

Code of Conduct

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Approved by: Executive Management Committee

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Purpose

This Code of Conduct Policy outlines the behaviour expected of persons engaged in activities associated with, or on behalf of, Very Special Kids. It will assist in understanding responsibilities and obligations of all who work and volunteer within Very Special Kids. The Code does not attempt to provide a detailed and exhaustive list of what to do in every aspect of a person's role. Instead it is intended to provide a broad framework that will help guide decisions on appropriate behaviours when performing a role or when faced with an ethical issue.

Definitions

- **VSK** - Very Special Kids:
- **Organisation** - refers to Very Special Kids
- **Staff and Volunteers** - includes management, staff, contractors, students in all areas of VSK and includes Family Support Volunteers, Friends Volunteers, board members and committee members when acting as a volunteer of Very Special Kids. All persons representing or acting on behalf of Very Special Kids are required to be committed to the same standard of “appropriate behaviour” which is based on the organisation's values.
- **Personal information** - means any information about an identified or identifiable individual that is not available in the public domain.
- **Public comment** - includes public speaking engagements, comments on radio and television; and expressing views in letters to the newspapers or in books, journals, social media or notices, or where it might be expected that the publication or circulation of the comment will spread to the community at large.
- **Records management** - is the control and management of records to meet service delivery, business, legal, fiscal and administrative requirements and the functions performed through the collective actions of individuals.
- **Record** - is recorded information in any form, including paper files, data in computer systems, created or received by any staff and/or volunteer in the course of his/her duties.
- **CEO** - means the Chief Executive Officer, or their nominated delegate from time to time.
- **Serious Misconduct** – Serious misconduct is misconduct which is wilful or deliberate conduct by an employee which is so serious it fundamentally undermines the relationship of trust and confidence between the organisation and the employee. Such conduct may result in instant dismissal.
- **Conflicts of interest** - are assessed in terms of the likelihood that staff and volunteers possessing a particular interest could be influenced, or might appear to be influenced, in the performance of their duties.
- **Health Service Provider** – under the Privacy Act, a ‘health service’ includes any activity that involves:
 - Assessing, maintaining or improving a person's physical or psychological health; or
 - Where a person's health cannot be maintained or improved – managing the person's health
 - Diagnosing or treating a person's illness or disability; or
 - Recording a person's health for the purposes of assessing, maintaining, improving or managing the person's health
 - Dispensing a prescription drug or medicine by a pharmacist.
 - This includes activities performed in providing aged care, palliative care or care for a person with a disability.

Scope

- This policy applies to all staff, contractors, students and volunteers

Designated Responsibility

- Policy authorisation: CEO
- Policy implementation: CEO and Management Team
- Policy owner/maintenance: Human Resources Manager

Policy

The Code outlines the minimum behaviours required of each person to perform their role in line with the Vision, Purpose and Values of the organisation. Employees, Contractors, Students and Volunteers are required to speak to their Manager or Human Resources if they have any concerns in understanding any part of the Code.

When associated with VSK Staff and Volunteers shall:

1. Demonstrate behaviours which are consistent with the **Very Special Kids Values**
2. Act **honestly and in good faith**, and in the best interests of VSK
3. Carry out role duties according to the law, using **due care and diligence**
4. Comply with all VSK **policies, procedures and relevant statutory regulations**
5. Assign to VSK all **intellectual property rights** in the works created during association with VSK.

Consequences

Most people choose to work with VSK because of its Purpose, Vision and Values. For this reason it is likely that all employees and volunteers will comply with this Code through their everyday work. This Code outlines the minimum expectations for those working at VSK. Breaches of the Code will be taken seriously and may result in disciplinary action which may include termination of employment/volunteer position. To assist employees and volunteers with understanding their obligations in more detail, examples of the behaviours which do and do not demonstrate the VSK values are following. It is expected all those working with VSK will be familiar with this document and the example behaviours.

The Purpose, Vision and Values of Very Special Kids

Vision - All families of children with life-threatening conditions are able to access quality services that meet their needs.

Purpose - Very Special Kids supports families throughout their experience of caring for children with life-threatening conditions, from diagnosis through to recovery or bereavement.

Values – the Values of Very Special Kids outline the type of behaviours we demonstrate in all that we do. These are Respect, Collaboration, Community, Compassion, Learning and Integrity.

