

Child Protection Policy

Rationale: The Management and staff of the Little Explorers are committed to the prevention of physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children. This commitment means that the interests and welfare of children are the prime considerations when any decision is made about suspected abuse.

Purpose:

- To provide a safe environment for all children and staff.
- To ensure all staff are aware of the steps to take when dealing with suspected child abuse.
- To ensure all records and conversations remain confidential.
- To ensure all involved at the Centre are aware that anybody can report a suspected abuse situation.
- To meet the requirements of the Vulnerable Children Act 2015.
- For staff to know how to deal with a disclosure of abuse from a child.

Principles:

- The interest and protection of the child is paramount at all times.
- We recognize the rights of families to participate in decisions about their child.
- We have a commitment to all staff being able to recognise signs and symptoms of potential abuse and neglect and are able to take appropriate action in response.
- We will comply with relevant legislation responsibilities.
- We are committed to share information in a timely way and to discuss any concerns about an individual child with colleagues or Management.
- We are committed to promote a culture where staff feel confident they can constructively challenge poor practice or raise issues of concern without fear of reprisal.
- We are committed to working with other organisations to ensure child protection is consistent and of high quality.
- We are committed to supporting staff to work in accordance with this policy.

Definitions:

The following definitions apply to this policy:

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 – 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 the risk of abuse or neglect.

Designated person for child protection – the manager 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 the child protection policy.

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

Inappropriate Material - is anything of an explicitly sexual or violent nature.

Oranga Tamariki – the agency responsible for investigating and responding to suspected abuse and neglect and for providing a statutory response to children found to be in need of care and protection.

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

Children's services – any organisation that provides services to children or to adults where contact with children may be part of the service. These organisations should have child protection policies.

Safer recruitment – following good practice processes for pre-employment checking which help manage the risk of unsuitable persons entering the children's workforce.

Standard safety checking – the process of safer recruitment that is mandatory for organisations covered by the Vulnerable Children Act 2014.

Workforce restriction – a restriction on the employment or engagement of people with certain specified convictions under the Vulnerable Children Act 2014.

Children's workforce/children's workers – people who work with children, or who have regular contact with children, as part of their roles.

Closed space - any area where another adult has restricted visual access from the outside.

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 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).

Procedures:

Prevention of Child Abuse:

Further information to support the implementation of the procedures below can be found by accessing [Vulnerable Children Act 2014 RC v 1.00 May 2015 A Practical guide for Early Childhood Education Services Ngā Kōhanga Reo, Playgroups, Schools and Kura](#)

Link: <http://childrensactionplan.govt.nz/whats-new/childrens-workforce-guidelines-available/>

Responsibility of Management

- The Manager will undertake to implement the requirements of Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008 56 and 57 as set out in Appendix B to ensure children are protected from ill-treatment and their health and safety is maintained.
- The Manager will undertake to implement the requirements of The Vulnerable Children Act 2014 to ensure all employees, contractors and people undertaking paid work in the Centre undergo a safety check process.
- The Manager will undertake to implement the requirements of The Privacy Act 1993 and the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1993 to keep children safe when abuse or suspected abuse is reported or investigated.
- The Manager will keep a record of all safety checks completed.

Staff Selection:

- Little Explorers will employ staff only after a New Employee - Risk Analysis form has been completed and it has been decided that they are safe to work with children. The New Employee - Risk Analysis form will cover all safety checks as shown in Appendix C.
- All employees, including contractors, will have a New Zealand Police vet, unless at least three-yearly New Zealand Police vetting is already completed by The Education Council of New Zealand.
- All staff will have an Existing Employee - Risk Analysis form done every three years.
- Management will need to ensure if an applicant has spent time overseas that these records are included in the safety check process.
- Management will ensure when selecting staff that they have the skills and attributes to ensure children's safety.
- When employing temporary or casual staff, the applicant's referees will be contacted prior to employment.
- All staff, including volunteers, will be required to read and abide by the Child Protection Policy.

Safety Checks for Overseas Staff

- An Applicant that has lived overseas will need to be checked by obtaining a copy of Police Vet from a person's country of citizenship or from any country in which they have lived for one or more years within the last ten years.

Safety Checks for Students

- Little Explorers will accept Vulnerable Children Act Safety Checks that have been completed on their behalf by another provider.
- Before a student begins working in Little Explorers the Manager will check with the Students Education Institution or Training Provider that they have completed all the components of a safety

check consistent with the requirements for that student. If they have not been completed Little Explorers will not accept the student.

- Little Explorers will complete the identity check and risk assessment for all children's workers, including students even if these have already been completed by another person or organisation.

