



## **DE PAUL HOUSE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Goal:**

**To ensure that all children and young persons who have contact with De Paul House and its staff are afforded the care, protection and support to thrive in their family group and community to reach their full potential as required by the Children Act 2014.**

#### **Statement of Commitment:**

De Paul House is committed to the prevention of abuse and to the well-being of children and young people.

De Paul House is committed to acting, at all times, in the best interest of the children and, young people to whom it provides a service.

De Paul House is committed to dealing with abuse, suspected abuse or disclosure of abuse in a timely fashion.

De Paul House recognises that the family's primary role in caring and protecting the child should be valued and maintained. However, the child's safety and wellbeing should have priority.

De Paul House acknowledges that in cases of suspected child abuse, support for families is important.

De Paul House agrees that working in accordance with this policy requires staff to be trained and supported.

De Paul House will ensure any disclosures about alleged abuse are acknowledged and appropriate action taken to ensure the safety of children who make disclosures.

De Paul House is committed to complying with all relevant legislation.

De Paul House will ensure relevant staff attend Child Protection Training such as that provided by Child Matters.

### **Paramountcy Principle:**

The safety of the child or young person is always our prime consideration, pursuant to the Paramountcy Principle, s4a, Oranga Tamariki Act, 1989.

### **Scope:**

This policy applies to all children and young persons whom are clients of this organisation, and to those with whom staff come into contact in the course of their work with De Paul House.

It applies to staff, volunteers and management of De Paul House.

It also applies to any contracted staff providing support services to families and members, (including childcare), and to those providing support services to staff.

### **Definitions:**

This child protection policy applies to all children and young people as defined by the Oranga Tamariki Act, 1989, under the age of 17 years.

A 'family' is defined as adult(s) having the fulltime, permanent care of child(ren).

'Staff' is defined as those who are employed directly by or volunteer for, De Paul House, as well as staff and volunteers of partner organisations whilst they are working with children and young people in the care or supervision of de Paul House.

### **Responsibilities:**

**The General Manager will have primary, overall responsibility for child protection, and for monitoring this policy. The General Manager will be supported to provide this oversight by the Practice**

**Manager who will act as the designated person for staff child protection enquiries and day to day application of the policy.**

**Review:**

The Child Protection Policy will be reviewed every three years.

**DEFINITION OF CHILD ABUSE**

The Oranga Tamariki Act, 1989 states that “a child or young person is suffering, or is likely to suffer, serious harm if ... the child or young person is being, or is likely to be, abused (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), deprived, ill-treated, or neglected”

**Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse can be caused from punching, beating, kicking, shaking, biting, burning or throwing the child. Physical abuse may also result from excessive or inappropriate discipline or violence within the family, and is considered abuse regardless of whether or not it was intended to hurt the child. Physical abuse may be the result of a single episode or of a series of episodes.

**Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse occurs when a child or young person’s emotional, psychological or social well-being and sense of worth is continually battered.

It can include a pattern of criticising, rejecting, degrading, ignoring, isolating, corrupting, exploiting and terrorising a child. It may result from exposure to family violence or involvement in illegal or anti-social activities.

**Sexual Abuse**

It includes any touching for sexual purpose, fondling of breasts, buttocks, genitals, oral sex, sexual intercourse, an adult exposing themselves to the child or young person, or seeking to have a child touch them for a sexual purpose. It also includes voyeurism, photographing children or young people inappropriately, involving the child or young person in

pornographic activities or prostitution or using the internet and phone to initiate sexual conversations with children or young people.

### Neglect

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. Neglect can involve, physical needs, medical needs, educational needs, lack of supervision or refusal to take parental responsibility of providing care for children.

### Identification of Abuse and Neglect

All staff must be able to clearly identify the signs and symptoms of abuse and have the confidence to take the appropriate action. Staff will be familiar with the [Working together to support tamariki, rangatahi and their family/whānau](#) Interagency Guide which outlines key information around identification and understanding of abuse.

