

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

(Child abuse prevention, recognition, responses to and reporting of)



POLICY STATEMENT

This policy describes the commitment that the Golden Bay Workcentre Trust has to children, and the measures it will take to ensure their safety and well-being. The safety of the child is our prime consideration at all times.

Related Documents:

The child protection policy is to be used in conjunction with the following existing policies:

- Staff Induction
- Police Vetting Policy
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Recruitment & Selection Policy
- Conflict Resolution
- Staff Safety Guidelines
- Care and Protection Notification Process

This child protection policy adheres to the following Acts:

- Health and Disability Commissioner Act 1994
- Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989
- Privacy Act 1993
- Human Rights Act 1993
- Education Act 1989/1998
- Domestic Violence Act 1995
- Care of Children Act 2004 and subsequent amendments
- Employment Relations Act 2000
- Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights
- Vulnerable Children Act 2014

Scope

This policy applies to all children who are clients of this organisation, and to those with whom personnel come into contact in the course of their work with the organisation.

It applies to staff, volunteers, and management of the organisation.

It also applies to any contracted personnel providing support services to families and members (including child care) and to those providing support services to staff.

Principles

The Golden Bay Workcentre Trust is committed to the following principles:

- This policy recognises that children, young people, and vulnerable adults have a right to be safe from abuse and harm.
- We are committed to the prevention of abuse and to the well-being of staff, volunteers, children, young people, vulnerable adults, and their families.
- We are committed to acting at all times in the best interest of the children, young people, vulnerable adults, and their families.
- We are committed to dealing with abuse, suspected abuse, or disclosure of abuse in a timely fashion.
- We recognise that the family's primary role in caring and protecting the child should be valued and maintained. However the child's safety will have priority.
- We acknowledge that in cases of suspected child abuse, support for families is important.
- We agree that working in accordance with this policy requires staff to be trained and supported.
- We will ensure any disclosures about alleged abuse are acknowledged and investigated and that appropriate action is taken to ensure the safety of children who make disclosures.
- We are committed to complying with all relevant legislation.
- We will ensure that children and staff have access to appropriate medical, psychological, and legal services and support.

Definitions

Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development, or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power.

[World Health Organisation 1999]

Children and Young People Definition: For the purposes of this policy, children are those under the age of 14. Young people are those from 14 to 17.

Responsibilities: The Manager and the Board, in collaboration with staff, are responsible for the implementation of this policy.

Review: This policy and all sub policies are reviewed triennially.

Employment of Safe People:

In order to provide a safe environment for children, we are committed to employing people who will do no harm. We will do this by requesting sufficient relevant information to be able to gain a comprehensive candidate picture. **Refer to Safety Checking of Staff engaged in Children's Workers roles.**

We will do this by:

- Providing clear job descriptions to all interested candidates.
- All candidates will be personally required to complete an application form. The application form will include provision for the applicant to give permission for the organisation to speak to any appropriate people about the applicant.
- Personal checks will be referenced back to the replies from this application.
- An applicant who is not truthful on an application form will not be considered.
- A recent CV will be required along with the application form.
- Conviction of a crime will not necessarily be a bar to employment. Factors such as age at the time of the offence, type of offence, remoteness of the offence in time, and rehabilitation will be taken into account in determining the suitability for this position. Persons with convictions for violence/sexual offences or involving the exploitation of children will not be employed.

Vetting & Reference Checking

Candidates will be checked for their suitability and safety for working with children. No applicant will be employed by this organisation in any capacity without being vetted and undergoing a reference check.

All staff, volunteers, and trustees will be police vetted. Personal reference checks will be undertaken with at least two referees. Educational checks will be made when appropriate. Claims made in the Application Form will be cross-referenced with referees.

All candidates for paid, voluntary, or trustee positions will be interviewed in person by at least two interviewees before an appointment is made. All successful applicants will be required to have a signed Employment Contract and to sign a confidentiality agreement, Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct. Full employment records will be maintained.

Practices:

The Golden Bay Workcentre Trust values children and young people and is committed to the prevention of child abuse and to the protection of children. This commitment means that the interests and welfare of the child are the prime considerations when any decision is made about suspected child abuse.

We support the roles of the Police and CYF in the investigation of suspected abuse and will report suspected child abuse to these agencies.

We are committed to supporting families and maintaining relationships with agencies and individuals in the community.

We do this by:

- Including this organisation's commitment to the safety of children in all our strategies, plans, and relevant public documents.
- Regularly referring to the commitment to the safety of children to ensure all staff maintains the commitment.

