



Child Protection Policy Management Policy

Policy Owner	People & Capability Manager		
Adopted by	Leadership Team		
Description of policy	To support the wellbeing of Children and young people who come into contact with Council services and to guide Council staff to identify and report abuse and Neglect.		
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Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to protect Children and young people who come into contact with Thames-Coromandel District Council (Council) services from the risk of abuse, Neglect, or harm and to support the Council's compliance with applicable child protection legislation and recognised safeguarding good practice.

This policy also provides a framework that supports Staff to work safely and appropriately with Children and young people.

The Council is committed to:

- Preventing vulnerability, adversity and/or abuse of Children and young people whilst using or engaging with Council services or Staff.
- Supporting and protecting Children or young person's facing or experiencing risks of vulnerability, adversity and/or abuse when using Council services.
- Supporting and protecting any Child, young people or family, who discloses to Council, actually or potential abuse or harm,
- Complying with child safety legislation and demonstrating child safety best practice.
- Supporting Staff to identify and report any Child protection concerns.

Scope

This policy applies to all Staff, regardless of whether that person is in a Child or non-Child facing position including volunteers. It should be used wherever abuse or Neglect is suspected. It is intended to protect all Children that Staff encounter, the Children of adults accessing services and any other Children encountered by Staff as they provide their service.

At the Council there are positions that have regular interaction with Children, these include:

- Libraries
- Swimming pools
- Road Safety Education

Principles

- The rights, welfare and safety of the Child are paramount.
- Council have a commitment to ensure that relevant Staff are able to identify the signs and symptoms of potential or actual abuse and Neglect, including through Digital Communications, and are able to take appropriate action.
- Council are committed to supporting all relevant Staff to work in accordance with this policy.
- Council will always comply with relevant legislative responsibilities.
- This policy supports the Council's compliance with applicable requirements of the Children's Act 2014 and reflects recognised Child protection good practice.

Identifying Abuse and Neglect

The Council's approach to identifying abuse or Neglect is guided by the following principles:

- Every situation is different and it is important to consider all available information about the Child and their environment before reaching conclusions.
- Staff understand that when concerned that a Child is showing signs of potential abuse or Neglect, the Staff member should talk to someone, either a manager/supervisor or the 'person in charge' of the Child (if appropriate) – Staff should not act alone.
- While there are different signs of abuse, the important thing to consider is the overall well-being and the risk of harm to the Child. It is not important to be able to categorise the type of abuse or Neglect.
- Any Staff member who has concerns 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. No Staff member will act alone about suspected Child Abuse but will consult with their manager.
- All suspicious or observed incidents or reports of incidents of Child Abuse having taken place should be reported to the person in charge of the Children at that time (e.g. Library/Pool Staff) or if not appropriate, reports should be made to the relevant authority (Child Protection Coordinator).

Child Protection Coordinator

The Child Protection Coordinator is the champion for improving child protection practices within Council and also a source of advice and expertise for Staff seeking assistance. They are the primary point of contact for escalating any concerns about a Child, including abuse or Neglect. The current Child Protection Coordinator is the Senior People and Capability Business Partner and Library Manager.

Child & Staff Safety Supervision Guidelines

All Staff should examine the opportunities or possible situations where Staff could be alone with Children, including when transporting a Child. This should be avoided wherever possible.

An open-door policy for all spaces should be used (not toilets). Staff should be aware of where all Children are at all times and check to ensure what they are doing is appropriate.

Internal Abuse Allegations

Where it is suspected that Child Abuse has been carried out by a member of Staff, the matter must be reported promptly to the People and Capability Manager. All action will be undertaken with appropriate care to maintain confidentiality where possible. Ordinary disciplinary policies, guided by the employment agreement and relevant statutory obligations will be followed.

What the Council will do

The Council is committed to protecting Children from abuse through the following means:

Awareness and Prevention

The Council will ensure that all Staff understand the risks of Child Abuse and their responsibilities in preventing harm. Through training, awareness, and good practice, Staff and others will minimise risks to Children.

All new Staff and volunteers will be made aware of their responsibilities under this policy through the induction process. Child protection training will be required for relevant Staff and their managers.

Safety Checking

Safety checks are a condition of employment for applicable roles at the Council. Staff whose roles involve regular contact with Children and young people will be safety checked **prior** to employment and also be screened every three years (Libraries, Road Safety and Swimming pools).

Safety Checking will include Police vetting, identity verification, reference checks and other checks required by law.

The information obtained through the Safety Checking process will be assessed by the Council to determine whether the individual presents any risk to the safety or wellbeing of Children and young people and whether they are suitable for appointment to the relevant role.

