

Child Protection Policy

Definition of Child Abuse and Neglect:

Includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse as well as neglect which is the direct consequences of a deliberate act or omission by an adult and which has the potential or effect of serious harm to the child.

Neglect is a pattern of behaviour which occurs over a period of time and results in impaired functioning or development of a child or young person.

Neglect can be:

- Physical – failure to provide necessary basic needs of food, shelter or warmth
- Medical – failure to seek, obtain or follow through with medical care for the child
- Abandonment – leaving a child, young person in any situation without arranging necessary care for them and with no intention of returning
- Neglectful supervision – failure to provide developmentally appropriate or legally required supervision
- Refusal to assume parental responsibility – unwillingness or inability to provide appropriate care for a child.

Rational:

Bright Babes believes that child abuse in any form is abhorrent and not acceptable and that we have an obligation to ensure the wellbeing of children in our care is upheld and protected.

The centre is committed to protect our children against child abuse, by ensuring staff are well informed with the correct knowledge and by working with other agencies where necessary to respond to the needs of vulnerable children and families and whānau.

Principles:

- The interest and protection of the child is paramount in all actions
- We recognise the rights of family/whānau to participate in the decision making about their children.
- We have a commitment to ensure that all staff are able to identify the signs and symptoms of potential abuse and neglect and are able to take appropriate action in response.
- We are committed to supporting all staff to work in accordance with this policy, to work with partner agencies and organisations to ensure child protection policies are consistent and high quality.
- We will always comply with relevant legislative responsibilities.
- We are committed to promote a culture where staff feel confident that they can raise issues of concern without fear of reprisal.
- Management or where appropriate other senior staff could be asked to obtain training, resources and/or advice that will give them knowledge to fulfil their role, particularly in
 - Understanding child abuse and indicators of child abuse.
 - How to reduce the risk of child abuse in centres.
 - Understanding and complying with legal obligations in regard to child abuse.
 - Working with outside agencies

- Planning of environment, programme and supervision to minimise risk
- Providing staff training and advice
- Dealing with child/parents/whānau

Competent and supported Staff

We make sure all staff know and understand what abuse and neglect are, and how to recognise the signs. The physical and behavioural signs, symptoms and history listed below, may indicate abuse or neglect. However, they are not specific to abuse or neglect. In certain situations, contexts and combinations they may indicate other conditions. All signs must be examined in the total context of the child or young person’s situation.

Table 1.

| The Child | | | | |
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| Consider physical, emotional and sexual abuse and neglect | | | | |
| Recognise disclosure as a sign of abuse | | | | |
| Recognise Physical Signs | Record parent, caregiver or family signs | Observe Behavioural Signs | Child/Family Vulnerabilities | Identify Developmental Signs |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bruises and welts • Cuts and abrasions • Scalds and burns • Fractures • Head injuries • Sexually transmitted infections • Failure to thrive and malnutrition • Dehydration • Inadequate hygiene and clothing • Poisoning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposure to family violence • Unrealistic expectations • Terrorising • Corrupting • Isolating • Humiliating • Dependence • Closure • Flight | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggression • Withdrawal • Anxiety, fear and regression • Sadness • Overly responsible • Obsessions • Substance abuse • Suicidal thoughts/plans | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addictions • Mental health • CYF history • Age of parents or child • Attachment • Disability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global development Delay. • Specific delays: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Motor ➢ Attachment ➢ Speech and language ➢ Social cognitive ➢ Vision and hearing ➢ Unusual developmental patterns |

From Child Youth and Family website:

<https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Safer-Organisations-safer-children.pdf>

Staff are encouraged to discuss issues or concerns with management, and we have contacts readily available to take further if need be:

- Parent Help – 0800 568 856
- Child, Youth and Family – 0508 326 459
- Are You OK – 0800 456 450 (Family Violence Information Line)
- Plunket Line – 0800 933 922
- Vulnerable Children’s Hub – 0800 FOR OURKIDS

Safety Checking of Staff

- We conduct safety checks of all staff in accordance with MoE and Vulnerable Children’s Act requirements.

Relationships with parents

We will form good relationships with parents and be aware of issues that make life extra hard for parents.

Issues in the home that teachers or centre staff might become aware of, that might lead to abuse and neglect include:

- Parents with money problems, being out of work.
- Overcrowding or housing struggles.
- Parents with stress.
- Child with special needs.
- Parents isolated from friends, family and whānau.
- Parents with a history of depression or other mental illness.
- Parents separating.

Early signs that can lead to abuse and or neglect can be:

- Parent has a drug, alcohol or gambling problem
- Parent does not engage with their child or has a difficult relationship with them
- Child doesn’t have enough clothes on and is often cold and hungry.
- Child has unexplained or changeable emotions (eg, withdrawn or depressed)
- Parents frequently yell at, swear at or shame a child
- Child seems scared of a particular adult.

We will monitor situations and offer help and support to parents where we can.

Our centre will share this ‘Child Protection Policy’ with parents of children who attend here.

