

GLADSTONE PRIMARY SCHOOL

40. CHILD PROTECTION

RATIONALE

The well-being and safety of children and young people is a paramount concern of Gladstone Primary. This includes the prevention of child abuse or maltreatment.

The interest and welfare of the child or young person will be the primary consideration when any action is taken about suspected abuse. This school supports the roles of statutory agencies (the Police and Child, Youth and Family) in the investigation of abuse and will report cases of suspected abuse to these agencies, following the process outlined below.

This school will maintain a good working relationship with the statutory agencies and be familiar with the laws which serve to protect children and young persons from abuse. The school will consult with these and other agencies with specialist knowledge when needed, and our staff will not assume responsibility beyond their level of experience or training.

PURPOSE

This policy guides the actions of the school whenever there is a concern about the abuse or mistreatment of children. This includes recording concerns, if a child discloses abuse, suspected abuse by a staff member or suspected abuse between children at the school.

This policy applies to all staff, including volunteers and part-time or temporary roles and contractors. It is intended to protect all children that staff may encounter, including siblings, the children of adults accessing services and any other children encountered by staff.

1. Definitions

Child abuse refers to the harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill treatment, abuse, neglect, or serious deprivation of any child/tamariki, young person/rangatahi (Section 14B Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989).

Physical abuse - any acts that may result in physical harm of a child or young person.

Sexual abuse - any acts that involve forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening.

Emotional abuse - any act or omission that results in adverse or impaired psychological, social, intellectual and emotional functioning or development.

Neglect - the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or psychological needs, leading to adverse or impaired physical or emotional functioning or development.

Family violence may be witnessed/experienced by children and involve physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

2. Identifying child abuse and neglect

Every situation is different and it's important to consider all available information about the child and their environment before reaching conclusions. For example, behavioural concerns may be the result of life events, such as divorce, accidental injury, the arrival of a new sibling etc.

It is normal for people to feel uncertain, however, the important thing is that staff should be able to recognise when something is wrong, especially if a pattern is noticed or several signs together cause concern.

Some signs of potential abuse / neglect

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- Physical signs of abuse: unexplained injuries, burns, fractures, unusual or excessive itching, genital injuries, sexually transmitted diseases. Neglect: looking rough and uncared for, dirty, without appropriate clothing, underweight
 - Medical neglect (e.g. persistent nappy rash or skin disorders or other untreated medical issues).
 - Developmental delays (e.g. small for their age, cognitive delays, falling behind in school, poor speech and social skills). - Emotional abuse/neglect (e.g. sleep problems, low self-esteem, obsessive behaviour, inability to cope in social situations, sadness/loneliness and evidence of self-harm).
 - Behavioural concerns (e.g. age- inappropriate sexual interest or play, fear of a certain person or place, eating disorders/substance abuse, disengagement/neediness, aggression).
 - The child talking about things that indicate abuse (sometimes called an allegation or disclosure).
 - Neglectful supervision (e.g. out and about unsupervised, left alone, no safe home to return to).

Note: it is not important to identify what specific kind of abuse might be occurring. Staff simply need to be aware of and able to recognise the whole range of concerning signs.

3. Responding to child abuse

Under sections 15 and 16 of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989, any person who believes that a child has been or is likely to be, harmed physically, emotionally or sexually or ill-treated, abused, neglected or deprived may report the matter to Child, Youth and Family or the Police and provided the report is made in good faith, no civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against them.

This Gladstone Primary will act on recommendations made by statutory agencies concerning the official reporting of suspected abuse. Staff will only consult with or inform families about any suspected or actual abuse, after consulting with the appropriate statutory agencies.

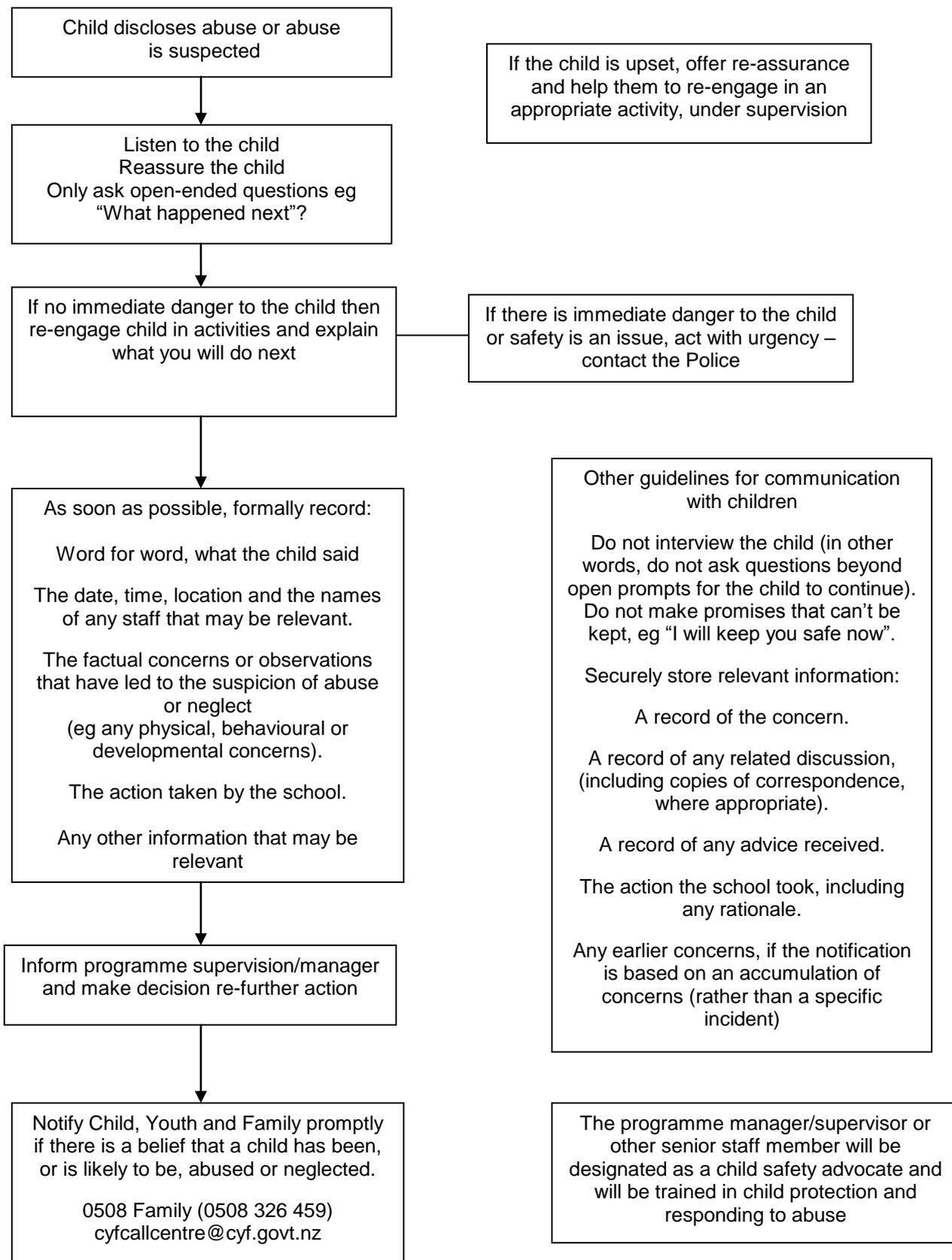
Staff will respond to suspected child abuse or any concerning behaviour by writing down observations, impressions and communications in a confidential register. This will be kept separate from programme diaries, day books communication books and enrolment information etc.

Information volunteered by a child should be fully and accurately recorded. No child should be interviewed or in any way questioned about the suspected abuse.

No staff member will act alone about suspected child abuse but will consult with the Principal/Director of Guidance and Support. Where staff and the Principal/Director of Guidance and Support suspect child abuse has occurred and a child is unsafe, they are committed to promptly reporting the matter to the Police or the Child, Youth and Family.

Staff who are responding to cases of suspected child abuse are entitled to have support. The school will maintain knowledge of such individuals, agencies and organisations in the community that provide support.

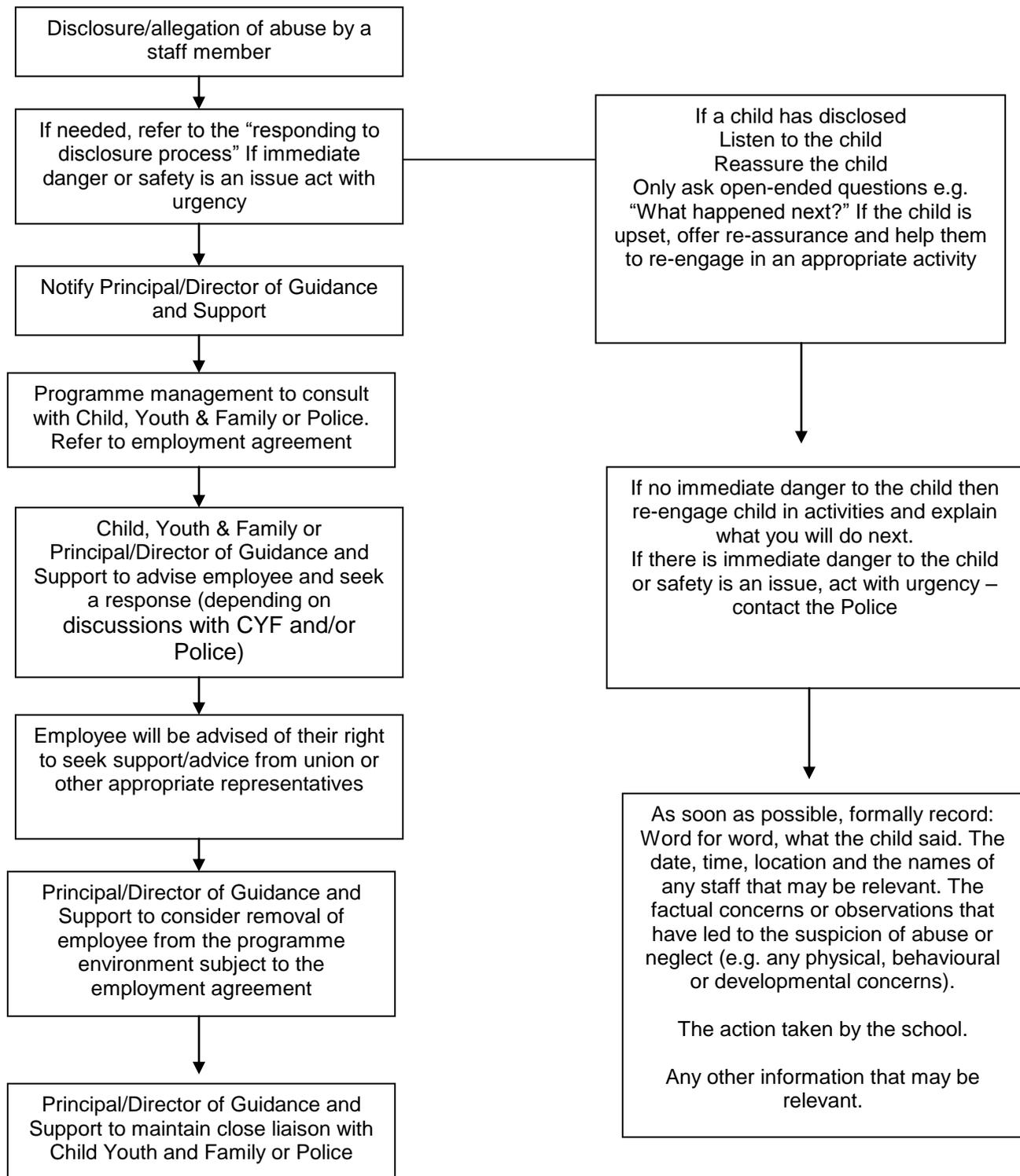
Responding to a disclosure/concern about Abuse



4. When an allegation of abuse is made against a staff member

Where it is suspected that child abuse has been carried out by a staff member (paid, unpaid or in any role), the matter must be reported promptly to programme management.

Under no circumstances should the child making the allegation be exposed to unnecessary risk. This may require programme management to consider removal of the staff member from the programme environment subject to the requirements of the applicable employment contract. All actions will be undertaken with appropriate care to maintain confidentiality.



5. Confidentiality and information sharing

The school will seek advice from Child, Youth and Family and/or the Police before identifying information about an allegation is shared with anyone, other than the service manager or designated child safety advocate in the organisation.

In general, when collecting personal information about individuals, privacy and confidentiality will be maintained.

Staff may disclose information under the Privacy Act/Health Information Privacy Code where there is good reason to do so – such as where there is a serious risk to individual health and safety (see privacy principle 11/Code rule 11). Disclosure about ill-treatment or neglect of a child/young person may also be made to the Police or Child, Youth and Family under sections 15 and 16 of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989.

6. Peer abuse

This school will ensure that the safety of the child or young person is paramount and no form of physical, sexual or verbal harassment or violence from peers will be sanctioned or minimized in any way.

While the situation is being evaluated, the children/young people concerned will be separated. It is essential to reduce further emotional trauma for the victims who may be fearful and distressed if they are in contact with possible abusers.

In some cases where the abuse has occurred at the programme immediate suspension may be appropriate, as outlined in the behaviour guidance policy.

This school will make every effort to keep personal information as private as possible. Parents will also be asked to keep all information confidential to allow proper investigation and resolution.

7. Child and staff safety – supervision guidelines

All staff should examine the opportunities or possible situations where staff could be alone with children. This should be avoided wherever possible.

Wherever possible an open door policy for all spaces should be used (i.e. not possible for toilets). Staff should be aware of where all children are at all times and check to ensure what they are doing is appropriate.

Visitors to the school should be monitored at all times by staff.

All volunteers and outside instructors should be monitored by the staff.

Unless requested by children or parents there is usually no need to assist school aged children with toileting.

In some situations a child or young person may require more regular physical and or personal care assistance. If possible, involve the parents/caregivers and outside agencies (such as Ministry of Education's Special Education Group) to assist. If this assistance is not available, ensure that staff are aware of the appropriate procedures when giving assistance.

Staff should avoid being alone when transporting a child or young person, unless an emergency requires it

Dave Shadbolt (Principal)

Fiona Barker (Chairperson)