Safety Checks for Relievers

- Little Explorers will ensure Vulnerable Children Act Safety Checks have been completed for all private relief staff prior to their beginning work in Little Explorers.
- For relievers from agencies, Little Explorers will accept Vulnerable Children Act Safety Checks that have been completed on their behalf by their agency.
- All agency relievers will be from **Preschool Staffing Solutions** or **TALK**, as they signed off that they have completed all the components of a safety check consistent with the requirements for their relievers.
- Little Explorers will complete the identity check and risk assessment for all children's workers, including agency relievers.
- In the event of an unexpected event, emergency or being unable to access relief staff with a current Vulnerable Children Act Safety Check completed, Little Explorers will employ the person for up to five days without a full Vulnerable Children Act Safety check provided that person has had a full check completed elsewhere. Little Explorers will complete an identity check prior to the person beginning work. The Vulnerable Children Act Safety Check process will begin on the person's first day at Little Explorers or earlier if possible. During this event or emergency the person without a Vulnerable Children Act Safety checks will not be left alone with children.

Staff Supervision

- Two staff members will be rostered on at all times. At no time will a single staff member be the only staff member on the premises during normal work hours.
- Careful consideration will be taken in the deployment of staff to ensure children are supervised at all times.
- If it is necessary for a child to be isolated by an adult due to sickness or potential danger to others, this should be to an open space in Little Explorers, eg, the office or outside playground with a teacher.
- The care of children involves physical contact; this is normal, natural and desirable. It is natural to touch them to show affection, to comfort, to reassure them, and to give them praise, as well as taking care of some of their physical needs. However, it is not acceptable to force unwanted affection or touching on a child. Physical contact with children during changing or cleansing must be for the purpose of that task only and be no more than is necessary.
- When staff are changing nappies or toileting children, other staff should be made aware that they are carrying out these duties.
- Procedures for changing wet or soiled children will be displayed in the bathroom area.
- A record will be kept of every child who has their nappy or soiled clothes changed at Little Explorers. This will include date, time, and signature of the staff member changing the child. Whenever possible, children will be supported to change their own clothes.
- Students and agency relievers will work with children only under direct supervision and are not permitted to undertake any caregiving routines.
- If children are to leave Little Explorers as part of the Centre programme (including school visits) they will always be accompanied by a teacher and one or more adults.

Parent Involvement

- Little Explorers has an open door policy where parents are welcome to visit at any time and to be involved as much as possible within the centre.

- Parents and visitors are not permitted to undertake any caregiving routines with other people's children or be alone with them.
- Children cannot leave the centre without written permission from parents, except in an emergency. If a non-custodial parent/guardian wishes to collect a child from Little Explorers the custodial parent will be informed before the child leaves the centre.

Professionalism Procedures

- Management will encourage staff to keep their personal and professional lives separate. Confidentiality is to be maintained at all times.
- At least once each year, the Child Protection Policy will be discussed at a staff meeting to ensure staff are familiar with the policy and are continually reminded of their responsibilities.
- The management team is committed to ensuring staff are familiar with this policy, and is aware of how to prevent, recognise and respond to abuse. All new staff will familiarise themselves with this policy during their induction process.
- Other information relating to preventing child abuse will be included in our parent library enabling parents and staff to access the information at all times.
- If parents have concerns about the treatment of a child by our staff, they are encouraged to make this known to the Manager/Supervisor/Head Teacher, who will ensure that the matter is investigated and acted on immediately as per the Complaints Procedure.

Preventative Education

- All teachers follow the Developing Social Competence in Children Policy, which promotes positive guidance of children's behaviour.
- Teachers work as a team to ensure they can support each other in managing children's challenging behaviours. If a teacher is feeling stressed by the behaviour of a child/ren they should immediately communicate this to another member of the teaching team.
- Information is provided on the prevention and recognition of child abuse as set in Children's Action Plan Guidelines.
- Education of children and family/whānau is important in the prevention of child abuse. We encourage parents to make use of education programmes organised by agencies in the community.

Using Professional Agencies

- The management team and staff will be aware of the professional agencies to contact in the case of suspected child abuse. The staff could contact the Community Public Health Nurse, or Parentline for support, or contact the Ministry of Vulnerable Children. In a serious case, the staff may have contact with the Police.
- Staff should not assume responsibility beyond their level of expertise, and management should contact a professional agency for support where necessary.

Protection from Exposure to Inappropriate Material

- All teachers will be made aware of cyber safety practices when using ICT with children.
- Any magazines and other materials provided for children to use will be checked for inappropriate images.
- Music being played for children or within hearing range of children will be monitored for inappropriate language or themes.

