



Our Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

Purpose

Being a Child or Young Person is a time to have fun, be carefree, splash around, play games – and the Y is a great place to enjoy being a Child or Young Person. At the Y, Safeguarding Children and Young People is our highest priority, so we want Children and Young People to hear our message loud and clear, we want them to 'Feel Safe and Be Safe', and this means we do not tolerate any type of harm or abuse.

Offering safe spaces for Children and Young People to enjoy being themselves is one of our greatest privileges. We offer many programs and services for Children and Young People as places of connection and belonging. These include recreation centres, early learning centres, out of school hours care, gymnastics, camps and other programs.

We always want to see the world through the eyes of Children and Young People – to make sure we understand what they need to feel safe and be kept safe. That's why we are committed to amplifying the voices of Children and Young People – and truly listening to them. We believe in the power of inspired Young People, and for Young People to be inspired they must be safe, and they must feel safe.

Scope

Safeguarding is everybody's responsibility, this Policy applies to all:

- ▶ Y People (this includes Board Directors and all those who are employed or volunteer for the Y, including those on work experience);
- ▶ Contractors; and
- ▶ Visitors and Patrons.

Key Terms

At the Y, we define a Child or Young Person as anyone up to the age of 18 years (in line with Child protection legislation).

We define Safeguarding as taking all action necessary to ensure Children and Young People can feel safe and be safe. This includes in their homes, their communities and when in organisations, regardless of their age, sexuality, gender, ability, religion, political beliefs or socio-economic background.

Safeguarding also means when they do feel unsafe, measures are taken to restore their safety.



Our Safeguarding Framework

To achieve our Safeguarding Vision, we have developed our Safeguarding Framework. At the heart of our Safeguarding Framework is our Safeguarding Vision, to 'feel safe, be safe'.

Our Safeguarding Vision stands on three Pillars:

- ▶ **Culture,**
- ▶ **Operations** and
- ▶ **Environment**

These Pillars are comprised of 15 elements that enable our Y People to understand how Safeguarding directly relates to their individual roles. The Elements in our Safeguarding Framework build upon the 10 National Child Safe Principles and provide the Y Movement with a clear model on how to embed Safeguarding.





Delivering our Safeguarding Framework





Culture

We are committed to creating a safe culture that empowers Children and Young People and promotes intergenerational leadership and governance to embed Safeguarding at the Y. Our commitment to achieving a Safeguarding Culture comprises of:





Leadership

We commit to being leaders in Safeguarding across Australia by:

- ▶ Actively preventing abuse (Emotional or Psychological, Physical, Sexual and Family Violence), Neglect, Bullying and Discrimination
- ▶ Championing the rights of all Children and Young People as guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- ▶ Providing our Boards and Y leaders with the knowledge and skills required to keep Children and Young People safe
- ▶ Working with external organisations to continue improving our practices.



Governance

We commit to having robust governance processes that keep Children and Young People at the front and centre of everything we do by:

- ▶ Ensuring all Y People are involved in our risk management process
- ▶ Ensuring Safeguarding is embedded in our business and strategic planning processes
- ▶ Reporting Safeguarding to our Boards and Y Leaders
- ▶ Undertaking annual Safeguarding selfassessments with an independent Safeguarding audit/review every third year
- ▶ Ensuring any partner organisations we engage with meet our Safeguarding requirements.



Empowerment

We commit to empowering all Children and Young People that we come into contact with, by:

- ▶ Listening to and consulting with them
- ▶ Delivering our Stay Safe, Tell Someone Program
- ▶ Amplifying their voice in a true, genuine intergenerational approach
- ▶ Providing them information about our Safeguarding commitments.



Values and Behaviours

We commit to demonstrating the highest standards of behaviour and conduct whilst living and breathing our values each and every day by:

- ▶ Being Heroic, Creative and Nurturing– standing up for Children and Young People's rights and role modelling safe behaviours
- ▶ Educating and ensuring our Y People adhere to their Code of Conducts and Safe Behaviours
- ▶ Empowering our Y People to speak up and take action suspect (see, hear, feel) a breach of our Safe Behaviours and/or Code of Conduct.



