

Our position

Life Without Barriers purpose is to partner with people and change lives for the better, we all share the responsibility for safeguarding. At Life Without Barriers we use our National Safeguarding Framework to guide our commitment and support for people who use our services. The Apology Framework is one of the Corrective Safeguards contained within our safeguarding approach and is our commitment to Open Disclosure.

Staff are committed to knowing what is important to the people we support so we can deliver person-centred high-quality services.

Life Without Barriers, we apologise, regardless of fault, for incidents where a person we support has been harmed whilst we provided services to them.

Staff to remain alert to opportunities to apologise. Saying sorry:

- Is always the right thing to do.
- Is an acknowledgement that shows things could have been better and helps to restore confidence.
- Is the first step towards learning from mistakes and making changes.
- Does not mean accepting blame or leaving us open to legal action.
- Can occur before we have all the information; there is no need to wait or delay.
- Might still result in a complaint or feedback from a person.

Open communication is essential to our partnership with the people we support, their family and significant people in the person's life. A two-way dialogue must occur when the apology threshold has been met using the following steps:

1. Acknowledge and apologise for the harm experienced.
2. Share factual information about what happened and what is being done.
3. Listen to the person and their family and offer support in their preferred way.
4. Outline what will happen next.

What types of apologies are there?

Verbal	Written
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offered at the point when we acknowledge an event or any time after.• Use natural opportunities where it feels right to apologise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provided for significant matters at the discretion of a Senior Leader.

Apology Trigger

Any adverse client event, complaint, or quality of care concern during our services harmed a person. Harm may be physical, psychological, financial, or social, resulting in loss of quality of life, impairment, suffering, injury, or disability. Mistakes, delays, omissions or misunderstandings may inadvertently cause harm. The following examples are a guide to when an apology is required.

- We did not use a support plan as described.
- We did not attend a scheduled appointment to give personal care support.
- We took too long to call for an ambulance or to seek medical help.
- A staff member used abusive language towards a person we support.
- We did not administer medication the way we needed to.
- We used a restrictive practice without consent or proper plans in place.
- A person we support is living in our service where there are domestic violence incidents, and they have suffered physical or psychological harm.
- A person we support, their family or significant people in the person's life complained that we are not meeting their needs. We did not recognise the deterioration of a person we supported who needed a review of circumstances and a change in support level.
- We did not recognise the deterioration of a person we supported who needed a review of circumstances and a change in support level.
- A person we support experiences pressure injury because of being in their bed for too long whilst in our care.
- A person we support suffers financial harm due to a staff member's misuse of their funding or money.
- A person we support suffered emotional harm as they were not provided with an opportunity for independent decision-making, impacting their choice and control.

Apology

An act of expressing regret, empathy, and, if appropriate, remorse by an individual, group, or organisation for causing harm or distress. This expression should explicitly include the words "I am sorry" or "We are sorry."

Staff should not withhold an apology out of concern for saying the wrong thing.

Acknowledging an adverse event, apologising or expressing regret encourages transparency, disclosure, and discussion and ensures we continue to learn to improve our systems.

Framework

Values	What	Guiding Principles
Relationships	<p>We recognise the importance of building and supporting strong relationships.</p> <p>We prioritise open and transparent communication. We acknowledge the impact on the person, their family and significant people and address concerns.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active listening. We listen to people we support, their families and significant people in the person's life with empathy and an open mind. We aim to understand their concerns and needs. • Relationship management. We build and keep positive relationships with people. We support their family and significant people in the person's life. Our relationships are strong and based on trust, respect, and mutual understanding. Because of our relationships, we can make sound judgements about the impact of the event on the person and their support networks. • Trauma-informed. We create safe and supportive environments and adapt our communication. • Careful determination of the apology recipient. We are thoughtful about who should receive the apology. We consider the person we support, family and significant people in the person's life.
Imagination	<p>We know that effective communication may need creativity and imagination. This helps the person, their family, and significant people in their life understand the situation, the cause, and their response.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative communication. We communicate complex or challenging information in a clear, concise, and engaging way that is appropriate for the person. We use various tools and techniques, such as visual aids or storytelling, to ensure the person understands their rights. • Innovative problem-solving. We think creatively when addressing issues or incidents. We consider many perspectives and explore new solutions and improvements.
Courage	<p>We recognise that an apology can be challenging. We show courage and communicate openly and transparently.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authenticity. We communicate openly and honestly. Even if it may be difficult or uncomfortable. • Accountability and continuous improvement. We take responsibility for mistakes or issues. We communicate openly about how they will be managed. We have a culture of learning and continuous improvement. We value monitoring and analysing information to improve the quality of our services.
Respect	<p>We recognise that people we support, their families and significant people in the person's life have different perspectives and experiences. We listen and show respect for their opinions and concerns so we can understand their views. Then we can respond respectfully and honestly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy. We understand and appreciate the perspectives and experiences of others. • Age and developmentally appropriate. We use communication and language that is understandable to the person. • Choice. We respect the choice of the people we support, their families and significant people in the person's life to take part in the apology process. • Cultural competence and diversity. We communicate effectively and respectfully across diverse cultures and backgrounds. We show an awareness of and sensitivity to different norms and values. • Documentation: Our recording in i-Sight is respectful and respects confidentiality and privacy.
Responsiveness	<p>We recognise that an apology is not a one-time event but an ongoing communication and engagement process. We will remain responsive to concerns.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeliness. We respond and take action to address the person's immediate support needs. We respond to any concerns or inquiries. We give regular updates and feedback as needed. Apologies are delivered within ten business days. • Follow-up support. We give proper care and support to the person we support, their family and significant people in the person's life.

Step 1

Detect and assess harmful incidents

National Safeguarding Unit (NSU) in partnership with Client Services systematically detect and assess harmful incidents in i-Sight. Client Services will determine if and when an apology will be issued (if not issued prior).

Step 2

Engage in a two-way dialogue

The apology should be conducted as an ethical, respectful and mutually beneficial two-way discussion between Client Services and the person, their family and significant people in the person's life.

Step 3

Make an apology

The person, their family and/or significant people in the person's life will receive a sincere apology or expression of regret for the harm they have experienced.

Step 4

Provide a factual explanation

The person, their family and/or significant people in the person's life provided with a factual explanation of what happened and what steps are being taken to respond.

Step 5

Facilitate learning and systemic improvements

The apology process provides an opportunity to learn about how an adverse event may have occurred and how its re-occurrence can be prevented in the future, supported by i-Sight reports and assurance checks carried about by the NSU.

Further Information

Further guidance on our Apology Framework can be found on our Internal [Apology Framework SharePoint](#) site. Further information can also be obtained from the National Safeguarding Unit via:

Email: safeguarding@lwb.org.au

Website: www.lwb.org.au

Phone: 02 4064 8988