Person and Employee should consult with the Child Protection Helpline – 132111
8. Reports will be reported either via **PHONE** 132111 or online through 'childstory'
9. If a report is not warranted the Responsible Person will follow the steps outlined **not significant harm**

File:

- File or save to file the report form and any documentation that supports the report in a confidential file separate to the child's file that is accessed by Responsible persons (Childstory Folder).

In addition:

- It may be necessary to share the concerns with fellow staff members. This information must only advise staff that there are concerns of wellbeing for the child and if they have any specific concerns they are to advise the Responsible Person immediately.
- All primary staff members are Mandatory Reporters and should they feel that the Management is not taking appropriate action they have a responsibility to make a report.

The Responsible Person does have the discretion to inform the family where:

- a) this poses no additional risk to the child



- b) this poses no risk to the staff
- The Parent Management Committee may be told, if necessary, that a report has occurred but should not be given any further detail.

Responding to a child or young person who discloses information:

When responding to a child:

- Believe the child and acknowledge this to them (I believe you)
- Acknowledge how hard this must be for them
- State other children have also been hurt like this before (you are not alone)
- Ask 'are you ok?'
- Allow the child to talk, you may ask them to come and sit in a more quiet area of the room if ratio does not allow you to leave or to follow you to the office if the child is comfortable there.
- Continue supporting them (allowing child to sit /remain with you, holding your hand)
- Do not say everything will be OK or that you won't tell anyone else (telling lies to children will only set children up to mistrust you)

When children disclose they may:

- 'Blurt out' a harmful experience or their fear of something
- Confide privately that they have been abused or fear that they will be
- Tell another child
- Provide hints – as evidenced in drawings, play or stories
- Disguise a disclosure by posing 'what if' or 'a friend of mine' scenarios
- Present with somatic symptoms (such as constantly feeling 'sick').

Follow-up:

Department of Communities and Justice will follow up the notification within 30 days advising the service of the outcomes and how the service can assist with support of the child and family.

Notifying procedures for staff In the case of suspected risk of NOT significant harm to a child:

If the concern is not significant harm the following procedures may be advised:

Consult a Professional or Referral

- If the risk of significant harm threshold is not met and you still have professional concerns, the Responsible Person
 - May contact the Helpline to clarify and make a report.
 - May access other services available within the Springwood and District Preschool Kindergarten resources.
 - May refer directly to an appropriate service, contact a service to assist in identifying supports or services, or seek additional information under exchange of information provisions, for example, a Family Referral Service, if available; the Domestic Violence Line; a local referral or advice service; and services listed on HSNet- the NSW Government's Human Services website, at <http://www.hsnw.gov.au> or on the Families NSW website at <http://www.nswfamilyservices.asn.au>

Document and Continue Relationship (Also Document and Monitor)

- When the decision point of 'Document and Continue Relationship' (or 'Document and Monitor') is reached, you are not required to report. However, you will need to document the decision and continue your professional relationship with family members, where appropriate. Print out decision tree findings and attached to completed form. File in Childstory Folder.
- It is important to maintain a connection to the family so that if conditions worsen, you will be available to report to Department of Communities and Justice if need be. This relationship may include monitoring, creating or maintaining a safe space where the child / young person or parent/ guardian may further disclose concerns that already exist but which he/ she has been reluctant to disclose, or to disclose new incidents. The relationship may also include supporting the child/ young person or parent/ guardian who may be experiencing other difficulties that are not reportable as abuse or neglect.

Information Exchange from Chapter 16A care and Protection Act 1998 may need to be utilised here when there is not enough evidence for significant harm or families are unwilling for you to access services for their child's wellbeing. (See Attachments for preferred formats used by Springwood and District Preschool Kindergarten)

Information Exchange:

- Chapter 16A Care and Protection Act 1998 allows government agencies and non-government organisations (NGOs) who are **prescribed bodies** to exchange information that relates to a child's or young person's safety, welfare or wellbeing, whether or not the child or young person is known to Community Services, and whether or not the child or young person consents to the information exchange.
- Consent is not necessary for the exchange of information under Chapter 16A. However it is important that organisations providing a service to a child, young person or their parents inform them early on that information about them may be provided, or is being provided, to other organisations. Keeping the client informed is part of best practice case management and helps to maximise client engagement.

