

Policy on Child Protection and Wellbeing

Including risk of self harm and suicide prevention



Policy Summary

Purpose Statement To protect the safety and promote the wellbeing of children and young persons aged up to the age of 18 years while they are in our care.

Policy Scope This policy applies to all volunteers and staff. This should be used wherever:

- abuse,
- neglect or
- self harm and /or suicide risk of children participating in our programmes is suspected or identified, regardless of whether the child is a member of the organisation.

Policy Principles

- Our first and paramount consideration is the rights, welfare and safety of the child/tamariki, young person /rangatahi
- Our care and programme delivery contribute to the nurturing and protection of children and advocate for them
- Wherever possible the family/whanau participate in the making of decisions affecting that child/tamariki, young person/rangatahi
- All volunteers and staff recognise, accommodate and are sensitive to other cultures
- The organisation has volunteers and staff who are competent in the identification and management of actual and potential abuse and/or neglect and risk of self harm/suicide through the organisation's policy and procedures and development programme.

Organisational commitment to child protection and prevention of self harm/suicide

Our Guiding Development Committee and staff leadership team will ensure that:

- There are organisation -wide policies for the appropriate response to, and management of, child abuse and neglect, prevention of self harm and management of suicide risk.
- The child protection policy and procedures comply with legislative requirements, the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and best practice.
- Organisation-wide procedures exist to provide appropriate, adequate support for, and supervision of, those affected by child abuse and neglect or at risk of self harm or suicide.

Volunteers and staff working with children and volunteers of our organisation have responsibility for the safety of children in our care and for the appropriate management of identified and suspected child abuse and/or neglect, self harm and/or suicide risk factor.

These responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- complying at all times with minimum adult-to-child ratios as per GirlGuiding NZ policies
- having a female leader present at all times
- being aware of situations which may present risks and manage these

- appropriately
- limiting opportunities to be alone and/or out of sight with girl members
- ensuring any physical contact always takes place in an open or public environment and does not take place in secret or out of sight of others.
- being guided, when making any physical contact with girl members, by the principle that they will do so only in order to meet the girl member's physical or emotional needs. Touching must not be initiated to gratify the needs of the leader/helper. If a girl member initiates physical contact in the seeking of affection, reassurance or comfort, it is appropriate to respond in a manner suitable for that girl member's developmental stage and needs
- ensuring that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed
- being conversant with our Policy on Child Protection and Wellbeing and related policies
- understanding the statutory referral processes and management of identified or suspected abuse and neglect
- understanding available self harm and suicide prevention support services and how to refer
- attending initial training, refresher training and regular updates as appropriate for their area of work
- seeking advice when child abuse or other risk factors are suspected or identified.

The Guiding Development Manager has in addition the designated responsibilities relating to child protection for:

- reviewing the Child Protection and Wellbeing Policy and procedures as required
- co-ordinating a system wide response to child abuse and neglect
- providing support and advice to personnel regarding disclosures and child abuse and neglect.

The National Volunteer Adviser has in addition responsibility for the provision of relevant and accessible training

Definitions

Child abuse refers to the harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill treatment, abuse, neglect, or serious deprivation of any child/tamariki, young person/rangatahi (Section 14B Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989).

This includes actual, potential and suspected abuse.

- Physical abuse- any acts that may result in physical harm of a child or young person.
- Sexual abuse- any acts that involve forcing, grooming or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, including sexual exploitation, whether or not they are aware of what is happening.
- Emotional abuse- any act or omission that results in adverse or impaired psychological, social, intellectual and emotional functioning or development.
- 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.

Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki- the government department responsible for the care and protection of children and young people.

New Zealand Police- the agency responsible for responding to situations where a child is in imminent danger, including investigating cases of abuse or neglect where an offence may have occurred.

