



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

RATIONALE:

To ensure children experience an environment where emotional well-being is nurtured.
To ensure children experience an environment in which children are kept safe from harm.

PRINCIPLES:

To formulate a written policy on management practices, identification of, reporting of, protection of, and handling of any evidence of child abuse that may come to the notice of staff.
Criterion HS31 (Source Part2, Subpart 4, S56 Education ECS Regulations 2008)

The interests and welfare of the children in our care are the prime consideration where any decision is made about suspected abuse.

The purpose of this policy is to reduce the risk of harm to children by requiring people employed or engaged in work that involves regular contact with children to be safety checked. The Criminal Records (Clean Slate Act 2004) does not conceal a conviction of a person who is subject to a safety check to work with children as a care worker.

Wellington Childcare is committed to the protection of children in our care. We provide an environment where children are kept safe from harm.

This policy also recognises the need to protect children's information available on-line through our centre website and media pages by seeking individual permission from parents and guardians.

PROCEDURE:

This policy applies to all of our staff team (casual and permanent), students, whanāu and visitors.

- The welfare of our children is of paramount importance at all times. Our staff team are advocates for every child attending the centre.
- We continually re-evaluate systems and routines to ensure we are providing a quality and safe environment for our children.



- We ensure our teacher/child ratio is above the minimum required to provide clear supervision.
- Parents and families/whanau are encouraged to visit at any time.
- Only adults named on the enrolment form are able to collect children from the centre, unless otherwise advised by the parents.
- All visitors to the centre are required to sign in and out and are never left unsupervised.
- Our complaints procedure ensures issues of concern are dealt with appropriately and parents are encouraged to express their concerns and feelings to Teachers, the Manager and Director/Licensee (See Complaints Policy).
- Students/visitors and new teachers are not allowed to change or toilet children and are supervised at all times. The Centre Manager will use their discretion to allow trusted centre relievers to be involved in care routines
- We have a thorough team induction process for new teachers/team members and permanent relievers. This process ensures that the supervising and management team are thoroughly confident in the new team members' ability to uphold centre standards, policies, procedures and processes, ensuring the safety and welfare of our children at all times.
- All staff members are Police Vetted before commencing employment and rechecked every two to three years.

POLICY:

In consultation with staff and parents we have developed a written Child Protection policy for the protection of children and staff. This policy will:

- Outline ways to respond when an adult in our community is suspected of committing an offence against children.
- Outline ways to respond when abuse is suspected or identified.
- Protect staff and other adults for being suspected of child abuse.
- Endorse our commitment to giving support to families.
- Outline procedures for reporting of child protection concerns and of suspected child abuse.



STAFF TRAINING

Staff and regular relievers will familiarise themselves with centre policy and have awareness of the four types of abuse –physical, sexual, neglect and emotional. Management will display educational programmes organised by any group or individual in the community and encourage staff to attend.

Preventative Education

Staff are encouraged to:

- Read resource material and gain knowledge of how to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse.
- Know how to respond when abuse is suspected or if a child tells of abuse.
- Respond to suspected abuse in a manner that will keep the child safe.
- Gain an awareness of what resources and family support are available.
- Encourage families to continue visiting Plunket after the child is 1 year old

The centre aims to protect children from abuse by the open plan/door environment, policies and publishing or displaying educational programmes organised by any group or individual in this community.

Employment

All staff members must undergo a safety check before beginning employment. This includes *verification of identity, recruitment interview, information about work history, referee information, information from the Teaching Council where applicable, police vet, and risk assessment.*

Management will make personal checks into the background of all applicants before they are employed, by contacting referees personally and not relying on written references. Applicants are required to complete declarations as part of the approval process and will be told on application that the following questions will be asked about them:

1. Did you ever have any reason to be concerned about this person's behaviour with children?
2. Have there been any complaints from parents, staff or children about this person?
3. To your knowledge, has the applicant had major personal difficulties which interfered with their ability to behave in a responsible fashion with other people?
4. Were the relationships the applicant formed with the children and/or parents and other staff appropriate for their employment?



Identification of suspected child abuse:

The following is an EXAMPLE of what may be considered an indicator list of abuse. It is not an exhaustive list. Each child is to be observed independently. Staff members in Early Childhood Centres are seen as being well placed to observe potential abuse from their observations of the child and of parent-child interactions.

Neglect- A series of events that happen over time, rather than a one off event. A person having responsibility for a child and not providing them with what is necessary for their well-being; a child can be physically, socially, emotionally, and educationally neglected.

- The child's unmet need- food, shelter protection, clothing, health care, education, emotional engagement, love or social experience.
- The responsible parties' capability and culpability- Adults may be aware or unaware of the child's needs, variously capable of meeting them and variously motivated in not meeting them.
- The harm or risk of harm to the child- This may be palpable ranging from minor physical impact to death, or impalpable ranging in severity from mild anxiety to an incapacitating psychological disorder.
- Established standards of care- It is distinctly different to practices within the social-cultural context in which they occur.