Education and Training

We commit to providing high quality Safeguarding education and training by:

- ▶ Inducting all Y People appropriately using our Safeguarding Framework
- ▶ Providing regular training, including refresher training to our Y People on how to keep Children and Young People safe using our Safeguarding Training Model as informed by our Safe Behaviours
- ▶ Undertaking cultural sensitivity and awareness training as required by our role within the Y
- ▶ Encouraging our Y People to speak up and ask questions when they are unsure of their responsibilities.



Continuous Improvement

We commit to continuous improvement by:

- ▶ Learning from national and international best practice
- ▶ Sharing safeguarding data and reviewing safeguarding cases to reduce future risk and inform future practice
- ▶ Regularly reviewing all of our Safeguarding policies, procedures and practices.



A photograph of two young children, a girl and a boy, both wearing light blue school uniforms. They are smiling and looking towards the camera. The girl is on the left, and the boy is on the right. The background is slightly blurred, showing some greenery and a building. The image is overlaid with a large, semi-transparent orange geometric shape on the left side.

Operations

We commit to creating safe operations to ensure Y People have the right policies, processes and practices to keep Children and Young People safe. Our Commitment to creating a Safeguarding Operations comprise of:





People

We commit to recruiting and retaining the right Y People by:

- ▶ Using best practice standards in recruitment, screening and employment (including, but not limited to, police and/or Working with Children Check, reference checks) of all Y People
- ▶ Providing clarification of our Safeguarding policies and procedures
- ▶ Ensuring Safeguarding in embedded performance appraisals.



Policies and Procedures

We commit to developing and implementing robust Safeguarding policies and procedures by:

- ▶ Ensuring Y People understand their responsibility to keep Children and Young People safe and report all Safeguarding concerns
- ▶ Ensuring all Safeguarding policies and procedures have Child and Young Person friendly versions and are accessible, where appropriate.



Practices

We commit to best practice in Safeguarding by:

- ▶ Embedding the requirements of relevant peak and regulatory bodies
- ▶ Providing Children and Young People with positive and nurturing experiences.



Complaints

We commit to responding to all Safeguarding concerns or complaints by:

- ▶ Ensuring that they are managed fairly
- ▶ Responding in a timely manner
- ▶ Always acting in the best interests of Children and Young People and obtaining their consent before sharing their information, unless the Child or Young Person is at risk of harm (or required by law)
- ▶ Sharing information and concerns to the relevant bodies (including Y Australia and the National Safeguarding Unit) as well as external reporting agencies as per state or territory legislation.





Environment

We commit to creating safe environments and spaces for Children and Young People at the Y. Our Commitment to creating a Safeguarding Environment comprise of:



eSafety

We commit to creating safe online environments by:

- ▶ Identifying, assessing, managing and communicating eSafety risks when engaging online
- ▶ Ensuring that Y People who manage online platforms on behalf of the Y are appropriately trained and supported
- ▶ Providing opportunities for Children and Young People to report Safeguarding concerns to us online and anonymously.

Physical

We commit to providing safe physical environments by:

- ▶ Maintaining open, honest and transparent communication with Y People about Safeguarding risks relevant to their roles
- ▶ Regularly reviewing safety of our facilities
- ▶ Adhering to the required ratios and supervision for Children and Young People
- ▶ Only working 1:1 with Children and Young People when there is a specific need and appropriate procedures to do safely with authorised permission.



Families and communities

We commit to supporting families and communities to promote Children and Young People's safety and wellbeing by:

- ▶ Ensuring open and honest communication with families and communities
- ▶ Engaging and listening to families and communities
- ▶ Providing information and access to other community support services.

Diversity

We commit to respecting and supporting diversity by:

- ▶ Striving to understand the cultural needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People
- ▶ Taking action to ensure all Children and Young People with diverse needs are protected from discrimination
- ▶ Promoting the safety and wellbeing of all Children and Young People including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, those living with a disability, culturally and linguistically diverse, those who are unable to live at home and LGBTIQA+ Children and Young People
- ▶ Ensuring cultural safety for those from diverse communities and providing Safeguarding resources in alternate languages and/or imagery where possible.