- Making information about the organisation's commitment available to stakeholders, including parents, staff, and prospective staff, and all others involved in the organisation.
- Giving leadership on child safety from the Board and management.

Professional Behaviour of Staff:

The Golden Bay Workcentre Trust requires high standards of behaviour from staff in order to protect children from abuse and at-risk situations and to protect staff from unwarranted suspicion.

We believe that, as far as is possible, staff working with children and families should keep their personal and professional lives separate and should not encourage close personal relationships or caretaking activities outside the work environment.

We do this by:

- Reviewing regularly with staff the behavioural guidelines, particularly at times when roles are not clear.
- Ensuring staff have a clear understanding and agree to the Code of Ethics.
- Staff are expected to inform the Manager of existing relationships with clients or their families which could constitute a conflict of interest or place the staff member in a position of compromise.
- Expecting staff to inform the manager of any potential situations of possible compromise or conflict of interest that arise as part of their work.
- Declaring that no staff member is to enter into any relationship with a child, young person or family which could mean that any other policy is compromised.
- Ensuring that at any time during employment, any staff member (paid or unpaid) shall feel it is their right to bring any issues relating to child abuse and child protection to the Manager.

Responding to Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect

We aim to respond to allegations and suspicions of child abuse in a manner which best ensures children's or young persons' immediate and long term safety and to refer to specialist advice and support those who seek help when concerned about a child at risk.

We will respond to suspicions and allegations of child abuse by a member of staff by recording all observations, impressions, and communications about children suspected of being abused. We will not act alone and will refer all suspected situations of child abuse to the Police or Child, Youth and Family. The safety of the child will be the primary consideration, and no person in this organisation will collude to protect an adult or an organisation.

Allegations will be treated in such a way that the rights of adults and the stresses of the staff are also taken into consideration.

We do this by:

- All staff to follow the process in the Response to Suspicions or Disclosure of Abuse flow chart.
- Staff will declare to the Manager any situation where there could be a conflict of interest.
- Where possible, staff will not act alone about suspicions, but will consult with the Manager who is committed to taking action as outlined in the flow chart.
- When child abuse is suspected, the Manager will inform Child, Youth and Family or the Police. If the Manager is not available and a staff member has concerns for child safety, the staff member will report these concerns to the Police or Child, Youth and Family immediately.
- If it is decided that concerns are not significant enough to refer to statutory authority, the child will continue to be monitored and records kept.
- All suspicions and information will be recorded factually and held confidentially. Anything that is an opinion or a personal concern will be identified as such and not as being a fact.
- Staff will not question or interrogate a child who has disclosed abuse or who is displaying signs of possible abuse. Staff will listen to the child and respond to them appropriately.
- The Manager will inform parents or guardians as soon as practically possible. The Manager will only inform the parents or guardians if the Manager is certain that the child will be safe if the information is disclosed.
- If a family member or someone close to the family is suspected of abuse, the Police or Child, Youth and Family will make the disclosure.
- The Trust will ensure that support is available to help staff debrief after dealing with a case of child abuse.
- Information and concerns about child abuse will only be made available to those who have a need to know. This will be determined by the Manager.

Responding to allegations of abuse against staff:

We aim to respond to allegations and suspicions of child abuse by a member of staff in a manner which best ensures children's or young persons' immediate and long-term safety and will treat suspicions or allegations against a staff member with the same seriousness as suspicions or allegations made against another person.

We will not act alone and will refer all suspected situations of child abuse to the Police or to Child, Youth and Family. The safety of the child will be the primary consideration, and no person in this organisation will collude to protect an adult or an organisation.

Allegations will be treated in such a way that the rights of adults and the stresses of the staff are also taken into consideration.

We will do this by:

- The first consideration will be to ensure the safety of the child.
- Both staff and children's rights are to be attended to. Safety of the child is the first concern, and the staff member must have access to legal and professional advice.
- Recording and notification will happen as described in the above section.
- This organisation will not collude with, or protect that person or this agency.

- The person managing the child abuse issue will not be the same person as that managing the employment issue.
- The suspected staff member or volunteer will be prevented from having further unsupervised access to children during any investigation and will be informed fully of his or her rights.
- The organisation will adhere to the principles of the Employment Contracts Act and give the staff member all information regarding his or her rights.

Supervision of Children:

The Golden Bay Workcentre Trust aims to ensure any children the organisation is working with have appropriate supervision at all times.

We will ensure that children and young people receive the safest and most appropriate care from our staff, that they are safe on any of our premises, that activities take place in ways that protect them from abuse, and that staff members are protected from unwarranted allegations of child abuse.

