



Child Safe Environment Policy

Endorsement date: 1st October 2021

Review date: 1st October 2026

Purpose

This policy was written to demonstrate the commitment of Nurture Speech Pathology to child safety and ensuring that a child safe and child friendly environment is maintained. Nurture Speech Pathology is also committed to protect our staff from falsely made allegations of child maltreatment as a result of their work.

Context

This policy reflects our commitment to provide a safe environment where every person has the right to be treated with respect and is safe and protected from harm. It complies with our obligations under the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 and Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016.

We will review and update this policy at once in a 5 year period and will lodge a new compliance statement with the Department of Human Services each time the policy is reviewed and updated as per the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017.

Scope

Everyone within our practice has a role to play in ensuring a safe environment for children and young people. This policy applies to all individuals involved in the organisation, including:

- Employees (permanent and casual)
- Directors
- Managers
- Work experience students
- University students on placements
- Subcontractors (both health professionals and otherwise)
- Other professionals who sublet space within Nurture Speech Pathology premises or programs



Commitment to Child Safety

Everyone who attends Nurture Speech Pathology have a right to feel and be safe. We are committed to the safety and well-being of individuals accessing our services and strives to create a child safe and child friendly environment where all children are valued and feel safe.

Everyone within our practice has a role to play in ensuring a safe environment for children and young people. This policy applies to all individuals involved in the organisation, including all those mentioned in section 3. Scope.

Children Participation

Nurture Speech Pathology encourages and respects the views of children and young people who access our services. We listen to and act upon any concerns that children, young people or their families raise with us. We adapt our communication style by taking into account their age, developmental and cultural backgrounds when communicating with children. We advise all clients on how they can report any concerns, provide feedback or submit a complaint during their first consultation with us.

We provide clear age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate explanations to children and young people and allow for questions during consultation and treatment. We involve children and young people in decision-making as appropriate. We value diversity and do not tolerate any discriminatory practices.

Nurture Speech Pathology's Code of Conduct and Child Protection Guidelines outlined in Appendix A.

Recruitment Practices

Nurture Speech Pathology takes all reasonable steps to ensure that we engage the most suitable people to work with children. We use a range of screening measures and apply best practice standards in the screening and recruitment of employees:

- All prospective employees undergo an interview process. Referee checks are conducted on all employees.
- All employees are required to have a Working with Children Check issued by the Department of Human Services Screening Unit, and complete Reporting Abuse and Neglect (RAN) training. When Nurture Speech Pathology becomes aware of information regarding any person involved in the organization, including any serious criminal offence, child protection information, or



disciplinary or misconduct information, the DHS Screening Unit will be contacted immediately.

- All Speech Pathologists need to comply with mandatory professional development as outlined by Speech Pathology Australia, and Commonwealth and State Laws.
- All new employees undergo induction and receive a copy of our Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct. Employees will be provided opportunities to attend training sessions about their mandatory notification obligations

Any person who falls within the scope of this document who does not fulfil these requirements will not be able to work for Nurture Speech Pathology.

Code of Conduct

All employees are made aware of, and must abide by, our Code of Conduct. Nurture Speech Pathology's Code of Conduct is outlined in Appendix B. All Speech Pathologists have to abide Speech Pathology Australia's Code of Ethics and Professional Standards.

Breaches of this Code of Conduct, or of any Nurture Speech Pathology policies and procedures, will be reported to the individual's supervisor and/or team leader as soon as practicable. Nurture Speech Pathology takes breaches of this Code of Conduct and RCH policies and procedures seriously. Employees who breach this Code of Conduct may face disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. Contractors and volunteers may also face disciplinary action, including termination or cessation of their engagement if they breach the Code. Serious breaches of this Code that amount to potential criminal conduct may also be referred to the police.

Support for Employees

Nurture Speech Pathology provides support and supervision, so that people feel valued, respected and fairly treated.

We ensure that employees who work with children have ongoing supervision, support and training so that they can promote the establishment and maintenance of a child safe environment. Employees are also required to undergo regular RRHAN-EC mandatory notification training and keep their RRHAN-EC current.

Reporting and Responding to complaints or feedback



Nurture Speech Pathology seeks to build a responsive, efficient, effective and fair complaint management system. Resolving complaints at the earliest opportunity in a way that respects and values the person's feedback can:

aid in recovering the person's confidence about Nurture Speech Pathology's services;
help prevent further escalation of the complaint.