Identifying possible abuse or neglect

Indicators of potential abuse and neglect include:

- physical signs
- developmental delays
- physical neglect
- medical neglect
- behavioural concerns
- the child talking about things that indicate abuse (sometimes called an allegation or disclosure)
- neglectful supervision
- abandonment.

Self-harm

Self-harm is the direct, deliberate act of hurting or injuring your body.

Common indicators of self-harming in children and young people include:

- overdoses
- self-mutilation e.g. cutting skin on wrists, arms or legs
- biting and scratching at skin
- head banging and punching self
- burning of skin
- hair pulling

Suicide Prevention

Warning signs in young people

Many young people who think about self-harm or suicide have experience of depression so it is important to recognise the signs of depression in young people:

- excessive irritability or change in mood
- boredom
- seeing their friends less often
- dropping out of regular activities
- lowered marks or interest in schoolwork.

Children and young people at risk of depression, self-harm and suicide include those impacted by:

- family members who have depression
- unhappy family environment
- being high achievers who may be under pressure to do better
- bullying
- physical, sexual or emotional abuse

Every situation is different and it is important to consider all available information about the child and their environment before reaching conclusions. For example, behavioural concerns may be the result of life events, such as divorce, accidental injury or the arrival of a new sibling etc.

Further information about signs and symptoms can be found on the following links:

<http://safeguardingchildren.org.nz/worried-about-a-child/>

<https://www.mvcot.govt.nz/worried-about-a-child-tell-us/>

<http://www.childmatters.org.nz/88/resources-info-centre/resources> (then click on the link to the 'How can I tell' booklet)

<http://www.commonground.org.nz/common-issues/thoughts-and-feelings/suicidal-thoughts-and-feelings/>

Allegations or concerns about staff or adult members

All matters involving allegations against staff or volunteers must be escalated to the relevant line manager.

To ensure the child is safe, steps may be taken to remove the volunteer or staff members against whom an allegation has been made from the environment, subject to the requirements of the applicable individual contract and relevant employment law in the case of staff, or relevant GirlGuiding NZ policies in the case of volunteers.

Consultation will occur with the relevant government department and/or the Police before taking any further actions.

GirlGuiding NZ commits not to use 'settlement agreements', where these are contrary to the culture of child protection. Settlement agreements allow an adult to agree to resign, provided that no disciplinary action is taken, and a future reference is agreed. Where the conduct at issue concerns the safety or wellbeing of a child, use of such agreements is contrary to a culture of child protection.

Confidentiality and information sharing

All observations, after an investigation has been notified, must be kept in writing with the Guiding Development Manager, but the file will be sealed for privacy reasons.

The Privacy Act 1993 and the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989 allows information to be shared to keep children safe when abuse or suspected abuse is reported and investigated. Note that under sections 15 and 16 of the CYPF Act, any person who believes that a child 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 government department responsible for the care and protection of children and young people or the Police and, provided the report is made in good faith, no civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against them.

Recruitment GirlGuiding NZ's volunteer and staff recruitment processes reflect a commitment to child protection and wellbeing by including comprehensive screening procedures.

Relevant Legislation Vulnerable Children Act 2014
Care of Children Act 2004
Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989
Domestic Violence Act 1995
Privacy Act 1993
The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC)

Date of policy: **December 2012**

Last reviewed: **November 2017**

Due for review:



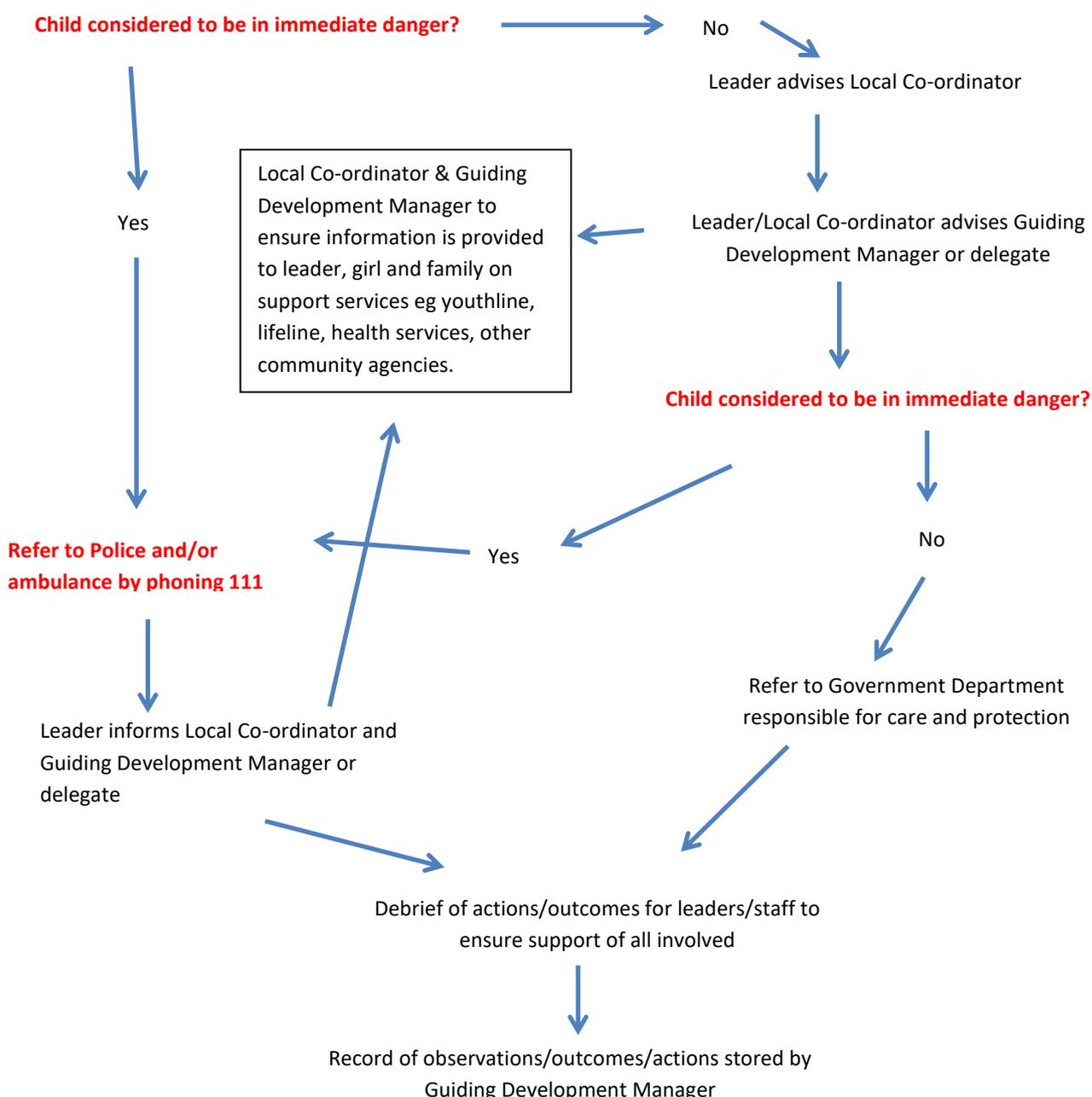
Process for Responding to Disclosures or Suspected / Observed Abuse

Including Violence, Neglect, Abuse, Self-harm, Suicide Risk, Concern for Emotional Wellbeing

Quick Reference Guide

Leader receives disclosure / has concerns about possible child abuse, neglect or risk.

Advise parent/caregiver as soon as possible **only if it is clear that parent/caregiver is not the abuser/involved.
If you are not comfortable or unsure, seek advice by following this flowchart*



Process for Responding to Disclosure or Suspected/Observed Abuse: Including Violence, Neglect, Abuse, Self-harm, Suicide Risk, Concern for Emotional Wellbeing

Responding to a child when the child discloses:

In all cases where there is concern about a child/tamariki/young person/rangatahi being or likely to be abused or neglected, or other risk situation, the leader will report this to their team leader and notify the Guiding Development Manager or her delegate to assist in the formulation of a plan to address the care and protection concerns.