### **Procedures for Managing Disclosures of or Suspected Child Abuse**

1. Ensure the immediate safety of the child/young person is secured.
2. Where staff receive a disclosure from a child leading them to believe there may have been abuse they will follow the following steps.
  - a. Listen
    - i. Listen carefully to the specific words being used and note this down.
  - b. Reassure
    - i. Let them know they are not in trouble and have done the right thing by speaking up.
  - c. Limited open-ended prompts.
    - i. Do not interview the child, however, if appropriate use prompts such as, "tell me more about that" or "What happened next" to encourage further conversation.
    - ii. Do not introduce any new language that the child has not already used. (do not correct children's names for body parts)
  - d. Say what you will do
    - i. Do not make promises you can't keep such as keeping secrets or keeping them safe now.

- ii. Let them know you will need to talk to some other adults about helping them
  - e. Next steps
    - i. If in immediate danger, call police immediately
    - ii. If not in immediate danger, support child to engage in neutral activities such as drawing or calm play before finishing.
  - f. Documentation
    - i. Call Practice Manager or General Manager to inform them of the disclosure or incident as soon as practicable.
    - ii. Note word for word what was said by the child and what questions you asked.
    - iii. Note the date, time and who was present for the disclosure.
- 3. Staff member or volunteer will not act alone about suspicions and is to urgently approach the Practice Manager or the General Manager immediately upon becoming aware of child abuse concerns and ensuring the immediate safety of the child/young person.
- 4. A decision is to be made by the team member and the General or Practice Manager about level of risk and whether a report of concern to Oranga Tamariki or contact with Police is the appropriate course of action, or whether other supports should be put in place. If there is non-agreement or uncertainty, staff from Oranga Tamariki contact centre or Police will be consulted and the required action will be immediately taken on the basis of this advice. This should be completed within the same day of the concern being raised.
- 5. In the event that a report of concern to Oranga Tamariki is made, the information is to be factually and clearly written up. Staff will use the 'Report of Concern Template' located in j:7. Family Support: Oranga Tamariki Reports of Concern: (appropriate year).
- 6. The General, Practice or Operations Manager will read the information drafted and then co-sign the document with approval.
- 7. The report of concern is then scanned and emailed to Oranga Tamariki email address; [contact@ot.govt.nz](mailto:contact@ot.govt.nz) . A copy of the email including sent information is to be retained as proof of action.

8. The actual report of concern is to be filed on the Exess case management system immediately after the report of concern has been made to Oranga Tamariki.
9. Report of concern details are to be recorded in the computer based folder: j: 7. Family Support: Oranga Tamariki Reports of Concern: (appropriate year).
10. If there has been a traumatic, critical event, a debrief for all staff/volunteers involved will be held at the earliest practicable time, facilitated by the Practice Manager or another appropriate person. All staff members involved will be kept informed as far as possible within the limits.
11. Although the parent or caregiver of the child will usually be informed of concerns, there may be times when those with parental responsibility may not be initially informed. This may happen when:
  - the parent or caregiver is the alleged perpetrator
  - it is possible that the child may be intimidated into silence
  - there is a strong likelihood that evidence will be destroyed
  - the child does not want their parent or caregiver involved and they are of an age when they are competent to make that decision

Should this situation arise, the reason will be recorded immediately once report of concern is forwarded to Oranga Tamariki in the Exess case management system

### **Confidentiality and Information Sharing:**

De Paul House recognises that all staff must act within the legal requirements of the Privacy Act, Oranga Tamariki Act, Health information Act 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.

De Paul House encourages the sharing of information when appropriate steps have been taken, and information sharing will be restricted to those who have a need to know in order to protect children.

### **Relationships with External Agencies:**

De Paul House will maintain a good working relationship with Oranga Tamariki and with Police and be familiar with the laws that serve to protect children from abuse. We will consult with Oranga Tamariki, the Police, and with other appropriate agencies that have specialist knowledge to help us protect children from abuse.