Staff are to be well supervised and, wherever possible, visible in the activities they perform with children.

We do this by:

- Operating under an 'open door' policy.
- Staff are discouraged from being alone with children and when this is unavoidable, another staff member will be informed.
- There are times when touching children is necessary, such as:
 - When the child has initiated the contact.
 - When the child is hurt and needs attention.
 - When an activity being undertaken requires guidance and support from an adult.
- Staff will not take children into their own home. In an emergency:
 - The child will be taken to the Police Station, or
 - The Police will be requested to attend at the Workcentre, or
 - CYF will be requested to attend at the Workcentre.

Care of Staff

Our Supervision policy is to ensure that staff feel well supported, supervised, and not overloaded. We will ensure that staff have access to personal supervision and the opportunity to deal with stress and any issues arising as a result of being involved directly or indirectly with an incidence of child abuse.

We do this by:

- Providing professional, supportive workplace supervision to all staff.
- Other staff may attend regular supervision as approved by the Manager.
- In the event of a traumatic incident or incident of child abuse, professional supervision will be available and paid for by this organisation for those staff affected. This need will be determined by the Manager. Volunteers are eligible.
- Regular staff performance reviews will assess staff workload.
- Opportunities for staff to communicate with each other and their peers and managers will include staff meetings.

Relationships with specialist and statutory agencies

The Golden Bay Workcentre Trust will consult with Child, Youth and Family, the Police, and with other appropriate agencies that have specialist knowledge to help us protect children from abuse.

We believe that in order to keep children safe, people who suspect or uncover abuse should not be tempted to deal with cases themselves. When there is a relationship of trust and understanding with the statutory agencies, people are more likely to report and enable professional investigation to ensue.

We do this by:

- Ensuring current contacts for Child, Youth and Family and for Police are maintained.
- A list of specialist agencies will be kept and updated. This list is available to all staff.
- The Manager will meet regularly with a contact person from specialist agencies to ensure that a trusted relationship is maintained in order that the Workcentre can seek help easily and appropriately.
- We will also maintain relationships with NGOs and agencies that provide services to children and families.

Information sharing with other agencies and groups

The Golden Bay Workcentre Trust recognises that all staff must act within the legal requirements of the Privacy Act, Children, Young Persons, and their Families Act, 1989, Health Information Act, and other statutes. There are provisions within each of these acts for sharing information needed to protect children and enable other people to carry out their legitimate functions. In general, staff will not share information if they believe that doing so will endanger the child.

We do this by:

- Restricting information sharing to those who have a need to know in order to protect children.
- When any agency, Department of Child, Youth and Family, lawyers, or psychologists contact a staff member for information, that staff member must first refer to their Manager for clearance before providing information.

- Information will only be given after the staff member has identified the person making the request, the actual purpose of the request, what use the information will be put to, and who will have access to the information.
- Before providing information to a non-custodial parent or other family member, staff will consult a child's records and follow any recommendations on record.

Provision for support and treatment

Photographing Children

This organisation acknowledges that from time to time photographs and videos will be taken of children. These images will only be made when necessary for the legitimate work of our organisation and by adhering to clear guidelines.

We do this by:

- Ensuring everyone photographing or filming the activities has a connection to the activities or is from the media.
- Distribution of the photographs or videos must have the permission of the parents.
- We will not use images of children on publications or website without the permission of the parents or child if he or she is old enough to consent.

Cybersafety and use of information technology

The Golden Bay Workcentre Trust aims to ensure the safe use of information technology.

We will make all effort to ensure that children and adults use technology safely and within the prescribed rules.

Cyber bullying like any other bullying will not be tolerated by this organisation, and all steps will be taken to ensure the safe use of information and computing technology (ICT).

We do this by:

- Active supervision of children by staff when accessing the internet when on our premises.
- All bullying incidents will be recorded and investigated.
- Providing information to children on safe use of technology.
- Ensuring that no person may access or have involvement with inappropriate, dangerous, illegal, or objectionable material or activities.
- Ensure no person saves or distributes such material by copying, printing, or storing.
- Authorisation from the Manager must be gained before any attempt to download, install, connect, or utilise any unauthorised software or hardware onto or with any of the organisation's ICT equipment or devices.
- Computer use will be monitored by the Manager or Technology Support Person, and random checks on use of the organisation's technology will be made without warning.

Staff Training Requirement:

On an annual basis the Workcentre will:

- Arrange with a local social worker who has specialised training in the area of child protection to provide training in the prevention, recognition, responses to and reporting of child abuse, and
- attend Child Matters Trust training sessions and any related child protection training opportunities as they arise .