Where concerns are identified through the Safety Checking process, Council will undertake a risk assessment having regard to the nature of the role, the level and nature of contact with Children, the information obtained through the Safety Check, and any other relevant circumstances. Council may determine that a person is unsuitable for appointment or engagement where the risk assessment identifies an unacceptable risk to Children or young people.

Reporting and Responding

The Council ensures that relevant Staff understand the steps to take when concerns arise about the safety or wellbeing of a Child and that appropriate action is taken to support and protect Children where abuse or Neglect is suspected.

To support effective reporting and response, Staff will:

- Take seriously any concerns raised.
- Take positive steps to ensure the protection of Children who are the subject of any concerns.
- Support Children, Staff or other adults who raise concerns or who are the subject of concerns.
- Act appropriately and effectively in instigating or co-operating with any subsequent process of investigation.
- Are guided through the Child protection process by the principle of 'best interests of the child'.
- Listen to and take seriously the views and wishes of Children.

This approach ensures that the Council maintains a safe environment for Children and meets its obligations to prevent, identify, report, and respond to concerns about Child Abuse and Neglect.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Keeping Children safe requires the appropriate sharing of information subject to legal restrictions and the best interests of the Child.

The Council recognises that all Staff must act within the legal requirements such as the Privacy Act 2020, Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, and other statutes. There are provisions within each of these acts for

sharing information needed to protect Children and enable other people to carry out their legitimate functions.

The Council encourages the sharing of information only when appropriate steps have been taken.

Staff may be asked to provide information to after making the referral to Oranga Tamariki - Ministry for Children or the Police, Court, Lawyers or Psychologists.

Information sharing will be restricted to those who have a need to know in order to protect Children.

Information will only be given after the Staff member has identified the person making the request, the actual purpose of the request, what use the information will be put to, and who will see the information.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions shall apply:

Term	Definition
Child/Children	Any child or young person aged 17 years or under, who is not married or in a civil union.
Staff	All persons employed or engaged by the Council, in both paid positions and as volunteers.
Safety Checking	Screening and checking process required under the Children's Act 2014, including identity verification, reference checks, Police Vetting and other checks required by law.
Abuse	Refers to physical, emotional and Sexual Abuse as well as Neglect which is the direct consequence of a deliberate act or omission by an adult and which has the potential or effect of serious harm to a Child.
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. Neglect is the most common form of abuse and although the effects may not be as obvious as physical abuse, it is just as serious.
Digital Communication	Any form of electronic communicators including text message, email, writing, photograph, picture, recording or other matter that is communicated electronically.
Designated Person	The manager responsible for Child protection within their area of service. As part of their overall responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of Staff, contractors and visitors within their area of the workplace, the manager is also responsible for ensuring Child protection, including responding and reporting appropriately.

Appendix one

Procedure For Responding To Child Protection Concerns

Appendix One:

PROCEDURE FOR RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS

1. When to use this procedure

- 1.1. This procedure applies in all situations where there is a Child protection concern that has come to Council's attention at the Council. This includes but is not limited to:
 - when Staff personally witness something that makes them concerned for the safety or wellbeing of a Child
 - when there is a concern relating to the conduct of Staff towards a Child
 - when a Child discloses abuse to Staff
 - where information about a Child protection concern is provided by a third party to Staff
- 1.2. The safety of the Child is the Staff members primary focus. Staff must contact the NZ Police on 111 or Oranga Tamariki (Ministry for Children) on 0508 326 459 if they believe there may be a serious and immediate threat to safety. In all other situations, Staff must inform the people leader/manager and contact the Council's child protection coordinator (People & Capability Business Partner or Library Manager).
- 1.3. Staff must not discuss the matter with anyone other than the people leader/manager and the child protection coordinator unless there is a serious and immediate threat to safety.
- 1.4. If another colleague also witnesses the same event, it may be appropriate to discuss what both witnessed to confirm concerns. Staff must ensure they inform their people leader/manager.
- 1.5. If the concern is relating to the conduct of Staff towards a Child, the Child Protection Coordinator, in consultation with Oranga Tamariki and/or Police, will ensure the matter is investigated and responded to appropriately in accordance with the Code of Conduct and Performance Management and Disciplinary Policy.

2. What do I do or say if I become aware of a Child protection concern?

- 2.1. The basis of Council's response should always be as follows:
 - **Listen** – Allow the person to provide you with the information they have. Don't question them . . . just listen.
 - **Acknowledge** – Make sure they know you've heard and understood them. Be kind.
 - **Act** – Pass the information to the appropriate person.
 - **Record** - As soon as possible, write down word for word what was said. Note the date, time, location, others present, and factual concerns or observations.
 - **Inform** – Contact the child protection coordinator (People & Capability Business Partner or Library Manager) as soon as possible.

3. FLOWCHART: RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS

