

Child Protection Policy

10/12/19

Open Home Foundation is committed to protecting Children and Young People from all types of harm. All Open Home Foundation staff and volunteers (including Foster Parents) have a legal and moral duty to prevent, recognise and report suspected abuse of Children and Young People.

We recognise the Children and Young People we work with are especially vulnerable to being abused. OHF staff and volunteers must be able to recognise signs of abuse and know how to respond to and report abuse allegations. All staff and volunteers must ensure all possible measures are taken to prevent abuse taking place, providing a safe environment for Children and Young People when they and their families/whānau receive support and care from OHF. Providing a safe environment for Children and Young People also has the effect of safeguarding OHF staff and volunteers against allegations of abuse.

Background

The Vulnerable Children Act 2014 (VCA) requires the New Zealand Government to improve the wellbeing of vulnerable children. One of the measures involved in achieving this is through protecting vulnerable children from abuse and neglect. The VCA requires all providers of children's services, including approved Child and Family Support Services under section 396 of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, to develop a child protection policy describing provisions on recognising and reporting abuse.

OHF honours its responsibility to keep children and young people safe by rigorously vetting and safety checking all staff and volunteers. In addition, OHF employs many other measures described in this policy, all of which work together to help OHF staff and volunteers recognise prevent, report and respond to abuse.

RECOGNISING ABUSE

Physical abuse

Physical abuse is any act or acts that result in inflicted injury to a Child or Young Person. The injuries may be deliberately inflicted, or unintentional. Injuries caused by physical abuse may include:

- Abdominal or head injuries
- Cuts and abrasions
- Fractures and sprains
- Internal injuries
- Burns and scalds
- Poisoning

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is any act, or acts that results in the exploitation of a Child or Young Person, whether consensual or not, for the sexual gratification of a parent or other person. These acts may be performed by adults, or other children, or young people. Sexual abuse may include, but is not restricted to:

- Non-contact abuse; (exhibitionism, voyeurism, suggestive behaviour or comments, exposure to pornographic material)
- Contact abuse; (fondling, masturbation, oral sex, finger or object penetration, encouraging child to perform sexual acts, rape, molestation, sodomy, incest)
- Involvement in activities for pornography or prostitution

Psychological maltreatment or emotional abuse

Rejection

Children or Young People may be rejected by adults for a number of reasons. Significant behavioural problems may make it difficult for adults to accept and love them, to the extent that the rejection leads to neglect of the need for nurture. This type of rejection is more than the safe, emotional distance an adult may keep from a Child or Young Person

Children or Young People who are different in some way (commonly but not exclusively those with disabilities) may be rejected consciously or unconsciously at any age. Again, neglect is a common consequence, but emotional and even physical abuse is also common.

Isolation

Cutting Children off from normal life, from their family/whānau and community, or from other Children and Young People in the home, leads to slow development and affects self-esteem and social relationships. It is harmful to stop a Child or Young Person from participating in activities outside the home, or to lock them up as punishment.

Terrorizing

Creating an atmosphere of fear by verbal and non-verbal methods is another form of abuse, e.g. yelling and cursing Children and Young People; insisting they comply with authority in order to gain 'privileges' which are actually their rights; threatening; constantly punishing; enforcing strict rules by using public ridicule and shaming; constantly criticising and name calling.

Ignoring

Psychological unavailability is a type of maltreatment e.g. being emotionally detached, seldom talking and playing, disregarding the Child's or Young Person's interests and wishes.

Corrupting

Allowing and instigating anti-social behaviour of Children or Young People. This may occur either directly or by not making efforts to socialise them. Examples are exploiting Children, behaving in questionable moral and legal ways, encouraging Children or Young Persons to break the law, or violate norms.

Causing developmentally harmful conditions, some examples include:

- Administering non-prescribed medication or over-medicating a Child or Young Person in order to control them
- Overfeeding a Child or Young Person to a serious and harmful degree
- Promoting conformity and failing to recognise the individuality and uniqueness of each Child or Young Person

Neglect

- Failure to provide adequate food or clothing
- Lack of supervision
- Failure to get medical attention

The use of corporal or emotional punishment to discipline Children and Young People is strictly forbidden and could represent serious misconduct as it is harmful, unnecessary and illegal - Section 59 of the Crimes Act 1961 prohibits the use of force for the purposes of correction of children in New Zealand.

