

Child Protection Policy

Rationale

- This policy outlines our commitment to child protection. It includes our protocols when child abuse is reported to us or suspected by us. It also includes practice notes on measures to be taken to prevent child abuse. All staff are expected to be familiar with this policy and to abide by it.
- We have an obligation to ensure the wellbeing of children in our care and 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 (CYFs) in the investigation of suspected abuse and will report suspected/alleged abuse to these agencies.
- We support families/whānau to protect their children.
- We provide a safe environment, free from physical, emotional, verbal or sexual abuse.

Policy Procedures

- 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.

Educare policy as per criterion HS31 Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Centres 2008

- We are committed to share information in a timely way and to discuss any concerns about an individual child with the person in charge and the senior leadership team.
- 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 of 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:** see schedule 1 attached to this policy.
- **Responding to suspected abuse or neglect:** see schedule 2 attached to this
- **Allegations or concerns about staff:**
 - (i) When a staff member is suspected, the same processes apply.
 - (ii) If there is a need to pursue an allegation as an employer, consult with CYFs 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.
 - (iii) 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 individual employment agreement and relevant statutory obligations.
 - (iv) 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.
 - (v) 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:**
 - (i) The Privacy Act 1993 and the Children, Young Persons, and their Families (CYPF) Act 1989 allow information to be shared to keep children safe when abuse or suspected abuse is reported or investigated.
 - (ii) 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 CYFs 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)**

(i) 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.

(ii) 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**

(i) 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.

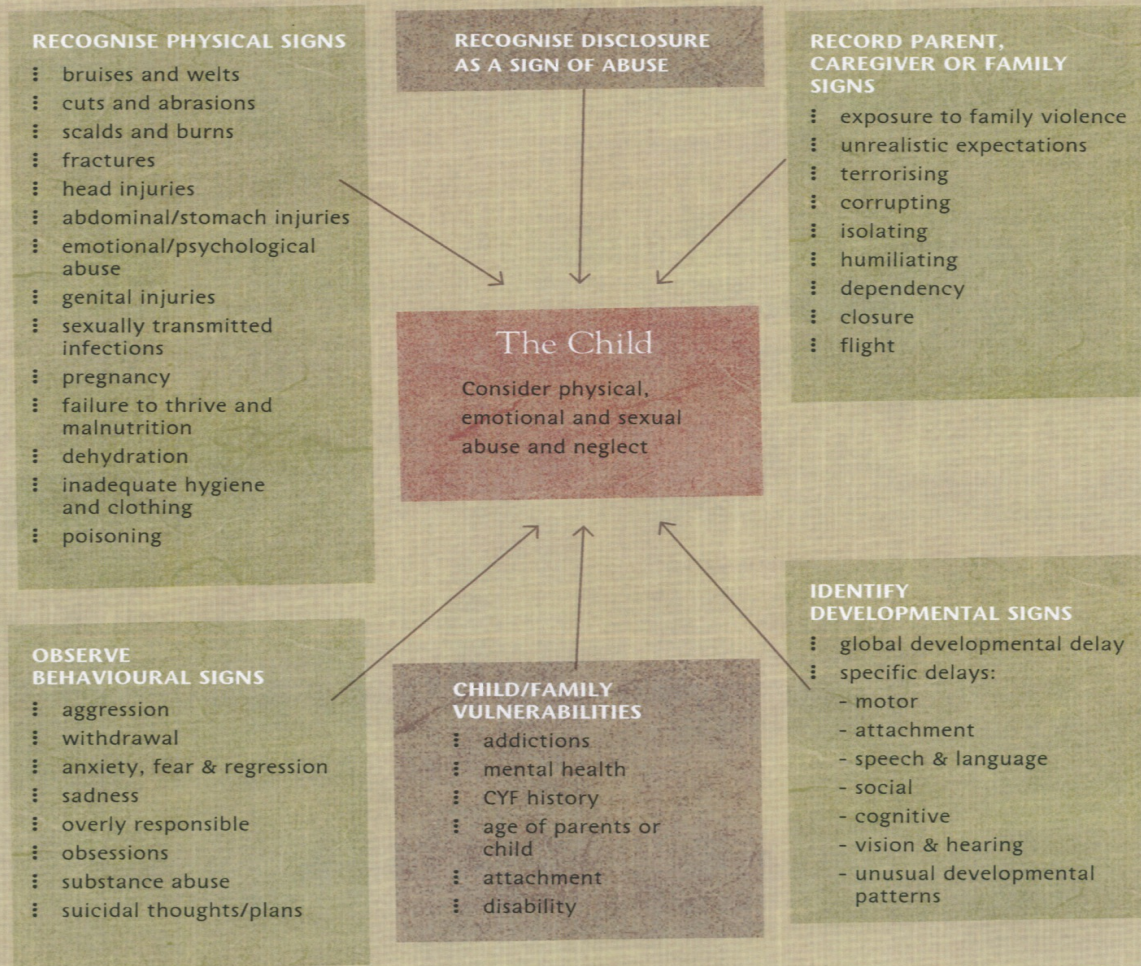
(ii) This policy will be part of the initial staff induction programme.

- **Related documentation and review;** this policy will be reviewed at least every three years. All staff are expected to be familiar with this policy and to abide by it.

Schedule 1.

Signs of abuse and neglect

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.



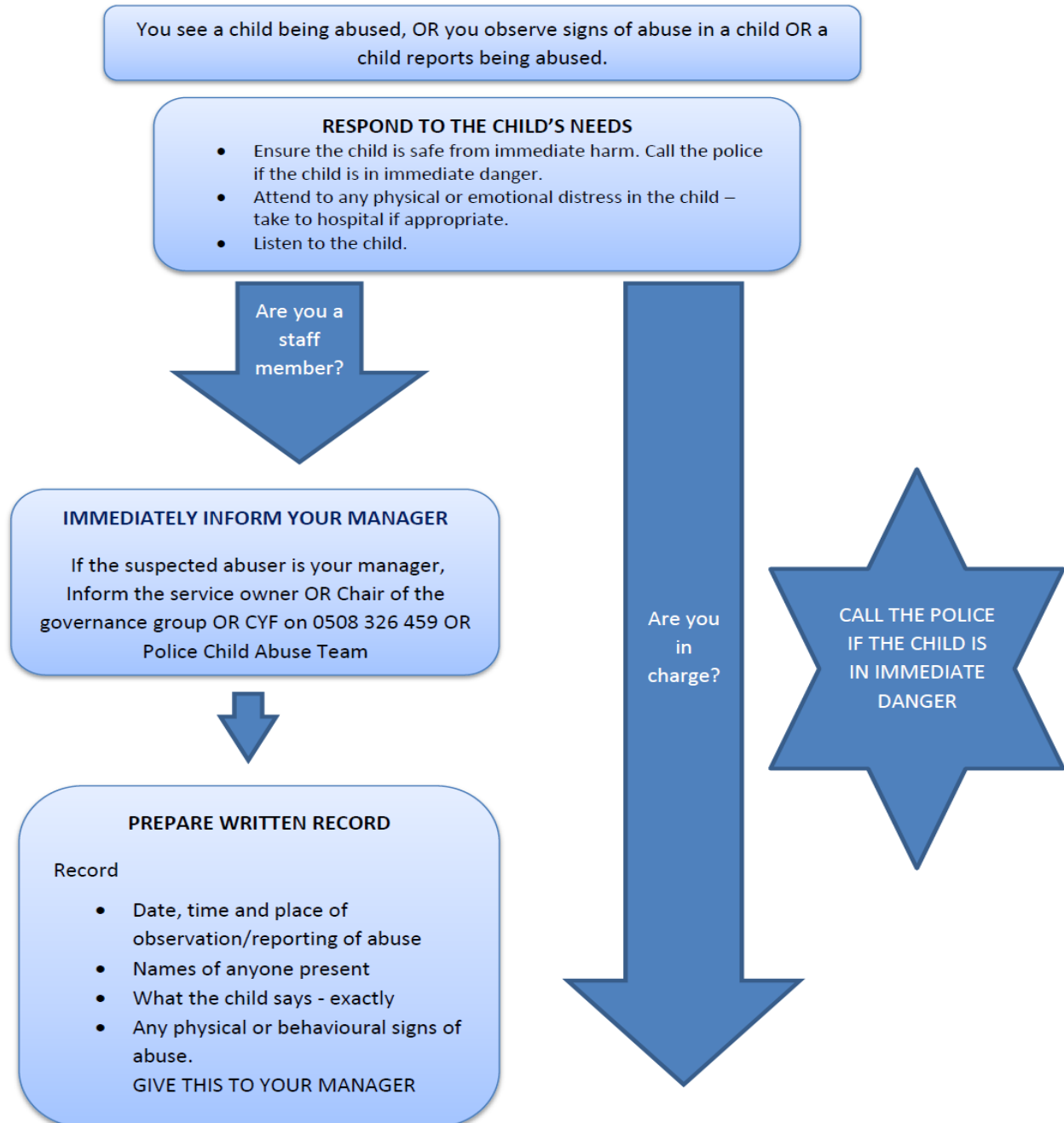
www.practicecentre.cyf.govt.nz

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Schedule 2.

REPORTING PROCESS FOR CHILD ABUSE



PERSON IN CHARGE

GATHER INFORMATION

Ensure you have a full report from the person who identified the abuse. Offer them support. Get them to sign the report. Tell them what actions you will take. Ring CYF (0508 326 459) or Plunketline (0800 933 92) and discuss your concerns. CYF will tell you if you need to do a formal report about your concerns.

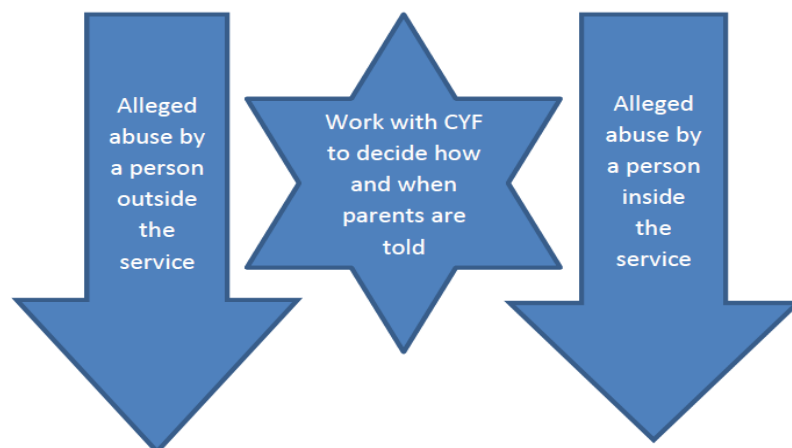
REPORT ABUSE

Ring CYF on 0508 326459 and tell them:

(If it is an emergency, ring the Police Child Abuse Team)

- your own name and contact details
- name of child/children (also known as/nicknames)
- date of birth (if known)
- ethnicity (if known)
- name of caregivers, parents and other family members and current living situation
- current legal custodians
- reasons why it is believed that the child has been abused
- other significant background information
- any concerns for your physical safety in making this notification.

ASK WHAT HAPPENS NEXT – get timeframe



OUTSIDESERVICE

- You are most likely to suspect the abuse is by a parent but you cannot assume this. If you are concerned about the child going home, tell CYF or the Police this.
- While the child is in your care, ensure the child is not at risk of being further abused.

INSIDE SERVICE

- Maintain close liaison with CYF/the police and discuss any actions you want to take with them first.
- Discuss with CYF/Police who will tell the suspected abuser of the allegation and whether the suspected abuser should remain on the ECS premises.*
- Recommend the suspected abuser seeks support from their union or lawyer.
- Ensure records are kept of any comments or event relating to the complaint(s) and /or allegations and follow-up action is taken and documented.
- Get employment/legal advice where appropriate.

ATTEND TO HEALING OF YOUR COMMUNITY

If there is disruption to the ECE service or community, negative impacts on other children and/or staff, or media interest contact

SPECIAL EDUCATION TRAUMATIC INCIDENT COORDINATOR for support on 080084 8326

FINALLY! GET SUPPORT FOR YOURSELF

Notes

*If a centre manager or owner knows of alleged abuse and another incident occurs by the offender at the centre, the owner of the centre is liable for failing to provide a safe educational environment for the children.

1. What is child abuse?

Child abuse is defined in the Children Young Persons and their Families Act as “the harming (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation of any child or young person.”

2. Possible ECS situations

Abuse within an early childhood centre could be:

- Adult to adult
- Adult to child
- Child to child

This model addresses adult to child abuse. The police can be contacted where appropriate for adult to adult abuse. If one child is abusing another, it is often an indication that the abusing child has been abused. Treat this as an indicator and compile information about this child's behaviour over time to look for a pattern. Discuss with a CYF social worker or Plunketline

3. Getting advice

You can ring CYF and ask to discuss your concerns with a social worker without making a formal complaint.

You can also ring PlunketLine on 0800 933 922. PlunketLine is available 24 hours everyday of the year. All calls are answered by a Plunket Nurse-who is a registered nurse with a post grad qualification in Well Child Health. You can also make contact with your local Plunket Nurse.

4. Healing

If the suspected abuser is a staff member there will be concerns amongst parents, governance members, staff and children. Clear, timely, appropriate and accurate information is essential to stop rumours, to address people's concerns and to rebuild trust is essential.

5. More information

There is more information on this website. You can also go to www.cyf.govt.nz or talk to a local support agency.

The best thing to do is to form strong healthy relationships amongst your staff, parents and community to reduce child abuse. Ensure staff know how to recognise abuse and what to do about it. But more importantly, create an atmosphere where people can turn to you for support.

Reviewed: September 2016

To be reviewed: September 2017

Educare policy as per criterion HS31 Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Centres 2008

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