



virtual services child and youth risk management strategy

Document number	PLN-1289	Approval date	10 Jan 25
Approved by	Virtual Services Manager	Next review date	10 Jan 28
Document owner	Specialist Services & Projects Team Leader		
Applies to	Virtual Services		

Contents

purpose 2

management strategy 2

1. Commitment 2

 1.1 Statement of commitment to the safety and well-being of children and the protection of children from harm 2

 1.2 Code of conduct for interacting with children and young people and adults at risk (CYPAR) 2

2. Capability 2

 2.1 Procedures for recruiting, selecting, training and managing team members and volunteers 2

3. Concerns 4

 3.1 Policies and procedures for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm 4

 3.2 Plan for managing breaches of the Virtual Services Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy 5

 3.3 Risk management plans for high-risk activities and special events 5

4. Consistency 5

 4.1 Policies and procedures for managing compliance with working with children requirements 5

 4.2 Strategies for communication and support 6

document review 6

referenced and related documents 7

document review details 8



purpose

The document outlines the risk management strategies undertaken by **yourtown** Virtual Services when working with children within Kids Helpline and Parentline services, in accordance with Chapter 8, Part 3 of the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000.

yourtown maintains numerous [position statements](#), policies and procedures that inform and are referenced in this Risk Management Strategy. Some of these documents are internal 'company in confidence' documents. If additional information is required regarding any of these referenced documents, please contact us by accessing the online feedback form via the Feedback link on the Kids Helpline, Parentline or **yourtown** websites

management strategy

1. Commitment

1.1 Statement of commitment to the safety and well-being of children and the protection of children from harm

yourtown's [Safeguarding Commitment Position Statement](#) explicitly confirms our commitment, in line with our Mission and Values, to providing services that protect and keep children and young people and adults at risk (CYPAR) from harm.

1.2 Code of conduct for interacting with children and young people and adults at risk (CYPAR)

yourtown's expectations of team members behaviour in interacting with CYPAR is enshrined within our Values and Core Behaviours, our [Consumer Rights Position Statement](#) and supported by our [Code of Conduct Policy](#), our [commitment to Safeguarding](#) and Ethical Code and Practice Policy.

2. Capability

2.1 Procedures for recruiting, selecting, training and managing team members and volunteers

yourtown has policies and procedures in place relating to recruiting, selecting, training and managing paid team members and volunteers, in order to minimise risks at each stage of the employment process.

All Virtual Services team members providing Kids Helpline and Parentline services are paid, tertiary qualified and experienced counsellors. Volunteers are not currently engaged within Kids Helpline or Parentline.

Recruitment and selection of Virtual Services team members

yourtown's recruitment practices are designed to elicit key information relating to working with CYPAR.

Position descriptions for all Virtual Services counsellor positions outline the key expectations of practices in working with CYPAR.

Recruitment processes include assessment of professional boundaries, safeguarding, ethics, duty of care practices, and alignment with **yourtown** practices for all client service delivery.

Applicants undertake a thorough recruitment process including a phone interview with People & Culture, a face-to-face interview, and professional references. Each stage directly

virtual services child and youth risk management strategy	DN:	PLN-1289
COMPANY CONFIDENTIAL Correct when printed from the Document Portal. Printed documents are uncontrolled.		Page: 2 of 8



focuses on duty of care, ethics, and professional boundaries within applicant's practices, to confirm their eligibility, knowledge and experience.

More information regarding **yourtown's** recruitment and selection processes is detailed in:

- [Managing our People Position Statement](#)
- Talent Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Procedures
- Safeguarding Screening Policy
- Safeguarding Screening Procedure
- [Safeguarding in Practice Policy](#)
 - section 5.1 Recruiting safe and capable staff
 - section 5.2 Embedding safeguarding into induction and training.

Screening checks including Working with Children Check (WWCC) and National Criminal History Certificate (NCHC) are undertaken for all prospective counsellors prior to offer of employment. A positive working with children clearance and satisfactory criminal history check are required prior to commencement of employment and ongoing employment is subject to maintenance of these (see 4.1 of this document for more information on this).

Training of Virtual Services Team members

Once employed, new Virtual Services counsellors will commence work in either Kids Helpline or Parentline.

Counsellors participate in a three-month probationary period, including a structured learning program that includes:

- initial face-to-face intensive training program
- online learning
- on-the-job training.

Virtual Services counsellors are then supported to further develop their knowledge and skills in working within Kids Helpline through line management supervision and feedback from Team Leaders and Shift Supervisors, including regular feedback and monitoring of phone calls with clients.

yourtown also provides ongoing quality assurance and professional development to all Virtual Services counsellors, through a dedicated practice unit. Support includes:

- fortnightly Practice Supervision during probation
- practice review and feedback
- review of client files
- review of duty of care and risk assessment decision-making
- Practice review and support for serious and complex client situations.
- Within the first three months of employment, Virtual Services counsellors complete:
 - yourtown's Organisational induction
 - online induction
 - learning program - outline - Supervision, Training and Evaluation Program (STEP).
 - Parentline Training (if recruited as Parentline Counsellors).

