



## Child Protection Policies and Procedures

### Policy Rationale

1. The purpose of Neighbourhood Support New Zealand and our Member Organisations is to build safe, resilient and connected communities. We, therefore, have a commitment to ensure that our tamariki are safe.
2. The nature of our work in communities means that Neighbourhood Support personnel often work in situations where there are children present, and may run Junior Neighbourhood Support programmes in schools. It is important the public, schools and our partners in NZ Police have confidence that our personnel:
  - are safe to work with children
  - we uphold the expectations of the Children's Act 2014.

### Policy Statement

1. All staff and volunteers of NSNZ and our Member Organisations who are likely to work with children in their role will be Police Vetted, in accordance with our *Vetting and Code of Conduct Policy (Schedule of Children's Act)*.
2. All staff and volunteers of NSNZ and our Member Organisations will exercise safe working practices, as set out in the Guidelines below, and have access to training and resources that assist them to understand what is expected.
3. NSNZ and our Member Organisations will have procedures in place to effectively handle complaints about staff or volunteers' behaviour around children.
4. Concerns about the safety of children, including disclosures from children themselves, will be taken seriously and responded to quickly.
5. All staff and volunteers of NSNZ and our Member Organisations have a responsibility to notify the appropriate agency when they have a belief that a child has been, or is at risk of being, abused or neglected.

Date: 19 November 2019



## Child Protection Procedures and Guidelines

### Recruitment

The Children's Act 2014 requires personnel who work with children to be safety checked if they are Core Workers or Non Core Workers (refer to Children's Act 2014 on Page 4 of this document).

1. If a staff member or volunteer of NSNZ or our Member Organisations works with children as part of their role and meets the definition of Core or Non-Core Worker they should be Police Vetted.
2. If a person has been convicted of an offence specified under Schedule 2 of the Children's Act they cannot be employed unless they have a Core Worker Exemption.
3. In addition to Police Vetting, NSNZ and our Member Organisations should ensure that appropriate reference checks are also carried out as part of the recruitment process. If there are any concerns about whether a person is safe to work with children then the appointment panel should always put the best interests of children first.

### Safe Working Practice

1. All NSNZ personnel who work with children or where children are present should ensure that they always act in a child's best interests. This includes ensuring that they:
  - take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour
  - avoid any conduct or situation that would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation or intentions.
2. NSNZ and our Member Organisations should ensure that personnel are not placed in situations which make them vulnerable, and that personnel are aware of expectations, policies and procedures.

#### Events involving children

If NSNZ or a Member Organisation is undertaking an event that involves children they should ensure that:

- A thorough risk assessment has been carried out which considers any potential risks to children, including (but not limited to) such things as venues, travel arrangements and equipment, and plans are in place to mitigate these risks.
- The appropriate permissions from parents or guardians have been obtained.
- There are appropriate levels of suitable adult supervision in place, and that all adults in supervisory roles are aware of their responsibilities, can be trusted to exercise good judgement and are positive role models.
- The event is age appropriate.

#### Communicating and Interacting with children

NSNZ personnel who interact or communicate with children should understand the need to maintain appropriate professional boundaries. They should:



- Ensure that all communications and interactions, including emails, text messages and phone calls, are undertaken within the boundaries of a professional relationship and are open to scrutiny from other adults.
- Take care that their language or conduct does not give rise to comment, offence or speculation.
- Ensure that physical contact is in response to the child's needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, culture and background.
- No photos of children should be taken or published without signed permission of a parent or legal guardian.

Useful information about Safe Working Practices can be found at [Child Matters](#)

## Dealing with Disclosures of Abuse

It is possible that, in the course of their work, NSNZ personnel may have concerns about a child or have to deal with a disclosure of abuse.

1. In the event that a staff member or volunteer has concerns that a child is being abused or neglected they should:
  - a. Act immediately to secure the safety of the child if the child is in immediate danger.
  - b. Record or note the physical or behavioural observations that have raised concern.
  - c. Consult with a manager, committee member or their Police Liaison Officer to discuss and agree on an appropriate course of action, including whether a report of concern is to be made.
  - d. If a report of concern is to be made this should be made to either the Police or Oranga Tamariki.
  - e. Follow the advice of the Police or Oranga Tamariki.
2. In the event that a child discloses that they are being abused the following steps should be followed:
  - a. Listen to the child and accept what the child says.
  - b. Reassure the child that they have done the right thing by telling someone and that you will do your best to help.
  - c. Let them know that you need to tell someone else and what you will do next.
  - d. Write down what the child says in their own words, but do not interview the child. Avoid making inferences or assumptions.
  - e. Inform your manager, a Committee member or Police Liaison Officer as soon as possible.
  - f. Make a referral to Oranga Tamariki or the Police.
  - g. After making the referral look after yourself. Talk to your manager or Police Liaison Officer if you need support.

## Dealing with Complaints Against Staff or Volunteers

If NSNZ or a Member Organisation receives a complaint about the behavior of one of their staff or volunteers around children they should:

- a. Take the complaint seriously.



- b. Take immediate steps to ensure that the staff member or volunteer concerned is not interacting with children.
- c. Discuss the matter with Oranga Tamariki and/or the Police and follow their advice.
- d. It is likely that there will be a need to pursue the allegation as an employment matter. It is important to follow ordinary disciplinary policies as set out in the person's employment agreement or volunteer agreement. For this reason, it is important to ensure that the organisation has sound Disciplinary Policies for both employees and volunteers and that all employees and volunteers sign these when they commence their role.

## **Related Legislation and Government Policies**

### **Children's Act 2014**

This Act was previously known as the Vulnerable Children Act 2014. It was renamed the Children's Act in December 2018.

The Act's purpose is to protect children and the accountability for this sits with six government agencies: NZ Police; Oranga Tamariki; and the Ministries of Education, Justice, Health and Social Development. Child Protection policies have been adopted by these agencies, and these include ensuring that people working with children have been vetted, and that these safety checks are updated every three years. People with serious convictions are prohibited from working closely with children, unless they have been granted an exemption.

Local authorities and the organisations they fund are also legally required to ensure that core children's workers are safety checked.

The Act distinguishes between Core Workers (those who work directly with children and are likely to be the only person present or the person with primary responsibility over the child) and Non-Core Workers (those who work with children but are not a core worker). Both types of worker are required to be safety checked. If the person is applying for a Core Worker role and has been convicted of an offence specified under Schedule 2 of the Children's Act, you cannot employ them unless they have a Core Worker Exemption.

The safety checking requirements do not extend to volunteers, unless the volunteering is part of an educational or vocational training course. However, community and voluntary organisations are encouraged to adopt the new standards voluntarily.

All organisations that are contracted or funded by the above agencies to provide services to children must have child protection policies. Even organisations that are not obligated under the Act are encouraged to have child protection policies and cultures to ensure our tamariki are safe.

## **Related NSNZ Policies**

- NSNZ Vetting and Code of Conduct Policy
- NSNZ Health and Safety Policy
- NSNZ Privacy and Confidentiality Policies and Procedures



## Related NSNZ and Police Documents

- NSNZ Code of Conduct
- [Police Code of Conduct](#)