
Child Protection Policy

Purpose and Scope

Ensuring the wellbeing and safety of children, including prevention of child abuse or maltreatment, is a paramount goal of the Mt Cargill Trust.

The purpose of this policy is to protect the safety and promote the wellbeing of children and young persons aged under 17 years, who live in the care of the Mt Cargill Trust. The Service provides a safe environment, free from physical, emotional, verbal, or sexual abuse.

This policy outlines the Service's commitment to child protection. It includes protocols for when child abuse is disclosed, reported, or suspected by staff. It also promotes prevention of child abuse and a commitment to ensuring staff have access to the training they need.

Management, including the manager in their capacity as Director, and is responsible for the maintenance and review of this policy, in addition to ensuring the responsibilities outlined are carried out. It applies to all staff, and it is intended to protect all children and young people that staff may encounter, including other children and young people staff may interact with while undertaking their role within the Service.

Principles

- The rights, welfare, and safety of the child or young person is the first and paramount consideration.
- Recognition of the important roles all staff have in protecting children in the care of the Mt Cargill Trust.
- Maori children/tamariki and young people/rangatahi receive a culturally safe environment and, wherever possible, the family/whanau participate in the making of decisions affecting that child/tamariki or young person/rangatahi.
- The Mt Cargill Trust has a commitment to ensuring that all staff are able to identify the signs and symptoms of potential and actual abuse and neglect, and are able to take appropriate action in response.
- The Mt Cargill Trust will always comply with relevant legislative responsibilities, and is committed to sharing information in a timely way with the relevant statutory agency, i.e. Child Youth and Family, the Police and the Ministry of Health.
- The Mt Cargill Trust is committed to promoting a culture where staff feel confident that they can constructively challenge poor practice or raise issues of concern without fear of reprisal.
- The Service will always act on the recommendations of statutory authorities including Child Youth and Family, and the Police. Families/whanau will only be informed about suspected or actual abuse after consultation with these agencies.
- Child abuse includes physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, as well as neglect which is the direct consequence of a deliberate act or omission by an adult which has the potential or effect of serious harm to the child or young person.

Training

- The Mount Cargill Trust is committed to maintaining and increasing staff awareness of how to prevent, recognize, and respond to abuse through appropriate training. As part of their induction, new staff are made familiar with the policy on child protection.
- All staff with direct service delivery responsibilities are required to undertake the relevant Abuse and Neglect Intervention training. The Training will consist of:
 - Initial induction training with senior staff
 - Core training of 2 hours every year
 - Advanced training for designated staff

Recruitment

- Safety checking will be carried out in accordance with the Vulnerable Children's Act 2014. This will include: Police vetting, identity verification, references, and an interview. A work history will be sought and previous employers will be contacted. If there is any suspicion that an applicant might pose a risk to a child or young person, that applicant will not be employed.
- Staff who are employed and a Police vetting response is pending, will not work with children or young people until the vetting process has confirmed suitability for the role within the service.

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).

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 or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, including child 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.

Child, Youth, and Family – the agency responsible for investigating and responding to suspected abuse and neglect, and for providing care and protection to children found to be in need.

New Zealand Police – the agency responsible for responding to situations where a child is in imminent danger, and for working with Child, Youth, and Family in child protection work, including investigating cases of abuse or neglect where an offence may have occurred.

Identifying child abuse and neglect

- Every situation is different and it's 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 family circumstances, changes within the home.
- When there are concerns a child is showing signs of potential abuse or neglect, staff should talk to their Team Leader or the Residential Coordinator. It is not good practice to act alone.

Signs of potential abuse

- Physical signs (e.g. unexplained injuries, burns, fractures, unusual or excessive itching, genital injuries, sexually transmitted diseases)
- Developmental 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, evidence of self-harm)
- Behavioural concerns (e.g. age-inappropriate sexual interest or play, fear of a certain person or place, eating disorders/substance abuse, disengagement/neediness, aggression).
- The child talking about things that indicate abuse (sometimes referred to as an allegation, or disclosure)

Signs of potential neglect

- Physical signs (e.g. looking 'rough' and uncared for, dirty, without appropriate clothing, underweight)
- Developmental 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, evidence of self-harm)
- Behavioural concerns (e.g. disengagement/neediness, eating disorders/substance abuse, aggression).
- Neglectful supervision (e.g. out and about unsupervised, left alone, no safe home to return to)
- Medical neglect (e.g. persistent nappy rash or skin disorders, or other untreated medical issues).

