

Equity and Inclusion for Children and Young People Policy



Policy Purpose

Access4u is committed to creating an inclusive, welcoming and culturally safe environment for all children and young people in its care. Inclusion means that every child and young person has access to, can participate meaningfully in, and can experience positive outcomes whilst under the care of Access4u.

Access4u believes that all children and young people are entitled to fair and equal treatment, regardless of their background, and that diversity of experience enriches our organisational environment. Access4u recognises that all families are unique and that children learn in different ways and at different rates.

Access4u commits to:

- Ensuring children and young people are treated equitably and with respect, regardless of their background, ethnicity, culture, language, beliefs, sexuality, gender, age, socioeconomic status, ability, additional needs, family structure or lifestyle
- creating a sense of belonging for all children and young people, where diverse identities, experiences, skills and interests are respected, valued and given opportunity to be expressed
- complying with all relevant anti-discrimination legislation
- ensuring children and young people are free from any forms of discrimination or harassment.

Responsibilities and delegations *This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and contractors.*

Specific responsibilities	<p>All members of the governing body, management, staff and volunteers and contractors must sign and act in accordance with the Access4u Code of Conduct as part of their induction into the organisation, to commit to keeping children safe within the organisation and act in their best interests always.</p> <p>At a governance and strategic risk level, the Board of Directors shall: The governing body has ultimate responsibility for policies and procedures to be in place that are appropriate for the size and type of services provided, and for ensuring that all staff and volunteers abide by these to prevent and respond to child abuse. They must also be aware of their legal liability for failure to disclose abuse or failure to reasonably protect based on known risks.</p> <p>The CEO Is responsible for reviewing research and relevant practice experience to identify, reduce and, where possible, eliminate cultural and physical barriers the demographic may face accessing Access4u's services.</p> <p>At the operational level Access4u shall:</p> <p>Staff, Volunteers Staff and volunteers have a responsibility to act in accordance with the Code of Conduct, and be aware of and comply with their obligations.</p>
Policy approval	CEO

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Policy context – this policy relates to:	
Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Principles for Child Safe Organisations National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safety Framework
Legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Disability Insurance Scheme (Provider Registration and Practice Standards) Rules 2018 National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013 Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992 Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth) Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth) Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth) Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA) South Australian Equal Opportunity Act 1984 SA Racial Vilification Act 1996 Civil Liberty Act 1936 Family Law Act 1975 (Cth)
Contractual obligations	NDIS Provider Registration
Organisation policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child Safe Policy Child Safe Code of Conduct Human Rights Policy Customer Safety and Protection Policy Sharing Information Policy and Procedure Code of Conduct Staff Recruitment Policy Staff Training and Induction Policy
Forms, record keeping, other documents	Access4u - Incident Report TEMPLATE

Definitions for the purpose of this policy the following definitions apply:	
Word	Definition
<i>Additional needs</i>	A broad term which includes families and children experiencing disability, a medical condition, a developmental concern, an emotional need, family displacement, domestic violence and family separation.
<i>Child</i>	A person under the age of 18 (unless otherwise specified in relevant legislation).
<i>Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)</i>	Refers to individuals and groups who are from diverse racial, religious, linguistic and/or ethnic backgrounds.

<i>Disability</i>	In relation to a person, includes long-term physical, psycho-social, intellectual, cognitive, neurological or sensory impairment, or a combination of any of these impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder the person's full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others ¹
<i>LGBTI</i>	A broad term to inclusively refer to all people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or have an intersex variation, as well as to represent other members of the communities who use different terms to describe their diverse sexuality and/or gender.
<i>Unconscious bias</i>	Implicit assumptions and beliefs about particular groups of people that affect the way individuals in that group are perceived and judged, often in a negative way. It is difficult to change, because people are not often aware of bias, which is why unconscious bias training is valuable to help individuals learn how to decrease the impact of unconscious bias on their decision-making.

Procedures

Managing barriers to access

Access4u provides services to meet the following: Children, young people and adults up to age 65 years or older adults who are eligible for NDIS.

The CEO is responsible for reviewing research and relevant practice experience to identify, reduce and, where possible, eliminate cultural and physical barriers the demographic may face accessing Access4u's services.

Care of children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Australia is a culturally diverse community made up of many nationalities, cultural backgrounds, languages and religious groups. Access4u is committed to promoting the cultural safety of children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds by:

- providing training and development to staff and volunteers on cultural sensitivity and competency
- being respectful, inclusive and welcoming of families from a range of backgrounds
- asking children and families about their culture and cultural support needs
- identifying occasions which are important to different cultures and dietary requirements
- ensuring the physical environment reflects a positive and welcoming approach to diverse cultures, through decoration and artwork
- employing staff who are representative of the diversity of the local community
- asking families about their preferred format for the provision of information including translation or interpreting into community languages
- ensuring the complaints management process is understood and provided in culturally sensitive ways.

