

152 Child Protection Policy

1. Customer Statement

At Link Wentworth our customers and communities are at the centre of what we do. We are committed to:

- treating our customers with compassion and respect
- communicating clearly so that our customers can make informed decisions
- Providing fair service by following the right process
- working openly with customers to find shared solutions
- following all relevant laws and regulations

2. Purpose

This policy outlines how Link Wentworth responds to suspected or actual risk of harm, abuse, and neglect to children and young people. Link Wentworth is committed to providing a service that is in accordance with the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1988*.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all staff, contractors, applicants, tenants, and former tenants of Link Wentworth. It also applies to all Link Wentworth volunteers, including all members of the Link Wentworth Board.

4. Policy

If Link Wentworth staff identify a child at risk of harm, or potentially at risk of harm, they consult the Mandatory Reporter Guide to determine what action is required.

The Mandatory Reporter Guide can be found at: <https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/mrg>

Principles

We consider the welfare of the child or the young person to be the most important. We work in partnership with government and non-government agencies to ensure the safety, welfare, and well-being of the child or young person are addressed.

Reporting

We use the Mandatory Reporter Guide to advise us on what action we should take if we suspect child abuse or neglect, or if we receive a report of suspected child abuse or neglect from a third party such as a neighbour or Link Wentworth contractor. Actions we could take include:

- Referring the household to specialist support services
- Contacting the Child Protection Helpline

Staff who are advised to make an immediate report to the Child Protection Helpline should do so online at <https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/login/SelfRegister>. Reports can be made for an unborn child and children up to 18 years of age.

Link Wentworth contractors and volunteers, including members of the Link Wentworth Board, are instructed to tell us if they identify suspected child abuse or neglect.

If a third party such as a neighbour or contractor reports suspected child abuse or neglect, Link Wentworth reviews the information and makes a report to the Child Protection Helpline if it is recommended by the Mandatory Reporter Guide. We also advise the third party to contact the Child Protection Helpline on **132 111** (answered 24 hours a day, seven days a week) or the NSW Police if the concern is immediate.

If we have concerns about the welfare of a child or young person and there are support services, we contact the support agency within 24 hours to raise our concerns. We follow this up in writing. If appropriate, we also complete the Mandatory Reporter Guide.

Information Storage and Exchange

We keep all information relating to a report of suspected child abuse or neglect confidential and store it securely. We disclose information to other agencies only if required to under Chapter 16A of the *Children and Young Persons Care and Protection Act*.

Chapter 16A of the *Children and Young Persons Care and Protection Act 1998* allows government agencies and non-government organisations 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.

This means we are obliged by law to provide the requested information to the relevant authorities.

5. Definitions

Mandatory Reporters - people who work in a range of specially identified service areas and who are required to report suspected abuse/neglect of a child or young person to the appropriate authorities per government legislation.

6. Legislative or other applicable framework

- *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1988*
- Mandatory Reporter Guide

Complaints and Appeals

A tenant or applicant who is not happy with a decision made by Link Wentworth or who believes that Link Wentworth has not followed policy can provide feedback or appeal a decision using the complaints and appeals policies. If you have experienced service excellence, we would also love to hear from you. You can provide feedback at www.linkwentworth.org.au, by phoning Link Wentworth on 13 14 21 or by emailing feedback@linkwentworth.org.au.

7. References

- Child Protection Helpline - 132 111
- Chapter 16A of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection Act) 1998*
- Mandatory Reporter Guide - <https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/mrg>

8. Privacy and Confidentiality

Link Wentworth has obligations and responsibilities under its Privacy Policy please refer to the policy for further information.

Approval, Policy Owner and Review Frequency

Policy type:	Board Level
ELT owner:	Chief Customer Officer
Business owner:	Head of Tenancy
Ultimate Approval body:	Board
Review Frequency:	Every two years or more frequently if circumstances warrant.

Approved by – **Board of Directors**