

1.5 Child Protection

Rationale

Friendship House is committed to putting children and young people first throughout its services and programmes, fulfilling its obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and meeting the requirements of the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act (1989) and the Vulnerable Children Act (2014).

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Protect children and young people
- Ensure that parents, family/whanau and the general public have confidence in the safe practices of the organisation
- Provide clear guidance and procedures to ensure consistency and best practice and
- Ensure robust vetting, training, supervision and recording practices are in place.

Procedure

1 Scope and definitions

- 1.1 **Child abuse** is defined in the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989 as 'the harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation of any child or young person'.
- 1.2 **Emotional abuse** is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child so as to cause severe and persistent adverse effect on a child's emotional development. This can include a pattern of rejecting, degrading, ignoring, isolating, corrupting, exploiting or terrorising a child.
- 1.3 **Sexual abuse** involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities (penetrative and non-penetrative, for example, rape, kissing, touching, masturbation) as well as non-contact acts such as involving children in the looking at or the production of sexual images, sexual activities and sexual behaviours.
- 1.4 **Physical abuse** is any non-accidental act on a child that results in physical harm. This includes but is not limited to beating, hitting, shaking, burning, drowning, suffocating, biting, poisoning or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. It also includes the fabrication or inducing of illness.
- 1.5 **Neglect** is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, causing long term serious harm to the child's health or development. This may include neglect of a child's basic physical or emotional needs.
- 1.6 **Definition of child and young person** - The Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989 defines a child as a person from 0-14 years of age and a young person as 14-17 years of age.

2 Application of policy

- 2.1** This policy applies to all Friendship House programmes and services. All staff are expected to be proactive in early intervention, follow-up and advocacy to Child Youth and Family, the Police or other agencies. Staff will receive basic, in-house training through supervision and team meetings along with formal training from accredited providers as required.
- 2.2** Activities and services where the Child Protection policy is especially relevant are:
- Undertaking children's and young people's assessments to determine the need for behaviour support, management interventions and consultation with their family/whanau when assessing needs, developing client plans and providing services or programmes
 - Indications, evidence or disclosure about alleged abuse during assessment of new customers or work with existing customers
 - Disclosure to Living Without Violence programme facilitators of possible harm or abuse to a child or young person
 - Staff making home visits to customers
 - Engaging in activities involving children
 - Storing and distributing sensitive and confidential information on children such as family profiles or other forms of communication
 - Promoting the work of Friendship House through the use of images of children
 - Occasions when children have been harmed, yelled at or threatened in any form while in the Friendship House Community Centre
 - Children involved in activities provided by external room hirers.
- 2.3** It is acknowledged that Friendship House does not provide direct services to children and young persons and that its dealings with children arise as part of other services provided. If the need arises to employ staff whose key responsibility is for children and/or young persons, the parameters around safety checking and workforce restrictions are laid out in the Children's Action Plan.
- Refer to <http://www.childrensactionplan.govt.nz/childrens-workforce/safety-checking-and-the-workforce-restriction/>

3 Process in dealing with Customers

- 3.1** Indications or evidence of abuse may arise in many different situations and all require judgement and skill to enable an effective response.
- 3.2** If there is immediate concern about possible abuse, a notification can be made to Child, Youth and Family pursuant to sections 15 and 19 of the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989.
- 3.3** Some of the steps that need to be taken to ensure compliance with Section 19 of the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989 are set out below.
- 3.4 Assessment of new customers/working with existing customers -**
- 3.4.1** New customer assessments must include data, tools and observations that identify any child protection issues e.g. the number and ages of children in a household; risk factors such as poverty, family violence, alcohol and drug abuse.
- 3.4.2** New customers must be informed that risk to children or young people is one of the situations where confidentiality will be broken in order to prevent further or anticipated harm.

3.4.3 If issues are identified, the case worker will inform the customer of their concerns and their obligation to discuss this with their manager and possibly make a Report of Concern (notification to CYF).