Physical- Physical abuse is a non-accidental act resulting in physical harm to a child. It may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, burning, biting, poisoning, cutting, strangling or anything else that could cause a physical injury.

- unexplained bruises, welts, cuts and abrasions – particularly in unusual places like the face, on their back or tummy, buttocks, or the backs of their legs. Also look out for the regularity of these injuries to see if there is a pattern forming
- unexplained fractures or dislocations,
- scalding or burn marks anywhere on the body are concerning, and if not easily explained need to be notified.
- the child or their parent can't recall how the injuries occurred, or their explanations change or don't make sense
- behavioural concerns – including aggression, destructive nature, mistrust of adults, anxiety and restlessness, relationship difficulties

Emotional/psychological- is often a persistent pattern of behaviour towards a child or young person, but can also include a severe incident (such as witnessing a serious assault). It may involve, but is not limited to:



- persistently withholding affection,
- eroding their sense of self-worth and self-respect
- conveying they are worthless, unloved or inadequate, or valued only if they meet another person's needs
- causing them to live in fear
- having expectations that are significantly inappropriate for their development or age
- deliberate or persistent disregard for their cultural identity and wellbeing.

As emotional abuse is a component of all abuse and neglect, the signs are often encompassed in the other abuse types. You may often see the same indicators as you would for neglect, along with other signs particular to emotional abuse.

Sexual- Sexual abuse can involve, but is not limited to, forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing.

It also includes non-contact activities, such as involving a child or young person in looking at offensive materials, or producing sexual images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging them to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. It often begins with some form of grooming, which is when the person prepares the child for sexual contact by lowering their inhibitions and gaining their trust – this includes via the internet and social media.

— Physical indicators – like unusual or excessive itching, bruising, lacerations, redness, swelling or bleeding in the genital or anal area, and urinary tract infections. Be concerned and ask questions if there is ever blood in a child's urine or faeces, it's painful for them to go to the toilet, or if a child is showing signs of being sexually active.

— Torn, stained or bloody underclothing.

— Age inappropriate sexual play or interest and other unusual behaviour like sexually explicit drawings, descriptions and talk about sex.

— Fear of a certain person or place – children might be trying to express their fear without saying exactly what they are frightened of, so listen carefully, and take what they say seriously.

— Exposure to or involvement in pornography or prostitution. Some children may also purposefully try to make themselves unattractive, or try to feel clean through obsessive washing

The following measures will be taken by all staff members regarding suspected abuse:

If a child makes a disclosure (talks about abuse) we would do the following:

- Listen to them, accept what they are saying, offer reassurance in a tone of voice that is reassuring- be careful not to question, criticize, and act shocked or upset.
- Let the child know that this is good they have told you about the abuse.
- Reassure the child that it is not their fault.



- Let the child know that it is not okay for this abuse to happen to them.
- Tell the child that you will get help for them.
- Never promise the child you will keep this information a secret or won't tell their supposed abuser about it. You will have to speak to someone else about it to ensure they can get help.

As soon as possible after speaking with the child- write down what the child has told you, using the same words the child used and noting your own response.

Reporting of suspected Child Abuse

Staff will report all suspected abuse, (neglect/physical/emotional and sexual) to their Centre Manager immediately. Suspicions/accusations are only to be discussed with Management, not colleagues or whānau. Management will take appropriate action. If there is suspicion that a child is being abused, we will record the reasons for suspicion (see below) and the Manager will report our suspicions to Oranga Tamariki and/or the Police. The individual staff member also has the right to make their own report to Oranga Tamariki and/or the Police. All cases will be dealt with maintaining confidentiality.

We understand confidentiality to be of the utmost importance in cases of suspected child abuse. Suspected child abuse will only be discussed between the owners, Director, Manager and the involved members of the teaching team. If the matter is to be taken further, the information will be shared only with Oranga Tamariki, the child's GP, the Police and/or the child's parents, as appropriate. When a parent or another adult outside the centre is suspected, the child's parents will be informed after consultation with Oranga Tamariki or the Police.

Section 15 of the NZ Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989 states "Any person who believes that any child or young person has been or is likely to be harmed (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually) ill-treated, abused, neglected, or deprived may report the matter to a social worker or member of the Police".

