Our Code of Conduct

Policy | BM1

We're for children, not for profit

Our Code of Conduct

Goodstart was founded with a vision to give children the best possible start in life through access to quality early learning. Today, we're proud to be Australia's largest not for profit provider of early learning and care.

At Goodstart, we believe every child has great potential. Every day, we work hard to help children grow, learn and thrive. With purpose at the heart of everything we do, we push boundaries, lift quality and challenge systems to ensure no child is left behind.

Our people are the ones who make this possible. We all have different roles and skills, but together, we're not just dreaming of a better future – we're building it.

To support our shared purpose, it's important that we all follow the same values and standards. Our **Code of Conduct** (we call it "the Code") brings our Guiding Principles to life. It explains the behaviours expected from every team member and helps you make the right decisions that reflect our values.

Understanding the Code – and living by it – is an important part of working at Goodstart.

Our core Code principles

C **Children at the centre**
We put children at the centre of everything we do and work in partnership with families to help every child feel safe, supported and able to thrive.

H **Health, safety and wellbeing**
We prioritise health, safety and wellbeing, speak up when something's not right, and contribute to a strong culture of trust and transparency.

I **Inclusivity and belonging**
We foster inclusive, culturally safe environments where everyone is respected, valued and has a strong sense of belonging.

L **Learning and growth**
We take responsibility for our own learning, performance and upholding this Code while supporting others to do the same.

D **Doing what's right**
We act with integrity, professionalism, and care – always using good judgement and doing what's right.

Who this Code applies to

This Code applies to everyone who works for or represents Goodstart – including employees, volunteers, contractors, students, and Board Members. Collectively we refer to ourselves as Goodstarters, because we're all part of the same purpose-driven community.

The Code applies whenever your actions could affect children, families, colleagues, or Goodstart's reputation. This includes:

- **When you're at a Goodstart centre** or workplace
- **When you're representing Goodstart** – at events, training or in the community
- **In your personal life, including online** – if your behaviour could harm a child, affect your role, put others at risk, or reflect poorly on Goodstart.

How we support you to live the Code

At Goodstart, you're not expected to do it alone. We support every team member to understand and apply the Code in daily practice through:

- Induction programs when you first join
- Learning programs which support our values and standards
- Guidance and support from your leader
- Ongoing reflective practice and team discussions.

Children at the centre

Being a Goodstarter means doing our best, and holding ourselves to high standards – always putting children, families, and each other first. This Code helps guide us in doing that, the right way.

We build strong, respectful partnerships so every child feels they belong, are valued, supported, and empowered.

As Goodstarters, we:

- **Welcome every child and family:** We create inclusive, respectful spaces where all children and families feel safe, valued, and heard. Families are our primary partners – we respect their unique relationship and involve them in decisions about their child.
- **Keep each child central to everything we do:** We treat every child with respect, dignity, and care – listening to their ideas, including their views in daily decisions, and supporting meaningful learning that reflects their individual needs and best interests. We always act in their best interests.
- **Champion inclusion and diversity:** We support every child's access and full participation, especially those with additional needs, complex trauma or at risk, by creating safe, supportive spaces that respect and celebrate all differences.
- **Inspire and challenge each child's learning and development journey:** We engage all children in rich, playbased learning experiences that stimulate curiosity, cognitive development creativity, and critical thinking. Our teaching practices continuously adapt to each child's strengths, interests, and developmental needs, ensuring they are inspired to be the best they can be.

To keep children safe we ask that you:

- **Know your role:** Understand your responsibilities and what you're accountable for.
- **Read and follow this Code:** Take time to understand what's expected. If something's unclear, speak with your leader or reach out to the People Support team.
- **Stay up to date:** Complete all mandatory training modules, attend team briefings and take part in ongoing professional learning – especially in areas linked to your role.
- **Meet compliance requirements:** Keep your certifications and checks current, including Working with Children Checks (or equivalent), and ensure your work rights always remain valid.

For further information: Refer to our Educational Program and Practice Policy; Safeguarding Children Requirement; and Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities Policy.

Additional resources: National Quality Framework; Early Years Learning Framework; United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Health, safety and wellbeing

Looking out for each other is part of who we are. Every Goodstarter plays a role in creating a safe and supportive environment and contributing to a culture of trust and transparency.

As a Child Safe Organisation, we're committed to protecting children and ensuring their safety.