'Prescribed bodies' under the legislation are:

- NSW Police Force
- A NSW government department or public authority
- A government school or a registered non-government school or a TAFE
- A public health organisation or a private hospital
- A private fostering agency or a private adoption agency
- A designated agency which is a department of the Public Service or an organisation that arranges out of home care
- Agencies that conduct residential child care centre or a child care service under the 1987 Act
- Any other organisations that have direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of health care, welfare, education, children's services, residential services, or law enforcement, wholly or partly to children.
- The Family Court of Australia (for the purposes of section 248 but not Chapter 16A) Centrelink (for the purposes of section 248 but not Chapter 16A)
- The Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Aboriginal Affairs (for the purposes of section 248 but not Chapter 16A).
- NGOs wishing to exchange information under Chapter 16A would normally be caught under the 'any other organisations' provision above.



Springwood and District Preschool Kindergarten is a prescribed body under the section 'any other organisation'.

What type of information can or should be shared?

- A government agency or NGO may request information, already held by another agency or NGO that relates to the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child or young person and includes information that may assist the agency to:
 - Make a decision or undertake an assessment or plan
 - Initiate or conduct an investigation (for example a Joint Investigation Response Team investigation)
 - Provide a service
 - Where there is a concern relating to the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child or young person, or to
 - Manage any risk to the child or young person.
 - Unless an exemption applies, a government agency or NGO is obliged to comply with a request for information that meets the above criteria if they reasonably believe that the provision of the information may assist the recipient agency or NGO for any purpose referred to above.

Depending on what information is requested, it may include relevant, factual information held on:

- A child or young person's circumstances or history
- A parent or other family member
- People having a significant or relevant relationship with a child or young person
- The other agencies' dealings with the child or young person, including past support or service arrangements

See Attachments for relevant forms to be completed in the case of sharing information with another prescribed body.

Section B - Employees of the service (Allegations reportable to Office of Children's Guardian)

The Reportable Conduct Scheme has been in operation since May 1999 and is operated by the Office of the Children's Guardian since 1 March 2020.

The Office of Children's Guardian have a **Paramountcy Principle**.

'The safety, welfare and wellbeing of children, including protecting children from abuse, is the paramount consideration in decision making under this Act and the regulations and in the operation of the Act and the regulations generally.'

Springwood and District Preschool is a 'relevant entity' under the Children's Guardian Act 2019 and must notify the Office of Children's Guardian of any allegations or convictions involving their employees, whether or not they occurred in the course of the employee's work but became known to the Head of Relevant Entity. You may need to notify allegations about your employee even when the allegation relates to their conduct outside of the workplace. A child under the Children's Guardian Act 2019 is a person under the age of 18 years at the time of the allegation.

The Head of Relevant Entity (HRE) is the most senior officer and the person who is primarily responsible for executive decision making in the organisation.

Employee

An employee is any person who is employed by Springwood and District Preschool Kindergarten, whether or not they are employed to work directly with children, as well as individuals engaged by Springwood and District Preschool Kindergarten to provide services to children such as contractors, volunteers, students on placement.

Reportable allegation

A reportable allegation is an allegation that an employee has engaged in conduct that may be reportable conduct. When an allegation is made it must be reported on the attached document 'Initial Documentation of Allegation and Response' (see attached B1).

A reportable conviction means a conviction (including a finding of guilt without the court proceeding to a conviction), in NSW or elsewhere, of an offence involving reportable conduct.

The Children's Guardian Act 2019 defines reportable conduct as being:

- A sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of a child,
- Sexual misconduct with, towards or in the presence of a child,
- Ill-treatment of a child,
- Neglect of a child,
- An assault against a child,
- Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child,
- Any offence under section 43B or 316A of the Crimes Act 1900, whether or not, with the consent of the child.

Reportable conduct does not include:

- Conduct that is reasonable for the purposes of the discipline, management or care of children, having regard to the age, maturity, health or other characteristics of the children, and to any relevant codes of conduct or professional standards
- The use of physical force that, in all the circumstances, is trivial or negligible, but only if the matter is to be investigated and the result of the investigation recorded under workplace employment procedures.

If an allegation involves a crime, this must be reported to the Police immediately.

If the allegation involves a risk of significant harm to a child it must be reported to the Child Protection Helpline (132111) or reported through the Mandatory Reporters Guide/Child Story).

If at any stage you are unsure you can contact the Office of Children's Guardian Reportable Conduct Directorate enquiries line on 8219 3800 or email reportableconduct@kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au.

Employee's support and rights

The point at which the employee is told about the allegation and given an opportunity to respond can be critical to the success of an investigation and can impact on the degree and duration of stress experienced by the employee. This step should therefore be carefully considered.

When all the relevant information has been obtained, the allegation may be put to the employee and the employee should be given an opportunity to respond. This can be in the form of an interview (that must be documented) or in writing. (Before the meeting, advice can be obtained from the Office of Children's Guardian if required).