Staff at this centre will not assume responsibility, but will follow the procedure by;

- Any child suspected of suffering from abuse is given prompt attention.
- All allegations of child abuse are taken seriously.
- Always take action in the short term to ensure the immediate safety of the child. This may mean contacting Oranga Tamariki or the police if you think there is an immediate risk of the child being abused again;



- Responding to suspected child abuse by writing down observations, impressions and communications which cause concern.
- Keeping notes and records of concerns in a confidential manner. All information is recorded factually and accurately as soon as possible.
- Avoid formally investigating the situation or interviewing the child. Obtain only necessary, relevant facts;
- Avoid making decisions alone;
- Consult with someone experienced.
- No staff member will act independently about suspected abuse. Management will arrange for consultation with appropriate agencies, i.e. Police and Oranga Tamariki. Ultimate responsibility for consultation or reporting lies with Management.
- Documentation may subsequently be used in Court as evidence for either side.
- Avoid making judgments; simply record the facts
- Interviewing of suspected abuse victims is a specialised procedure. Leave it to those who are trained in such techniques;
- Do not attempt to contact an alleged abuser.
- As a staff member, if you cannot contact your Manager, please immediately contact the Centre Director or Service Provider who can support you.

Wellington Childcare offers support to all those involved in any allegations.

Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989 and Vulnerable Children Act 2014 outlines the following:

- Reporting of ill treatment or neglect (section 15)
- Protection of Person Reporting (section 16)
- The requirement to undertake or arrange an investigation of a report by Police or Children and Young Persons Department (section 17)
- Concerns / complaints against members of our community

Concerns/complaints against staff members

For concerns/complaints against the staff the complaints procedure must be used. Where reports of abuse are made against workers or persons assisting, and are considered of substance, the management will seek advice from appropriate agencies and clarify whether or not to suspend a staff member, pending investigation. *Suspend the worker from all duties that require them to act as a worker with children; and specify the period of suspension, which must not be less than 5 working



days; and tell the worker the reason for the suspension and the grounds for the centres belief; and advise the worker than they may respond to this information.

Upon completion of any investigation that confirms any allegations made of abuse/neglect the teacher would be dismissed immediately and the dismissal notified to the Teaching Council.

Concerns/Complaints against members of our community

Any complaints or comments received about a person in our community (non-staff member but has connections to our centre) regarding offences committed against a child will be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly. This investigation will be carried out by the Centre Manager only, through consultation with relevant agencies and organisations. If the complaint is found to be of substance, the rest of the community will be notified in an appropriate and timely manner.

Working with families and the individual child after suspected abuse has been confirmed:

Continuing to support families on a daily basis- it is vital that there is a strong relationship between the family and the Centre.

Encourage daily and regular hours of attendance at early childhood education services.

Staff members are well trained in Child Protection issues and how they can work with families.

Offer to refer to Family Start or other agencies, especially agencies in the local area.

Ensure a coordinated effort between all agencies and the Centre happens and that there is regularly communication between all parties on how to best support the child.

Supervision

The centre environment, practices and programme are designed where possible so that staff and other adults visiting or working in the centre are visible in the activities they perform with children.

Students' tasks performed and their supervision will be discussed by the staff team. They will be made aware of and discuss the Child Protection Policy as part of their introduction to the centre.

Professionalism/Relationship with Parents

The centre aims to maintain high standards of adult behaviour and attitudes by clearly establishing the boundaries of staff roles. It encourages staff to keep their personal and professional lives separate. It discourages close personal relationships and/or care taking activities with children and families outside the work environment, including babysitting and nannying for families enrolled in the centre. The centre welcomes parents to visit freely. Our Child Protection Policies are available to be discussed with parents and prospective parents.



The following agencies may provide staff, families and others with support and counselling:

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| * Area Health Board Child and Family Counselling Services* | Awina Wahine ph 04 232 9817 |
| * Community Mental Health Services | * Child Help Line |
| * Doctors for Sexual Abuse Care (DSAC) | * Family Planning |
| * Early Childhood Development Unit | * General Practitioners |
| * Hospital Social Workers | * Iwi Health Clinics |
| * Pacific Island Counselling Services | * Parent Help Line |
| * Public Health Nurses / Plunket Nurses | * Refuges |
| * Rape Crisis Centre wellingtonrapecrisis.org.nz
04 801 8973 | * Specialist Education Service |
| | * Family start |
| | * Strengthening families |

Recommend Resources to view (as recommended in Child Abuse booklet)

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| <i>Books for children</i> | I have a secret; It's my body; What's wrong with bottoms; Katie's yucky problem |
| <i>Books for adults</i> | Every child is special; For your child's sake; The sexual abuse of children |
| <i>Videos</i> | Feeling safe; Times and seasons: Child abuse; Safe before five |

*A copy of the Child Protection Policy is also available on our centre website, www.wellingtonchildcare.co.nz and on Educa for our Centre families

References:

- Recognising and responding to child neglect in New Zealand. Ministry of Social Development- Centre for Social Research and Evaluation.
- Vulnerable Children Act 2014.
- An interagency guide, Working Together. Oranga Tamariki.



Flow chart of action: after abuse is suspected, disclosed or discovered