The Manager will:

- Always prioritise the safety and wellbeing of the child.
- Maintain confidentiality. Failure of staff to comply with this policy will be regarded as serious misconduct.
- Maintain and increase staff and parental awareness of how to prevent, recognise and respond to abuse, including learning about appropriate touching.
- Carry out staff safety checking (including Police Vetting) in accordance with the Vulnerable Children (Requirements for Safety Checks of Children’s Workers) Regulations 2015

- Give no persons, other than employed staff over the age of 17 years, tasks that involve nappy changing, toileting or responsibility for the supervision of children.
- Ensure that staff and other adults visiting or working in the centre are well supported and visible in the activities they perform with children. While the centre respects the privacy of our children, staff, visitors, visibility will be given priority to ensure the safety of all concerned.
- Respond appropriately to a child who initiates physical contact in seeking affection, reassurance or comfort. It is not appropriate to force any form of unwanted affection/touching on a child. Touching should not be initiated to gratify adult needs. Physical contact during the changing or cleansing of children must be for the purpose of that task only and not be more than is necessary for the job.
- Ensure no child is taken from the centre by any staff member or adult, without the permission of a parent, except in the case of an emergency where clearance has been obtained from either the manager or the owner.
- Maintain appropriate records.
- Ensure the centre's procedures protect staff from unjustified allegations of abuse.
- Ensure the centre has educational and informational resources for children and adult on child abuse.

Staff will:

- Always prioritise the safety wellbeing of the child.
- Familiarise themselves with this centre policy.
- Immediately notify management if they observe signs of child abuse or anyone reports to them any suspicions of child abuse of children at the centre, or a pattern of neglect or concerns is identified.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Respond appropriately to a child who initiates physical contact in seeking affection, reassurance or comfort. It is not appropriate to force any form of unwanted affection/touching on a child. Touching should not be initiated to gratify adult needs. Physical contact during changing and cleansing of children must be for the purpose of that task only and not be more than is necessary for the job.
- Where practical keep yourself safe with knowing the areas to supervise and ensuring other staff can see you at all times.
- **No persons other than employed staff shall be given tasks which involve nappy-changing, toileting or responsibilities for supervision of children.**
- Never take a child from the centre without permission of a parent, except in the case of an emergency where clearance has been obtained from either the Manager or the Owner.
- Failure of staff to comply with this policy will be regarded as serious misconduct.

Management and all teachers and general staff shall ensure visitor and contactors on official business in the centre shall not be left unsupervised.

Responding to information or complaint

Where any person reports to any staff member any suspicions of child abuse at the centre, the staff member shall immediately notify Management of Bright Babes LTD. No staff member will take any action alone in these matters and any action taken or discussion about suspicion should only be after consultation with the most senior staff member or management person that can be contacted.

Where appropriate the person making the allegation will be given a copy of this policy.
When advised about an incident or allegation, the management shall immediately investigate.

Responding to a child when the child discloses abuse:

Table 2.

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| i. Listen to the child | Disclosures by children are often subtle and need to be handled with particular care, including an awareness of the child’s cultural identity and how that affects interpretation of their behaviour and language. |
| ii. Reassure the child | Let the child know that they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are not in trouble • Have done the right thing |
| iii. Ask open-ended prompts – e.g.: “what happened next?” | Do not interview the child in other words, do not ask questions beyond open prompts for the child to continue. Do not make promises that cannot be kept, eg: “I will keep you safe now” |
| iv. If the child is visibly distressed | Provide appropriate reassurance and re-engage in appropriate activities under supervision until they are able to participate in ordinary activities |
| v. If the child is not in immediate danger | Re-involve the child in ordinary activities and explain what you are going to do next. |
| vi. If the child is in immediate danger | Speak to senior staff/management straight away and they will contact the Police immediately (call 111) |
| vii. As soon as possible, formally record the disclosure | Record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word-for-word what the child said • The date, time and who was present. |

Recording and notifying Child, Youth and Family of suspected child abuse or neglect

Table 3.

| What process to follow | For example | Key considerations |
|------------------------|--|--|
| i. Recording | Formally record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anything said by the child. • The date, time, location and the names of any staff that may be relevant. • The factual concerns or observations that have led to the suspicion of abuse or neglect (e.g. any physical, behavioural or development concerns) • The action taken by | Relevant information can inform any future actions |