Child safe practice guidelines

Due to the nature of the Mt Cargill Trust's service, staff will be alone with children or young people at various times. Wherever possible, an open door policy for all spaces should be used (excluding toilets and showers). Staff should be aware of where all children are at all times.

Staff are to be familiar with all individual care, safety and support needs of the children and young people who they are responsible for in all relevant environments and with all interactions. This information is to be included in all individual plans, in particular any Safety or Risk Plans.

The Mt Cargill Trust will provide full accurate and prompt sharing of information with all relevant agencies that maybe involved in supporting individual children and young people's safety or in order to promote a referral eg Youth Specialty Services, STOP or Explore

The risk and safety needs of all referrals to the Mt Cargill Trust service will be assessed by the management team at the time of referral to make informed decisions in regard to risks to themselves and others. The suitability of the service for an individual referral is then established.

Adequate staff support and supervision of the children and young people living with the service, to be maintained within the residential homes and community environments at all times.

Visitors to residential homes should be monitored at all times by staff, including the families of the children and young people.

Staff are expected to promote professionalism in working with children and young people, and display adult behaviour. Staff are encouraged to keep their professional and personal lives separate. Providing gifts, fostering infatuation etc. is discouraged.

Physical contact by staff with children and young people is not encouraged, but it is accepted that there will be some circumstances where it will be appropriate.

Examples of contact considered appropriate by staff include:

- Emotional support; placing a supportive arm across a child or young person’s shoulders when and where needed, for reassurance
- Personal care and assistance procedures
- Where custom and practice within cultural observances dictates appropriate physical contact.

Restraint

The Mt Cargill Trust is committed to ensuring any physical intervention by staff with the children and young people living with the service, is considered as a last resort and is used only when all other de-escalation strategies have been exhausted and or there is an immediate and serious risk to the child, young person or others. All staff receive relevant training to minimize restraint use and manage crisis situations in the least restrictive way with children and young people.

All episodes of physical intervention are reviewed by management, as the restraint review team to ensure all policies and procedures have been followed, including the safety needs of the child and young people being up-held at the time of the episode.

Responding to suspected abuse or neglect

In all cases where a member of staff has a concern about a child/tamariki/young person/rangatahi being, or likely to be, abused or neglected (refer to Definitions) by an adult or other child/tamariki, young person/rangatahi, they will report this to their Team Leader. Management will make referrals/notify key staff to assist in the formulation of a plan to address the care and protection concerns.

A referral to Child, Youth, and Family may be made at any time.

It is mandatory for all concerns to be reported to the Director and or the management team in their absence, within a time period which allows for effective consultation/advice to be given.