### **Managing Allegations Against Staff:**

**Any allegation that a member of staff or volunteer has behaved in an inappropriate or unsafe way must be taken seriously and handled in an appropriate manner that ensures the child's safety.**

De Paul House will respond to suspicions and allegations of child abuse by a member of staff in a manner which best ensures children's or young persons' immediate and long-term safety and will treat suspicions or allegations against a staff member with the same seriousness as suspicions or allegations made against any other person.

De Paul House will not act alone and will refer all suspected situations of child abuse to Police or Oranga Tamariki. The safety of the child will be the primary consideration, and no person in this organisation will collude to protect an adult or an organisation.

Allegations will be treated in such a way that the rights of adults and the stress upon the staff member or volunteer are also taken into consideration.

The person managing the child abuse issue will not be the same person as that managing the employment or volunteer issue should this arise.

The suspected staff member (or volunteer) will be prevented from having further unsupervised access to children during any investigation and will be informed fully of their rights.

Staff will declare to a management team member any situation where there could be a conflict of interest, and provision made on a case-by-case basis about who will handle the process.

De Paul House will adhere to the principles of the Employment Contract's Act and give the staff member all information regarding his or her rights.

De Paul House recognises the added stress to fellow staff in such a situation, and they will be directed to appropriate support.

If the police decide to undertake a criminal investigation, then the member of staff may be suspended, without prejudice, as a precautionary measure. It is important that no internal investigation is undertaken, and no evidence gathered that might prejudice the criminal investigation.

If De Paul House is aware that a member of staff it has placed on precautionary suspension also works with children for another organisation, either as an employee or a volunteer, it should ensure that the other organisation is informed of the suspension and the subsequent outcome. Consultation with Oranga Tamariki or the Police will determine how this information is conveyed.

If there is insufficient evidence to pursue a criminal prosecution, then a disciplinary investigation may still be undertaken if there is "reasonable cause to suspect" that abuse may have occurred. The allegation may represent inappropriate behaviour or poor practice by a member of staff which needs to be considered under internal disciplinary procedures.

## **Safeguarding Children at De Paul House**

### Recruitment and Selection:

De Paul House ensures that all staff working with children, both paid and voluntary, have been appropriately vetted and screened by an interview process, Police vetting, and referee checks.

De Paul House ensures that all staff working with children are employed in accordance with the Safe Employment Policy.

### Professional development

All staff who have direct contact with children are to complete the Child Matters Recognising and Responding to Child Abuse training and other relevant topics.

All new staff will undertake an induction programme that requires them to read the De Paul House Child Protection Policy and meet with the Practice manager to discuss child disclosure and reporting processes.

All staff will read and have access to a copy of the Child Protection Policy. Reference to the Child Protection Policy will be made on a regular basis in staff meetings and training sessions, so that staff remain familiar with and up to date with the policy statements and procedures. The policy will also be available on the De Paul House Website

### Convention of the rights of a child

De Paul House supports and abides by the UN Convention on the rights of a Child. We believe all children deserve to be treated with care, dignity and respect and live free from harm or discrimination of any kind. See [What are my rights? - Children's Rights agreed under United Nations Convention | Mana Mokopuna](#) for further information from Mana Mokopuna | Children's Commissioner.

### Physical contact

Any physical contact with children and young people must be appropriate to the delivery of each service and based on the needs of the child or young person (such as to assist or comfort a distressed young person) rather than on the needs of our staff. This will look different for each team at De Paul House depending on the nature of the role and tasks being completed.

Under no circumstances should any of our staff have contact with children or young people participating in our service that:

- Involves touching of genitals, buttocks or the breast area (female children).
  - Exception for nappy changing in play centre by select paid and vetted staff. Change tables are located in common areas, in sight and hearing of all other staff.
- Would appear to a reasonable observer to have a sexual connotation.
- Is intended to cause pain or distress to the child or young person – for example corporal punishment.
- Is overly physical – as is, for example, wrestling, tickling or other rough play.
- Is unnecessary – as is, for example, assisting with toileting when a child does not require assistance.