An entity should not inform an employee about the reportable allegation if doing so would compromise the investigation or put a person's health or safety at serious risk.

The employee may wish to have a support person present if they are interviewed about the allegation. The support person may be invited to observe but should be advised not to unnecessarily interrupt the interview and keep details confidential. This person must not pose a 'conflict of interest'.



Conflict of interest refers to a situation where a person's official duties and their private interests, could influence the performance of those official duties. This can also be in the case of where the employee and employer have developed a friendship/or animosity with each other. Given the sensitive nature of allegations of a child protection nature against an employee, and the serious potential outcomes for those involved, the need for objectivity and impartiality is particularly important.

The employee will be provided with the purpose and process of the investigation and the role of the Office of Children's Guardian.
If the employee is dissatisfied with the process or the outcome, they can lodge a complaint with the Office of Children's Guardian.

Section 57

Section 57 of the Office of Children's Guardian Act states that the Head of Relevant Entity must disclose 'relevant information' unless they are satisfied that the disclosure is not in the public interest. This relates to the child, parent or authorised carer. Refer to Section 57 of the Act and/or Fact Sheet 7 (The NSW Reportable Conduct Scheme).

Reporting obligations to Office of Children's Guardian

Under the Children's Guardian Act 2019, the HRE must advise the Office of the Children's Guardian within **7 Business Days** of becoming aware of the reportable allegation (see 7-Day Notification Form Attached). This form can be completed and sent electronically to 7day@kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au. Before completing this form a initial Risk Assessment and Risk Management Action must be documented (see attached document B3). If an allegation has been made against an employee, the HRE will make a decision in regards to the safety and support of the child or another employee, if relevant. The HRE will need to follow the plan and document this (see attached Plan document).

Any interviews, discussion, investigation, decisions, phone calls, emails etc relating to the allegation or investigation must be documented (see attached document B4)

A 30 day Interim Report Form must be completed by the HRE within 30 days of the original notification (see 30-Day Interim Report Form attached). This form can be completed and sent electronically to 30day@kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au

At the conclusion of the investigation the HRE must complete a Entity Report Form (see attached). This form can be completed electronically and sent to entityreport@kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au

All information and documentation must be kept **extremely confidential**. It should not be stored with the employee's general file. All documentation relevant to an allegation against an employee will be stored in the 'Childstory' folder, that is locked in the office.

Further information can be found in the Child Protection Resource Folder under 'The NSW Reportable Conduct Scheme – Fact Sheets 1-10). Also in the folder is a copy of the Childrens Guardian Act 2019.

From 1 October 2023, there will be new record keeping requirements under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations.

A fact sheet explains the changes, which are being made in response to recommendations by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

For changes to the new record keeping requirements to support child protection please visit nqreview.com.au.

For further/additional details on the changes to the new record keeping requirements to support child protection please visit the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse Final Report – Volume 8, Record keeping and information sharing.

The changes are being made in response to recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. It has been recommended that organisations engaged in child-related work retain records relating to child sexual abuse that has, or is alleged to have occurred, for at least 45 years (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017).

Good record keeping – good record keeping is important in identifying and responding to the risks and incidents of child sexual abuse, it can help to avoid additional distress and trauma for survivors who may be seeking and documenting information about their abuse while in the care of child-centred organisations. It is recommended that records identified as relevant to child safety and wellbeing (including child sexual abuse) be:

kept for 45 years

clear, objective, and thorough

maintained in an indexed, logical, and secure manner

retained and disposed of in a consistent manner.

Further details on what records may be relevant to child safety and wellbeing can be found:

in the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse page 22-24 or on their website

in Section 175 of the National Law: Offence relating to requirement to keep enrolment and other documents

in Regulation 177 of the National Regulations: Prescribed enrolment and other documents to be kept by approved provider.

Incident, injury, trauma, and illness records – It is already the responsibility of the approved provider and each family day care educator to keep incident, injury, trauma and illness records. **The approved provider must ensure that records are stored until the child is 25 years old. In accordance with the findings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, approved providers should retain records relating to child sexual abuse that has or is alleged to have occurred, for at least 45 years from the date the record was created.**

Record of evidence of fitness and propriety of staff members, volunteers, and students – Approved providers are required to keep a record of each educator's Working with Children Check (WWCC) or Working with Vulnerable People Check (WWVP), under their relevant jurisdiction law. This is being expanded to include checks for volunteers and students. The record must include the identifying number of the current check under their relevant law, and the check's expiry date if applicable. For all services this information must be included in the staff record (regulations 147, 149 and 154).