Indicators that Support May be Needed

Sometimes children are neglected or harmed when parents or caregivers do not have the skills, knowledge, or resources to care for them appropriately, or are facing their own challenges, or when the family/whānau system is not working well.

Some things to look out for include:

- parents/carers seem stressed or are struggling to cope
- parents/carers do not have friends or family/whānau to help
- isolating, controlling and/or threatening behaviours within the family/whānau
- adults hitting, yelling, or showing aggressive behaviours
- children are left home alone or unsupervised
- physical injuries
- children displaying bullying or aggressive behaviour
- parents/carers have not accessed services that could help them. There may be valid reasons for this such as transport issues.

Indicators that something is not right for children include:

- not having basic needs met, such as appropriate clothing, school items, food
- becoming withdrawn and speaking less than normal
- showing signs of distress through behaviours such as aggression and frustration, or other behaviours which are out of character
- not managing normal situations and interactions with other children or adults
- bullying other children
- being bullied by other children
- isolating themselves or being excluded by other children
- running away or hiding from a situation
- physically presenting differently – their clothing may not be appropriate for the season, or their physical appearance may be unkempt
- tearful, distressed, sad
- anxious, nervous, lacking confidence
- taking on adult responsibilities, such as young children bringing younger siblings to school
- trying to tell you something but not having the words to say what is happening
- regression in their development

Working Together to Support Children and their Family/Whānau

Every situation is different, and people will experience things differently. It is important to consider the whole situation and environment of the child, including the context of their different cultural values, beliefs and ways of being. Be aware that children will react differently to significant life events, including: parental separation or divorce, losing a loved one (including pets), the arrival of a new sibling, starting at a new school, or becoming part of a blended family/whānau. It is always helpful to speak to the child and their family/whānau to understand what is happening, and what help or support they feel is needed.

When Children Talk about Abuse

The child may try to find different ways to tell you they are unhappy, scared, or unsafe. Talking about what has happened is often scary for them. This means they may try to say things in a way that is tentative, vague or uses other people's names or places.

Sometimes they will say things very quietly or simply make hints. They might act out with dolls or toys or use words that are not appropriate for their age or just do not sound right. They might tell you through artwork, stories, and poems, or by their behaviour. It is important to listen to what they are trying to say, be understanding and take what they say seriously. It is unusual for children to make up situations of abuse.

It is important to be aware of all the ways children may try to tell us about abuse. If you are worried, it is more important to do something about it than understand fully what each type of abuse is. Even if you are not sure, it's important to talk with someone.

Responding to Suspected Child Abuse

Any Person in the Centre is able to Report Suspected Child Abuse

If you're worried about the child and want to make a referral or a report of concern

Call: 0508 326 459 or 0508 FAMILY

Email contact@ot.govt.nz

For emergencies or immediate safety concerns call the Police on 111

Guidelines for when a Child tells you about Abuse

Listen and be reassuring. It is really important to make the child feel safe in telling you about abuse or harm. Listen to them and:

- accept what they have to say (make sure you do not say anything critical like, 'Why didn't you tell me sooner?')
- do not question or be too quick to fill the silences. Give them time and space to talk
- let them know it is the right thing they told you about it
- let them know it is not their fault
- let them know it is not okay for things like this to happen
- remain calm yet confident, and keep your voice low and gentle
- tell them you will get help

Do not promise confidentiality. The best response might be 'thank you for telling me about that, now I need to talk to someone so we can make sure you're safe'.

Write it down as soon as possible. Record as accurately as you can what the child has told you, using the same words they used, and how you responded. Also make a note of how the disclosure came about – for example, by role playing or drawing. Do not question or interview the child. Once the child has made the disclosure and you have reassured and comforted them, make sure you do not question them further. This may interfere with any further action that needs to be taken. Remember it is not your job to investigate if harm has happened. It is your job to take what children say seriously and consult with someone about what to do next.

Key things to consider. If a child talks to you about harm:

- make sure the child knows they have done the right thing in telling you
- try to determine if there are any immediate safety or risk issues that Oranga Tamariki or the Police need to know about urgently, but don't ask any leading questions
- speak to your manager as soon as possible, so they can help you understand what to do next
- ask if there is anyone significant to them and they feel safe with they want you to contact
- do not let anyone who may be involved in the abuse know the child has said anything to you. You can talk to Oranga Tamariki about how to manage this
- it is important that you respect the sensitivity of the information the child has shared with you.