As Goodstarters, we:

- **Champion the safety and wellbeing of children:** We actively promote a culture that prioritises children's rights, where every child feels safe, is safe, and is heard. We take all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse, neglect and/or harm.
- **Ensure effective supervision:** We engage in active and responsive supervision at all times to safeguard children from abuse, neglect and harm and reduce the likelihood of accidents during play and learning. Educators use ongoing communication to maintain required educator to child ratios and adjust supervision strategies to ensure the effective supervision of children and other adults in the environment.
- **Model professional behaviour:** We build trusting, respectful relationships with children by maintaining professional boundaries and acting with empathy, fairness, and consistency.
- **Follow our Look, Do, Tell Framework:** We take all concerns seriously and believe children if they disclose harm. We immediately report any and all concerns about children using the Look, Do, Tell approach – whether the concern relates to conduct inside or outside Goodstart, including online.
- **Lead by example:** We take practical steps to protect ourselves and others by spotting risks early, speaking up, and following our safety and safeguarding policies.

  This includes:
  - Identifying and fixing hazards as soon as we notice them
  - Stopping and reporting any task that feels unsafe
  - Using the right equipment and following procedures
  - Reporting incidents or injuries straight away, and calling out unsafe behaviour, concerns, incidents or injuries.
- **Show up ready:** We meet Goodstart dress standards and only come to work when we're fit to do our jobs safely. That means never working under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or anything that could impair our judgment or performance.
- **Know what's expected:** We understand the safety responsibilities that come with our roles – including how to use equipment, materials, and technology safely and responsibly.

For further information:
Refer to our Safety, Health and Wellbeing Policy; and Safety Commitment

What's never Ok when with children

As Goodstarters, we will not:

- **Engage in, condone, or fail to report any actions or behaviours that are unprofessional, inappropriate, illegal, unsafe or abusive** towards, or in the presence of children, including physical, sexual or psychological abuse, ill treatment, exploitation, exposure to physical or verbal violence, neglect, crossing professional boundaries or grooming.
- **Ignore, dismiss, or prevent the reporting** of concerns, suspicions, complaints, or disclosures of potential harm or risk to children, in line with Goodstart policies.
- **Exaggerate or trivialize child abuse, neglect or harm.**
- Use **discriminatory, offensive, or inappropriate** language, gestures, or actions to children or others, including yelling, swearing or threats.
- **Criticise, humiliate, or intimidate** a child, or create an environment of fear, exclusion or distress.
- **Use inappropriate discipline, or subject a child to inappropriate conduct,** including physical abuse, corporal punishment, rough handling, or other conduct likely to cause emotional, physical or psychological harm.
- **Engage in restrictive practices, immobilise or restrain** a child unless absolutely necessary to prevent imminent risk of serious harm to the child and/or others.
- **Engage in or encourage any form of inappropriate physical contact.** This may include touching a child in an inappropriate, sexualised or intrusive way, contact that is unwarranted, invasive or unnecessary for the child's age and developmental stage, needs or abilities. Examples include kissing, massage, tickling, blowing raspberries or physical closeness (such as encouraging a child to sit on an educators lap for an extended period, repetitively, or in favour of other activities).
- **Engage in grooming behaviours,** including but not limited to favouritism, offering gifts or special privileges, encouraging emotional dependency (attachment fostering), or initiating private or secret communication with a child.
- **Perform personal care tasks** for a child that they are capable of doing themselves (e.g. dressing, feeding, toileting).
- **Use or share sexualised** language, jokes, gestures, or content.
- **Be alone with a child** unless there is a valid professional reason and it is in line with Goodstart policies.
- **Engage in unprofessional communication,** such as sending personal messages, capturing or sharing images of children via unauthorised devices or platforms, or engaging with children or families online through social media or apps unrelated to your role or endorsed communication channels.
- **Violate privacy or misuse technology** by taking, storing, or sharing images or videos of children in ways that are not authorised, safe, respectful or for a valid educational purpose.
- **Transport enrolled children in a private vehicle** under any circumstances, unless the child is related to you, or there is a pre-existing relationship which has been disclosed to your leader and managed in accordance with Goodstart's policies.
- **Offer children** alcohol, cigarettes, e-cigarettes (vapes), or other drugs.
- **Supervise family contact, including offering/ accepting the supervision of family contact** to occur at the service at the request of statutory child protection.
- **Deliberately prevent a child from forming friendships**

Our shared responsibility to protect children from harm: Every Goodstarter plays a vital role in keeping children safe. If you know that someone at Goodstart poses a serious risk of harming a child - and you're in a position to reduce or remove that risk – you must act. Failing to do so is a criminal offence.