A referral may be made to the Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki at any time.

If a child is in immediate danger a referral should be made directly to the Police and/or ambulance by calling 111.

Listen to the child	Disclosures by children are often subtle and need to be handled with particular care, including an awareness of the child's cultural identity and how this affects interpretation of their behaviour and language
Reassure the child	Let the child know that they are not in trouble and have done the right thing. Do not interview the child or ask questions about the suspected abuse or neglect, or other situation. Do not make promises that cannot be kept, e.g. 'I will keep you safe now'
If the child is visibly distressed	Provide appropriate reassurance and re-engage in appropriate activities under supervision until they are able to participate in ordinary activities
If the child is in immediate danger	Re-involve the child in ordinary activities and stay with them until support arrives Contact the police and/or ambulance immediately by phoning 111
Support	Give information on community support services available to child, family and leader as appropriate to situation disclosed eg: youthline, lifeline, victim support, health services, other community agency.

Process to follow – recording and notifying:

Process to follow	For example	Key considerations
Recording	As soon as possible record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The child's disclosure or observations - Date, time location - Factual concerns or observations that have led to suspicion of abuse or neglect, or other situation (e.g., any physical, behavioural or developmental concerns) - Action taken - Any other relevant information 	Relevant information can inform any future actions
Decision- making	Discuss any disclosures, concern about suspected abuse or neglect, or other situation, with your team leader. Advise the Guiding Development Manager or her delegate. Treat the situation as confidential and do not discuss it with anyone else. Parents/caregivers will be informed as	No decisions should be made in isolation

	<p>soon as possible unless the concern relates to suspected abuse by a parent/caregiver or may put the child at further risk.</p> <p>The Guiding Development Manager will brief other personnel as appropriate to ensure the safety of the child and to support the leader involved.</p> <p>Depending on the circumstances, the Guiding Development Manager may delegate to a staff member to work with the leader, co-ordinate information and act as a liaison with referral agencies.</p>	<p>Parents/caregivers should only be informed at this stage if it is clear that this will not compromise the safety of the child.</p>
Notifying authorities	<p>If child is in immediate danger refer immediately to Police and/or ambulance- 111</p> <p>In all other cases, notify the Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki promptly, within one working day, if there is a belief that a child has been, or is likely to be abused or neglected.</p> <p>A phone call is the preferred initial contact as this enables both parties to discuss the nature of the concerns and appropriate response options.</p> <p>Notifications should be made to the Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki national contact centre on 0508 FAMILY (0508 326 459) or contact@mvcot.govt.nz.</p>	<p>Immediate means if the child could suffer harm (eg by returning to home environment, threatens to commit suicide)</p> <p>The Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - make the decision to inform the parents or caregivers, in conjunction with our organisation - advise what, if any immediate action may be appropriate, including referring to the Police.
Following the advice of authorities	<p>Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki advice will include what, if any, action may be appropriate, including referring the concern to the Police.</p>	<p>The Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki is responsible for looking into the situation to find out what may be happening and referral to any other appropriate agencies.</p>
Support	<p>Give information on community support services available to child, family and leader as appropriate to situation disclosed eg youthline, lifeline, victim support, health services, other community agency.</p>	
Debrief	<p>Debrief of actions and outcomes occurs with leaders and staff involved</p>	<p>It is important for those involved to receive appropriate support and not work in isolation.</p>

Storing relevant information	Securely store: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - record of the concern - record of any related discussions - action taken by GirlGuiding NZ, including any rationale - this concern with any earlier concerns, if this notification is based on an accumulation of concerns. 	Sealed record of notifications to be kept by Guiding Development Manager.
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