Responding to a child when the child discloses abuse

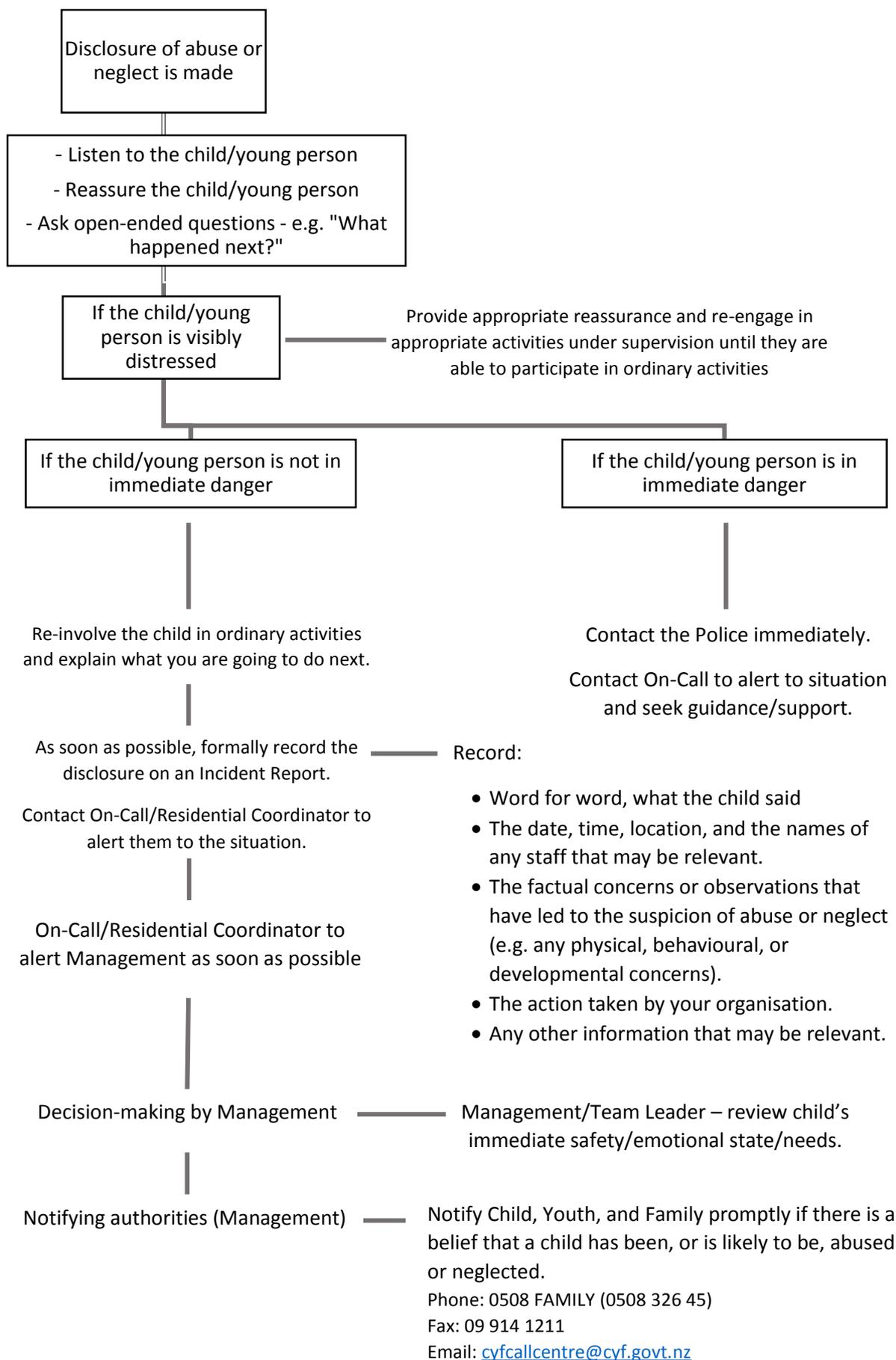
Listen to the child	Disclosures by children are often subtle and need to be handled with particular care, including an awareness of the child’s cultural identity and how that affects interpretation of their behaviour and language.
Reassure the child	Let the child know that they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are not in trouble • Have done the right thing
Use open-ended prompts – e.g. “what happened next?”	Do not interview the child (do not ask questions beyond open prompts). Do not make promises that can’t 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 not in immediate danger	Re-involve the child in ordinary activities and explain what you are going to do next.
If the child is in immediate danger	Contact the Police immediately

As soon as possible, formally record the disclosure (Incident Report)	Record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word for word, what the child said • The date, time, and who was present
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Recording and notifying Child, Youth, and Family of suspected child abuse or neglect:

What process to follow	For example	Key considerations
Recording: Incident Report	Formally record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anything said by the child • The date, time, location, and the names of any staff that may be relevant • The factual concerns or observations that have led to the suspicion of abuse or neglect (e.g. any physical, behavioural, or developmental concerns) • The action taken by your organisation • Any other information that may be relevant 	Relevant information can inform any future actions
Decision-making	Discuss any concerns with the Team Leader or Management	No decisions should be made in isolation
Notifying authorities: Management	Notify Child, Youth, and Family promptly if there is a belief that a child has been, or is likely to be, abused or neglected. A phone call to the relevant social worker or the Contact Centre: Phone: 0508 FAMILY (0508 326 459) Fax: 09 914 1211 Email: cyfcallcentre@cyf.govt.nz	Child, Youth, and Family will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the decision to inform the parents or caregivers, in consultation with our organisation. • Advise what, if any, immediate action may be appropriate, including referring the concern to the Police.
Following the advice of Child, Youth, and Family	Child, Youth, and Family advice will include what, if any, immediate action may be appropriate, including referring the concern to the Police.	Child, Youth, and Family is responsible for looking into the situation to find out what may be happening, and whether our organisation needs to work with the family/whanau.