Roles and Responsibilities

Everyone has a role to play in keeping Children and Young People safe. Our Y People are expected to undertake the responsibilities as set out below:

**The National Council of
the Ys of Australia**



The development and endorsement of this Policy, champion it and oversight of compliance to agreed licensing standards

**The National Safeguarding
Unit (NSU)**



Provide subject matter expertise and ongoing support for all Y People to understand and undertake their responsibilities under this Policy

Member Y Associations



Implementation of this Policy, our Safeguarding Framework and the Safeguarding Licensing Standards, whilst ensuring localised policies, codes of conduct and procedures support compliance to this Policy

Boards of Directors



Provide strategic support and guidance of Safeguarding initiatives to ensure that their Y People and their Member Y Association empower Children and Young People to feel safe and be safe.

Board Safeguarding Lead



Ensure adequate resources and support is made available to enable their Y People to effectively deliver upon the Y's Safeguarding Strategy and act as a Safeguarding advocate for the Member Y Association.

CEOs



Ensure adequate resources and support as determined by the Member Y Board is made available to enable their Y People to effectively deliver upon the Y's Safeguarding Strategy.

**Safeguarding
Consultative Group**



Will be established by the NSU to coordinate and share best practice opportunities, data and learnings to continuously improve the Y's approach to Safeguarding Children and Young People.

**Operational
Safeguarding Leads**



To provide operational Safeguarding leadership to the Member Y Association to embed the Y's Safeguarding Framework, this Policy and relevant Safeguarding law.

Y People



Commit to create safe cultures, operations and environments for all Children and Young People. Speak up when they see something, hear something or feel something that worries or concerns them.

Breaches of this Policy

If any Y Person is found to be in breach of this Policy, the appropriate action will be taken under their Member Y Association's Disciplinary Policy (or equivalent), including up to dismissal.

If any Member Y Association is found to be in breach of this Policy, appropriate action will be taken by Y Australia on behalf of the Y Movement, including up to the suspension of their YMCA licence.

Reviewing this Policy

This Policy will be formally reviewed every three years, unless there is change to legislation, national guidance or in response to opportunities to improve within the Y. The review process will take place in consultation with Children, Young People, families, communities and the Y Movement.

We always welcome any feedback from Children and Young People, families and communities or Y People at any time. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any feedback on this Policy by emailing safe@ymca.org.au



Addenda to Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

1. Details of Addenda:

1.1 Purpose

In Victoria, organisations providing services to children and young people must, by law, adhere to the Victorian Child Safe Standards. In accordance with the Victorian Standards, Y Whittlesea has developed the below addenda to support the National Children and Young People's Safeguarding Policy.

2. Addenda to the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

In addition to the requirements outlined within the National Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, the following additional overarching principles and operational requirements apply:

2.1 Overarching principles

- 2.1.1 Y Whittlesea is committed to promoting the cultural safety, inclusivity and needs of Aboriginal children, young people, and their families.
- 2.1.2 Y leaders support staff, volunteers and community members to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children.
- 2.1.3 All Y People actively support and facilitate the participation and inclusion of Aboriginal children, young people and their families.

2.2 Operational requirements

- 2.2.1 All Y Whittlesea sectors are to maintain a child safe standard self-assessment to ensure compliance with each standard within the context of the operational environment
- 2.2.2 Y Whittlesea creates an inclusive and welcoming physical and online environment for Aboriginal children and their families by acknowledging and respecting Aboriginal people, communities, cultures, and values.
- 2.2.3 All children receive information from Y Whittlesea about cultural rights and Y Whittlesea takes active steps to encourage Aboriginal children to express their culture. When children express their culture, Y People give them support.
- 2.2.4 Aboriginal children, young people and families are consulted about services and programs Y Whittlesea offers.
- 2.2.5 Y Whittlesea takes steps to empower Aboriginal children and young people and provides them with opportunities to participate in a way that is culturally safe.
- 2.2.6 Y Whittlesea provides members of our community with information on cultural rights and the importance of culture to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children.
- 2.2.7 Y Whittlesea provides members of our community with information on the connection between cultural safety and the prevention of child abuse and harm for Aboriginal children.
- 2.2.8 Strategies to keep Aboriginal children and young people safe are developed, implemented, and embedded.
- 2.2.9 Y Whittlesea recognises the absence of racism does not indicate cultural safety. Y Whittlesea has a zero-tolerance approach to racism and discrimination.



