29. Child Protection

*(Including Abuse, Neglect & Vulnerable Children)*

**Rationale**

All children have a right to be kept safe from harm.

**Purpose**

* The Avonside Early Childhood Centre is committed to protect vulnerable children from abuse and neglect through its actions, activities and staff.
* This policy recognises the important role and responsibility of all our staff in the protection of children by identifying and responding to suspected child abuse or neglect and appropriately responding to concerns about the wellbeing of a child in a timely and appropriate way.
* The interests and welfare of the child will be the prime considerations when any decision regarding suspected abuse is made.
* The Centre is committed to supporting parents and families and will aim to meet the needs of all parties concerned in a suspected abuse case.

**Designated person for child protection:**

The Centre Manager/Senior teacheris 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.

**Definition of Abuse**

Child abuse is the harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill-treatment, neglect or deprivation of any child. It involves any action or inaction that results in harm to a child.

This includes:

* Physical Abuse: Behaviour of any person (child or adult) that causes non-accidental injury or pattern of injuries or endangers or impairs a person’s physical or emotional health or development. It can be, but is not limited to; bruising, cutting, hitting, beating, biting, burning, and causing abrasions, strangulation, suffocation, and 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**:** is an adult’s action that results in significant harm to a child’s self-esteem or their intellectual, emotional or social development and functioning.
* Verbal Abuse**:** language that results in significant harm to a child’s self-esteem or their intellectual, emotional or social development and functioning.

This includes:

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

**Definition of Neglect**

Child neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical or psychological needs, leading to adverse or impaired physical or emotional functioning or development.

This includes:

* Physical Neglect: not providing the necessities of life, like a warm place, food and clothing.
* Emotional Neglect: significant failure to meet a child’s need for nurture and support.
* Neglectful Supervision: leaving children without someone safe to look after them.
* Medical Neglect: not taking care of health needs.

**Guidelines**

**Protecting Children in the Centre**

* Children’s’ rights will be respected.
* Children will be empowered through choice and decision making.
* Teachers will promote and encourage children’s self-esteem and confidence.
* Teachers will talk and listen to children.
* Teachers will use positive behaviour management strategies.
* Avonside Early Childhood Centre has an ongoing commitment to appropriate training, development and supervision in child protection.
* The Centre operates an open door approach to childcare. Parents are encouraged to be a part of the programme when and as often as they choose.
* All practicable steps are to be taken to protect children from exposure to inappropriate material.
* Staff will check newspapers/magazines brought into the service to ascertain if it is suitable for children’s use.
* Teachers will be responsible for toileting the children at the Centre.
* Parents will only toilet their own child.
* Children will be encouraged to manage their own hygiene routines where possible.
* Children will learn appropriate names for their body parts.
* Teachers will keep a record of anyone who visits the Centre.
* No child will be allowed to leave the Centre with anyone not specifically named by the parent on the sign-in sheet, or by telephone call from the parent (in case of emergency)
* Permanent staff will keep professional and personal lives separate. E.g. no babysitting allowed.
* If any employee has been suspected of misconduct against a child, they will be suspended from the Centre on full pay until investigations are complete.
* *Safer Recruitment -As per Regulations 56 & 57*

The Centre will exclude any person employed or engaged in the service from coming into contact with children if there are reasonable grounds to believe that the person:

* Has physically ill treated or abused a child.
* Committed a crime against children.
* In controlling or guiding a child, has subjected the child to solitary confinement, immobilisation, or deprivation of food, drink, warmth, shelter or protection.
* Is in a state of physical or mental health that presents any risk of danger to children.
* Has an infectious or contagious disease or condition. (If necessary, to ensure no child becomes ill, the Centre will exclude the person from the Centre and ensures they do not remain on the premises while the Centre is operating).
* Standard safety checking – As per Selection and Appointment Policy in line with Vulnerable Children’s Act 2014

**Responding to child abuse**

**Indicators of potential abuse:**

* Physical signs – e.g. unexplained injuries, burns, fractures, unusual or excessive itching, genital injuries, and sexually transmitted diseases.
* Behavioural concerns – e.g. age inappropriate sexual interest or play, fear of a certain person or place, eating disorders/substance abuse, disengagement/neediness, aggression.
* Development delays – e.g. small for their age, cognitive delays, falling behind in school, poor speech and social skills.
* 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.
* The child talking about things that indicate abuse (sometimes called and allegation or disclosure).

Any person, staff or parent can report suspected abuse should the need arise. Staff should advise the Senior Teacher if a report has been filed. Teachers will take prompt and appropriate action in any case of suspected child abuse including:

* Notifying and/or seeking advice from Child Youth and Family Services or NZ Police.
* Acting on any physical signs immediately teachers will:
* Care for and comfort the child.
* Notify another staff member.

**Disclosure:**

* Listening carefully and sensitively to the child teachers will:
* Let the child know you believe what they say.
* Let the child know they were right to tell you.
* Say you are sorry to the child that this happened to them.
* Let the child know it is not their fault.
* Let the child know you will help them.
* Teachers will keep careful written observations and records:
* Dates and times of events.
* Physical and behavioural indicators.
* Details of disclosure and adult response.
* Parental reaction to the situation.
* Confidentiality will always be maintained
* Unless the Parent/Whanau is suspected of being party to alleged abuse, teachers will maintain open communication and transparent relationships with the parents/whanau to ensure concerns can be addressed unless this would result in an escalation of risk.
* Avonside Early Childhood Centre has a commitment to develop and maintain links with iwi, Pasifika and other cultural and community groups and to ensure that important cultural concepts are integrated, as appropriate into practice.

**Prevention of unauthorised removal of children (including non-custodial parent)**

* Staff will ensure that only persons named as being able to collect children may take a child from the Centre.
* If an unknown person wishes to take a child from the Centre, they will be asked to remain at the Centre while a staff member contacts the child’s parent. (If the parent is unable to be contacted emergency contacts will be called and asked to come to the Centre).
* If permission to take the child is not granted the person will be asked to leave the Centre.
* If the person will not leave the Centre, or becomes abusive or takes the child without authority, the police will be called immediately.
* Staff will note description of person who has taken the child and any vehicle licence plates.
* Parents will be notified after police are called.

*Links:*

*Legal definition of family violence section 3 of the Domestic Violence act 1995*

*For further information, refer to Children’s action Plan* [*http://www.childrensactionplan.govt.nz/assets/CAP-Uploads/childrens-workforce/Safer-Organisations-safer-children.pdf*](http://www.childrensactionplan.govt.nz/assets/CAP-Uploads/childrens-workforce/Safer-Organisations-safer-children.pdf)

**Support Agencies**

* *NZ Police*
* *Child Youth and Family Services*
* *Independent counsellors*
* *Strengthening Families*
* *Lifeline*
* *Victim Support*
* *Whānau Ora*
* *Iwi Social Services*
* *Budget services*
* *Medical Practitioners*
* *Mental health, drug and alcohol services*
* *Sexual Abuse Centre*

Last reviewed: 30/8/19

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date:30/8/19

On behalf of the Board of Trustees

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date:30/8/19

On behalf of Centre Management