Details regarding STEP training are included in the outline to this learning program Learning Program - Outline - Supervision, Training and Evaluation Program (STEP).

During their employment, Virtual Services Counsellors may also complete:

virtual services child and youth risk management strategy	DN:	PLN-1289
COMPANY CONFIDENTIAL Correct when printed from the Document Portal. Printed documents are uncontrolled.		Page: 3 of 8

- Professional and personal development training.
- Relevant and up-to-date training around new and emerging issues, trends, ways of working with clients, to ensure currency.

All training is designed to ensure Virtual Services counsellors work safely and effectively. Counsellors receive training around topics such as:

- **yourtown's** counselling framework
- ethics, duty of care and working in the best interests of the client
- issues facing children, young people and parents such as e.g. family issues, bullying, cyber-safety, mental health and well-being
- how to provide counselling services by phone, web and email.

3. Concerns

3.1 Policies and procedures for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm

yourtown maintains policies and procedures to ensure that responses occur as quickly as possible and in the interests of the child/young person, if disclosures of harm are received or harm is suspected.

These policies and procedures include guidelines for responses where the actual or suspected harm originates both outside of **yourtown** and within **yourtown**.

yourtown has a 'no wrong door' policy when it comes to feedback, complaints and compliments and is aware of its responsibilities under relevant Reportable Conduct Schemes. Children, young people and other external stakeholders may report matters concerning harm or suspicions of harm, or breaches relating to our Virtual Services Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy by:

- speaking with any **yourtown** team member
- lodging a complaint using the feedback facility on the [yourtown](#), [Kids Helpline](#) or [Parentline](#) websites
- contacting **yourtown** through any avenue or platform
- emailing safeguarding@yourtown.com.au.

Where harm or suspicion of harm reported to us by CYPAR arises from outside of **yourtown**, **yourtown** has a duty of care to act and are aware of their mandatory reporting obligations. Procedures in relation to the management and reporting of risk of harm are in place to ensure that these reports are appropriately assessed and responded to.

These situations can include:

- child abuse and neglect (including witnessing domestic and family violence)
- suicide and suicidal behaviour
- homicide
- violence/harm to others
- self-injury
- threats of intended harm to self
- threats of intended violence to others
- psychiatric and medical emergencies or the potential for an emergency.

All counsellors are provided with training in relation to the application of these procedures in daily practice and are required to adhere to and follow these processes. Understanding and application of these procedures are regularly monitored by line managers and in mandatory monthly Practice Supervision.



Policies procedures and relevant legislation for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm regarding Duty of Care/harm originating outside of **yourtown** include:

- Practice Principles for Reporting CSA/E
- [Duty of Care Position Statement](#)
- Performance Management Policy
- Supporting Safety in Virtual Services Suite
- Client Support Pathways Standards and Guidelines
- Operations and Unsupervised Shift Manual
- Online Counselling Manual
- Social Media Moderating Manual
 - Child Protection Act 1999
 - Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000.

If harm or suspicions of harm arising from within **yourtown** are identified or reported to Virtual Services team members, these will be managed in accordance with:

- [Safeguarding in Practice Policy](#)
- [Code of Conduct Policy](#)
- Reportable Conduct Schemes Policy
- Ethical Conduct in Practice Policy
- Practice Principles for Reporting CSA/E
- Performance Management Policy
- Managing Breaches of Virtual Services Ethical Practice Procedure
- Virtual Services Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy (this document).

3.2 Plan for managing breaches of the Virtual Services Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy

A breach of the Virtual Services Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy (this document) is any action or inaction by any Virtual Services team members/s or participant/s that fail to comply with any part of this strategy, the [Safeguarding in Practice Policy](#), the [yourtown Code of Conduct](#) or the Ethical Code and Practice Policy. **yourtown** will manage any breaches in a fair, unbiased and supportive manner in accordance with the processes outlined above.

3.3 Risk management plans for high-risk activities and special events

This Strategy pertains to **yourtown's** Virtual Services (Kids Helpline and Parentline) therefore, as there are no high-risk organised activities or special events conducted by these services, this clause is not required. Should the service delivery model for Kids Helpline and Parentline be amended to include high risk activities and special events, **yourtown** will develop appropriate Risk Management Plans.