¹ Disability Inclusion Act 2018 (SA)

Care of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people

It is the right of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to be immersed in, and maintain links with, their culture. The right to culture includes the right to kin, community, cultural practices and identity. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, cultural safety and security requires the creation of:

- environments of cultural resilience within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- cultural competency by those who engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Access4u is committed to promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people by:

- consulting and forming relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community groups and individuals, to create opportunity for Aboriginal voice in planning, policies and activities
- acknowledging the Traditional Owner groups in our area
- recognising the impact of the past, through acknowledgement of the harm caused by past Government policies and practices, and acknowledging that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the First Peoples who have had an ongoing connection to this country for more than 40,000 years
- observing key events, including the National Government Apology to Australia's Indigenous People for the forced removal of Aboriginal children (Sorry Day), and NAIDOC Week which celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures
- respecting and embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture through the physical environment, which includes displaying culturally appropriate symbols, images and objects, selected in consultation with families of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people involved in our organisation.

Care of children and young people with a disability

Children and young people with a disability have need for special care and protection to ensure they are safe. Children and young people with a disability are more vulnerable to social isolation, may have a lower capacity to raise concerns, communication difficulties, and signs of their abuse could potentially be viewed as merely part of their disability.

Access4u is committed to upholding the safety and wellbeing of children and young people with a disability by:

- anticipating unsafe situations in our risk assessment processes
- implementing sound recruitment processes for staff and volunteers
- ensuring relevant staff and volunteer training outlines the boundaries about staff and volunteer interaction with children and young people with a disability, including personal care assistance
- making reasonable adjustments to the physical environment, where necessary
- empowering children and young people with a disability by assisting them to build their self-esteem and confidence
- teaching children and young people about their bodies and safety, through sex and relationships education
- communicating directly with children with a disability about how safe they feel
- being inclusive and collaborative with families

- making sure children and young people with a disability know whom to approach if they feel unsafe or have a concern – these processes are to consider the child’s or young person’s developmental level and communication abilities
- implementing organisational procedure which ensures vigilance in identifying indicators or warning signs, for children and young people with communication difficulties.

Care of LGBTI children and young people

LGBTI children and young people can face issues which stem from social and cultural beliefs and assumptions about gender and sexuality, including systemic discrimination at an individual, social and political level. These issues may include social exclusion, violence, abuse and discrimination, a lack of family support, and barriers to accessing support services.

Access4u is committed to combatting these issues, by promoting the safety, inclusion and support for LGBTI children and young people in the following ways:

- educating children and young people, and staff and volunteers within the organisation about diversity
- community awareness strategies which address discrimination and harassment towards LGBTI children and young people and which promote respect
- respecting privacy and confidentiality in relation to all children and young people
- giving proper consideration to the impact of any requirement to participate in an activity according to gender identity (e.g. sports activities, camps)
- referring LGBTI children and young people to external support services, where need is identified.

Equity and inclusion

The organisation will apply the principles of equity and inclusion to all child and young person related work and treat all children and young people fairly and equitably about individual circumstances or attributes, as required by applicable legislation, including:

- race
- ethno-religious background
- nationality, ethnic or national origin
- gender
- disability (physical, intellectual, psychiatric)
- political or religious conviction
- age
- sexual preference
- transgender status
- experience of domestic or family violence

These principles will be applied to situations including, but not limited to, the following:

- onboarding
- recruitment and selection
- education, training or caretaking
- assessment and discipline
- access to opportunities

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Staff training and awareness

All staff, including senior staff and governing body members, will participate in training on applying the principles of this policy to relevant organisational processes. Training will address matters including, but not limited to; anti-discrimination, cultural sensitivity, identifying signs of harm, and unconscious bias.

Staff and volunteers must ensure that the services offered by the organisation are free of any form of direct or indirect discrimination related to any of the individual circumstances or attributes listed above. This includes the following:

- Harassment: any form of behaviour that is not wanted, not asked for, and that humiliates someone, offends them or intimidates them.
- Vilification: any public act that is likely to incite hatred, serious contempt or severe ridicule for a person or a group of people.
- Victimisation: treating someone unfairly because they have made a complaint about discrimination, or helped someone else make one.

Staff and volunteers who believe that a child or young person has been subject to any form of discrimination outlined above or who are aware of discriminatory behaviour should follow the Access4u complaints and concerns procedure.

Staff and volunteers may also seek assistance from an external body such as SA anti- discrimination Agency the Equal Opportunity Commission.