

## Child Protection and Mandatory Reporting

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to explain how Bridge Housing will respond to any concerns regarding the welfare, safety and well-being of children and young people.

### Scope

This policy applies to all staff, contractors, applicants, tenants and former tenants of Bridge Housing.

### Roles and Responsibilities

All Bridge Housing Staff and Contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to Bridge Housing, Team Leaders (Assets, Pathways and Housing) any instance of suspected neglect, abuse or risk of harm to children or young people</li> <li>Make a Mandatory Report to Family and Community Services as required</li> </ul>
Team Leaders – Housing, Pathways, Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manage all reports of harm to children or young people and advise on course of action</li> </ul>
Director, Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor reports to Family and Community Services and NSW Police</li> </ul>
GM, Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor Bridge Housing’s response to child protection issues and report to the Executive Team</li> </ul>

### Policy Overview

Bridge Housing is committed to identifying and responding early in order to prevent children and young people from harm. Any staff member or contractor who suspects a child or young person is at risk of, or experiencing harm, must report these incidents in accordance with this policy.

### Policy

This policy details the role of Bridge Housing staff and contractors in reporting a reasonable suspicion that a child or young adult is at risk of significant harm from abuse or neglect.

Bridge Housing and our contractors will ensure that:

- Signs of abuse and neglect are recognised
- Any suspected cases of significant harm are reported to the NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS)
- Information is shared with relevant agencies in order to prevent abuse and neglect
- Staff work with government and other agencies to ensure the safety, welfare and well-being of all children and young persons residing in Bridge Housing properties, and
- Bridge Housing staff are properly trained and resourced to implement this policy.

## Bridge Housing's Role as a Mandatory Reporter

This section details the role of Bridge Housing staff in reporting reasonable suspicion that a child or young adult is at risk of significant harm from abuse or neglect.

Under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998, Bridge Housing employees are classified as mandatory reporters. This means that if during the course of their work they have a reasonable suspicion that a child (aged 0-15) is at risk of significant harm from abuse or neglect, they are legally obliged to report these concerns to the Department of Family and Community Services. This includes the children of a tenant, their guests and also housing applicants.

It also allows for the exchange of information, without consent, between "prescribed bodies" (which includes Bridge Housing) to aid the protection of children and young people. This means that in relation to child protection matters, information must be shared and requested without the consent of a parent, guardian, individual or family to keep children safe.

While not mandatory, Bridge Housing staff with concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of an unborn child or a young person aged 16-17 years old, will be required to report these matters to the NSW Family and Community Services to comply with this policy.

## Supporting Children, Young People and Their Families

Bridge Housing will consider the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people when making housing management decisions.

When risk of harm concerns do not meet the statutory reporting threshold to warrant reporting to the FACS, Bridge Housing will work to support children, young people and their families through active referral to support services that meet their needs.

If a family chooses not to engage with support services Bridge Housing will remind families of the services available and monitor ongoing concerns through our housing services contact with the family.

## Complaints and Appeals

If a tenant is not satisfied with a service provided by Bridge Housing they can ask for a formal review. Bridge Housing's *Compliments, Complaints and Appeals Policy* outlines how we will undertake a review of our decision. A copy of our policy and information leaflet, is available from Bridge Housing's office or downloaded from our website: [www.bridgehousing.org.au](http://www.bridgehousing.org.au).