

QA4

Code of Conduct Policy



NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARDS (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 4 STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS

4.1	Staffing arrangements	Staffing arrangements enhance Children's learning and development.
4.1.2	Continuity of Team Members	Every effort is made for Children to experience continuity of educators at the service.
4.2	Professionalism	Management, educators and staff are collaborative, respectful and ethical.
4.2.1	Professional collaboration	Management, educators and staff work with mutual respect and collaboratively, and challenge and learn from each other, recognising each other's strengths and skills.
4.2.2	Professional Standards	Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS

82	Tobacco, drug and alcohol-free environment
84	Awareness of child protection law
155	Interactions with Children
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures.
170	Policies and procedures to be followed.
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available.
172	Notification of change to policies or procedures.

RELATED POLICIES AND FORMS

IT Acceptable Use Policy	Child Safe Environment Policy
Child Protection Policy	Safe Use of Digital Technologies Policy
Confidentiality and Privacy Policy	Whistleblower Policy
Dealing with Complaints Policy	Dress Code Policy
Safe Use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments Policy	CCTV Policy

AIM OF POLICY

At Story House we expect a common understanding of workplace standards and ethics of all team members, volunteers, visitors and students of the service (Team Members). We aim to ensure positive working relationships are formed between Team Members, promoting dignity and respect by avoiding behaviour that is or may be perceived as harassing, bullying, or intimidating. Team Members will be expected to always maintain the following ethical ideologies.

At Story House our aim is to ensure that all Team Members have a clear understanding of our code of conduct and our expectations. We expect that Team Members will always conduct themselves in an ethical manner and strive to ensure that all interactions are positive and respectful and are in accordance with Story House philosophy and the service's philosophy.

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SCOPE

This policy applies to team members, management, agency educators and visitors to our Story House referenced herein as Team Members. Team Members with management accountability will also be referenced as direct managers or managers.

IMPLEMENTATION

We expect that our Team Members adhere to the Early Childhood Australian Code of Ethics, National Regulations and National Quality Standard, and service policies and procedures always.

RESPECT FOR PEOPLE AND THE SERVICE

Team Members are committed to the service philosophy and values, inclusive of best practice in early childhood education and building positive partnership with children, families and Team Members.

- Effective, open, and respectful reciprocal communication and feedback between Team Members, Children, and Families is conveyed.
- We expect that all our Team Members treat Team Members, children, and families with respect. Bullying or insulting behaviour, including verbal and non-verbal aggression, abusive, threatening, or derogatory language or intimidation towards other team members, children, visitors, or families is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
- Team Members are committed to valuing and promoting the safety, health, and wellbeing of other team members, volunteers, children, and families.
- Team Members are committed to an equal opportunity workplace and culture which values the knowledge, experience, and professionalism of all and the diverse heritage of our families and children.

TEAM MEMBERS WILL

Ensure their work is carried out proficiently, harmoniously, and effectively. They will always act in a professional and respectful manner whilst at work, giving their full attention to their responsibilities and adhering to all service policies, procedures, laws, regulations, and National Quality Standard.

- Act honestly and exercise attentiveness in all service operations. They will carry out all lawful directions, retaining the right to question any direction which they consider to be unethical. If uncertain they can seek advice from their direct manager or their manager's manager.
- Have a solid understanding of the service's policies and procedures and the Early Childhood Australian Code of Ethics. If uncertain about the content of any policy or procedure with which they must comply, Team Members should seek clarification from their direct manager.
- Be courteous and responsive when dealing with Team Members, children and families.
- Work collaboratively with team members and recognise and value diversity.
- Be mindful of their duty of care towards themselves and others.
- Be positive role models for children always.
- Respect the rights of all children.
- Respect the confidential nature of information gained about each child participating in the program.
- Engage in critical reflection to inform individual and collective decision-making and ensure continual improvement.
- Take all reasonable steps to protect children from harm.
- Report and act on any behavioural complaints, concerns or observed breaches regarding this code of professional conduct.
- Any behaviour that is not aligned to SHEL's *Relationships with Children Policy* should be promptly reported to the Nominated Supervisor or the manager to respond to the situation and/or concern. The Nominated Supervisor and manager will provide guidance on the next steps, including the necessary actions regarding mandatory reporting. It is the responsibility of all employees at SHEL, to be vigilant and proactive in identifying and addressing any behaviour and/or concerns.
- Report any concern, allegation, disclosure, or observation of child abuse to the relevant person or authority as outlined in the *Child Safe Organisation and Child Protection Policy*.
- Respect the privacy of children and their families by keeping all information regarding child protection concerns confidential, only discussing information with the relevant people to follow reporting procedure