PREVENTING ABUSE

Open Home Foundation has a responsibility to keep all the Children and Young People we work with safe from abuse. We achieve this by promoting a culture of openness and transparency in our organisation. To prevent abuse, best practice indicates all individuals working closely with Children and Young People must be rigorously screened, trained and supervised in their work. We also take a team approach to caring for Children and Young People, encouraging the flow of information, observations and ideas between families, OHF staff and volunteers to ensure people avoid working in isolation. Prevention of abuse is achieved by observing our policies and processes in the following areas:

Recruitment

All employees must undergo comprehensive safety checks in accordance with the Safety Checks Policy. Interviews must be conducted by the Practice Manager (or Senior Social Worker by delegation) or Regional Manager Practice for the Service Centre, during which specific questions on the applicant's employment history and attitude towards child safety must be asked. No person with a conviction for crimes in relation to violence or offending against children may be employed or allowed to volunteer or become a Foster Parent for OHF.

Training

Foster Parents undergo CREATE training which has specific modules to address recognising, preventing and reporting abuse.

All new Social Workers attend all 6 core modules of CREATE at their Service Centre. They also are trained in Therapeutic Crisis intervention (TCI); Signs of Safety and Safety Planning, and must receive a policy and process orientation which includes responding to abuse allegations.

Support Workers must undergo training to understand the specific needs of the Children and Young People they work with and how to meet these needs safely. They also undergo Therapeutic Crisis Intervention training and may be requested to attend other training as part of ongoing Professional Development.

Supervision

Social Workers are supervised by their Practice Manager or supervisor according to the Social Work Practice Supervision Policy.

Support Workers are supervised by their manager in line with the number of hours they work, according to the Support Worker Supervision Policy. They are also required to attend team meetings on a regular basis where the care of the Children and Young People they work with is discussed and reviewed. Supervision contributes to a culture of openness and transparency around the care of Children and Young People and helps to build safety into the interactions Support Workers have with them.

Assessment and Planning

Social Workers are responsible for addressing concerns over the care and protection of Children and Young People as part of their core duties. They do this by carrying out thorough assessments to determine the safety of the Child or Young Person in their current situation.

Where Children and Young People are in the care of their family/whānau, Safety Plans are developed together with the family and a Safety Network is established to ensure the Children or Young People are kept safe from abuse and neglect. Everyone in the Child or Young Person's Safety Network must take responsibility for following the Safety Plan.

Where Children and Young People receive disability support services, individualised plans contain important information for Social Workers, Support Workers and Foster Parents to use in managing behaviour and developing and improving Children and Young People's communication skills. Helping Children and Young People communicate effectively and confidently is vital in making them less vulnerable to abuse.

Case notes

Social Workers are required to case note all actions they complete for a Child or Young Person and place these on the OSCAR file in accordance with the Practice Recording policy.

Support Workers must case note their activities with Children and Young People in accordance with the Case Notes and Data Collection Policy, including where the child has been, who they have met and what they did.

Foster Parents are required to keep diaries with notes on the care of Children and Young People, including entries on subjects including but not limited to: visits or contact, behaviour, injuries, and significant statements by the Child or Young Person.

Sighting Children and Young People in OHF custody

Children and Young People in OHF custody must be seen and spoken to on their own as recorded in their care plan in accordance with the Monitoring a Child or Young Person in Care policy. Social Workers must make use of this opportunity to speak to the Child or Young Person about their care and give the Child or Young Person an opportunity raise any concerns they may have.

Personal Cares – Disability Support Services

Where OHF Support Workers help Children and Young People with personal cares, this must be carried out in accordance with the Personal Cares process which details best practice for providing personal cares in a safe way. When Support Workers are required to supervise or carry out personal cares, bathroom and toilet doors may not be fully closed and must never be locked.

Restraint

Open Home Foundation is a non-restraint organisation. The use of restraint is a serious intervention that requires sound risk assessment. All incidents of restraint must be reported to the Practice Manager according to the Restraint Prevention and Minimisation Policy.

Reporting medical incidents, injuries and behavioural incidents

Open Home Foundation requires all staff and volunteers to report incidents where harm has occurred or is alleged to have occurred as part of the Critical Incident Process. This includes incidents where Children and Young People are injured, restrained, or where an allegation of abuse has been made, whether the abuse is against a Child or Young Person or an adult.

Support Workers and Foster Parents providing care under Oasis and Wraparound services have processes they must follow to report any issues of a medical nature (including injuries) that arise while they are caring for Children or Young People. Support Workers must also report all behavioural incidents where a Child or Young Person exhibits behaviour that causes any type of harm or concern. This ongoing

reporting requirement helps Support Workers and Foster Parents to document any signs that the Child or Young Person they are caring for may be experiencing neglect or abuse.

Adult-child ratios

Foster Parents and Support Workers are often required to care for Children and Young People with no other adults present. Where possible, Support Workers and Foster Parents should avoid engaging in activities that involve spending excessive amounts of time alone with Children and Young People out of view of other adults.

Where there are more adults present, Social Workers, Support Workers and Foster Parents should use a '2 Adult' rule, making every effort to keep within view of another adult at all times.

