What is the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework?

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission) examined what makes an organisation child safe. The Royal Commission highlighted the need to provide an environment in which children and young people are safe, protected and respected, and where staff have the skills, confidence and knowledge to safeguard children.

In response, the Australian Government has introduced the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework (CCSF), a whole-of-government policy that sets minimum standards for creating and embedding a child safe culture and practice in Commonwealth entities.

Under the CCSF, Commonwealth entities must:

- Undertake risk assessments annually in relation to activities of each entity, to identify the level of responsibility for, and contact with, children and young people, evaluate the risk of harm or abuse, and put in place appropriate strategies to manage identified risks.
- Establish and maintain a system of training and compliance to make their staff aware of, and compliant with, the CCSF and relevant legislation including working with children checks and mandatory reporting requirements.
- Adopt and implement the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (National Principles) by 1 February 2020.

The CCSF also recommends that entities implement child safety requirements, consistent with the CCSF, on individuals or organisations they fund in relation to activities involving children (individuals under the age of 18 years). This includes but is not limited to funding arrangements such as grants and procurements.

What the CCSF means for your Department

At a minimum, implementation of the CCSF will involve:

- annual risk assessment and risk mitigation;
- clear internal child safe policies that inform staff of their obligations in relation to the safety and wellbeing of children;
- identification of the roles that require working with children checks (or working with vulnerable people checks) and a compliance regime to manage and keep them current;
- child safe recruitment, screening and induction processes;
- ongoing staff training (training should be trauma informed);
- child-focused procedures for responding to concerns and complaints about child safety; and
- upholding children’s rights through policies, procedures and practices that are child focused, trauma informed, and culturally appropriate.

Need further information?

The National Office for Child Safety has published a range of resources and practical tools to support implementation.

Materials to support implementation of the National Principles can also be found on the Australian Human Rights Commission’s Child Safe website.

Alternatively you can contact the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework team at CommonwealthChildSafe@pmc.gov.au.