Similarly, if you know or reasonably believe that a child has been abused, you must report it to the relevant authorities (including Police) where mandatory reporting laws apply. These statutory child protection and/or police laws exist to protect children, and we are all accountable for upholding them.

For further information: Refer to our Commitment to Safeguarding Children; Safeguarding Children Requirement; Look Do Tell (for Safeguarding Children) Requirement; Unwanted contact and grooming Fact Sheet; and Digital Safety (Model Code) Requirement.

Inclusivity and belonging

Together, we create spaces where everyone is respected, valued, has a strong sense of belonging, and inspired to thrive.

As Goodstarters, we:

- **Foster a positive workplace:** We build trust through honesty, respect, and appreciation for each other's strengths and stories.
- **Celebrate diversity:** We embrace the many languages, cultures, identities, abilities, and traditions that shape our centres, workspaces and communities.
- **Create culturally safe spaces:** We listen deeply, respect difference, and ensure everyone feels heard and supported.
- **Stand up for what's right:** Racism, unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying, and any behaviour that undermines dignity or safety have no place here. If you see it – speak up.
- **Champion inclusion:** We embed inclusive practices in our everyday decisions and actions. Everyone belongs at Goodstart.
- **Advance Reconciliation:** We honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, voices, and ways of knowing, being, and doing – through our relationships, practice, and environments.

For further information: Refer to our Ensuring a Fair Workplace Policy; Educational Program and Practice Policy; Safeguarding Children resources; and Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities Policy.

Additional resources: National Quality Framework; Early Years Learning Framework; United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Learning and growth

We take ownership of our own growth, performance, and conduct. We are committed to upholding the Code and supporting others to do the same.

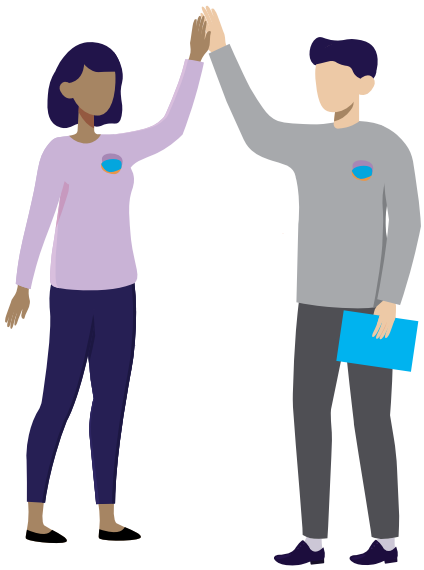
As Goodstarters, we:

- **Uphold the Code:** We understand and commit to the expectations set out in the Code. We apply its principles in our daily work and decision-making.
- **Hold ourselves accountable:** We strive to do our best in every aspect of our role. We take pride in our work, reflect on our impact, and support others in holding themselves to the same high standards.
- **Keep learning, always:** We ask questions, share ideas, and look for ways to grow. Whether it's improving how we work, deepening our practice, or strengthening inclusive and safe environments – we learn and evolve together.
- **Speak up:** When something doesn't align with our values or the expectations of the Code, we speak up. We do so respectfully and constructively, knowing that raising concerns helps strengthen our culture and protect each other.

Speak up: There are several ways you can raise a concern

- **Raise it with your leader and for safety and/or safeguarding, log the concern:** Speak directly to your leader, or if they are involved, escalate to their leader—such as your Centre Director, State Performance Lead, State Manager, or Department Manager. All safety and/or safeguarding concerns, incidents and complaints must be logged in Service Now.
- **Contact a specialised support channel:** Depending on the issue, reach out to one of our specialised teams listed on our Intranet. This includes Employee Support; Safety, Health and Wellbeing; Children and Families; Practice and Inclusion; Safeguarding Children Team; Centre Operations; and IT, Systems and Labour.

  For urgent assistance, contact the Support Directory at 1300 376 583.
  For urgent assistance related to safety and/or safeguarding, contact our Safety Hotline 1300 375 583.
- **Report corporate misconduct:** Use Goodstart's independent Whistleblower service, Your Call, on 1300 790 228, to report corporate misconduct or wrongdoing. You can report anonymously and confidently, where your identity and the details of your disclosure will be protected. Reports can also be made to any person or body listed in the Whistleblower Policy.



Doing what's right

Our children, families, and colleagues rely on us to use good judgement and do the right thing – every day, in every situation.

As Goodstarters, we:

- **Act professionally, always:** We maintain respectful boundaries and model positive behaviour – at work, online, and in the community.