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- Treat all children with respect, regardless of race, colour, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, culture, property, disability, or other status.
- Listen to and value children’s ideas and opinions.
- Include children and families in the decision-making process of the program and aspects of the service.
- Report any suspicious behaviour regarding care of children, work ethic, to the service.

ADHERING TO SERVICE CONFIDENTIALITY

- Unless authorised to do so by legislation, team members must not disclose or use any confidential information without appropriate approval. All queries regarding this must be referred to your direct manager and in their absence, their direct manager or People & Culture.
- Only a manager (where the employee directly reported) and the People & Culture Team are authorised to provide references for current or former Story House employees. No other employee is permitted to make any comments, in any form, about an individual's employment or performance.
- All Team Members are to ensure that confidential information is not accessed by unauthorised people.
- Team Members will adhere to the service’s *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*

BABYSITTING

- We do not provide babysitting services outside normal operating hours.
- Team Members must not solicit babysitting arrangements from families of the service.
- Should Team Members undertake private babysitting arrangements with families, our service takes no responsibility for any private arrangements between Team Members and the family.
- We have rigorous recruitment and suitability processes in place to ensure that we employ competent and professional Team Members and maintain our duty of care to safeguard children whilst on our premises. We have no such control over the conduct of team members outside of their position of employment. Parents should make their own checks as to the suitability of a Team Member for babysitting.
- We will not take responsibility for any health and safety issues, conduct, grievances, or any other claims arising out of the Team Member’s private arrangements outside of the service hours. Team Members will not be covered by the service’s insurance whilst babysitting as a private arrangement.
- Out of hours work arrangements must not interfere with the Team Member's employment at the service.
- All Team Members are bound by contract to the service’s *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*, where they are unable to discuss any issues regarding the service, other team members, parents/families, or other children.

DUTY OF CARE

Team Members have a responsibility to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others at the workplace to enable compliance with the work health and safety legislation outlined in the *Work Health and Safety Policy*.

- Duty of Care relates to both physical and psychological wellbeing of individuals.
- Team Members must always provide adequate supervision of children and ensure the health, safety and welfare of children and young people in their care. This includes taking all reasonable action to protect children and young people from risk of harm that can be reasonably predicted.

SOCIAL MEDIA

- The service offers its current families and Team Members Facebook page as a communication tool. The administrator of the account is the manager of the location. .
- The manager controls the content on the page and ensures that the postings are relevant and respectful of the service, the children, the team members, families, and greater community.
- We will ensure that we only post images of children who have given permission in the Story House *Enrolment record*.
- Team Members who have a personal Facebook account are not permitted to post any negative comments relating to the service, children, team members, or families. If they choose to ‘like’ the service’s page they have a responsibility to ensure that their profile picture is an appropriate representation of an early childhood educator. If it is not, we request that they do not ‘like’ the page.