Allegations or Concerns about Staff

If an allegation of abuse is made about a staff member the Centre will ensure the staff member has the following information:

- Ensure the staff member has a contact number of a lawyer specialising in allegations of abuse of children or, if a member, NZEI Te Riu Roa.
- Little Explorers will follow the procedures set out in Appendix A.
- Should allegations of abuse against a staff member be proven this will be treated as serious misconduct.

Licensing Criteria HS 31-33.

Approved by: Name: Position: Date:	Tracey Bentley, Ki Mansell Director, Manager 27/02/25
Consultation:	Staff, Management, Parent Feedback.
Next Review Date:	Feb 2026
Copies Located:	Operations Manual, Website

Child Abuse is Suspected / Discovered



Consult Immediately with Manager or Director

Share your concerns with the centre manager or director.



Any Person in the Centre is able to Report Suspected Child Abuse

If you believe a child is in immediate danger, call the Police on 111.

If you're worried about a child and want to make a referral or report of concern, call Oranga Tamariki on freephone: 0508 332 774 or email edassist@ot.govt.nz



RECORD ANY OBSERVATIONS OR DISCUSSIONS



CONSULT WITH OUTSIDE AGENCIES

(Health Nurse, Oranga Tamariki - Ministry of Vulnerable Children, Police)

Concerns Confirmed	Concerns not Confirmed
1. Report to Oranga Tamariki - Ministry of Vulnerable Children / Police. <i>Await further contact before taking any action.</i> 2. Seek support for yourself. 3. Advise Director/Manager.	Continue to closely monitor the situation in consultation with others.

NOTE: The Centre Staff or Director/Manager have the right to ask for confidentiality when reporting a suspected case abuse to Oranga Tamariki - Ministry of Vulnerable Children / Police. This must be stated clearly in the first contact with Oranga Tamariki - Ministry of Vulnerable Children / Police.

If a Staff Member is accused of Abusing a Child, the Procedures below will be followed.

The Manager Will:

- Make sure that the child is safe and protected in the Childcare Centre environment.
- Inform the employee of their right to support from a person/s of their own choosing, such as a legal representative, union counselor, family member or friend.
- Inform the director as soon as possible.
- Keep records of any formal discussions regarding the matter.
- Contact the child's parents/caregivers when appropriate.
- Contact insurer and/or legal advice.

The Manager and/or Director Will:

- Take the staff member off contact with children in a non-contact role until the investigation has been completed or grant the employee discretionary leave.
- Conduct the initial investigation.
- Inform Oranga Tamariki - Ministry of Vulnerable Children and the Police if necessary. The decision to follow up on any allegations should be made in consultation with these agencies.
- Invoke disciplinary procedures as per the staff member's Employment Contract.
- Little Explorers will treat employees accused of child abuse fairly and according to their contract.

Appendix B

Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008

56 Ill-treatment of Children

- (1) In order to ensure that the standards set out in this Part are complied with, the service provider of a licensed service and any educator who provides education and care for a licensed home-based education and care service must comply with *subclause (2)* if the service provider or educator has reasonable grounds to believe that a person employed or engaged in the service, or any other person:
- (a) has physically ill-treated or abused a child or committed a crime against children; or
 - (b) in guiding or controlling a child, has subjected the child to solitary confinement, immobilisation, or deprivation of food, drink, warmth, shelter, or protection.
- (2) The service provider and the educator must ensure that:
- (a) the person is excluded from coming into contact with the children participating in the service or, as the case requires, the children being educated by the educator; and
 - (b) if satisfied that it is necessary to do so to ensure that no child is ill-treated, ensure that the person is excluded from the service and does not enter or remain in any premises where the service is provided while it is being provided, or as the case requires, is excluded from the home and does not enter it or remain in it while the educator is providing education and care.

57 Health and Safety of Children

- (1) In order to ensure that the standards set out in this Part are complied with, the service provider of a licensed service and any educator who provides education and care for a licensed home-based education and care service must comply with *subclause (2)* if the service provider or educator has reasonable grounds to believe that a person employed or engaged in the service, or any other person:
- (a) is in a state of physical or mental health that presents any risk of danger to children; or
 - (b) has an infectious or contagious disease or condition.
- (2) The service provider and the educator must ensure that:
- (a) the person is excluded from coming into contact with the children participating in the service or, as the case requires, the children being educated by the educator; and
 - (b) if satisfied that it is necessary to do so to ensure that no child becomes ill, ensure that the person is excluded from the service and does not enter or remain in any premises where the service is provided while it is being provided or, as the case requires, is excluded from the home and does not enter it or remain in it while the educator is providing education and care.
- (3) This regulation does not apply in respect of a licensed hospital-based education and care service to which the Health and Disability Services (Safety) Act 2001 applies.

