

Stonehenge Aotearoa Child protection Policy

Summary

Ensuring the wellbeing and safety of children, including prevention of child abuse or maltreatment, is a paramount goal of this organisation. This policy provides guidance to staff on how to identify and respond to concerns about the wellbeing of a child, including possible abuse or neglect.

The interests of the child will be the paramount consideration when any action is taken in response to suspected abuse or neglect. This organisation commits to support the statutory agencies (Child, Youth and Family and the New Zealand Police (the Police)) to investigate abuse and will report suspected cases and concerns to these agencies as per the process in this policy.

Our Designated Person for Child Protection, Kay Leather, will be responsible for the maintenance and annual review of this policy, in addition to carrying out the responsibilities outlined in this policy.

This policy was authored by Kay Leather on 25/9/2024. The policy is due to be updated on 25/9/2027. It is consistent with Child, Youth and Family and Police guidelines and will be updated when new guidance is issued.

Purpose, scope and principles Our child protection policy supports our staff to respond appropriately to potential child protection concerns, including suspected abuse or neglect.

It is our organisation's commitment to protect children from abuse and to recognise the important roles all of our staff have in protecting children. This policy provides a broad framework and expectations to protect children, including (but not limited to) staff behaviours in response to actual or suspected child abuse and neglect. It applies to all staff, including volunteers and part-time or temporary roles and contractors. It is intended to protect all children that staff may encounter, including siblings, the children of adults accessing tours, lectures and activities and any other children encountered by staff.

In addition to guiding staff to make referrals of suspected child abuse and neglect to the statutory agencies – i.e., Child, Youth and Family and the Police – this policy will also help our staff to identify and respond to the needs of the many vulnerable children whose wellbeing is of concern. We recognise that 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 our organisation 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.

We also commit to explore opportunities to work with other providers, including from other sectors, to develop a network of child protection practice in our community. This policy applies to all staff, including contractors and volunteers.

Definitions

- **Child** – any child or young person aged under 17 years and who is not married or in a civil union.
- **Child protection** – activities carried out to ensure that children are safe in cases where there is suspected abuse or neglect or are at risk of abuse or neglect.
- **Designated person for child protection** – the manager/supervisor or designated person responsible for providing advice and support to staff where they have a concern about an individual child or who want advice about child protection policy.

• **Disclosure** – information given to a staff member by a child, parent or caregiver or a third party in relation to abuse or neglect.

• **Child, Youth and Family** – the agency responsible for investigating and responding to suspected abuse and neglect and for providing care and protection to children found to be in need.

• **New Zealand Police** – the agency responsible for responding to situations where a child is in immediate danger and for working with Child, Youth and Family in child protection work and investigating cases of abuse or neglect where an offence may have occurred.

• **Physical abuse** – any acts that may result in physical harm of a child or young person. It can be, but is not limited to: bruising, cutting, hitting, beating, biting, burning, causing abrasions, strangulation, suffocation, drowning, poisoning and fabricated or induced illness.

• **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. Sexual abuse can be, but is not limited to:

- **Contact abuse:** touching breasts, genital/anal fondling, masturbation, oral sex, penetrative or non-penetrative contact with the anus or genitals, encouraging the child to perform such acts on the perpetrator or another, involvement of the child in activities for the purposes of pornography or prostitution.
- **Non-contact abuse:** exhibitionism, voyeurism, exposure to pornographic or sexual imagery, inappropriate photography or depictions of sexual or suggestive behaviours or comments.

• **Emotional abuse** – any act or omission that results in adverse or impaired psychological, social, intellectual and emotional functioning or development. This can include:

- **Patterns of isolation, degradation, constant criticism or negative comparison to others.** Isolating, corrupting, exploiting or terrorising a child can also be emotional abuse.
- Exposure to family/whānau or intimate partner violence.

• **Neglect** – neglect is the most common form of abuse and although the effects may not be as obvious as physical abuse, it is just as serious. Neglect can be:

- **Physical** (not providing the necessities of life like a warm place, food and clothing).
- **Emotional** (not providing comfort, attention and love).
- **Neglectful supervision** (leaving children without someone safe looking after them).
- **Medical neglect** (not taking care of health needs).
- **Educational neglect** (allowing chronic truancy, failure to enrol in education or inattention to education needs).

Training -We are committed to maintaining and increasing staff awareness of how to prevent, recognise and respond to abuse through appropriate training.

Our approach to identifying abuse or neglect is guided by the following principles:

• We understand that 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.

• We understand when we are concerned a child is showing signs of potential abuse or neglect we should talk to someone, either a colleague, or the Designated Person for Child Protection – we shouldn't act alone.

- While there are different definitions of abuse, the important thing is for us to consider overall wellbeing and the risk of harm to the child. It is not so important to be able to categorise the type of abuse or neglect.
- It is normal for us to feel uncertain, however, the important thing is that we should be able to recognise when something is wrong, especially if we notice a pattern forming or several signs that make us concerned.
- Exposure to intimate partner violence (IPV) is a form of child abuse. There is a high rate of cooccurrence between IPV and the physical abuse of children.

We recognise the signs of potential abuse:

- **Physical signs** (e.g., unexplained injuries, burns, fractures, unusual or excessive itching, genital injuries, sexually transmitted diseases).
- **Developmental delays** (e.g., small for their age, cognitive delays, falling behind in school, poor speech and social skills), looking rough and uncared for, dirty, without appropriate clothing, underweight).
- **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, aggression, neediness.).
- **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).
- **Medical neglect** (e.g., persistent nappy rash or skin disorders or other untreated medical issues).

This organisation will always act on the recommendations of statutory agencies, including Child, Youth and Family and the Police. We will only inform families/whānau about suspected or actual abuse after we have discussed this with these agencies.

Adults should accompany children. If there is to be a different adult removing the children from the premises we require written permission from their caregiver/parent. This could be text or email.

To avoid situations where staff may be alone with children. Wherever possible an open door policy for all spaces should be used (excludes toilets).

Where a child or young person requires assistance, e.g., if they are intellectually or physically disabled, if possible involve the parents/caregivers and outside agencies (in education such as the Ministry of Education's Special Education group) to assist.

Staff should avoid being alone when transporting a child or young person, unless an emergency requires it. Except in an emergency, children and young people are not to be taken from our organisation's premises, or from the programme we provide, without written parental consent (this may be text or email).