| | | |
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| | <p>your centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any other information that may be relevant | |
| ii. Decision-making | Discuss any concern with the Centre Manager or Senior Teacher. | No decisions should be made in isolation. |
| iii. Notifying authorities | <p>Notify Child, Youth and Family promptly if there is a belief that a child has been or is likely to be abused or neglected</p> <p>A phone call to the National Contact Centre (0508 Family/ 0508 326459) is the preferential initial contact with CYF as this enables both parties to discuss the nature of the concerns and appropriate response options. Phone: 0508 Family / 0508 326459 Fax: 09 914 1211 Email: cyfcallcentre@cyf.govt.nz</p> <p>Alternatively, Vulnerable children's hub can be contacted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable Children's Hub – 0800 FOR OURKIDS | <p>CYF will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Make the decision to inform the parents or caregivers in consultation with your centre. 2) Advise what, if any, immediate action may be appropriate, including referring the concern to the police. <p>Vulnerable Hub has connections to CYF and other valuable networks that maybe need to be involved.</p> |
| iv. Following the advice of Child, Youth and Family | CYF advice will include what, if any, immediate action may be appropriate, including referring the concern to the police. | CYF is responsible for looking into the situation to find out what may be happening, whether they need to work with the family or to put them in touch with people in their community who can help. |
| v. Storing relevant information | <p>Securely store:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The record of the concern • A record of any related discussions, including copies of correspondence where appropriate • A record of any advice received • The action your centre | |

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| | <p>took, including any rationale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This concern with any earlier concerns, if the notification is based on an accumulation of concerns rather than a specific incident. | |
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When a staff member is suspected

Initial report or information of any incident must be written down in full as soon as possible.

Where appropriate Management will discuss the incident as soon as practical with the staff member and other possible witnesses. The staff member’s version of the incident(s) will be investigated, and Insurance Companies Hotline will be rung before any decision is made. Where the investigation takes more than one day, the staff member may be asked to carry out alternative duties or be suspended until a full investigation can be completed. Appropriate support will be accessed for the staff member.

Where there is some substantive evidence that an instance of child abuse may have taken place an appropriate outside support agency should be contacted by Management. Where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that an instance of child abuse has taken place, that staff member shall be suspended whilst an investigation occurs.

The parent of the child (or children) affected will be advised as soon as possible after investigations are reasonably complete unless deemed by Management or Employment Law to be inappropriate.

Obligations to staff

Whilst the protection of the child shall be paramount and the next obligation of Management shall be a full and fair investigation, it shall not be forgotten the impact to the staff members this can have. Care will be taken to ensure that the presumption of innocence of those accused or implicated will be maintained until investigations are complete. Time off for counselling will be offered to staff that have been accused wrongly.

Staff support when they have witnessed a colleague’s ill treatment of a child of a prolonged or serious nature.

It is recognised that there can be serious stress and discomfort when a staff member witness’s ill treatment of a child by another teacher however the alleged offender has rights under employment law for confidentiality. This means that the witness / or witnesses cannot be given any information about the consequences of such behaviour.

Bright Babes will institute support for teachers placed in this position through accessing counselling through the MOE Counselling for Critical Incidents and opportunity to have 1 on 1 time with Management.

What a parent should do if abuse in the Centre is suspected

All suspicions or observed incidents or reports of incidents should be reported directly to Management as soon as possible, who will immediately take steps to protect the child(ren), record the report and institute an investigation.

The parent who has made the allegation or report must not discuss this with other staff, nor the person(s) or parents involved in the alleged abuse, nor other parents, or persons outside the centre, until after a full and fair investigation has taken place.

The parent of the child (or children) affected will be advised as soon as possible after investigations are reasonably complete.

When a parent/caregiver is suspected of abuse

Where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been or is subjected to abuse, (but not in immediate danger) Management will be advised and will arrange for the child to be observed and a confidential record initiated.

If it is clear from information or investigation that there is clear evidence or reasonable cause to believe of an instance of child abuse having taken place Management shall notify an appropriate support agency (see table 3)

Visitor supervision and Limits

Parents, and families are generally welcome to be in the centre at all times and parents particularly are welcome to participate in centre activities.

All unrecognised visitors to the Centre shall be challenged by the nearest senior staff member “can I help you?” to ascertain their business. Visitors without good reason to be on the premises are to be asked to leave.

Management and all teachers and general staff shall ensure visitors and contactors on official business in the centre shall not be left unsupervised. They are also to sign the Hazard and Visitor Book, located in the office.

Alignment with Other Policies

- Staff safety checking policy
- Client boundaries and confidentiality
- Toileting and Cleansing Policies and Procedures
- Visitors Policy
- Staff protection policy (stress, armed intruders, alcohol and drug abuse)
- Serious misconduct policy

Relevant Background (including legislation/regulation references)

Regulation 30 Suspension of licenses, and 46 Health and Safety Practices standard: general (1) of the Education) Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008

Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Centres 2008

Child Protection

Health and safety practices criterion 31 – a process for the prevention of child abuse is implemented.

Health and safety practices criterion 32 – All practical steps are taken to protect children from exposure to inappropriate material (for example, of an explicitly sexual or violent nature)

Vulnerable Children Act 2014 and associated regulations.

Policy Review Schedule

Review every three years or when there is a significant change in the area of the policy topic.

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| Introduction Date: | 26/9/2016 | | | |
| Next review date: | | 26/9/2019 | September 2022 | |
| Comment: | New regulations and acts added to comply with change | Checked for changes Aligned with Children's action plan Checked and changed URL | | |
| Consultation Undertaken: | Management Staff Parents/whanau | | | |