- Is initiated against the wishes of the child or young person, except if such contact may be necessary to prevent injury to the child/young person or to others, in which case: Physical restraint should be a last resort, must be the minimum required to prevent harm to themselves or others and must be reported to management as soon as possible.

### Giving gifts

Gifts are not given to children without the knowledge of parents, and where possible should be given to the parents themselves to give to the children rather than directly by staff or volunteers. All gifts to children or families are on behalf of De Paul House.

### Photography

Photography of children or young people in our service will only be taken as necessary for participation in events or approved marketing materials where permission of parents or caregivers has already been attained. At times photos not including children's faces may be taken for the above purposes. Photos will be stored on secure De Paul House devices, and will not be taken or stored on personal devices.

### Communicating and engaging with children

Our communication (verbal and non-verbal) with children and young people is:

- For providing clear direction, boosting their confidence, encouraging, or affirming them. In all our communication we are acting as role models and promoting choice and inclusion.
- Not to be harmful to children – in this respect, avoid language that is:
  - discriminatory, racist or sexist.
  - derogatory, belittling, or negative, for example, by calling a child a 'loser' or telling them they are 'too fat'.
  - intended to threaten or frighten - profane or sexual in nature

All staff will ensure that their approach and interactions with children and young people are sensitive, respectful, and inclusive of all backgrounds and abilities. Where De Paul House is involved with children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds or who have a

disability, our staff will promote their safety (including cultural safety), participation and inclusion.

### Digital communication

Wherever possible digital communication with children and young people should be avoided. All communication with children or families is to be from work related devices and contact details. Where traditional forms of communication such as text, calling or emailing – in consultation with their Manager, staff are able to create a work linked social media account (i.e. Whatsapp) to assist with communication barriers. These login details should be stored and shared with their line manager.

Where necessary to communicate digitally to children, this should be done with consent of the parents and where possible parents should be included/copied into the communication.

### Supervision

De Paul House staff will avoid one-to-one unsupervised situations with children and young people. Staff will conduct all activities and/or discussions with children in sight and sound of parents or other staff.

### Conflicts of interest and Professional relationships

De Paul House believes that as far as possible, staff working with children and families should keep their personal and professional lives separate, and does not encourage close personal relationships or care-taking activities with children or families associated with De Paul House outside the work environment.

Staff are to inform their line manager of any existing relationships with members, students, clients or their families which could constitute a conflict of interest or place the staff member in a position of compromise.

Staff are to inform their line manager of any potential situations of possible compromise or conflict of interest that arise as part of their work.

No staff member is to enter into a relationship with a child, young person or family, either current or former, which could mean that any other section of this policy, is compromised. Staff should be aware of their 'duty of care' which precludes developing a sexual relationship with or grooming of a

child. A sexual relationship between an adult and a child will always be wrong, unequal and unacceptable.

## Relevant legislation/regulatory compliance

- Oranga Tamariki Act 1989
- Privacy Act 2020
- Childrens Act 2014

## Related Policies/Procedures

- Complaints Procedure (CLI3)
- Children's Worker Safety Checking – Employment Policy (HR7)
- Safe Recruitment Policy (HR6)
- Transport Policy (HS10)
- Conflict of interest Policy (HR4)

## Quality Control

Version	Last Reviewed	Reviewer	Approved
01	1/04/2018	PB	JR
02	1/04/2019	PB	JR
03	16/04/2021	PB/FSW	JR
04	24/08/2023	JR	Children's Act 2014 amendment only
05	1/05/2024	JR	Remove Oranga Tamariki contract 327885 only
06	1/08/2025	JR	Change of title Practice Manager
07	19/12/2025	ZK	JR