Nurture Speech Pathology's approach to feedback, compliments and complaints management ensures:

- clients understand their rights and responsibilities;
- information on the feedback, compliment and complaint management process is easily accessible;
- increased satisfaction of clients in the management of their compliments and complaints;
- the recording of data to identify existing or emerging trends or systemic issues;
- staff demonstrate an awareness of Nurture Speech Pathology's feedback, compliments and complaints management processes; staff develop the range of skills and capabilities required to manage compliments, complaints and feedback; and
- an organisational culture that is focused on effective, person-centred complaints resolution and utilising feedback for continuous improvement.

Procedure Overview

- Nurture Speech Pathology will promote best practice, continuous
- improvement and an open, supportive, respectful culture that encourages and supports staff, clients and other stakeholders to make complaints and report concerns without fear of retribution.
- Nurture Speech Pathology's Compliments and Complaints Brochure provide clients, their families and carers and all other stakeholders with information about this policy and procedure, in an easy to understand format. This will include information on how feedback and complaints will be addressed and who to contact to provide feedback and complaints to external agencies, including external advocacy and support agencies.
- Information will be clearly displayed in Nurture Speech Pathology and provided by staff when requested.
- Information about providing feedback and making complaints will be provided in a variety of formats where appropriate, including in Easy English and alternative languages. Interpreters and referrals to advocates can be provided.
- Nurture Speech Pathology will provide all clients, their families and carers with this policy and procedure when they first access the service and, throughout service delivery, remind them of the policy and their right to make a complaint without fear of affecting their service.



- All personal information Nurture Speech Pathology collects to manage feedback or complaints will be handled in accordance with privacy legislation and the Privacy and Confidentiality Policy and Procedure. Feedback and complaints will be dealt with in a confidential manner and will only be discussed with the people directly involved. All information regarding feedback and complaints will be kept securely in accordance with the Records and Information Management Policy and Procedure.
- Complaints and feedback can be lodged by a third party on behalf of another person, if their consent has been provided.
- The Director will track and analyse feedback and complaint data to identify any ongoing issues and opportunities for service improvement.

Reporting and Responding to Suspected Child Harm and Risk of being Harmed

Nurture Speech Pathology will not tolerate incidents of child harm. All employees of Nurture Speech Pathology are mandated reporters as outlined under the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017. All employees understand their obligation to notify SA Police at 000 if the child is at risk right now or the Child Harm Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78 as soon as practicable if they have a reasonable suspicion that a child has been, or is being, harmed or at risk of harm.

Relevant information resources:

- Information about making appropriate reports of harm or risk of harm is available from the South Australian Department of Child Protection website: <http://www.reportchildabuse.families.sa.gov.au/>
- Guidelines for Mandated Notifiers (available to view or download from https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/107099/mandatory-reporting-guide.pdf)
- Department for Families and Communities' reporting child harm website: [https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse/mandated-notifiers-and-their-role#:~:text=A%20mandated%20notifier%20is%20required,\(whether%20paid%20or%20voluntary\).](https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse/mandated-notifiers-and-their-role#:~:text=A%20mandated%20notifier%20is%20required,(whether%20paid%20or%20voluntary).)

We ensure that support is also available for the employee making the report, particularly where an ongoing service is provided to the child, young person and their family. This support may be accessed through their supervisors.

Employees are also encouraged to report to their supervisors following a report being made to CARL or SA Police, any reasonable suspicion that a child has been, or is being, harmed or at risk of being harmed by another employee. Nurture Speech Pathology will take protective action to keep the child and others safe.



Supporting Children, Young People and Their Families

Child Protection is everyone's responsibility. Nurture Speech Pathology recognises that even where a report is made, we may still have a role in supporting the child or young person. This support may include:

- Referring the child, young person or their family to other appropriate services;
- Displaying information in our waiting area about other relevant support services; and
- Ensuring that the child or young person's medical needs continue to be met following the making of a report.

Strategies to Minimise Risk

Nurture Speech Pathology takes steps to minimise the risks to children due to the actions or omissions of employees. We undertake regular reviews to address any new or emerging risks in order to maintain a safe environment for children.

Strategies implemented to minimise and control risks to children and young people include:

- All employees are required to abide by our Child Safe Policy.
- Nurture Speech Pathology will undertake to ensure that we hold current, accredited Child Safe Environments certificates
- Nurture Speech Pathology requires that all employees provide evidence of current Working with Children Check at commencement of engagement and renew every five years as applicable.
- Employees of Nurture Speech Pathology will take reasonable steps to ensure they are responsive to the particular needs and vulnerabilities of children and young people (such as age, language barriers, developmental capabilities, disability, mental health, trauma or harm).
- Nurture Speech Pathology will take reasonable steps to ensure that all clients and caregivers are made aware that young children entering our practice must be supervised at all times. Where a child or young person is



unaccompanied by a parent or caregiver, the practitioner will consider whether a chaperone is required.

- Employees of Nurture Speech Pathology will take reasonable steps to provide clear age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate explanations to children and young people about the consultation and allow for questions prior to examination.
- Where treatment requires physical contact, employees will first seek the consent of the child, young person and their parents (where applicable).
- Employees confirm the identity of any child receiving treatment at this Practice.
- Nurture Speech Pathology will take reasonable steps to ensure that we respond to any concerns that children, or their families or carers raise quickly and fairly.
- Employees understand their obligation to notify the Child Harm Report Line on 13 14 78 as soon as practicable if they have a reasonable suspicion that a child or young person has been or is being harmed or at risk of being harmed.
- We ensure a physically and socially safe environment for children and young people that is free of any identifiable hazards.

Harassment/ Bullying

Nurture Speech Pathology opposes all forms of harassment, discrimination and bullying. We take this issue seriously and encourage anyone who believes that they, or another person, has been harassed, discriminated against or bullied to raise this issue with their supervisor or the Director.

Communication

Nurture Speech Pathology will ensure that everyone to whom this policy applies is aware of and has had an opportunity to read the policy. As indicated in our initial consultation forms that all clients are required to sign, clients can access this policy on our website. We also ask employees to sign a written statement indicating that they have read and will abide by our Child-Safe Policy. We retain a copy of all signed statements.



APPENDIX A

Code of Conduct & Child Protection Guidelines

Caring for children and young people brings additional responsibilities for employees and volunteers of our organisation. All personnel are required to acknowledge and sign Nurture Speech Pathology's code of conduct. This code of conduct will be published on our website and is made available through Sharepoint in a folder that all employees are able to access.

All management and employees of Nurture Speech Pathology will adhere to the Speech Pathology Australia's code of conduct. Each non-health professional staff member will take on the code-of-conduct of their direct supervisor. Sections of the code not relevant to a particular non-Health Professional staff member, may be identified by that staff member to their manager, and may through mutual agreement, be excluded from this Code of Conduct for that individual staff member. Exclusions must be signed by both the staff member and their manager and kept with the Employee's Employment records in a safe and secure place.

All employees and volunteers of Nurture Speech Pathology are responsible for promoting and protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people by:

- Sticking to our child safe policy at all times and taking all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and protection of children and young people
- Treating everyone (this includes staff, volunteers, students, children, young people and parents) including those of different race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes and religious beliefs with respect and honesty and ensure equity is upheld
- Being a positive role model to children and young people in all your conduct with them
- Setting clear boundaries about appropriate behaviour between yourself and the children and young people in our organisation – boundaries help everyone to understand their roles
- Ensuring the safety and welfare of the child or young person is paramount at all times.
- being alert to children and young people who are, or may be at risk of harm, and reporting this quickly to the Child Harm Report Line (13 14 78)
- encouraging children and young people to 'have a say' on issues that are important to them
- Listening and responding appropriately to the views and concerns of children and young people within the Practice.



- Taking all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and protection of children and young people within the Practice.
- Where appropriate, ensuring that a chaperone or other suitable adult is present when consulting with a child or young person.
- Ensuring children and young people understand their rights and explaining to the child in age- appropriate language what they can expect during the consultation.
- Responding quickly, fairly and transparently to any serious complaints made by a child, young person or their parent/guardian.
- Contact SA Police at 000 if the child is at risk right now or notifying the Child Harm Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78 as soon as practicable if you have a reasonable suspicion that a child or young person has been or is being harmed or is at risk of being harmed.

Employees will not:

- Take part in any unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person.
- Engage in rough physical games
- Discriminate against any child or young person because of age, gender, cultural background, religion, vulnerability or sexuality.
- Develop any 'special' relationships with children or young people outside of the professional relationship that could be seen as favouritism such as the offering of gifts or special treatment
- Do things of a personal nature that a child or young person can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes.

All management and employees of Nurture Speech Pathology will adhere to the Speech Pathology Australia's code of conduct. Each non-health professional staff member will take on the code-of-conduct of their direct supervisor. Sections of the code not relevant to a particular non-Health Professional staff member, may be identified by that staff member to their manager, and may through mutual agreement, be excluded from this Code of Conduct for that individual staff member. Exclusions must be signed by both the staff member and their manager and kept with the Employee's Employment records in a safe and secure place.

I agree to abide by this code of conduct

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____