Open Home Foundation accepts this may be impractical for Foster Parents, however the aim is to avoid Children and Young People being isolated from their peers and maintaining the highest level of transparency possible in the care of Children and Young People.

Sleeping arrangements

Children and young people over the age of 1 year must never share a bedroom with an adult in accordance with the Sleeping Arrangements for Children and Young People in Care policy.

Professional Boundaries

Social Workers are bound by the requirements of the OHF Individual Employment Agreement to behave in a professional manner at all times with their OHF colleagues, other professionals and the families OHF works with. All OHF Social Workers must become registered with the Social Work Registration Board and are expected to meet the Social Work Registration Board Code of Conduct. Social Workers registered with ANZASW are also bound by the Code of Ethics of the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers.

Support Workers must abide by the Professional Boundaries policy as well as the terms of the OHF Individual Employment Agreement (where applicable). They may not take Children and Young People to their own home or the home of another person.

REPORTING ABUSE

Abuse allegation – the Practice Manager **must be informed immediately** when there is an allegation of what a staff member or volunteer believes is abuse or neglect.

Care Concern – the Practice Manager must be informed as soon as possible if a staff member or volunteer has concerns about the quality of care a child is receiving from OHF Foster Parents or Support Workers.

The Practice Manager will follow the Abuse Allegation of Child or Young Person in Care policy and process.

Allegation of abuse against an OHF staff member or volunteer

In the event of an allegation of abuse against an OHF staff member or volunteer, including Foster Parents or a member of a Foster Parent's family, the Practice Manager will follow the Abuse Allegation of Child or Young Person in Care policy and process.

RESPONDING TO ABUSE

How to respond to a disclosure of abuse

Protect the child's privacy

If a child begins to tell of their abuse in group or public setting, reassure them that you want to hear what they've got to say. Tell them you want to talk about it in a more quiet place and as soon as possible. Older children and teens might want a friend with them who they may have already told. Don't probe or ask leading questions - your role is to let the child speak and to listen, not to find out what happened.

Listen

Do not put words in the child's mouth. Allow them to tell only as much as they want to. It is not your responsibility to determine the extent of the abuse, nor the person responsible for it.

Avoid making promises

Avoid making the promise that you will not tell, but reassure you will only tell someone who can help, and let him or her know what you will tell them. If they want to know what will happen now, tell them you will find out and let them know rather than make promises or statements that may be inaccurate.

Five Basic Rules

1. Believe what they say.
2. Say you are glad they told you.
3. Say you are sorry it happened.
4. Let them know it is not their fault.
5. Let them know you will help.

Let them know they are not the only ones

This sort of thing has happened to others as well.

Do not overreact

A Child's or Young Person's initial disclosure of abuse, especially sexual abuse, is a critical moment. They will be monitoring your every reaction.

Do not panic

If the Child or Young Person judges you unable to handle the situation or that it shocks and confounds you, they may clam up and not disclose any more of the story (or retract or deny it matters).

Do what you can to ensure the child or young person's immediate safety

Do not alert the alleged abuser. Reassure the Child or Young Person that you will get help to keep them safe.

Keep a record of what has happened

Write it down as soon as possible. Try to put the exact words the Child or Young Person said, and what you said.

Report to Open Home Foundation ASAP

Oranga Tamariki and the Police will be involved in the investigation of any allegation of abuse. When they are, you may need to reassure the Child or Young Person it's okay to tell Oranga Tamariki and that everyone is working together to keep them (the Child or Young Person) safe.

Get support for yourself

Dealing with abuse can be hard; many different emotions may emerge for you. You may decide to talk with your Practice Manager.

How to respond to incidents of abuse or suspected abuse

Abuse of a Child or Young Person by others

Immediately report to the Social Worker, Practice Manager or Police any abuse or suspected abuse of Children and Young People. Oranga Tamariki will be informed of any abuse allegations.

Abuse by a Child or Young Person

If a Child or Young Person physically, sexually or emotionally abuses you or any other person, report the incident to the Social Worker, Practice Manager or the Police immediately depending on the severity of the incident.

Try to remain calm, but firmly tell the Child or Young Person that this behaviour is not acceptable and that you must report it.

The earlier the notification and intervention the better, so the alleged victim, the perpetrator and all others involved can receive appropriate help before the problem escalates.

Abuse by a Child's or Young Person's family

OHF staff and volunteers at times work closely with the Child or Young Person's family/whānau; this relationship can also give rise to conflict.

Threats, intimidation or actual physical or sexual assaults must be reported and stopped. Report these to the Practice Manager or the Police. If you think you are at risk, tell the Practice Manager. Follow the Social Worker Safety Policy when planning meetings/hui with family/whānau.