

Child Protection Policy

Child Protection Policy

February 2021

Policy Statement

Halberg Foundation (Halberg) is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children in its environs. We recognised the responsibility to promote safe practice and to protect children from harm and exploitation while participating in our activities.

Staff and volunteers will work together to embrace difference and diversity and respect the rights of children. All children have a right to protection and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account.

For the purposes of this policy and associated procedures, a child is recognised as someone under the age of 18 years.

Policy Principles

- Child protection is everyone's responsibility;
- The welfare of children is the primary concern; and
- All children have the right to protection from all forms of harm

Policy Aims and Objectives

- To provide a safe environment for children;
- To adopt best practice to safeguard and protect children from harm and reduce risks;
- To ensure appropriate procedures are in place for those who encounter any issue; and
- To work in partnership with children and parents/carers to promote the welfare, health and development of children

This Policy applies to all Halberg representatives and activities:

- Employees
- Volunteers
- Board Members
- Trustees
- Interns and work experience students
- Contractors and consultants

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Procedures & Practices

Protocols

The protocols as identified in Appendix 1 are to ensure that the utmost is done to provide a safe environment for children engaging with the Halberg. They provide guidance to those working with children in the Halberg environs by outlining good practice and establishing boundaries in a range of situations. The intention of these protocols is to reduce the likelihood of harm to a child as well as minimising the risk of an allegation or complaint being made.

Recruitment and Training

To ensure that suitable and appropriate staff and volunteers are engaged with Halberg a robust recruitment and screening process will be followed for all roles. Screening is also required for staff and volunteers currently engaged by the organisation.

The recruitment process will include:

- Ensuring there is a role description for every role
- Interview screening which incorporates behavioural-based interview questions around working with children (*staff compulsory/volunteers where practical*)
- Verbal referee checks that are documented (*staff compulsory/volunteers where practical*)
- Screening of all preferred applicants
- Roles covered by the Vulnerable Children's Act will be police vetted every 3 years.

Halberg recognises that induction training for new employees and volunteers is critical to the safety of children and all staff and volunteers will attend induction training on child abuse. They will also be required to attend training to understand and carry out the child protection policy, and their further training needs will be identified.

All new staff will undertake an induction programme that requires them to read and understand specific material and information about child abuse.

A child protection component will be part of the induction training for the Executive Board Members and Trustees.

All staff will read and have 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.

Child Protection Officer

A Child Protection Officer (CPO) will be appointed by Halberg. Their main responsibilities will include:

- Ensuring that child protection procedures are understood and adhered to by all Halberg representatives

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- Organising training and awareness within the organisation;
- Establishing and maintaining the complaints procedure;
- Reporting to Management and the Executive Board as appropriate
- Acting as the main contact and support for child protection matters
- Keeping up-to-date with developments in child protection legislation
- Liaising with local child protection agencies as required
- Maintaining confidential records of reported cases and any action taken
- Regularly monitoring and reviewing existing policies and procedures

Education and Training

Monitoring and training of staff and volunteers will be carried out to ensure that they are working safely and effectively with children.

- Training will be carried out in the induction programme to introduce the procedures set out in this policy and child protection training
- Staff and volunteers should have clear understanding of what constitutes inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour

Handling a Disclosure

Appendix 2 identifies a best practice guidance and should support the process of handling a disclosure

Complaint and Investigative Procedure

Any person may make a complaint about a person to whom this Policy applies if they consider that a person has, or may have, breached any part of this policy. Mandatory reporting obligations relate to all aspects of suspected or know abuse being identified.

Appendix 3 identifies the process for responding to suspected or disclosed harm.

Responding to Suspected Harm in the nature of Physical or Sexual Abuse

Physical or sexual abuse is at the most serious end of the harm spectrum and will require an immediate response. Key principles for responding to suspected child physical or sexual abuse:

- The welfare and interests of the child are the first and paramount considerations
- Suspected and actual incidences of reported harm should be responded to and recorded accurately and appropriately and as soon as possible
- Notify Oranga Tamariki Ministry for Children if there is concern about suspected physical or sexual abuse. If it is thought that the child is at immediate risk the Police should be notified
- Managing the rights of the alleged offender – People who have allegedly acted improperly also have rights, e.g. privacy. They also have a reputation and families of their own and it is important to carefully investigate any complaints and follow a robust and fair process.

Policy Review

The Halberg Child Protection Policy will be reviewed annually by the Board.