  Example: If a parent sends you a friend request on social media, you must decline. We keep relationships professional to protect everyone's wellbeing.

- **Follow laws, policies, and values:** We operate with integrity and uphold the highest ethical standards. That means following lawful and reasonable directions, and staying aligned with Goodstart's policies and values.
- **Use resources responsibly:** We treat Goodstart's property, equipment, and information with care – and only use them for legitimate work-related purposes.
- **Protect privacy and confidentiality:** We only access, use or share personal information when it's part of our role – and always in line with Goodstart's policies.

  This includes:
  - Keeping passwords secure
  - Ensuring personal or confidential information isn't left visible
  - Never copying or sharing data unless it's for an approved purpose, and never misusing data
  - Disposing of personal or confidential information securely.

Important: Only use Goodstart-issued devices to capture, download or share images of children – and only for approved purposes like documenting learning. Always have parental permission, and wherever possible, the child's consent. Personal devices must not be used while working directly with children, unless essential.

- **Act ethically and honestly:** We have zero tolerance for fraud, bribery, or corruption. That includes misusing resources, altering information for personal gain, or offering gifts to gain unfair advantage.

  Example: Using Goodstart funds for personal purchases, submitting false medical documents for a WorkCover claim, misusing Child Care Subsidy funds or assets, or falsifying timesheets.

- **Speak up about changes:** Let your leader know straight away if something changes that could affect your role - like updates to your Working with Children Check, criminal charges, or a potential conflict of interest.
- **Support transparency:** We cooperate fully with internal and external investigations and audits – sharing accurate, complete information and helping build a culture of accountability.

Managing relationships

We count on each other's integrity to make decisions that are fair, ethical, and in everyone's best interests. That means being upfront about anything that could create a conflict between personal interests and professional responsibilities.

As Goodstarters, we:

- **Declare close connections:** Let your leader know if you have a close personal relationship with a colleague, family member, or child enrolled at your centre. This includes during recruitment, performance reviews or decisions involving your close connection.
- **Disclose interest:** If something in your personal life could influence – or appear to influence – your decisions at work, let your leader know and report it through the Interest, Gifts and Benefits Declaration Form. This includes close family ties, financial relationships with suppliers or other employment.
- **Manage or avoid conflicts:** If a conflict exits or might arise, work with your leader to manage it transparently or step away from decisions where personal benefit could be involved. Always prioritise the rights and best interests of children.
- **Keep boundaries clear:** Don't offer or accept private work (like babysitting, tutoring, or emergency care) for families connected to Goodstart.
- **Be thoughtful about gifts:** Never offer or accept gifts, benefits, or hospitality that could influence decisions – or look like they might If you're offered something over $100, use the Interest, Gifts and Benefits Declaration Form to record it.

Leading with care and accountability

Our leaders play a key role in creating thriving environments and teams. If you're in a leadership or supervisory role, you're expected to:

- **Lead with clarity and care,** by providing clear guidance, support, and supervision.
- **Be responsible for supporting a culture of high performance, engagement and continuous improvement** by ensuring your team understands their roles, and by actively managing their performance and development.
- **Ensure others who perform work or deliver services for Goodstart,** including volunteers, contractors, and students are aware of and abide by our Code.
- **Address and report breaches of policy promptly and appropriately** to maintain a safe and respectful workplace.

For further information: Refer to our Confidentiality, Privacy and Digital Information Security Requirement; Digital Safety (Model Code) Requirement; Risk Management - Conflict of Interest Requirement.

We take our Code seriously because it reflects the values we live by every day. If someone's behaviour or conduct doesn't align with what's outlined here, we'll respond in a way that's fair, proportionate, and focused on restoring trust and safety.

Depending on the situation, this might involve extra support or supervision, a change in role, or in more serious cases, suspending or ending the employment, contract, or volunteer involvement. Where the law requires it, Goodstart will also notify the appropriate external authorities.

Our Code won't provide an answer for every situation, but it serves as a strong guide to help you act legally, ethically, and respectfully. When making any decision, if you're unsure about doing the right thing, consider the following questions:

- Is this decision consistent with our Code and Goodstart policies and procedures?
- Is this decision legal, ethical, and safe?
- Is this decision in the best interests of the children in Goodstart's care?
- Does this decision reflect well on me, Goodstart, and my team?
- Would I be comfortable if this decision and my actions were made public?

If you answer "no" or "maybe" to any of these questions, pause and seek advice. Reach out to your leader or use one of the specialised support channels listed in the Speak Up section.