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- Ensure that no images of children or the service are shared on personal social media sites.
- Ensure that no harassment of any kind takes place between team members or families on social media sites. Such acts may result in disciplinary action.
- The service does not recommend Team Members to add Families of the service as they will be seen still as a representative of the service and held to the service’s Code of Conduct on all posts on their private wall if Families have access.
- Team Members are not permitted to request the friendship of Families from the service.
- Team Members are to respectfully decline friend requests from Families of the service if this occurs, unless a prior friendship was already in place outside the service environment.
- Ensure that personal Facebook pages or social media sites, are not used as a mechanism to discuss or disclose information regarding the service or Story House, including team members, children or families. Such posts will be deemed as inappropriate and will lead to disciplinary action.
- Not access personal Facebook accounts or any other personal social media accounts on any workplace device.
- Not post offensive or derogatory comments or information that could bring their professional standing or that of the service into disrepute.
- Not use their personal camera, iPads or phones to take photos or videos whilst at the service.

USE OF ALCOHOL DRUGS AND TOBACCO

- Smoking, e-cigarettes and vaping is NOT permitted in or on surrounding areas of the service.
- It is an expectation that if a team member is smoking or vaping then that the odour of cigarette smoke or vape should not be detected on a team Member’s clothing as per the *Dress Code Policy*.
- If a team member is found smoking using e-cigarette or vaping on the premises, during excursion(s) and according to state legislation guidelines, Story House may take disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.
- Story House supports the [Smoke Free Environment Act 2000](#). The company and its Team Members will follow all conditions outlined in this act. For more details, please read SHEL - Tobacco Drug and Alcohol Policy.
- Story House is bound by the Education and Care National Regulations. As such, alcohol, drugs, or other substance abuse by Team Members can have serious adverse effects on their own health and the safety of others. As such, all Team Members must not:
 - Consume alcohol nor be under the influence of alcohol while working directly with children
 - Use or possess illegal drugs at any workplace
 - Drive a vehicle, having consumed alcohol or suffering from the effects of illegal substances,
 - Bring alcohol or any illegal drugs onto the premises where children are or are reasonably likely to be present.
- If a Team Member suspects another team member to be affected by drugs or alcohol, they must inform their direct manager immediately. No Team Member will be allowed to work with children under the influence of drugs or alcohol and if found to be doing so will be subject to disciplinary action.
- Team Members undergoing prescribed medical treatment with a controlled substance that may affect the safe performance of their duties are required to report this to their direct manager.
- All issues pertaining to these matters shall be kept strictly confidential. A breach of this policy may initiate appropriate action including the termination of employment.

DRESS CODE

- All Team Members must adhere to our uniform/dress code supplied during induction including the display of their name badge whilst on shift.
- Team Members must wear their supplied uniform for each shift worked. The uniform is as follows:
 - Story House branded or co-branded items provided by Story House or available in the Story House Shop.
 - Black pants/long shorts that do not hinder the delivery of supervision and care of Children.
 - Story House name badge
 - Closed in non-slip shoes.
 - For further clarification please refer to *Story House Dress Policy*.

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PERSONAL HYGIENE

All team members are to adhere to the following standards:

- Long hair is to be clean and neatly tied back: Ensure hair does not hang in your eyes.
- Fingernails are to be clean and well groomed, please refrain from presenting with long talons.
- Nail polish (if worn) cannot be chipped to ensure no risk to children.
- Team Members will follow appropriate oral hygiene practices.
- An appropriate deodorant/antiperspirant will be worn.
- Strong perfumes will not be worn as they may cause allergic reactions in Children.

PERSONAL PHONE CALLS/ MOBILE PHONES / SMART WATCHES

- To ensure child safety and uphold active supervision obligations, personal electronic devices must not be in the possession of Team Members while providing education and care and working directly with children.
- This includes mobile phones, smart watches and wearable technology, tablets, or any device capable of taking, storing, transmitting or accessing images, video, audio or data.
- All personal devices must be stored in a designated secure location for the duration of the shift and may only be accessed during designated breaks, in staff areas away from children.
- Only service-issued devices may be used for authorised educational documentation purposes in accordance with service policies.
- An exemption may be granted by the Approved Provider for essential medical purposes, subject to written approval and documented evidence.

WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS

- Consensual personal or romantic relationships between Team Members are not prohibited. However, relationships must be disclosed and managed appropriately where they may create an actual, perceived, or potential conflict of interest, compromise professional boundaries, impact objectivity or decision-making, or create a risk to children, families, or the service.
- A personal or intimate relationship includes any consensual romantic, dating, or sexual relationship beyond a professional working relationship.
- Where such a relationship exists within the same reporting line, or where one individual has direct or indirect influence over another's supervision, performance management, remuneration, or employment conditions, the relationship must be disclosed in writing to People & Culture within 10 business days.
- Disclosures will be handled confidentially and without retaliation. SHEL may implement reasonable measures to manage any identified conflict, including changes to reporting lines or duties. Failure to disclose a relevant workplace relationship may constitute misconduct.

SERVICE EMAIL

- Email is to be used only for company usage, not for private communications.
- Passwords and access privileges are strictly confidential and to be used only by the person issued with that access, or persons delegated to know and use that access in the normal course of operation.
- It is the responsibility of the person provided with that device or access to take fair and reasonable steps to ensure the passwords and other forms of access are held safe.

EXPECTATIONS OF MANAGERS

MANAGERS WILL ENSURE

- They promote a collaborative and interconnected workplace by developing a positive working environment where all Team Members can contribute to the ongoing continuous improvement of the service.

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- They promote leadership by working with Team Members and providing opportunities for professional development and growth.
- They provide ongoing support and feedback to Team Members to enhance knowledge and skills.
- They keep Team Members informed about essential information and any relevant policy changes and make all documents readily accessible to them.
- Copies of the ECA code of ethics is available to Team Members.
- They model professional behaviour at all times whilst at the service.
- They implement supportive and effective communication systems, consulting Team Members in appropriate decision making.
- They will ensure that investigations are conducted in accordance with principles of procedural fairness.
- They take appropriate action if a breach of the code of conduct occurs.
- They share skills and knowledge with Team Members.
- They provide encouragement and constructive feedback to Team Members, respecting the value of different professional approaches.
- They maintain full, accurate, and honest records as required by national regulations and law.
- That Team Members comply with their record keeping obligation outlined in the *record keeping and retention policy*.

MANAGING CONFLICT IN THE WORKPLACE

- Managers will remain objective and impartial when managing conflict in the workplace.
- Managers have a responsibility to address a possible breach of the code of conduct by any Team Member as soon as they aware of the breach.
- Allegations will be investigated and can result in remedial action, or disciplinary action ranging from a caution to dismissal.
- Managers will consider all relevant facts and make decisions or take actions fairly, ethically, consistently, and with transparency. If they are uncertain about the appropriateness of a decision or action they will consider:
 - Whether the decision or conduct is lawful
 - Whether the decision or conduct is consistent with service policies and objective
 - Whether there will be an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest involving obligations that could influence the business relationship or conflict with business duties.
- Any formal performance management of any Team Member must first be referred to People and Culture for approval.

REPORTING A BREACH IN THE CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

- All Team Members working directly with Children are required by law to undergo a working with Children check (WWCC) (NSW & VIC) and blue card verification- (QLD) which is verified by the direct manager online.
- If a Team Member's circumstances change and result in name change (for example marriage, divorce, name change certificate as evidence due to changing name) then the team member will immediately apply for name change on their valid photo ID as well as change their name on WWCC card and submit copies of both documents by email to People & Culture (people@shel.edu.au).
- If Team Members become aware of a serious crime committed by another Team Member, they are required to report it to the their direct manager or People & Culture.
- All Team Members must report possible risk of harm to Children or young persons to their direct manager or People & Culture.
- Team Members will report any concerns they may have about inappropriate actions of any other Team Member that involves Children to their direct manager or People & Culture
- The manager will report any allegations or child related misconduct as per the *Child Protection Policy*.

