

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Rationale

The Community Networking Trust (CNT) is committed to safeguarding children and young people through the prevention and early detection of abuse and/or neglect.

The purpose of this policy is to provide staff with guidelines to identify and respond appropriately to any concerns of neglect or abuse, whether physical, emotional, or sexual in nature, and understand their role in keeping children and young people safe.

All services delivered by CNT reflect the principle that the welfare and interest of the child and young person are the first and paramount considerations.

This policy covers all staff who have direct or indirect contact with children. For the purposes of this policy "staff" is defined as anyone working for this organisation whether paid, voluntary, contracted or on placement.

Guidelines

- At all times, a child or young person's safety and welfare are paramount.
- We will always comply with relevant legislative responsibilities.
- Information will be shared in a timely way and any concerns about an individual child will be discussed with colleagues, the Team Leader or the Manager.
- A culture where staff feel confident that they can constructively challenge poor practice or raise issues of concern without fear of reprisal will be promoted. If staff have concerns regarding poor practice but don't feel able to challenge this themselves, they should discuss this with their Team Leader or Manager.
- At no time will staff use methods of discipline or control that involve physical or emotional punishment
- Volunteers will be well supervised and visible to staff when interacting with children.

Recruitment and Employment (Safety Checking)

In accordance with the Children's Act 2014, all necessary safety checks will be undertaken on new and existing staff. If there is any suspicion that an applicant might pose a risk to children, that applicant will not be employed or used as a volunteer.

Training, Supervision and Support

The CNT will ensure that all employees who work directly with young people receive the appropriate training and resources to enable them to identify the signs and symptoms of potential abuse. The CNT will also ensure that staff understand their obligations to act in the interests of the child or young person and are supported to take appropriate action in response.

The Community Networking Trust will ensure that the Ministry for Children - Oranga Tamariki be advised immediately where there are concerns a child or young person is at risk from abuse or serious danger.

Responding to suspected Abuse or Neglect

All suspected or observed incidents or reports of child abuse will be responded to in a manner which ensures the child's immediate and future safety. If there is clear evidence or reasonable cause to believe an instance of abuse has taken place the CNT Manager or appropriate staff member shall notify the Ministry for Children - Oranga Tamariki, or NZ Police.

If abuse is suspected or alleged, all details will be documented by the staff member concerned. These concerns must be reported to the CNT Manager or Team leader who will make the 'Report of Concern' to Oranga Tamariki/Police, or, following discussion with the CNT Manager or Team Leader, the staff member involved may make the report of concern independently.

A central register of all 'reports of concern' will be kept by the CNT Manager and updated as appropriate.

Any staff member making a report of concern must ensure that the Manager is given all documentation relating to the Report of Concern. Staff must also ensure that a copy of all documentation relating to the report of concern is placed in the client file on Exess. The information must include any responses received or follow up made by Ministry for Children - Oranga Tamariki. Verification of receipt of the notification must also be received and kept on file in the register.

If a child or young person is in immediate danger call POLICE ON 111

All reports of concern go through the Ministry for Children - Oranga Tamariki Contact Centre,

Phone: 0508 FAMILY or 0508 326 459 Email: contact@ot.govt.nz

Confidentiality and information sharing

The Privacy Act, 2020 and The Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 allow information to be shared to keep children and other vulnerable persons safe when abuse or suspected abuse is reported or investigated.

Note that under sections 15 and 16 of the Childrens' & Young Peoples Well-being Act 1989, any person who believes that a child or vulnerable person has been, or is likely to be, harmed physically, emotionally, or sexually, or ill-treated, abused, neglected or deprived, may report the matter to the Chief Executive - Ministry for Children - Oranga Tamariki or to the Police, and provided the report is made in good faith, no civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against them.

Appropriate support will be provided to staff member(s) making a report of concern; this could be peer support, support from the Team Leader or CNT Manager, Clinical Supervision, or through the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

Allegations or concerns regarding staff

All suspicious or observed incidents or reports of incidents relating to a CNT staff member or volunteer should be reported directly to the CNT Manager, who will record the report and immediately take steps to protect the child. If there is clear evidence or reasonable cause to believe an instance of abuse has taken place, the Manager shall notify the Ministry for Children - Oranga Tamariki and/or the Police as appropriate. Where such reports of concern are made the Manager will consult with Oranga Tamariki/Police before advising the staff member/volunteer concerned, informing them that they have a right to seek legal advice and providing them with an opportunity to respond. They should also be advised of their right to seek support from the relevant union/representative body. Ordinary disciplinary policies and procedures as per the individual employment agreement and relevant statutory obligations should be followed.

Where any investigation relating to allegations of abuse by a staff member has been initiated, and the person concerned resigns, the investigation will be continued.

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Manager: Ruor Date: 29/5/24