Glossary of Terms

Bullying – Bullying involves the inappropriate use of power by one or more persons over another less powerful person or group and is generally an act that is repeated over time. Bullying may take many forms (including direct and indirect) that are often interrelated and can include: verbal, physical, social or psychological. For the avoidance of doubt, bullying includes cyber bullying, which can also have lasting and damaging consequences.

Child abuse – All forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the Child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship with a person of responsibility, trust or power.

Discrimination – Discrimination means treating or proposing to treat someone less favourably than someone else because of a particular characteristic or attribute in the same or similar circumstances. Discrimination can be direct or indirect.

Emotional or Psychological abuse – Emotional abuse of a Child refers to a inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts towards a Child and/or a pattern of failure over time to provide a Child with adequate non-physical nurturing and emotional availability. Such acts of commission or omission are likely to damage a Child's self-esteem or social competence.

Family violence – Family violence is physical, emotional and/or financial conduct, whether actual or threatened, by a person towards a member of the person's family (or towards the property of a member of the person's family) that causes any other member of the person's family network to fear for, or to be apprehensive about, their personal wellbeing or safety.

Harm – Harm to a Child or Young Person or other person, is any detrimental or harmful effect of a significant nature to the Child or Young Person's or other person's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is does not matter how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by: physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect, sexual abuse or exploitation, a single act, omission or circumstance or a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.

Member Y Associations – An association or entity that is a party to a current valid YMCA Licence Agreement. It is a requirement of the YMCA Movement in Australia that to be a YMCA, the entity must have entered into a Licensing Agreement with YMCA Australia.

National Safeguarding Unit – an enabling service that supports all Y People to increase their knowledge, skills and capabilities in safeguarding Children and Young People.

Neglect – Neglect of a Child or Young Person includes both isolated incidents, as well as a pattern of failure over time to provide for the development and wellbeing of the Child or Young Person – where the parent or caregiver is in a position to do so – in one or more of the following areas; health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter and safe living conditions.

Physical abuse – Physical abuse of a Child or Young Person is the intentional use of physical force against a Child that results in – or has a high likelihood of resulting in – harm for the Child or Young Person's health, survival, development or dignity. This includes but is not limited to, hitting, beating, kicking, shaking, biting, strangling, scalding, burning, poisoning and suffocating. Much physical violence against Children and Young People in the home is inflicted with the object of punishing.

Safe Behaviours – A national document that outlines the behavioural expectations of all Y People when working with Children and Young People. The Safe Behaviours are embedded into each Member Y Association's local Code or Standard of Conduct.

Safeguarding Licensing Standards – The Y's Safeguarding Licensing Standards are licensing obligations that detail the Safeguarding requirements and responsibilities of a Member Y Association. Each Member Y Association must comply with the YMCA Safeguarding Licensing Standards in existence at the time.

Sexual abuse – The involvement of a Child in sexual activity that they do not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the Child is not developmentally prepared, or else that violates the laws or social taboos of society. Children can be sexually abused by both adults and other Children who are – by virtue of their age or stage of development – in a position of responsibility, trust or power over the victim.

The Y Movement – The Y Movement in Australia is a federation of licensed Member Y Associations. Each Member Y Association is a member of the National Council of YMCAs of Australia. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, or UNCRC, is the basis of all of UNICEF's work <https://www.unicef.org/Child-rightsconvention>. It is the most complete statement of Children's rights ever produced and is the most widely-ratified International Human Rights Treaty in history.

Y People – YMCA People include all YMCA Board Directors, staff and volunteers (this includes school, university and TAFE students on placement or work experience with Member Y Associations).

Safeguarding Strategy – The Y's Safeguarding Strategy has been developed so that all Y People share the responsibility for keeping Children and Young People safe and incorporates our Safeguarding Vision and Safeguarding Framework.

10 National Child Safe Principles – The National Principles, based on the Royal Commission's Child Safe Standards, are endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). They drive the implementation of a Child safe culture across multiple sectors providing services to Children and Young People.

For more information:

Email: safe@ymca.org.au

www.ymca.org.au/safe

Associated Documents:

Safeguarding Strategy 2020 -2023:

<https://ymca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Our-Safeguarding-Strategy.pdf>

National Redress Scheme:

<https://ymca.org.au/national-redress-scheme/>