DISMISSAL

All Team Members are made fully aware that the following breaches of the Code of Professional Conduct and role responsibilities may lead to termination of employment: These include, but are not limited to the following:

- Reporting to work under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Refusal to complete required additional training.

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- Possessing or selling drugs at the service.
- Immoral, immature, or indecent conduct while at the service.
- Inappropriate use of company equipment and/or resources.
- Refusing to work as reasonably directed.
- Possessing a dangerous weapon whilst at the service.
- Bringing disrepute to the service (including the use of social media)
- Causing disruption or discontent in the relationship between a family and the service.
- Disclosure of confidential information.
- Falsifying documentation.
- Taking, abusing, defacing, or destroying company property.
- Falsification of reports, documents, or wages information.
- Failure to report for work without notice.
- Abandoning work and leaving service out of ratio.
- Failure to follow policies and procedures.
- Vulgarity or disrespectful conduct to Families, Management or Team Members.
- Making or publishing false, vicious, or malicious statements about any Team Member of the service, or the service itself.
- Failure to hand in lost property (this is regarded as stealing): lost property is to be handed to the Service Manager.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

- All Team Members are made fully aware that continued abuse of the following may result in disciplinary action. These include, but are not limited to the following:
 - Unauthorised absence.
 - Consistent or ongoing late arrivals and/or unauthorised extended breaks.
 - Having personal Visitors whilst on shift.
 - Continued personal phone calls.
 - Carrying a personal mobile phone whilst on shift.
 - Using a personal mobile phone or device to take photographs of the Children.
 - Unauthorised distribution of service resources or materials.
 - Consistent or ongoing poor work standard.
 - Carelessness in the performance of duties.
 - Consistent or ongoing low level of enthusiasm.
 - Lack of personal cleanliness and hygiene.
 - Failure to report health, fire, or safety hazards.
- **Compliance with Australian Immigration Requirements:** Failure to comply with any of the below requirements may result in disciplinary action:
 - Employers in Australia have a legal obligation to verify and maintain records of Team Members work rights, including those on visas, to ensure compliance with immigration and workplace laws. This involves checking work rights by conducting audits regularly for Team Members on Visa through the Department of Home Affairs' Visa Entitlement Verification Online (VEVO) system and keeping detailed records of the checks, including the documentation provided by the Team Member and the VEVO results.
 - All Team Members must always meet and maintain compliance with Australian immigration laws and visa conditions during their employment. As part of this obligation, Team Members must:
 - **Visa Status Updates:** Please notify the People & Culture team (people@shel.edu.au) by email of any changes to your visa status by attaching copy of new visa granted (for example - new bridging visa, new student visa, skilled immigration visa with work rights or a permanent resident visa). You must provide a copy of the full visa grant notification (all pages) within 2 business days of receiving it.
 - **Passport Renewal:** If your passport is renewed or replaced (for example in cases of passport expired or due to name change), you must:
 - Email a copy of the new passport (biodata page) to People & Culture team (people@shel.edu.au) by email within 2 business days of receiving it.

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- If your visa is linked to your passport, notify the Department of Home Affairs immediately so that your new passport is linked to your visa to ensure visa validation (VEVO) remains active.
- Ensure this is completed promptly so that SHEL management can continue updated the records of visa and linked passport to facilitate/conduct VEVO checks as required.
- **Australian Citizenship:** If you acquire Australian citizenship, you must email the copy of evidence to People & Culture team (people@shel.edu.au) attaching acceptable evidence immediately. Acceptable forms of evidence include:
 - Australian citizenship certificate to be submitted within 2 business days from receiving this certificate.
 - Australian passport within 2 business days from receiving the passport.

SOURCE

- [Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority - ACECQA](#)
- [Guide to the National Quality Framework. 2020](#)
- [Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010.](#)
- [National Regulations 2018](#)
- [Code of Ethics](#)
- [United Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

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