

# 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 or 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 or 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**

Guiding Leadership 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 and Wellbeing 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 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 factors.

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 in a physical Guiding environment

- being aware of situations which may present risks and managing these appropriately
- ensuring communication happens through approved channels
- 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
- being aware of their responsibilities in managing situations where children need assistance in accordance with this policy
- 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 Head of Girl Experience has in addition the designated responsibilities relating to child protection for:

- reviewing the Child Protection and Wellbeing Policy and procedures as required

The Girl Experience Manager- Classic Programme has in addition designated responsibilities for:

- co-ordinating a system wide response to child abuse and neglect
- providing support and advice to personnel regarding disclosures and child abuse and neglect
- ensuring 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 or young person/rangatahi (Section 14(1) Oranga Tamariki 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.

*Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children*- 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, eg. 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.

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

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

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

<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 staff line manager that the role reports into.

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 Girl Experience Manager- Classic Programme, but the file will be sealed for privacy reasons.

The Privacy Act 1993 and Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 allow 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 Oranga Tamariki 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 Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children 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** Children Act 2014  
Care of Children Act 2004  
Oranga Tamariki 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:** March 2020

**Due for review:** March 2023

# Process for Responding to Disclosures or Suspected / Observed Abuse

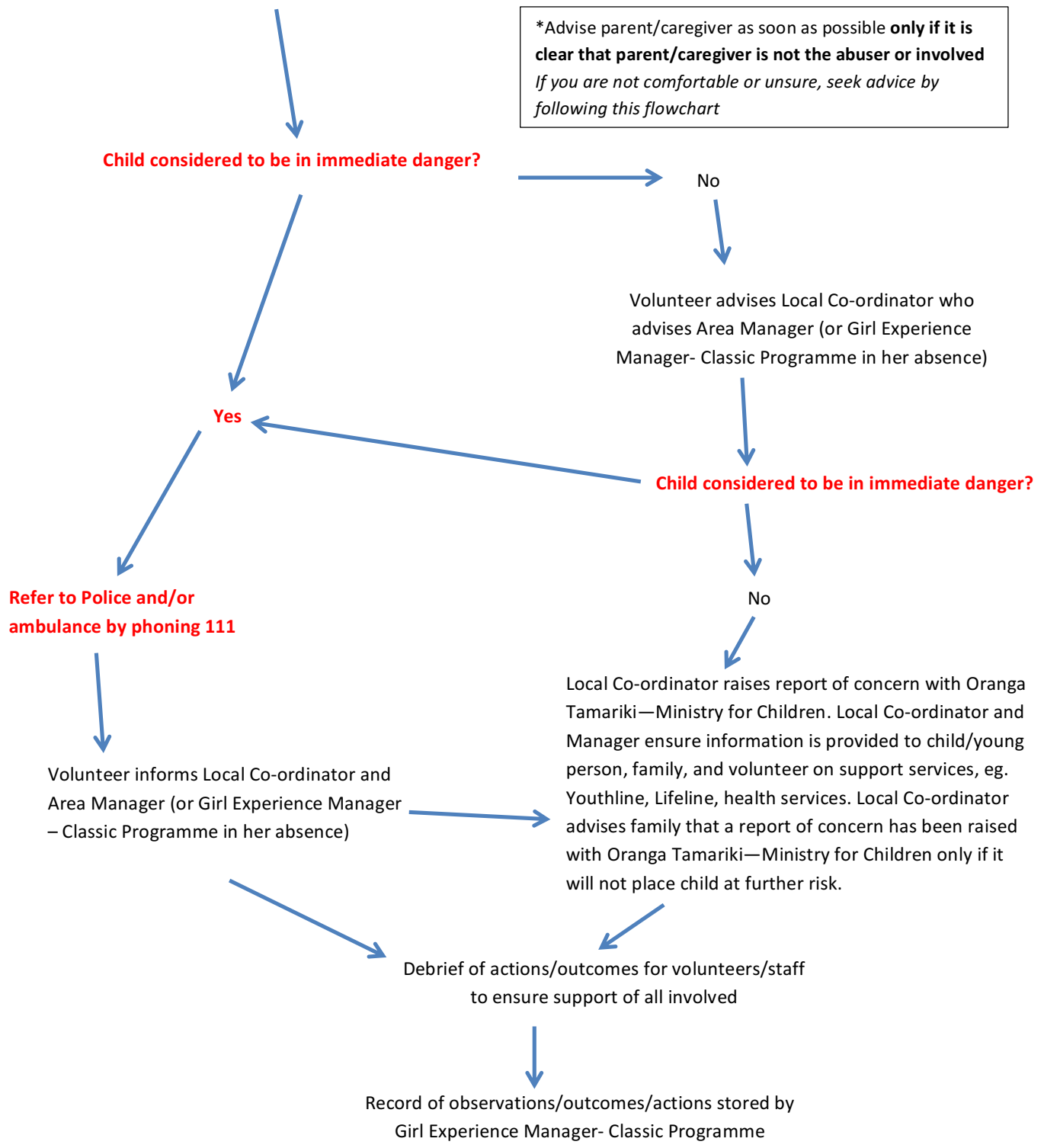
Including Violence, Neglect, Abuse, Self-harm, Suicide Risk, and Concern for Emotional Wellbeing



## Quick Reference Guide

Volunteer 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 or involved**  
If you are not comfortable or unsure, seek advice by following this flowchart*



# Process for Responding to Disclosures or Suspected / Observed Abuse

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



## Responding to a child when the child discloses:

In all cases where there is concern about a child/tamariki or young person/rangatahi being or likely to be abused or neglected, or other risk situation, the volunteer will report this to their co-ordinator and notify the relevant Area Manager (or Girl Experience Manager- Classic Programme in her absence) to assist in developing a plan to address the care and protection concerns.

A referral may be made to Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children 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, eg. “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.
<b>If the child is in immediate danger</b>	<b>Contact the police and/or ambulance immediately by phoning 111.</b> Re-involve the child in ordinary activities and stay with them until support arrives.
Support	Give information on community support services available to child/young person, family, and volunteer as appropriate to situation disclosed, eg. Youthline, Lifeline, victim support, health services, or other community agencies.

## Process to follow – recording and notifying:

Process	Example	Key Considerations
Recording	As soon as possible record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The child’s disclosure or observations</li> <li>- Date, time, location</li> <li>- Factual concerns or observations that have led to suspicion of abuse or neglect, or other situation (eg. any physical, behavioural or developmental concerns)</li> <li>- Action taken</li> <li>- Any other relevant information</li> </ul>	Relevant information can inform any future actions.  Retain any information written or sent and ensure it is stored securely
Decision-making	Discuss any disclosures, concern about suspected abuse or neglect, or other situation, with your co-ordinator and Area Manager.  Advise the Girl Experience Manager- Classic Programme (or the Head of Girl Experience in her absence).  <b>Treat the situation as confidential and do not discuss it with anyone other than the co-ordinator and Area Manager.</b>  Parents/caregivers will be informed as soon	No decisions should be made in isolation.  Be aware of our own professional biases to ensure they don’t cloud decision making.  Notification of suspected abuse is an important part of the process as we may have information that is part of a wider picture. Other organisations may also have concerns that have been notified, that we may not be aware of. It is important that we pass information on to the appropriate authorities so that a

	<p>as possible unless the concern relates to suspected abuse by a parent/caregiver or may put the child at further risk.</p> <p>The Manager will brief other personnel as appropriate to ensure the safety of the child and to support the volunteer involved.</p> <p>The Manager will ensure that the volunteer has the necessary support and assistance with co-ordinating information and liaising with referral agencies and can take on this responsibility as appropriate.</p>	<p>wider overview can be gained.</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 Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children 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 Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children national contact centre on 0508 FAMILY (<a href="tel:0508326459">0508 326 459</a>) or <a href="mailto:contact@ot.govt.nz">contact@ot.govt.nz</a>.</p>	<p>Immediate means if the child could suffer harm (eg. by returning to home environment, threatens to commit suicide).</p> <p>Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- make the decision to inform the parents or caregivers, in conjunction with our organisation</li> <li>- advise what, if any immediate action may be appropriate, including referring to the Police</li> </ul>
Following the advice of authorities	<p>Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children advice will include what, if any, action may be appropriate, including referring the concern to the Police.</p>	<p>Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children 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/young person, family, and volunteer as appropriate to situation disclosed, eg. Youthline, Lifeline, victim support, health services, or other community agencies.</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	<p>Securely store:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- record of the concern</li> <li>- record of any related discussions</li> <li>- action taken by GirlGuiding NZ, including any rationale</li> <li>- this concern with any earlier concerns, if this notification is based on an accumulation of concerns</li> </ul>	<p>Sealed record of notifications to be kept by Girl Experience Manager- Classic Programme.</p>



