

# HURUNUI DISTRICT COUNCIL

## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY



<b>Adopted:</b>	<b>October 2024</b>
<b>Replaces:</b>	<b>Child Protection Policy 2020</b>
<b>Review date:</b>	<b>October 2027</b>
<b>Related Documents:</b>	<b>Code of Conduct Policy</b> <b>Elected Members' Code of Conduct</b> <b>Hurunui District Council Police Vetting and Criminal Convictions Check Policy</b> <b>Hurunui Youth Code of Conduct for Employees, Volunteers &amp; Contractors</b> <b>Hurunui Youth Events &amp; Operations Manual</b> <b>Hurunui Youth Strategy</b>
<b>Related Processes:</b>	<b>Child Protection Policy Action Process</b> <b>Child Protection Policy Incident Form</b> <b>Lone Working in Vehicle with Passenger Process</b> <b>Lone Working with Young People</b> <b>Managing a Youth Disclosure Process</b> <b>Suspected/Declared Abuse Action Flow Chart</b>
<b>Relevant Legislation:</b>	<b>Education and Training Act 2020</b> <b>Human Rights Act 1993</b> <b>New Zealand Bill of Rights 1990</b> <b>Vulnerable Children Act 2014</b>

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### **Purpose**

This policy is about ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children who interact with Hurunui District Council.

Under the Vulnerable Children Act 2014, the Council has an obligation to seek regular 'safety checks' for staff who are deemed to be 'children's workers' under the act.

This policy is a guide for employees, volunteers, councillors and contractors regarding expectations of their behaviour to ensure that a child is kept safe, and the proper course of action is taken when presented with indications of child abuse or neglect.

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## Scope

This policy is a guide for employees, volunteers, councillors and contractors who may deal with, or encounter, a child or children in the normal course of their council work.

In terms of the Vulnerable Children Act 2014, several employees will be considered to be 'children's workers'. This policy is particularly relevant to these employees but is not limited to them. Any employee, volunteer, councillor and contractor can be faced with a potentially abused or neglected child and this policy will help you decide what to do.

In terms of concerns raised by a child or children where the facility or service falls under the jurisdiction of Hurunui District Council, all concerns raised will be considered within the context of the Human Rights Act 1993.

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## Principles

Hurunui District Council recognise the important role and responsibility that some employees, volunteers, councillors and contractors may have in the detection of suspected child abuse and/or neglect, and the importance of early recognition of a child or children at risk.

It is not acceptable to 'turn a blind eye' to signs of abuse or neglect, nor to 'mind our own business' when presented with cause for concern.

The welfare of our community's children is Hurunui District Council business.

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## Policies

### **1. Safe working practices**

Hurunui District Council is committed to providing a safe, respectful and supportive workplace. It is expected that Hurunui District Council employees, volunteers, councillors and contractors will:

- i.* Treat a child with dignity and respect regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, disability or other status.
- ii.* Conduct themselves in a manner appropriate with their position as a representative of Hurunui District Council in all their dealings with any child.
- iii.* Where practicable, be visible when working with a child and ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of a child.

### **2. Safety Checks**

Workforce safety checks will be undertaken when prospective employees, volunteers, councillors and contractors are recruited for Core and Non-Core Children's worker roles.

Overall responsibility for safety checks sits with the People and Capability Manager, individual safety checks are undertaken by the relevant Team Leader or Manager within Hurunui District Council and include:

- An interview

- Reference checking
- An identity check
- Police vetting.

Once safety checks have been completed, an assessment will be made of any risk the employee, volunteer, councillor or contractor pose to a child.

### **3. Training**

It is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that basic child protection training is provided to all core and non-core children's workers working with any child or children.

Training is to ensure that all core and non-core children's workers who interact with a child or children, as part of their employment, recognise the signs of potential child abuse or neglect and can respond accordingly.

Responsibility for training in basic child protection sits with Human Resources.

### **4. Detecting and responding**

It is not intended that core and non-core children's workers proactively look for signs of child abuse. Nor is it intended that the Council takes on a parental policing operation.

The focus of this policy is on our responsibility to take action when signs of child abuse or neglect are noticed.

**4.1 Detecting abuse** to assist in detecting signs of child abuse and neglect definitions and examples are contained within this policy.

**4.2 Physical abuse** is any non-accidental action that may result in physical harm of a child. This may include:

- Bruising
- Cutting
- Beating
- Hitting
- Shaking
- Burning
- Drowning
- Suffocating
- Biting
- Poisoning
- Strangling or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

**4.3 Emotional abuse** is the persistent emotional treatment of a child causing severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional, psychological, social and intellectual functioning or development. This may include:

- A pattern of rejecting, degrading, ignoring, isolating, corrupting, exploiting or terrorising a child.

- The child seeing or hearing the ill treatment of others.

**4.4 Sexual abuse** involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities penetrative and non-penetrative as well as non-contact acts.

This may involve:

- Rape, kissing, touching, masturbation
- Children looking at or production of sexual images, activities and behaviours.

**4.5 Neglect** is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical, emotional or psychological needs causing long term serious harm to the child's health or development. This may include:

- A lack of action, emotion or basic needs.

**4.6 Early signs of abuse and neglect** these include problems that eventuate in abuse and/or neglect:

- Parent has a drug, alcohol or gambling problem
- Parent does not engage with their child or has a difficult relationship with them
- Child doesn't have enough clothes on and is often cold and hungry
- Child has unexplained or changeable emotions (e.g., withdrawn or depressed)
- Parent frequently yells at, swear at or shame a child
- Child seems scared of a particular adult.

**4.7 Serious signs of abuse and neglect** signs that a child's safety and wellbeing is in danger include:

- Child tells someone they have been abused (e.g., have been hit, touched or are frightened)
- Young child home alone or unsupervised near roads or water
- Child threatened with violence and/or physically struck or beaten by an adult
- Child exposed to violence between adults in the house
- Baby or toddler left unsupervised in a cot or car seat for long periods of time
- Baby or child with unexplained or untreated injuries.

**4.8 Responding to abuse** it is expected that if any of these signs of abuse or neglect become apparent during normal interaction with, or observation of a child, the following action should take place:

- i.* **Be clear** about what signs you have seen that lead you to suspect abuse or neglect and, if possible, write them down.
- ii.* **Decide** whether this is a matter of concern or an emergency. It will be an emergency if what you have seen will cause further significant harm to the child if not stopped promptly.
- iii.* **Emergency** phone the police on 111. Do not delay. Provide your name and work location and report what you have seen and your concerns. Once you have done this, you must then report verbally and later in writing to the People and Capability Manager stating what you have seen and what action you have taken.

- iv. Matter of Concern** when not an emergency, report what you have seen to the People and Capability Manager and discuss whether to report the matter to the NZ Police or to Ministry for Vulnerable Children or to take no action at this time.  
If you do not agree with the decision, you have the right to report your concerns directly to Ministry for Vulnerable Children as an individual.
- v. Human Resources** will maintain all records of each incident identified under this Child Protection Policy and the actions taken in respect of that incident.

#### **5. Points to note**

- Do not put yourself at risk by confronting a parent or guardian directly if not deemed safe to do so.
- Treat the matter in confidence and do not discuss with members of the public or the media, or with colleagues, except in the context of a formal training exercise or debriefing.
- Do not follow up with the police or with Ministry for Vulnerable Children to find out what has happened. Once reported, the matter is outside our jurisdiction.

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#### **Definitions**

**Child or children:** a person/s under the age of 18 who is not married or in a civil union.

**Child abuse:** the harming (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), ill treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation of any child or young person.

**Community Partnerships Team:** engage, connect, inform and empower residents, community groups and local businesses in achieving its goal of strengthening communities.

**Core children's worker:** an employee, volunteer, councillor or contractor who works in, or provides, a regulated service, and the person's work involves regular or overnight contact with a child or children without the parent or guardian being present. For example, a Pool employee, Community Partnerships Team, Library employees and Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools and Spa employees.

**Employees:** for the purposes of this policy includes all permanent, fixed term and casual staff who work for Hurunui District Council.

**Non-core children's worker:** an employee, volunteer or contractor who has regular, but limited child contact. For example, Customer Service representatives, Chief Executive Officer

**People and Capability Manager:** leads and directs the functions of Human Resources including the implementation of Council organisation policies and practices.

**Regulated service:** this includes, but is not limited to, services Hurunui District Council provide at libraries, swimming pools, community centres and through our youth waste education programmes.

**Volunteer:** a person who does not receive any reward for the work they have agreed to do.

**Young child:** is legally defined as a child under the age of 14 years. You can leave a child under 14 at home or in another place if you've made reasonable provisions to have them supervised and cared for safely, and they're not left for a long time.

## **Appendices**

1. Child Protection Policy Action Process
2. Child Protection Policy Incident Report
3. Hurunui Youth Code of Conduct for Employees, Volunteers & Contractors
4. Lone Working in Vehicle with Passenger Process
5. Lone Working with Young People
6. Managing a Youth Disclosure Process
7. Suspected/Declared Abuse Action flowchart

## **Contacts**

- NZ Police - 111 (emergency only)
- Oranga Tamariki - Ministry for Children 0508 326 459

# Appendix 2: Child Protection Policy – Incident Report

<b>Name:</b>		<b>Position/Role:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Time:</b>		<b>Location:</b>
<b>Name of child: (if known)</b>	<b>Age of child: (if known)</b>	<b>Address of child: (if known)</b>	
<b>Details of what was observed:</b>			
<b>Specific concerns noted:</b>			
<b>NZ police notified:</b>		<b>Yes / No</b>	
<b>Signature:</b>		<b>Date of report:</b>	
<b>Human Resources Recommended Action</b>			
<p>Having regard to all the facts presented, the recommended action is to (delete as necessary):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report the matter to the NZ Police and / or Oranga Tamariki - Ministry for Children</li> </ul> <p><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take no further action at this time Reasons for this action are:</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.....</li> <li>.....</li> </ol>			
<b>Name:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	



## Appendix 6: Suspected/Declared Abuse Action Flowchart

