



Purpose

Playcentre Aotearoa is committed to the prevention of child abuse, to the protection of our tamariki, and to supporting an increasing Playcentre community awareness of how to prevent, recognise and respond to any situation in which our tamariki may be facing harm.

This commitment means that the interest and wellbeing of our tamariki is our prime consideration when any decision is made about suspected child abuse. This policy provides guidance on our shared responsibilities and how to identify and respond to concerns about the wellbeing of a Playcentre child, including possible abuse or neglect.

Everyone at Playcentre Aotearoa has a role to play in protecting our tamariki and keeping them safe.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide safe Playcentre environments - free from physical, emotional, verbal or sexual abuse
- Proactively prevent child abuse and neglect in our Playcentre community
- Give confidence in identifying and addressing any concerns of child abuse and neglect
- To comply with legislation in place for the protection of tamariki, education and early childhood services regulations, health and safety legislation and other applicable legislation.

Legislation has a focus on ensuring tamariki in New Zealand are safe from abuse and neglect. Playcentre Aotearoa fully supports this focus. This policy and related procedures are guided by the regulations set and putting our tamariki first and applies to us all at Playcentre.

Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 defines child abuse to mean “the harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation of any child or young person.” It is any type of abuse that has the potential to cause harm to a child - deliberate or otherwise. Child abuse may appear in a cluster of signs, examples referred to further in this policy.

Our principled approach to addressing suspected child abuse

Playcentre Aotearoa applies the following principles in the identification and reporting of possible abuse or neglect

- **Listen to the child.** Pay attention for a child disclosing abuse or neglect. Write down what they say and assure them of help. We listen, we do not interview.

- **No one is to act alone.** Anyone concerned about a child’s welfare is to raise their concern directly with Playcentre leadership – at Centre, regionally or nationally – who will then take immediate steps to protect the child.
- **No delays in raising concerns made in good faith.** New Zealand’s privacy laws and the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 allow information to be shared to keep children safe when abuse or suspected abuse is reported or investigated. Any person who believes that a child has been, or is likely to be, abused may report the matter to Oranga Tamariki or the Police as a Protected Disclosure (referred to in our Complaints Resolution policy) and, provided the report is made in good faith, no civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against them. Even if uncertain of abuse happening or unable to identify the form of abuse or neglect, we will act in the interests of the child and raise concerns just in case. Centre leadership will immediately take the appropriate steps as set out in procedures to protect the child, record the





concerns and report to the statutory agencies. Based on the concerns raised, our procedures will guide the level of our response. With the appropriate consultation and given the significance of the allegation, any Playcentre person under investigation for suspected abuse will be required to suspend attendance and duties at Playcentre whilst investigation occurs.

- **Every situation is different.** It is important to consider all available information about the child concerned, their home environment, and any significant events before reaching conclusions
- **Avoid gossip and speculation.** Concerns will be raised directly with the right person (depending on the circumstances, in Centres this will be the Centre President or equivalent, regionally it will be the Regional role responsible for Centre support or any

member of the National Team) who will facilitate appropriate action being taken. Those raising and addressing the child abuse concerns will work to maintain confidentiality.

- **Take the expert's advice.** We always act on the recommendations of statutory agencies such as Oranga Tamariki and the Police.
- **Refer support.** Everyone in our Playcentre community should have access to support when child abuse concerns are raised and we will refer people on to support agencies and organisations where possible. This support extends to being available to those about whom concerns are raised.

These principles apply regardless of whether the concerns are about a Playcentre employee, member or another adult. When addressing concerns in relation to an employee, our disciplinary procedures and relevant statutory obligations will be followed.