The Behaviours which underpin VSK Values

To assist people to understand the Values and how they apply in the workplace, examples have been provided (as outlined below) of the types of behaviours that demonstrate and some that **do not** demonstrate each of the Values.

Compassion & Respect

Being welcoming, showing warmth, hope and empathy to those we care for and with whom we work.

Recognising the individual, welcoming diversity and nurturing choice regardless of position or status.

EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOUR WHICH DEMONSTRATES COMPASSION & RESPECT	EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOUR WHICH DO NOT DEMONSTRATE COMPASSION AND RESPECT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Values everyone's' contributions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gossiping and talking about others behind their backs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognises other people's perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bullying or intimidating others
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listens actively and encourages diversity of opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interrupting others when they are speaking or not letting them speak
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicates openly; constructively challenges and questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not taking the time to talk to those we care for or team members
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uses language which is inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using language that is not accessible or meaningful to your audience

Collaboration

Building connections, strengthening relationships and partnering with others.

EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOUR WHICH DEMONSTRATES COLLABORATION	EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOUR WHICH DO NOT DEMONSTRATE COLLABORATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Works collaboratively, works together with other teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Makes decisions without consulting those who will be affected
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learns from others and uses best ideas irrespective of the origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Takes credit for the work of others
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fosters open and continuous exchange of information and opinions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arriving late for work or not telling people if we are not coming to work
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides information so others can understand the situation and take timely action	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Taking time off when not really sick
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gives people authority to participate and holds them accountable for doing so	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Covering up or blaming others for issues that impact on the team's performance
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assists others achieve objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Refusing to work with particular people or at particular times
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Celebrates team successes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not recognise others for work well done
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operates & makes decisions for the greater good of VSK as a whole	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Makes decisions advantageous to self or own team only

Community

Creating supportive relationships and a sense of belonging.

EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOUR WHICH DEMONSTRATES COMMUNITY	EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOUR WHICH DO NOT DEMONSTRATE COMMUNITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understands the needs, beliefs and perspectives as well as the role of the families in our organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not making the time to listen to the needs of the families
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advocates, communicates and shows an understanding of our services; promotes and is actively involved in our fundraising and relationship building activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not get involved in any VSK events or programs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seeks sustainable relationships without crossing boundaries into personal relationships with families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adding a Family member as a Facebook friend or providing personal email/phone contact details
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Goes the extra mile	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not doing things because you believe

	it is not your job
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeks continuous feedback on quality of service and improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resistant to any suggestion of changes or improvements required

Learning

Enhancing and sharing our skills, experiences, knowledge and wisdom

EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOUR WHICH DEMONSTRATES LEARNING	EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOUR WHICH DO NOT DEMONSTRATE LEARNING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shares key learnings, experiences with the greater team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holds knowledge to self
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses skills and knowledge to develop innovative solutions and improve the way we do things 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on identifying problems rather than solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeks opportunities to expand knowledge through internal and external networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resistant to change or improving ways of working
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waiting to be told what to do
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doing it the way it has always been done when better alternatives may be available

Integrity

Acting ethically, honestly, fairly and with accountability

EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOUR WHICH DEMONSTRATES INTEGRITY	EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOUR WHICH DO NOT DEMONSTRATE INTEGRITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivers on what is promised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work not delivered when promised or not the outcome promised.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operates openly and provides honest feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being dishonest and not complying with policies and procedure or legislation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behaves consistently and treats people equally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working in an unsafe manner or asking someone to do something that is unsafe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leads by example and treats others the way they would like to be treated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One rule for self and makes other rules for other people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Takes responsibility for mistakes and captures key learnings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covering up mistakes or blaming others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reports any case of suspected child abuse or neglect in accordance with the VSK Child Safe Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ignoring signs of an abused or neglected child
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wasting time, resources, money

Procedure

Staff and volunteers will comply with the Code of Conduct and will adopt the following standards as part of their everyday practice and consistently demonstrate behaviours which are congruent with the VSK values.

