



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

CHILDREN 1st Charitable Trust

Child Protection Policy

Rationale

The well-being and safety of children and young people is a paramount concern of this organisation. This includes the prevention of child abuse or maltreatment.

The interest and welfare of the child or young person will be the primary consideration when any action is taken about suspected abuse. This organisation supports the roles of statutory agencies (the Police and Child, Youth and Family) in the investigation of abuse and will report cases of suspected abuse to these agencies, following the process outlined below.

This organisation will maintain a good working relationship with the statutory agencies and be familiar with the laws which serve to protect children and young persons from abuse. The organisation will consult with these and other agencies with specialist knowledge when needed, and our facilitator will not assume responsibility beyond their level of experience or training.

Purpose

This policy guides the actions of the organisation whenever there is a concern about the abuse or mistreatment of children. This includes recording concerns, if a child discloses abuse, suspected abuse by a facilitator or suspected abuse between children at the programme.

This policy applies to all facilitators, including volunteers and part-time or temporary roles and contractors. It is intended to protect all children that the facilitator may encounter, including siblings, the children of adults accessing services and any other children encountered by the facilitator as they provide their service.

Definitions

Child abuse refers to the harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill treatment, abuse, neglect, or serious deprivation of any child/tamariki, young person/rangatahi (Section 14B Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989).

Physical abuse - any acts that may result in physical harm of a child or young person.

Sexual abuse - any acts that involve forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening.

Emotional abuse - any act or omission that results in adverse or impaired psychological, social, intellectual and emotional functioning or development.

Neglect - the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or psychological needs, leading to adverse or impaired physical or emotional functioning or development.

Family violence may be witnessed/experienced by children and involve physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

Training

This organisation is committed to maintaining and increasing facilitator awareness of how to prevent, recognise and respond to abuse through appropriate training. As part of their induction, new facilitators are taken through the programme policy on child abuse.

Identifying child abuse and neglect

Every situation is different and it's important to consider all available information about the child and their environment before reaching conclusions. For example, behavioural concerns may be the result of life events, such as divorce, accidental injury, the arrival of a new sibling etc.

It is normal for people to feel uncertain, however, the important thing is that facilitators should be able to recognise when something is wrong, especially if a pattern is noticed or several signs together cause concern.

Some signs of potential abuse / neglect

- Physical signs of abuse: unexplained injuries, burns, fractures, unusual or excessive itching, genital injuries, sexually transmitted diseases. Neglect: looking rough and uncared for, dirty, without appropriate clothing, underweight
- Medical neglect (e.g. persistent nappy rash or skin disorders or other untreated medical issues).
- Developmental delays (e.g. small for their age, cognitive delays, falling behind in school, poor speech and social skills).
- Emotional abuse/neglect (e.g. sleep problems, low self-esteem, obsessive behaviour, inability to cope in social situations, sadness/loneliness and evidence of self-harm).
- Behavioural concerns (e.g. age- inappropriate sexual interest or play, fear of a certain person or place, eating disorders/substance abuse, disengagement/neediness, aggression).
- The child talking about things that indicate abuse (sometimes called an allegation or disclosure).
- Neglectful supervision (e.g. out and about unsupervised, left alone, no safe home to return to).

Note: it is not important to identify what specific kind of abuse might be occurring. Facilitators simply need to be aware of and able to recognise the whole range of concerning signs.

Responding to child abuse

Under sections 15 and 16 of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989, 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.

This organisation will act on recommendations made by statutory agencies concerning the official reporting of suspected abuse. Facilitators will only consult with or inform families about any suspected or actual abuse, after consulting with the appropriate statutory agencies.

Facilitators will respond to suspected child abuse or any concerning behaviour by writing down observations, impressions and communications in a confidential register. This will be kept separate from programme diaries, day books communication books and enrolment information etc.

Information volunteered by a child should be fully and accurately recorded. No child should be interviewed or in any way questioned about the suspected abuse.

No facilitator will act alone about suspected child abuse but will consult with either the SENCO representative, Principal or Deputy Principal at the primary school where the programme is being facilitated.

Where facilitators suspect child abuse has occurred and a child is unsafe, facilitators hand this responsibility to the organisation involved to promptly report the matter to the Police or the Child, Youth and Family.

Facilitators who are responding to cases of suspected child abuse are entitled to have support. The programme will maintain knowledge of such individuals, agencies and organisations in the community that provide support.

Responding to a disclosure/concern about abuse

The programme facilitator will be designated as a child safety advocate and will be trained in child protection and responding to abuse.

It will be the responsibility of the organisation, where the programme is being facilitated, to notify Child, Youth and Family promptly if there is a belief that a child has been, or is likely to be, abused or neglected.

0508 Family (0508 326 459) cyfcallcentre@cyf.govt.nz

If a child discloses abuse or abuse is suspected as soon as possible the facilitator, formally records:

Word for word, what the child said.

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 developmental concerns).

The action taken by your organisation.

Any other information that may be relevant.

If the child is upset, offer re-assurance and help them to re-engage in an appropriate activity, under supervision or ask for assistance from another adult.

Other guidelines for communication with children:

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 can't be kept, e.g., "I will keep you safe now".

Securely store relevant information:

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 facilitator/organisation took, including any rationale.

Any earlier concerns, if the notification is based on an accumulation of concerns (rather than a specific incident).

If there is immediate danger to the child or safety is an issue, act with urgency – contact the Police

If no immediate danger to the child then re-engage child in activities and explain what you will do next : Listen to the child Reassure the child

Only ask open-ended questions e.g. "what happened next"?

Confidentiality and information sharing

In general, when collecting personal information about individuals, privacy and confidentiality will be maintained.

Facilitators may disclose information under the Privacy Act/Health Information Privacy Code where there is good reason to do so – such as where there is a serious risk to individual health and safety (see privacy principle 11/Code rule 11). Disclosure about ill-treatment or neglect of a child/young person may also be made to the Police or Child, Youth and Family under sections 15 and 16 of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989.