4. Consistency

4.1 Policies and procedures for managing compliance with working with children requirements

yourtown's People and Culture team is responsible for managing compliance with working with children legislative requirements for all Virtual Services team members. Procedures for implementing, maintaining and reviewing the working with children requirements for all Virtual Services team members, as part of the Virtual Services Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy (this document), include:

- For candidates who **do not** hold a current and valid working with children clearance, **yourtown's** People and Culture team will direct the candidate through the relevant



working with children and [national criminal history check](#) process to ensure all compliance requirements are met prior to offer of employment.

- For candidates who **do** hold a current and valid working with children clearance they are required to provide a copy to **yourtown's** People and Culture team who will validate and link to the organisation prior to offer of employment.
- Monitoring of compliance requirements is undertaken to ensure all Working with Children Check and National Criminal History Check renewals are submitted prior to the expiry date.
- Keeping records regarding each Virtual Services team members Working with Children Check within Preceda (**yourtown's** online Human Resources Information System including:

NOTE: This is mandatory for all Virtual Services personnel.

- The date the Working with Children Check application is submitted
- Details of the team members Working with Children check including the date of issue
- The date of expiry of the Working with Children Check
- The date that a Working with Children Check renewal application was submitted
- The date that the renewed Working with Children Check clearance is issued
- Where an team members submits a Change in Police Information Notification form or upon notification from a Working with Children regulatory body that there is a change to an team members police information, a risk assessment is undertaken in relation to the disclosure and the duties the team members performs, whilst their Working with Children Check clearance is reviewed by the Regulatory body.
- A prospective team members will not commence work without first receiving a Working with Children Check Clearance
- Where an existing team members does not receive a WWCC clearance upon renewal, a risk assessment will be undertaken, and a decision will be made regarding ongoing employment. While this process is underway, appropriate actions will be taken to ensure the safety of all clients and team members of **yourtown**.

4.2 Strategies for communication and support

Stakeholders of **yourtown's** Virtual Services consist of team members and board members, partner organisations, funding bodies, and children, young people and parents/carers, who access these services. These stakeholders are made aware of this Virtual Services Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy through the following:

- The strategy is published on the **yourtown**, Kids Helpline and Parentline websites and is available for download by all stakeholders and clients.
- Virtual Services team members receive training regarding elements of this strategy.
- Details of this training are included in Learning Program - Outline - Supervision, Training and Evaluation Program (STEP).

document review

The Virtual Services Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy (this document) will be reviewed annually, and all other documents referenced within will be reviewed in accordance with the Document Management Policy.

- If significant changes are made to Kids Helpline or Parentline service delivery models that involve reconsideration of any child safety risks.

virtual services child and youth risk management strategy	DN:	PLN-1289
COMPANY CONFIDENTIAL Correct when printed from the Document Portal. Printed documents are uncontrolled.		Page: 6 of 8



- In order to comply with any legislative or policy changes made under the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 and other relevant legislation.

The annual review process will consider:

- Whether the policies and procedures were followed.
- Whether any incidents relating to CYPAR risk management issues occurred.
- The actual process used to manage any incidents.
- The effectiveness of the policies and procedures in preventing or minimising harm to CYPAR.
- The content and frequency of communication to team members in relation to the child and youth risk management strategy.

All future changes to the Virtual Services Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy will be appropriately communicated to **yourtown** Virtual Services team members as per requirements outlined in the Document Management Framework.

referenced and related documents

yourtown:

- Practice Governance Principles
- [Safeguarding Principles](#)
- [Safeguarding in Practice Policy](#)
- Supporting Safety in Virtual Services Suite
- [Safeguarding Commitment Position Statement](#)
- [Consumer Rights Position Statement](#)
- [Code of Conduct Policy](#)
- Ethical Code and Practice Policy
- Counsellor Recruitment Information Sheet Form
- Document Management Policy
- [Duty of Care Position Statement](#)
- Recruitment and Selection Procedure
- [Feedback and Continual Improvement Position Statement](#)
- Learning Program - Outline - Supervision, Training and Evaluation Program (STEP)
- Learning Program - Outline - Parentline Skills Training
- Managing Breaches of Virtual Services Ethical Practice Procedure
- Client Support Pathways Standards and Guidelines
- Online Counselling Manual
- [Managing our People Position Statement](#)
- Talent Policy
- Social Media Moderating Manual
- Operations and Unsupervised Shift Manual

External:

- Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000
- Child Protection Act 1999.

virtual services child and youth risk management strategy	DN:	PLN-1289
COMPANY CONFIDENTIAL Correct when printed from the Document Portal. Printed documents are uncontrolled.		Page: 7 of 8



document review details

Review Details	Reviewed On	Revision
Original version	15-Sep-20	V1
Moved onto new branding	22-Oct-24	V2
Reviewed for alignment with yourtown Policy and Practice continual improvements.	08-01-2025	V3