1. Child Safe Principles and Expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children.

All staff and volunteers are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:

EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOUR WHICH SUPPORT CHILD SAFETY	EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOUR WHICH DO NOT SUPPORT CHILD SAFETY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adhering to the VSK Child Safe Policy at all times 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism e.g. offering of gifts or special treatment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exhibiting behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical e.g. inappropriate sitting on laps. NB. This could be appropriate while reading a storybook to a small child in an open plan area or holding an immobile child in an open plan area
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listening and responding to the views & concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Putting children at risk of abuse e.g. by locking doors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children and those from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background e.g. by never questioning an Aboriginal child's self-identification and having a zero tolerance of discrimination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doing things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves such as toileting or changing clothes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting the safety, participation & empowerment of children with a disability e.g. during personal care activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children e.g. personal social activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expressing personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting any allegations of child abuse to the GM – Planning & Improvement and ensure any allegation is reported to Child Protection Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discriminating against any child, including because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting any child safety concerns to the relevant team Service Delivery Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having contact with a child or their family outside of our organisation without the Service Delivery Manager's knowledge and/or consent e.g. babysitting.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having any online contact with a child or their family outside of work related contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging children to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ignoring or disregarding any suspected or disclosed child abuse

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone the police on 000.

2. Natural Justice, Fairness and Equity

- Staff who are required to investigate complaints against other staff or a volunteer, or issues affecting staff or a volunteer, are expected to act consistently, promptly, and fairly;
- There is an obligation to maintain the principles of natural justice in dealing with issues relating to any investigation;
- When using any authority, staff should ensure that they take all relevant factors into consideration and have regard to the particular merits of each case;
- Demonstrate sensitivity to the vulnerability of children and young people and work to protect them.

3. Use of VSK Facilities and Equipment

- Staff and volunteers should take all possible care in the use of organisation's property, goods, services and information and ensure they are used efficiently, carefully and honestly.

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- b) VSK resources are not to be used for private purposes without the permission of the relevant Team Manager (e.g. Hospice Manager for Hospice equipment).

4. Privacy and Use of Personal and Official Information

- a) Staff and volunteers have an obligation to ensure that personal information concerning other staff, volunteers, families, donors and supporters is secured against loss, misuse or unauthorised access, modification or disclosure. Of particular sensitivity is personal information about families or donors and health information about families.
- b) Staff and volunteers have a duty to maintain the confidentiality, integrity and security of official information for which they are responsible.

For more information refer to the [Privacy Policy](#).

5. Records Management

- a) Staff and volunteers need to be aware of their record keeping responsibilities and are reminded there is a legal requirement to adhere to proper records management practices and procedures.
- b) All staff and volunteers must ensure that documents which form part of the organisation's public record are not placed in unofficial or private filing systems. All such documents are to be placed on secure official files.
- c) Staff and volunteers must not remove documents from official files. They are controlled records, and must be complete, up-to-date and capable of providing organisational accountability when officially scrutinised.
- d) Staff and volunteers must not damage, dispose of, or in any other manner, interfere with official documents or files. The destruction of records may only take place in accordance with a disposal and retention schedule which has been approved.

For more information refer to the [Records Management Policy](#) for your team on Prompt.

6. Information Technology

- a) Staff and volunteers must use the authorised information systems or parts of the authorised system only for the purpose for which the authorisation was given.
- b) Staff and volunteers who have access to an information system or part of an information system, shall not allow any unauthorised person access to that system for any reason.
- c) Staff and volunteers must not access information which they are not authorised to access or use, and must not allow any unauthorised person access to information for any reason.
- d) Staff and volunteers must take all reasonable precautions, including password maintenance and file protection measures to prevent unauthorised access. Eg. Staff with access to VSK emails on their phone must have a password on the phone.
- e) Staff and volunteers have an obligation to maintain the security and confidentiality of the information systems over which they have responsibility or control and that are owned, leased or used under licence or by agreement by the organisation.

7. Conflicts of Interest

- a) In many cases, only the individual staff member or volunteer will be aware of the potential for conflict of interest. Therefore, the onus is on that person to notify their supervisor/manager/coordinator if a potential or actual conflict of interest arises.
- b) VSK expects staff and volunteers to:
- declare any conflict of interest to supervisors/managers/coordinators;
 - avoid any detrimental outcome as a result of a conflict of interest.

8. Financial Interests

- a) Staff and volunteers are required to avoid any financial involvement or undertaking that could directly or indirectly compromise or undermine the performance of their duties or the purpose, vision and values of the organisation.