Indicators of child abuse may include but is not limited to:

Neglect, the persistent failure to meet a child or young person's basic needs when reasonably able to do so

- physical neglect - not providing the necessities of life like a warm place to live, enough food and clothing
- neglectful supervision - leaving children home alone, or without someone safe looking after them during the day or night
- emotional neglect - not giving children and young people the comfort, attention and love they need through play, talk, and everyday affection
- neglect of medical care - the failure to take care of their health needs
- educational neglect - allowing chronic truancy, failure to enrol children and young people in school, or inattention to special education needs.

Emotional abuse, a persistent pattern of behaviour towards a child or young person, but can also include a single severe incident

- persistently withholding affection
- eroding their sense of self-worth and self-respect
- conveying they are worthless, unloved or inadequate, or valued only if they meet another person's needs
- causing them to live in fear
- having expectations that are significantly inappropriate for their development or age
- deliberate or persistent disregard for their cultural identity and wellbeing

Physical abuse, a non-accidental act resulting in physical harm to a child. It may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, burning, biting, poisoning, cutting, strangling or anything else that could cause a physical injury.

Sexual abuse, forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities. It can be direct physical contact or non-contact such as observing or being encouraged to behave inappropriately.





How we set out to protect our tamariki

At Playcentre Aotearoa, we protect the tamariki in our Playcentre communities through the preventative means and actions of:

- **Our philosophy of parents as educators** and high occurrences of parents present with their tamariki during Centre sessions
- **Familiarisation with this Child Protection policy and our Positive Guidance policy** for all our members and attending whānau at time of starting Playcentre. This stresses the importance we place on the welfare of our tamariki.
- **Regular refresher Child Protection training** for all Centre members identified as having regular responsibility for the education and care of our tamariki, as well as supervision of other adults on session. It will happen at least two-yearly.
- **Prohibiting objectionable materials** in our Playcentre environments
- **Limiting online access** to situations only when there is adult guidance
- **Reinforcing toileting and nappy changing procedures** whereby parents of the child attend in the first instance and where this is not possible, another adult is within line of sight at all times
- **Accompanying visitors** while in a Centre environment and around our tamariki - ensuring all visitors, be they contractors or whānau remain within line of sight at all times of a Playcentre member
- **Safety checking those who work with our tamariki** ("children's workers") at time of recruitment and as set out in regulation, and includes police vet, and identity and work history verification. Any concerns raised as a result of the safety check will be assessed by the responsible Regional and National roles

and limitations of access to tamariki and participation in activities may be imposed.

Applying the regulations for safety checking children's workers to our Playcentre context, we have determined the following:

Core "children's workers" at Playcentre are

- all those in paid Playcentre positions working with tamariki in Centres (at least once a week or 4 times a month)
- all volunteers engaged in formal training that requires them to do practical work on session
- any students from another training or education provider attending Playcentre as part of a placement or experience for their training programme

Non-core "children's workers" at Playcentre are

- Regional employees who visit Playcentres regularly (at least once a week or 4 times a month) as part of their role, who will not have primary responsibility for tamariki.

Exempt from safety checks are

- all other members, whānau, and volunteers

Safety checks for children's workers will be in place prior to employment and/or completed as part of enrolment according to the timelines guided by legislation.

We have a safety check procedure in place for everyday application at Centre level which includes record keeping of safety checks and the results and regular three-yearly safety check of every children's worker.





Policy controls	Regulatory references:	Other related references:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Name: Playcentre Aotearoa's Child Protection Policy• Version: P7/R1/7.19• Issued: July 2019• Owner: National Support Manager• Approver: Chief Executive• Last Reviewed:• Scheduled Review Date: 2022, thereafter every year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008, No 46, 47, 56• Licensing criteria and guidance - HS31, HS32, GMA7A• Health & Safety at Work Act 2015• Children's Act 2014• Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 (Previous known as Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oranga Tamariki website: https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz• How Can I Tell – Recognising Child Abuse booklet available online from: www.childmatters.org.nz• Barnardos for whānau counselling: http://www.barnardos.org.nz/SupportServices/FamilyCounselling.asp

*must be displayed and/or held at each Centre, including this Child Protection policy