3.4.4 The case worker must inform the customer of support available through Friendship House and other agencies.

3.5 If a customer acknowledges issues and wants to accept support -

3.5.1 Assess the degree of risk and if necessary, inform the Police or notify CYF immediately.

3.5.2 Develop a Safety Plan with the customer.

3.5.3 Monitor the Safety Plan weekly or at least each month, depending on the degree of risk agreed between staff member, manager and customer.

3.5.4 If there is no evidence of change within the agreed timeframe, inform the customer and make a notification to CYF.

3.5.5 Follow up with CYF within 24 hours on action that has been taken.

3.6 If a customer does not acknowledge issues or refuses support -

3.6.1 Notify CYF or Police if there is immediate risk.

3.6.2 Discuss the situation with manager or Chief Executive and act on advice received.

3.6.3 Document the issue or concern.

3.7 Visitors to Friendship House Community Centre -

3.7.1 If any worker witnesses physical, sexual or emotional abuse of a child or young person, then - if it is safe to do so - they must directly ask the perpetrator to stop.

3.7.2 If the child or young person or others are considered to be in immediate danger, the Police must be called.

3.7.3 If the abuse stops, then the worker should offer support or ask an appropriate member of staff to do so.

3.7.4 If the perpetrator refuses to stop or leaves the premises, the worker should call the Police and try to offer a description of the child and perpetrator (for example by using a mobile phone camera).

3.7.5 The worker must then notify one of the Social Practice Team or the Chief Executive.

3.7.6 If a worker sees evidence of or suspects abuse, then they must immediately contact one of the Social Practice Team or the Chief Executive.

4 Disclosures from Children

4.1 Disclosures from children and young people of any kind of abuse must always be taken seriously.

4.2 The following steps are to be taken in all situations of disclosure:

- Listen positively and carefully to the child/young person reporting the issue, take them seriously and reassure them.
- Where necessary, ensure the child is immediately safe from further abuse.

- Do not ask the child any leading questions or direct the conversation - allow the child to make disclosures in their own time.
- Staff should not act alone where disclosures have been made. It is important to identify the degree of risk or contact the Social Practice Team to do so.
- Let the child/young person know what you are going to do next and tell them what will happen next.
- Record exactly what the child or young person says.
- Report immediately to your manager or the Chief Executive.
- Discuss the matter with a support person if needed.

4.3 Staff Training will include how to respond to children or young people of different ages and in different situations in order to reassure them and provide emotional support,

5 Notifications

5.1 Notifications to CYF –

5.1.1 Notifications to CYF must be documented on the appropriate form. One copy must be attached to the customer's file and another copy given to the Chief Executive for filing in the Notifications file.

5.1.2 CYF will respond with a Receipt of Notification which must be copied for the Chief Executive's file. The original is to be retained on the customer's file.

5.1.3 If CYF has not responded within 24 hours with advice on the next steps to be taken, the referring staff member must take follow up action.

5.1.4 If the staff member is not satisfied with the CYF response, the matter must be discussed with the manager immediately.

5.2 Notifications to Police –

5.2.1 In cases where there is deemed to be immediate risk to a child, the Police must be notified, a statement made and follow up action taken.

6 Allegations against Friendship House workers

6.1 If possible, workers should always check with parents or others accompanying children or young people before touching them, for example to remove them from a potentially harmful situation. However, the safety of children and young people is paramount. Workers must intervene if they consider a child or young person to be in an actual or potentially harmful situation, e.g. a child near boiling water.

6.2 When allegations have been made against a worker at Friendship House, the Chief Executive will be responsible for arranging an investigation and ensuring that both the child or young person and the Friendship House worker have proper legal and other support.

6.3 At the Chief Executive's discretion, a staff member may be asked to work off-site or be suspended on full pay until the investigation is complete.

6.4 At the Chief Executive's discretion, a volunteer, student or contractor may be required to cease work at Friendship House until the investigation is complete.

7 Policy Review

- 7.1** Under the Vulnerable Children Act 2014, this policy must be reviewed within 3 years of the date of its first adoption or most recent review. Section 16 of the Vulnerable Children Act 2014 states that a copy of the policy must be made available on the Friendship House internet site.
- 7.2** The Chief Executive will report regularly to the Board on incidents, notifications, outcomes and the staff training programme.