

# **Child Protection Policy**

## **Policy Summary**

This policy outlines our commitment to child protection. It includes our procedures 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. Staff and educators are expected to be familiar with this policy and abide by it.

## **Purpose Statement**

We aim to uphold the safety and wellbeing of children by ensuring that there are robust child protection systems in place. The safety and wellbeing of the child is our top priority when investigating suspected abuse.

## **Policy Principles**

- 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 staff, and educators, 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 staff and educators to work in accordance with this policy, to work with partner agencies and organisations to ensure our approach to child protection is consistent and high quality.
  - sharing information in a timely way and to discuss any concerns about an individual child with colleagues or the person in charge.
  - providing a safe working environment for staff, educators and children of our service.
  - carrying out robust safety checking procedures to ensure staff and educators have the skills and attributes which contribute to the children's well being.
  - promoting a culture where staff and educators feel confident that they can constructively challenge poor practice or raise issues of concern without fear of reprisal.
- We will always comply with relevant legislative responsibilities.
- This policy will be reviewed at least every three years.

## Child Abuse Definitions

Child abuse includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse as well as neglect which includes physical, medical, abandonment, neglectful supervision and refusal to assume parental responsibility.

**Abuse** – the harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill-treatment, neglect or deprivation of any child

**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

**Child** – 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 the risk of abuse or neglect

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

**Physical Abuse** – any acts that may result in the 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 fabricating 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 purpose 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 or 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)

## Identifying the Signs of Child Abuse

It is not always easy to recognise that a child is being hurt or is at risk, so abuse is often undetected. There are indicators (signs, symptoms or clues) that when found, either on their own or in various combinations, can point to possible abuse, neglect or family violence.

Indicators can be:

- **Physical** – such as bruises or burns and relate to a child's physical condition.
- **Behavioural** – such as a child cringing or flinching if touched unexpectedly; or a caregiver constantly calling a child 'stupid' or 'dumb'. Behavioural indicators can be displayed by a child or by the alleged abuser.

Indicators do not necessarily prove that a child has been harmed. They alert us that abuse may have occurred and that a child may require help or protection. Sometimes indicators can result from life events that do not involve abuse, such as divorce, accidental injury, the arrival of a new sibling etc.

### Indicators of Emotional Abuse

There may be **physical indicators** that a child is being emotionally abused. Some examples of this are:

- Bed-wetting or bed soiling that has no medical cause
- Frequent psychosomatic complaints (eg. Headaches, nausea, abdominal pains)
- Prolonged vomiting or diarrhoea
- Has not attained significant developmental milestones
- Dressed differently from other children in the family
- Has deprived physical living conditions compared with other children in the family

There may also be **indicators in a child's behaviour** that could indicate emotional abuse. Some examples of this are:

- Suffers from severe developmental gaps
- Severe symptoms of depression, anxiety, withdrawal or aggression
- Severe symptoms of self destructive behaviour – self harming, suicide attempts, engaging in drug or alcohol abuse
- Overly compliant; too well-mannered; too neat and clean
- Displays attention seeking behaviours or displays extreme inhibition in play
- When at play, behaviour may model or copy negative behaviour and language used at home

There may be **indicators in adult behaviour** that could indicate emotional abuse. Some examples of this are:

- Constantly calls the child names, labels the child or publicly humiliates the child
- Continually threatens the child with physical harm or forces the child to witness physical harm inflicted on a loved one

- Has unrealistic expectations of the child
- Involves the child in “adult issues”, such as separation or access issues
- Keeps the child at home in a role of subservient or surrogate parent

### **Indicators of Neglect**

There may be **physical indicators** that a child is being neglected. Some examples of this are:

- Inappropriate dress for the weather
- Extremely dirty or unbathed
- Inadequately supervised or left alone for unacceptable periods of time
- Malnourished
- May have severe nappy rash or other persistent skin disorders or rashes resulting from improper care or lack of hygiene

There may also be **indicators in a child’s behaviour** that could indicate neglect. Some examples of this are:

- Demonstrates severe lack of attachment to other adults
- Poor school attendance or school performance
- Poor social skills
- May steal food
- Is very demanding of affection or attention
- Has no understanding of basic hygiene

There may be **indicators in adult behaviour** that could indicate neglect. Some examples of this are:

- Fails to provide for the child’s basic needs, such as housing, nutrition, medical and psychological care
- Fails to enrol a child in school or permits truancy
- Leaves the child home alone
- Is overwhelmed with own problems and puts own needs ahead of the child’s needs

## **Indicators of Physical Abuse**

There may be **physical indicators** that a child is being abused. Some examples of this are:

- Unexplained bruises, welts, cuts, abrasions
- Unexplained burns
- Unexplained fractures
- Disclosures

There may also be **indicators in a child's behaviour** that could indicate physical abuse. Some examples of this are:

- Is wary of adults or of a particular individual
- Is violent to animals or other children
- Is dressed inappropriately to hide bruises or other injuries
- May be extremely aggressive or extremely withdrawn
- Cannot recall how the injuries occurred or gives inconsistent explanations

There may be **indicators in adult behaviour** that could indicate physical abuse. Some examples of this are:

- May be vague about the details of the cause of injury and the account of the injury may change from time to time
- May blame the accident on a sibling, friend, relative or the injured child
- Shakes an infant
- Threats or attempts to injure a child
- Is aggressive towards a child in front of others
- May delay in seeking medical attention for a child

## **Indicators of Sexual Abuse**

There may be **physical indicators** that a child is being sexually abused. Some examples of this are:

- Torn, stained or bloody underclothing
- Bruises, lacerations, redness, swelling or bleeding in genital, vaginal or anal area
- Blood in urine or faeces
- Sexually transmitted disease
- Unusual or excessive itching or pain in the genital or anal area

There may also be **indicators in a child's behaviour** that could indicate sexual abuse.

Some examples of this in young children are:

- Age-inappropriate sexual play with toys, self, others
- Bizarre, sophisticated or unusual sexual knowledge
- Comments such as "I've got a secret", or "I don't like Uncle"

- Fire lighting by boys
- Fear of certain places eg bedroom or bathroom

Some examples of this in older children are:

- Eating disorders
- Promiscuity or prostitution
- Uses younger children in sexual acts
- Tries to make self as unattractive as possible

There may be **indicators in adult behaviour** that could indicate sexual abuse. Some examples of this are:

- May be unusually over-protective of a child
- Is jealous of a child's relationships with peers or other adults or is controlling of the child
- May favour the victim over other children
- Demonstrates physical contact or affection to a child which appears sexual in nature or has sexual overtones

### **Important facts to remember**

- Believe what children tell you and what you see
- Always take action in the short term to ensure the immediate safety of the child.
- Record clear concerns and observations, factual statement with dates
- Do not make decisions alone, consult with management.
- Act on your concerns
- Parents will be given access to information and support for example "How can I tell? Recognising child abuse" booklets by Child Matters
- No teacher will act alone regarding suspected child abuse.

More details and examples of indicators are available in the book 'How Can I Tell?' by Child Matters

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

Our prime consideration in employing staff and contractors is ensuring they have the skills and attributes which contribute to the children's wellbeing.

A 7 point Safety checking will be carried out in accordance with the Vulnerable Children Act 2014.

Where we suspect that a worker or another person within the service has perpetrated child abuse, we will report the matter promptly to management.

Staff members, or contractors, under suspicion may be suspended while the matter is investigated, and they will be informed fully of their rights.

Families, whānau, children, staff, contractors and others involved in the investigation of the suspected child abuse may seek support through organisations in the community.

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

- Training, resources and/or advice will be available to ensure that all staff and contractors 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 the environment and supervision to minimise risk.
  - Dealing with child/parents/family/whānau.
  - Staff, or contractors, are advised not to babysit privately for Little Magpies clients.

### **Educators Family Members**

Educators who have people living in their home over the age of 17 years of age, or regularly visiting the home, will be safety checked in accordance with the Vulnerable Children Act 2014.

### **Parents/Caregivers/Whānau**

- Parents will be involved in the development and review of any child protection policies.
- Parents will have access to information regarding a range of support agencies.

### **Supervision Guidelines**

Little Magpies Childcare Centre Ltd has established rules about acceptable touching of children, which are discussed regularly with staff, contractors and other adults. If a child initiates physical contact in the seeking of affection, reassurance, or comfort it is appropriate to respond. It is not appropriate to force unwanted affection or touching on a child.

Physical contact of children during care needs or cleaning must be for the purpose of that task only and no more than is necessary. We encourage children to take care of themselves if possible. In making physical contact with children, staff, and contractors, will be guided by the principal that they will do so only to meet the child's physical or emotional needs. Touching should never be initiated to gratify adult's needs. Children will not be asked to take care of adult needs, physical or otherwise. Except in an emergency, children are not taken from the service without parental approval, which is in writing.

### **Protection of Staff**

We are committed to providing a safe working environment for all our staff and ensure that employee privacy is protected. We take all reasonable steps to ensure staff safety. We will not disclose personal information (including personal address, phone numbers and personal circumstances) of any employee, to any child, parent or member of the public. Information will be kept secure and only employees with specific authority will be permitted access to confidential employee information.

### **Protection of Educarers (Contractors)**

We are committed to providing a safe environment for all children enrolled in our service and we take all reasonable steps to ensure educarer safety. Information about educarers will be kept secure and only employees with specific authority will be permitted access to confidential employee information.

### **Staff & Educarers Practices**

We require staff/educarers to be observant. If there is a concern regarding a child (ie observation of an unusual behaviour, evidence of injury etc) Management will be notified immediately.

### **Visitors to the Home**

- The educarer is responsible for ensuring that visitors know what adult behaviour is deemed appropriate.
- Inappropriate touching for visitors is: hugs, kisses, tickling, stroking, sitting child on knee, carrying children, changing children's clothes.
- Appropriate touching is: holding hands (e.g. taking children inside), helping children in or out of a swing, physical removal from potentially dangerous situations.
- Visitors will not perform care-taking tasks with children or be alone with them. They will never toilet or change nappies.
- Parents will perform care-taking tasks only with their own children.

### **Curriculum**

We ensure that children develop respect for their own and others' bodies, minds and spirits. We encourage good self-esteem, awareness of body health, and such concepts as "My body belongs to me" and "I have the right to say no."

### **Resources**

- Sexual Abuse Education NZ - [www.sexualabuse.org.nz](http://www.sexualabuse.org.nz)
- Vulnerable Children's Act 2014 - [www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2014/0040/latest/whole.html](http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2014/0040/latest/whole.html)



# Recognising the Signs Flow Chart

## Emotional

### Physical Indicators

- *Bed-wetting or bed soiling that has no medical cause*
- *Frequent psychosomatic complaints (eg. headaches, nausea, abdominal pains)*
- *Prolonged vomiting or diarrhoea*
- *Has not attained significant developmental milestones*
- *Dressed differently from other children in the family*
- *Has deprived physical living conditions compared with other children in the family*

### Child's Behaviour Indicators

- *Suffers from severe developmental gaps*
- *Severe symptoms of depression, anxiety, withdrawal or aggression*
- *Severe symptoms of self destructive behaviour – self harming, suicide attempts, engaging in drug or alcohol abuse*
- *Overly compliant; too well-mannered; too neat and clean*
- *Displays attention seeking behaviours or displays extreme inhibition in play*
- *When at play, behaviour may model or copy negative behaviour and language used at home*

### Adult's Behaviour Indicators

- *Constantly calls the child names, labels the child or publicly humiliates the child*
- *Continually threatens the child with physical harm or forces the child to witness physical harm inflicted on a loved one*
- *Has unrealistic expectations of the child*
- *Involves the child in "adult issues", such as separation or access issues*
- *Keeps the child at home in a role of subservient or surrogate parent*

## Physical

### Physical Indicators

- *Unexplained bruises, welts, cuts, abrasions*
- *Unexplained burns*
- *Unexplained fractures or disclosures*

### Child's Behaviour Indicators

- *Is wary of adults or of a particular individual*
- *Is violent to animals or other children*
- *Is dressed inappropriately to hide bruises or other injuries*
- *May be extremely aggressive or extremely withdrawn*
- *Cannot recall how the injuries occurred or gives inconsistent explanations*

### Adult's Behaviour Indicators

- *May be vague about the details of the cause of injury and the account of the injury may change from time to time*
- *May blame the accident on a sibling, friend, relative or the injured child*
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**Child Abuse**  
Follow our  
Reporting  
Suspected  
Child Abuse  
Steps

## Neglect

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## Sexual

### Physical Indicators

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