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- b) Financial conflict of interest may arise where a member of staff or a volunteer, who has a financial interest in a company, partnership or other business, is in a position to influence contracts or transactions between the organisation and that business.
 - c) This conflict may extend to any business undertaking in which staff or volunteer and their immediate family or the member of staff or volunteer is acting in direct competition with the organisation's activities or interests for personal gain.

9. Acceptance of Commissions, Gifts or Benefits

- a) Staff and volunteers should not accept a gift, secret commission or a benefit from a person or organisation outside VSK, if the intent of the gift or the benefit is to induce the staff or volunteer to waive or lessen standards or requirements or to extend a financial or other benefit to a person or organisation to the detriment of the interests of VSK.
- b) As a general rule, no staff or volunteer should accept a gift or benefit if it could be seen by the public, knowing the full facts, as intended or likely to cause that person to:
 - perform their job in a particular way, which the person would not normally do; or
 - deviate from the proper or usual course of duty.
- c) Staff and volunteers may accept token gifts or benefits in circumstances approved by their supervisor/manager/coordinator, provided that there is no possibility that the staff or volunteer might be, or might be perceived to be, compromised in the process. Gifts of a nominal value generally used for promotional purposes by the donor, or moderate acts of hospitality may be accepted by staff and volunteers. As a general rule gifts valued at \$100 or less would be considered nominal.
- d) A declaration by staff or volunteer of gifts and benefits they have received may be required and, if so, must be lodged with the CEO as soon as the gift or benefit is received.
- e) Staff and volunteers must not take advantage or seek to take advantage of their position to obtain a benefit, either for themselves or for someone else.

10. Public Comment and Use of Official Information

- a) While staff and volunteers, as members of the community, are expected to contribute to public debate on political and social issues there are some circumstances in which public comment may be inappropriate.
- b) Public comment by VSK staff or volunteers is to be made in a private capacity and should not imply that the comment is in some way an official comment by the organisation. Staff and volunteers are required to alert the CEO or their Manager immediately if they are approached to speak on the public record for any matter, and must refrain from giving any immediate response. If the CEO or Manager is unavailable, his/her delegate or Chairman of the Board is to be contacted.
- c) Official public comments on behalf of the organisation are to be made only by the Chairman of the Board or the CEO. The CEO may delegate this authority on a case by case basis.
- d) Staff and volunteers may disclose official information, with due regard to confidentiality, in order that:
 - colleagues may discharge their official duties; or
 - reporting requirements to government bodies such as the Department of Health & Human Services, or Worksafe are met.
- e) A member of staff or volunteer should disclose confidential or restricted information or documents acquired in the course of that capacity only when required to do so by law, in the course of their duty, when called to give evidence in court, or when proper authority has been given. Approval to release confidential information should be sought from the CEO.
- f) In circumstances where staff or volunteers are requested to provide information they should provide it in a timely and accurate manner and which complies with the principles of Freedom of Information, confidentiality, and the rights of the individual.
- g) Staff and volunteers acting in honorary capacities may be asked by third parties to make comment on VSK policy or procedure and, in such cases, staff should confine comments to factual information.

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- h) Where a member of staff or volunteer is privy to information of a restricted nature which may compromise the position of the organisation or infringe on the privacy of staff, families or donors the information should not be divulged.

11. Personal Relationships

- a) Very Special Kids is aware that situations may occur where staff and volunteers are working with persons with whom they develop close personal relationships. Where such relationships exist between staff or volunteers, or with prospective staff or volunteers, the organisation does not wish to interfere unnecessarily, but stresses that there may be situations where there is potential for conflict of interest.
- b) These situations may occur in the supervisory relationships that may have an impact on decisions concerning responsibility for employment related decisions or in decisions related to appointment, selection and promotion.
- c) As a general principle, staff and volunteers should adhere to the following:
- no staff member should participate in the procedures for selection, granting of tenure, performance appraisal, termination or transfer of any person with whom they have, or have had, a close personal relationship; and;
 - the existence of a close personal relationship with a staff member or volunteer should not constitute a bar to the employment, engagement, promotion, granting of tenure or transfer of any individual. See the separate policy on family members working at VSK.