Appendix C

Children's Worker Safety Checklist

Checks Required for Children's Workers

The following checks must have been completed for all people a specified organisation is seeking to employ or engage as a children's worker (including as a contractor) from 1 July 2015 for core children's workforce roles, and from 1 July 2016 for non-core children's workforce roles.

1. Identity confirmation, either by:
 - A. Use of an **electronic identity credential** (e.g., the RealMe identity verification service), and a search of personnel records to check that the identity has not been claimed by someone else.
 - B. Following the regulatory process to provide confidence that:
 - The identity exists (i.e. that it is not fictitious) by **checking an original primary identity document**.
 - The identity is a 'living' identity and the potential children's worker uses that identity in the community by **checking an original secondary identity document**.
 - The potential children's worker links to the identity either by checking an identity document that contains a **photo**, or by using an **identity referee**.
 - Searching **personnel records** to check that the identity has not been claimed by someone.
2. An **interview** of the potential children's worker. The interview may be conducted via telephone or other communications technology.
3. Obtaining and considering a **work history**, covering the preceding five years, provided by the potential children's worker.
4. Obtaining and considering information from the last employer and at least one **referee**, not related to the potential children's worker or part of their extended family.
5. **Seeking information** from The Education Council of New Zealand, or other relevant organisation, including (but not limited to) confirmation that the potential children's worker holds a current Registered Teacher Practising Certificate or is currently a member of the relevant organisation
6. Obtaining and considering information from a **New Zealand Police vet**, unless at least three-yearly New Zealand Police vetting is already completed by The Education Council of New Zealand
7. Evaluation of the above information to **assess the risk** the potential children's worker would pose to the safety of children if employed or engaged, taking into account whether the role is a core children's worker or non-core children's worker role.

Checks Required for Periodic Rechecking

Every three years following their checks at the required standard, the following checks must be complete for each person an organisation continues to employ or engage as either a core or non-core children's worker.

1. Confirmation that the children's worker has not changed their name from the name on the documents produced during the initial identity confirmation (i.e., the presented primary or secondary document). If there has been a change to the person's name since he or she was last safety checked, the person must reconfirm his or her identity by producing a supporting name change document relating to his or her name change.

2. Seeking information from The Education Council of New Zealand or any relevant professional organisation, licensing authority, or registration authority, including (but not limited to) confirmation that the person is currently a member of the organisation, or currently licensed or registered by the authority.
3. Obtaining and considering information from a **New Zealand Police vet**, unless the worker holds a Current Registered Teacher Practising Certificate and The Education Council of New Zealand has confirmed that the registration is current. Investigation of overseas police vetting or clearance should the employee have worked overseas.
4. Evaluation of the above information to **assess the risk** the children's worker would pose to the safety of children if employed or engaged, taking into account whether the role is a core children's workforce or non-care children's worker role.

Checks Required for An Existing Children's Worker

The following checks must have been completed by the date specified in the legislation for all people who are already employed or engaged by a specified organisation. For existing core children's workers this is by 1 July 2018 and for non-core children's workers, 1 July 2019.

Identity confirmation, either by:

Seeking information from any relevant professional organisation, licensing authority, or registration authority, including (but not limited to) confirmation that the person is currently a member of the organisation, or currently licensed or registered by the authority. Use of an electronic identity credential (e.g., the RealMe identity verification service), and a search of personnel records to check that the identity has not been claimed by someone else.

Following the regulatory process to provide confidence that:

- The identity exists (i.e. that it is not fictitious) by checking an original primary identity document. The identity is a 'living' identity and the potential children's worker uses that identity in the community by checking an original secondary identity document.
- The potential children's worker links to the identity either by checking an identity document that contains a photo, or by using an identity referee.
- Searching personnel records to check that the identity has not been claimed by someone else.
- Obtaining and considering information from a New Zealand Police vet, unless at least three-yearly New Zealand Police vetting is already a condition of the children's worker holding professional registration or a practicing certificate (and the specified organisation confirmed that the registration is or certificate is current.)

Evaluation of the above information to assess the risk the children's worker would pose to the safety of children if employed, or engaged taking into account whether the role is a core children's worker role or a non-core children's worker role.

Confirmation that the children's worker has not changed their name from the name on the documents produced during the identity confirmation (i.e. the presented primary or secondary document).

Ref: Vulnerable Children Act 2014 RC v 1.00 May 2015 A Practical guide for Early Childhood Education Services Ngā Kōhanga Reo, Playgroups, Schools and Kura

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