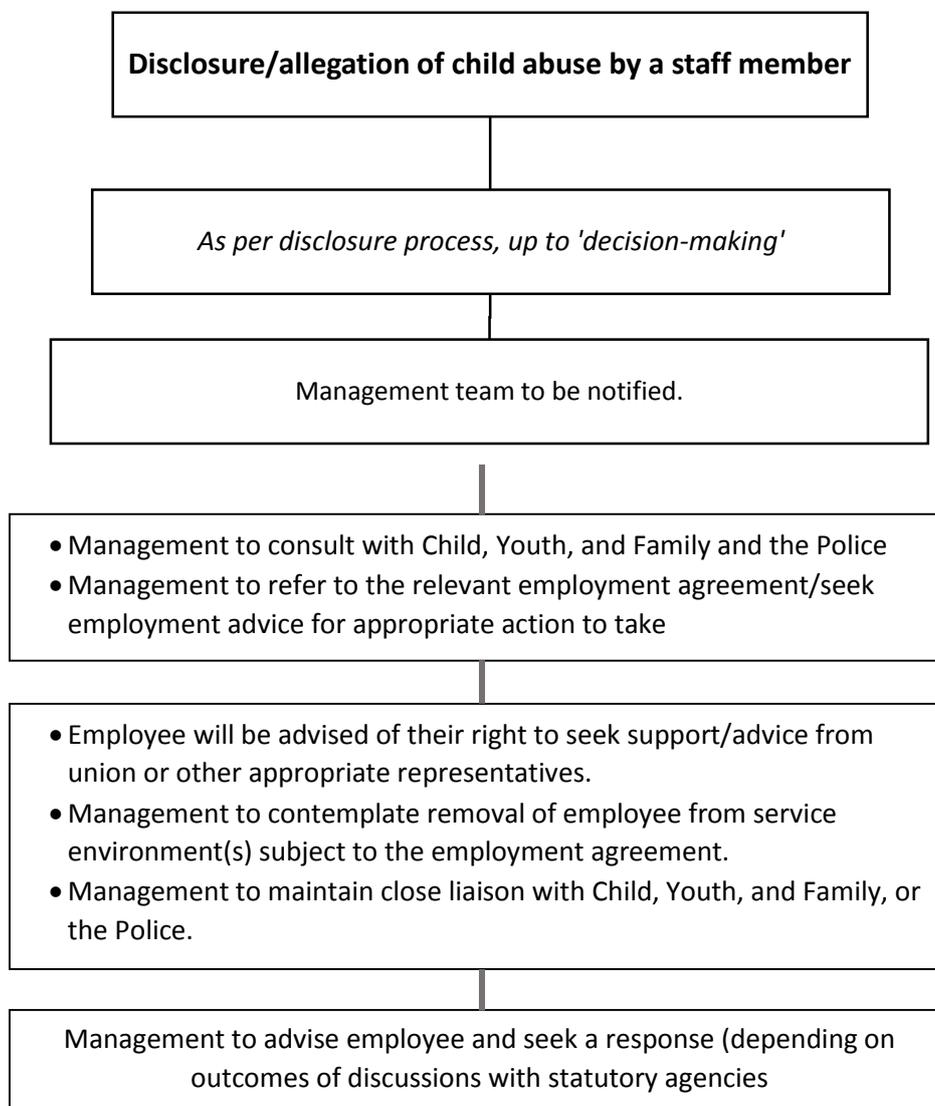
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When an allegation is made against a member of staff

All matters involving allegations against staff need to be escalated to the management team.

To ensure the child is kept safe, management may take steps to remove the staff member against whom an allegation has been made from the environment, subject to the requirements of the applicable individual or collective employment agreement and relevant employment law.



The Mt Cargill Trust commits not to use 'settlement agreements', where these are contrary to a culture of child protections. The Mt Cargill Trust will not use settlement agreements that allow a member of staff to agree to resign provided that no disciplinary action is taken, and a future reference is agreed. Where the conduct at issue concerned the safety or wellbeing of a child, use of such agreements is contrary to a culture of child protection within the organisation.

Review Completion Date:

Review Completed By: