

**Developing and Implementing your
Child Protection Policy and Safe
Working Practices**

Introduction

It is important that every organisation operates in ways which ensure that children and young people are protected from harm. Even if your organisation is not legally required to have a Child Protection Policy under the Children's Act 2014, it may still be established best practice within your industry or profession. A Child Protection Policy ensures that the safety and wellbeing of children is the paramount consideration in all circumstances, placing child protection at the forefront of what you do.

The Law

The Children's Act 2014 aims to strengthen measures for the protection of children. It is this Act that sets out the legal requirements for an organisations child protection policy, ensuring that those working with children are safe to do so.

Under the Children's Act 2014, selected organisations must have a child protection policy which:

- Is written
- Guides staff to identify and report child abuse and neglect
- Is reviewed a minimum of every three years
- Is made available on the Internet

The organisations which are required to adopt a child protection policy under the Act include:

- The Ministries of Education, Health, Justice, Social Development, Business Innovation and Employment, Maori Development (Te Puni Kōkiri)
- The New Zealand Police
- District Health Boards
- School Boards – including private and partnership schools (Kura Hourua)
- All providers of children's services contracted or funded by any of the above organisations.

The purpose of a **Child Protection Policy** is to create a safe and supportive environment for children by outlining how your organisation will prevent, respond to, and report abuse, neglect, or exploitation. A Child Protection Policy should ensure that children's safety and wellbeing are front and centre of all decision making and provide clear guidelines on how to identify and respond to actual or alleged abuse or harm.

This policy template developed by Child Matters provides a basic outline of what should be included in a Child Protection Policy and is compliant with legislative and ethical obligations.

The template covers the following areas:

- Statement of commitment
- Purpose and guiding principles
- Scope
- Review period
- Definitions

- Roles and responsibilities
- Procedures for identifying and responding to abuse
- Working with families, whaanau, and external relationships
- Child protection training
- Recruitment
- Information sharing

Appendices attached to the policy include indicators of abuse and a flowchart for responding.

Your Child Protection Policy should be read in conjunction with a **Safe Working Practices** document (template included), which provides procedural guidance to help staff understand what constitutes appropriate and safe behaviour within an organisation. The template is designed to be flexible, allowing organisations to adopt the sections most relevant to their specific context. By using the Child Protection Policy template alongside the Safe Working Practices template, organisations can promote a safer environment for children and support staff in maintaining professional boundaries and responsibilities.

The Child Protection Policy and Safe Working Practices templates have been developed by Child Matters in alignment with best practice standards and in compliance with the legislative requirements outlined in the Children's Act 2014. Organisations are welcome to adapt these templates to meet their specific needs; however, it remains their responsibility to ensure that any modifications continue to uphold current best practice and comply with all relevant legal obligations.

For a more in-depth review or expert guidance on child protection matters, organisations are encouraged to contact **Child Matters** for consultation services and associated costings.

Considerations

When developing your Child Protection Policy and Safe Working Practices, consider the following:

Related Documents

When developing your Child Protection Policy, you may need to reference other documents or policies to ensure consistency and clarity, and to promote organisation-wide procedures.

Other documents could include:

- Human Resource Policies
 - Selection / Recruitment of Staff
 - Code of Conduct
 - Disciplinary Policy
 - Family Violence Policy
 - Bullying or Harassment Policy
 - Employee Exit Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Transport Policy
- IT Policy
- Boarding or Residential Services Procedures

Legislation

Your Child Protection Policy should be written with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1989 in mind and in accordance with the following legislation:

- Care of Children Act 2004
- Children's Act 2014
- Crimes Act 1961
- Family Violence Act 2018
- Education Act 1989
- Education (Physical Restraint) Rules 2023
- Employment Relations Act 2000
- Health and Safety Act 1956
- Health and Safety at Work Act 2015
- Health and Disability Sector Standards Regulations 2001
- Health Information Privacy Code 1994
- Human Rights Act 1993
- Oranga Tamariki Act 1989
- Privacy Act 2020

Review

Current legislation requires that Child Protection Policies are formally reviewed at least every three years. However, in line with best practice, it is recommended to undertake a review this every two years or sooner if:

- There are significant changes in legislation or guidance,
- There is a major incident or safeguarding concern, or
- Feedback from staff, children, or stakeholders indicates a review is necessary.

Definitions

A short list of key definitions has been included in the Child Protection Policy template to support understanding of this policy. However, organisations should adapt and expand this list as necessary to reflect their specific context, terminology, and operational needs.

In the Child Protection Policy and Safe Working Practices templates, the term “child” has been used throughout to refer to anyone under 18 years of age. Some organisations may wish to differentiate between a “child” (typically anyone under 14 years of age) and a “young person” (typically over the age of 14 and under the age of 18).

Organisations can choose the term most relevant to the work they are doing.

Designated Person for Child Protection

Child Matters recommends every organisation has at least one Designated Person for Child Protection, responsible for the safeguarding of children and ensuring that child protection is a key focus in your organisation at both a strategic level and on a day-to-day basis.

Where possible, we recommend having two or more Designated People to share the responsibility. It is best practice for the Designated People to be from different departments or levels of the organisation, to give staff options when raising concerns.

It is also best to have the name and contact details of the Designated Person(s) for Child Protection clearly identifiable in the Policy.

Child Protection Training

Currently, there is no national mandate for child protection training in New Zealand. As such, it is at the discretion of each organisation to determine how training is delivered and maintained.

It is strongly recommended that organisations clearly outline their training approach within this policy, including:

- Who is responsible for organising and overseeing training
- How training will be delivered during staff and volunteer induction
- The schedule and format for annual refresher training
- Opportunities for advanced or role-specific training, particularly for those in Designated Person roles.

A clear training framework helps ensure that all staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities and are equipped to act in the best interests of children at all times.

Reporting Lines

Child protection concerns should initially be raised to the Designated Person(s) for Child Protection. In the Child Protection Policy and Safe Working Practices templates, you will see there are some instances where concerns should also be raised with another person in your organisation. This is usually the headmaster/principal, chief executive, or someone from the leadership team and you will need to name this person, including their role and how to contact them.

Child Matters



Child Matters is a national charitable trust that exists to upskill those working and interacting with children, young people, and their families and whānau so that they can identify risks concerning vulnerability and abuse and have the knowledge and confidence to take appropriate action.

For 30 years, Child Matters has worked with all sectors, including health and education professionals, central and local Government, and community organisations across all social services. Child Matters delivers online and face-to-face training, child protection audits, and consultation services for policies, procedures, recruitment, and best practice in relation to child protection.

Child Matters offers a tiered approach to training to allow flexibility to deliver different levels of training knowledge. To create a sustainable child protection culture within an organisation, all staff must have a foundational understanding, and key members must have more specialised knowledge to assist with decision-making regarding child protection issues as they arise.

Policy Development

For more individualised support, or if your organisation has complex or unique needs, Child Matters can work alongside you to develop your Child Protection Policy and Safe Working Practices.

Consultation

Child Matters is available to provide advice and guidance around appropriately managing child protection concerns or issues.

Investigations

Child Matters can provide comprehensive review of child protection incidents or full management of a child protection incident investigation, following best practice and industry guidelines.

Audit

Child Matters can provide child protection audit, which covers all aspects of an organisation procedurally, operationally, and of site facilities (if required).

Training

Training is available online, in-house, and public face-to-face settings. All face-to-face courses include a range of teaching methods and mediums, including lecture, small and large group discussions, interactive activities, and video clips. Participants are encouraged to share their

ideas and experiences and discuss scenarios. For more information, visit
<https://training.childmatters.org.nz/w/>

For support in any of these areas, please contact Megan West, National Services Manager:

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