APPENDIX 1 - Protocols

Applying a child-centred approach where all children are treated equally and with dignity

- Activities should be appropriate for the age and development of the child
- Ensure feedback to children is about their performance and not of a personal nature
- Use positive and age-appropriate language when talking to children and in their presence

Creating a safe and open working environment that also reduces risk to staff and volunteers

- Exercise common sense
- Ensure that children use appropriate protective gear and that all equipment and facilities comply with safety regulations
- Ensure that any filming or photography of children is appropriate
- Ensure that the start and finish times are communicated to caregivers and adhered to so that children are not left unsupervised
- Ensure that children are handed over to their caregiver, or other authorised person at the conclusion of activities
- Explain the purpose and obtain consent (from parents/caregivers) prior to filming or photographing children
- Obtain parental consent to publish photographs of children involved in all HF programmes
- Request parental consent before transporting children in a vehicle. Ensure that the vehicle is insured, has the appropriate child safety seats and has a current Warrant of Fitness and Registration
- Except in an emergency where it is unsafe to delay, ensure you have parental consent to administer first aid if required
- Do not use alcohol, cigarettes or electronic cigarettes in the presence of children and do not offer any of these to children under any circumstances
- Do not engage in communication with a child, on a one-on-one basis, through social media, texting or email other than for relevant Halberg business
- Ensure that all physical contact with children is relevant and appropriate to the activity
- Do not engage in any intimate, over-familiar or sexual relationships with people under the age of 18 years
- Do not engage in any bullying activity
- Do not allow parents, other children or spectators to engage in any type of bullying behaviour (that includes cyber/text bullying)

Avoiding situations where you are alone with a child

- Avoid private or unobserved situations, including being alone with a child in the changing rooms
- Avoid entering changing rooms – if you must enter, knock and announce yourself and try to have at least one other adult with you
- Avoid driving a child unaccompanied
- Do not invite or encourage children to your home without their caregiver
- Always have another adult present when staying overnight anywhere with children
- Do not share a room with a child in the absence of their caregiver

APPENDIX 2 – Handling a Disclosure (Best Practice)

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believe the person and take what they say seriously • Be accessible • Listen carefully • Reassure the person, e.g. they are right to tell; it's not their fault • Thank them for telling you • Tell them you will try to get help and if necessary explain this may involve telling another staff member • Consult immediately with your Manager or Safeguarding Support Staff • Make a careful record as soon as possible, of what was said in a Safeguarding Incident Form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't say anything critical, e.g. "why didn't you tell me sooner" • Don't jump to conclusions, especially about the abuser. It may be someone still trusted, liked and/or loved by the person • Don't investigate any concerns suspected or raised, including probing or questioning for further information. Particularly not asking leading questions, e.g. did this happen at home? • Don't make promises or tell them you will keep anything secret • Don't stop them when they are speaking freely, (just listen) and don't feel the need to fill any silences • Don't let anyone who may be involved in the abuse know the child/person has said anything to you (if the abuser is unknown we are to assume this may involve the child's parents or carers)

APPENDIX 3 – Complaint and Investigative Procedure



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SITUATION

ACTION

CONSIDERATION

Harm suspected, witnessed, reported or disclosed

Ensure the child is safe from immediate harm

Do not formally interview the child or make any judgements or commitments you cannot keep

Confidentiality is important. Avoid questioning the child beyond what they have already disclosed.

Record facts concisely including:

- Type of harm
- Signs and symptoms noted
- Any particular incidents with dates, times and place
- Any action taken

LISTEN to the child and reassure them

RECORD accurately and appropriately any information received/observed

CONSULT immediately with your CPO

REPORT your concern to Oranga Tamariki or the Police

If alleged harm is by a staff member or volunteer

Follow the advice of Oranga Tamariki or the Police

Ensure there is no contact between the staff member or volunteer and the child

A staff member or volunteer must be informed of any allegations against them. Be guided by the Police on this as each situation will be judged on its merits. Where there is a criminal offence the Police may want to notify the person. Your organisation may decide to stand the employee or volunteer down while the matter is being investigate.

If alleged harm is by a non-staff member

Follow the advice of Oranga Tamariki or the Police

Ensure the child is in a safe place

Decide who will inform the parents and provide support to the family. Seek help from trained personnel in order to manage this process effectively.

Investigation by the Police

Note that there is a difference between a criminal investigation and an employment matter and that these must be kept separate.

HF Debrief

Your debrief will include decisions about the person's future role in your organisation and a review of how the situation was managed and what changes to policy and safeguards need to be made