12. General Health Service Providers with certain mental or physical impairment

- a) A general health service provider must not provide treatment or care to clients while suffering from a physical or mental impairment, disability, condition or disorder (including an addiction to alcohol or a drug, whether or not prescribed) that places or is likely to place clients at risk of harm.
- b) Without limiting the provision above, if a general health service provider has a mental or physical impairment that could place clients at risk, the general health service provider must seek advice from a suitably qualified health practitioner to determine whether, and in what ways, the provider should modify the provider's practice, including stopping practice if necessary.
- c) Where a Manager has concerns that an employee cannot perform the inherent requirements of their job, or where they pose a safety risk to themselves or others at the workplace they will refer the employee to a mandatory independent medical examination organised by VSK. The manager will then be in a position to explore the availability of alternative duties to reduce the risk and/or enable the competent performance of work.

13. Alcohol or Substance Abuse or Misuse

- a) The organisation expects that staff and volunteers will carry out their duties safely and refrain from any conduct, including alcohol or substance abuse or misuse, which would adversely affect their performance.
- b) They must also ensure that the health and safety of other staff or volunteers and those with whom they work is not endangered by such misuse. The organisation expects its staff and volunteers to perform their job with skill, care and diligence. Staff and volunteers should not perform any act or omission that is likely to have a detrimental effect on their work performance and that of other staff members or volunteers. Accordingly, staff and volunteers should not be under the influence of alcohol or other substances while they are at work or on VSK premises to the extent that they are unable to carry out their duties safely or properly.

14. Outside Employment

The organisation will not restrain the activities of staff outside working hours provided staff obligations to the organisation are not undermined or compromised.

Any activities that could be a conflict of interest are required to be disclosed to the employee's manager, including the disclosure of other paid employment or voluntary roles.

VSK expects staff and volunteers to be diligent, impartial, courteous, conscientious and respectful in the performance of their duties and obligations to the organisation.

In dealing with other staff, volunteers, families, donors, supporters, stakeholders and the community, staff and volunteers should be guided by the organisation's purpose and values.

Consequence of a breach of this policy

Depending on the outcome of any disciplinary meeting and investigation of the incident, an employee may be subject to disciplinary action as per the VSK Performance Counselling & Disciplinary Action Policy, which depending on the circumstances and/or any past incidents can range from counselling, a formal written warning or termination of employment.

Refusal to attend an Independent Medical Examination organised by VSK will be treated as a disciplinary matter.

Serious Misconduct

Examples of behaviours that could amount to serious misconduct are provided below. This list outlines the types of actions and behaviours that could be considered serious misconduct and may result in instant dismissal. This list is not exhaustive.

Examples:

- Breach of family/resident/staff privacy
- Breach of VSK policies/procedures
- Failure to report a work related accident/serious near miss
- Continual lateness for duty/unauthorised absence
- Careless action/neglect of professional conduct or duty
- Failure to report a criminal conviction or impending action, which in the opinion of VSK, directly relates to a risk in performing your duties
- Sleeping during working hours where there is a requirement to be working
- Falsification of qualifications leading to employment
- Public misrepresentation – causing damage to the reputation or image of VSK or its employees
- Actions which deliberately or recklessly injure other employees, clients or visitors or that place their health, safety or welfare at serious risk
- Improper use of workplace equipment, supplies and other physical resources
- Attending work under the influence of alcohol or an illicit substance to the extent that normal duties cannot be performed safely or properly

Policy effectiveness

Policy effectiveness will be monitored by the review of staff behaviours in the Performance & Development Planning process and the number of incidents in relation to misconduct.

References

- All VSK Policies, Procedures and Guidelines
- Performance Counselling & Disciplinary Policy

Revision History

Version	Change Date	Reference and detail of changes
1	17/04/2012	Prior date of Approval
2	6/3/2015	Inclusion of behavioural examples for each VSK value and examples of serious misconduct and other updates required to terminology and role titles.
3	14/03/2017	Inclusion of Child Safe Principles and Expectations
3	06/09/2017	Inclusion of Health Complaints Act responsibilities for general health service providers and definitions.
3	06/09/2017	Removal of hard copy sign off sheet. Code of Conduct to be added to VSK Learning Hub to be reviewed upon commencement and every 12 months.
3	02/10/2017	Public Comment Procedure updated.
3	20/11/2017	Minor terminology changes.