

<b>CENTRAL CONNECT</b> <i>Whare Manaaki Inc.</i>	<b>Manual:</b>	General
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<b>Business Viability Standard 3</b> <b>CHILD PROTECTION POLICY</b>	<b>Issue Date:</b>	April 2015
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### Policy Summary

Central Connect Whare Manaaki Inc. has an obligation to ensure the wellbeing of children in our care and we are committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and to the protection of all children. The safety and wellbeing of the child is our top priority when investigating suspected or alleged abuse. We support the roles of the New Zealand Police (the Police) and Child, Youth and Family in the investigation of suspected abuse and will report suspected/alleged abuse to these agencies. We support families/whānau which includes the paramountcy of the child to protect their children. We provide a safe environment, free from physical, emotional, verbal or sexual abuse. The CYFs Act 1989 and its amendment in 1995 to include the Paramountcy of the child guide us in our work.

### Policy principles

- The interest and protection of the child is paramount in all our actions.
- We recognise the rights of family/whanau 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 share information in a timely way and to discuss any concerns about an individual child with colleagues or the Person in Charge.
- We are committed to promote a culture where staff feel confident that they can constructively challenge poor practice or raise issues of concern without fear of reprisal.

### Definitions

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

### Identifying possible abuse or neglect

*The signs indicated below may or may not be indicators that abuse has taken place, but the possibility should be considered.*

1) i) **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

ii) **Physical signs of abuse**

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them
- Injuries that occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc.
- Injuries that have not received medical attention
- Neglect - under nourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, stealing or gorging food, untreated illnesses, inadequate care, etc.
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy pains
- Bruises, bites, burns, fractures etc. which do not have an accidental explanation
- Cuts/scratches/substance abuse

2) i) **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and continuous adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

ii) **Emotional signs of abuse**

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clingy. Also depression/aggression, extreme anxiety
- Nervousness, frozen watchfulness
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults
- Attention-seeking behaviour
- Persistent tiredness
- Running away/stealing/lying

3) i) **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact,

including penetrative (e.g. rape or buggery) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

ii) **Indicators of possible sexual abuse**

- Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse
- Child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or who regularly engages in age-inappropriate sexual play
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing
- Child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults
- Inappropriate bed-sharing arrangements at home
- Severe sleep disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations
- Eating disorders - anorexia, bulimia

4) i) **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

ii) Possible signs of neglect:

- Constant hunger
- Poor personal hygiene
- Inappropriate clothing
- Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school
- Untreated medical problems
- Low self-esteem
- Poor social relationships
- Compulsive stealing and scrounging
- Constant tiredness

How to respond to a child who discloses abuse:

**General points:**

- Above all listen,
- Show acceptance of what the child says
- Keep calm
- Look at the child directly
- Be honest
- Tell the child you will need to let someone else know-don't promise confidentiality
- Even when a child has broken a rule, they are not responsible for the abuse
- Be aware the child may have been threatened or bribed not to tell

- Never push for information
- As soon as possible write down what been said.

#### Helpful responses

- ✓ Thank you for telling me
- ✓ It's not your fault
- ✓ I will help you.
- ✓ Reassure the child that they were right to tell you and show acceptance.
- ✓ Let the child know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens
- ✓ Consider your own feelings and seek support.

#### **Responding to suspected abuse or neglect.**

All suspicions or observed incidents or reports of incidents should be reported directly to the Person in Charge as soon as possible, who will immediately take steps to protect the children, record the report and report the concern to Child, Youth and Family. If there is clear evidence or reasonable cause to believe an instance of child abuse has taken place the Person in Charge will notify Child Youth and Family.

In addition to guiding staff to make referrals of suspected child abuse and neglect to the statutory agencies (CYF and Police) Central Connect's child protection policy will also help staff to identify and respond to the needs of the many vulnerable children whose wellbeing is of concern.

In many of these cases the involvement of statutory agencies would be inappropriate and potentially harmful to families/whānau. Throughout New Zealand statutory and non-statutory agencies provide a network of mutually supportive services and it is important for Central Connect to work with these to respond to the needs of vulnerable children and families/whānau in a manner proportionate to the level of need and risk.

Staff members will discuss suspicions with a senior staff member, who is deemed to be the Central Connect social worker, who is also the child advocate for our agency.

Where appropriate, the person making the allegation will be given a copy of this policy.

#### **Allegations or concerns about staff**

When a staff member is suspected, the same processes apply.

If there is a need to pursue an allegation as an employer, consult with Child, Youth and Family or the Police before advising the person concerned, informing them that they have a right to seek legal advice

and providing them with an opportunity to respond. They should also be informed of their right to seek support from the relevant union/representative body. It is vital to follow ordinary disciplinary policies, guided by the employment contract/collective employment contract and relevant statutory obligations. We commit not to use 'settlement agreements', where these are contrary to a culture of child protection.

Some settlement agreements allow a member of staff to agree to resign provided that no disciplinary action is taken, and a future reference is agreed. Where the conduct at issue concerned

the safety or wellbeing of a child, use of such agreements is contrary to a culture of child protection.

### **Confidentiality and information sharing**

The Privacy Act 1993 and the Children, Young Persons, and their Families Act 1989 allow information to be shared to keep children safe when abuse or suspected abuse is reported or investigated. Note that under sections 15 and 16 of the CYPF Act, any person who believes that a child has been, or is likely to be; harmed physically, emotionally or sexually or ill-treated, abused, neglected or deprived may report the matter to Child, Youth and Family or the Police and, provided the report is made in good faith, no civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against them.

### **Recruitment and employment (safety checking)**

Safety checking will be carried out in accordance with the Vulnerable Children Act 2014. This will include: a police vet, identity verification, references and an interview. A work history will be sought and previous employers will be contacted. If there is any suspicion that an applicant might pose a risk to a child, that applicant will not be employed.

### **Training, supervision and support**

Training, resources and/or advice will be available to ensure that all staff can carry out their roles in terms of this policy, particularly:

- Understanding child abuse and indicators of child abuse.
- How to reduce the risk of child abuse.
- Understanding and complying with legal obligations in regard to child abuse.
- Working with outside agencies on child abuse issues.
- Planning of environment and supervision to minimise risk.
- Dealing with child/parents/family/whānau.

This policy will be part of the initial staff induction programme.

### **Related documentation**

BVS2 Prevention of abuse of children and young people

BVS3 Paramountcy of child Policy

BVS3 Supervision of children

BVS3a Nominated Child Advocate

***For more information about identifying child abuse see: [http://cyf.govt/documents/aboutus/publications/27713\\_working\\_together3-0-45ppi.pdf](http://cyf.govt/documents/aboutus/publications/27713_working_together3-0-45ppi.pdf)***