



Child Protection Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Manawatū District Council (MDC) is committed to the prevention of abuse and to the well-being of children, young people, vulnerable adults and their families and to assist the appropriate agencies and authorities to investigate and deal with cases of child abuse.

- 1.2 This policy applies to all children, young people, vulnerable adults and their families who use the services and facilities of this organisation and those who staff come into contact with during their work at MDC.
- 1.3 It applies to all staff and volunteers of MDC as well as all contractors.
- 1.4 At all times, the interests of a child will be put ahead of any other individual.
- 1.5 Manawatū District Council aims:
- to provide a clear policy framework within which the organisation and its staff are encouraged and supported to be active in the protection of children from any forms of abuse; and
 - to help staff avoid situations that could raise concerns or put the organisation at risk
 - to provide staff members with clear guidance on the steps they should take when they are aware of, or suspect there is, any instance of child abuse; and
 - to help staff members refer instances or suspicions of child abuse to the appropriate agencies or authorities; and
 - to help staff members identify and respond to the needs of vulnerable children whose welfare is our concern; and
 - to support staff members to protect vulnerable children by seeking expert advice and assistance where needed and providing appropriate training and information.

2 Definitions

- 2.1 According to the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989:
- **Child** – any person aged under 17 years
 - **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 the child is aware of what is happening
 - **Emotional Abuse** – any act or omission that results in adverse or impaired psychological, social, intellectual or emotional functioning or development
 - **Neglect** – the persistent failure to meet a child’s physical or psychological needs, leading to adverse or impaired physical or emotional functioning or development
 - **Staff** – anyone employed by Manawatū District Council, or working on behalf of MDC including volunteers, contractors, sub-contractors
 - **Guardian** – anyone 16 years and over in charge of children

3 Confidentiality and information sharing

- 3.1 Under 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 a social worker or the Police. No civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against the person who makes the report, provided it is made in good faith.

- 3.2 When gathering, storing, or disclosing personal information about individuals, staff members must comply with the Information Privacy Principles set out in the Privacy Act 1993.
- 3.3 However, staff members may disclose information under the Privacy Act where there is good reason to do so, such as a serious risk to health and safety. Disclosure about child abuse may be made to a social worker or the Police under the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act.

4 Training, information and support

- 4.1 Manawātū District Council provides training for staff to promote awareness of how to prevent, recognise and respond to child abuse, as part of the annual MDC Academy (Corporate Training Programme). Staff who regularly interact with children and young people will be prioritised for this training.
- 4.2 The induction programme for all staff members includes reference to this policy.
- 4.3 MDC encourages staff members to seek and accept support when it is needed, including MDC's Employee Assistance Programme Vitae, on 0508 664 981.

5 Council rules and safeguards

- 5.1 Manawātū District Council will not take responsibility for the care and behaviour of unattended children. In the event of disruptive behaviour, children in distress or believed to be unsafe, the police may be notified if their supervising adult cannot be found or contacted.
- 5.2 Parents and guardians are responsible for the supervision and behaviour of their children while the children are in MDC facilities. In New Zealand, it is illegal to leave a child under the age of 14 years without reasonable provision for their care. In MDC facilities, no child under the age of 8 can be left without an adult, parent or guardian accompanying them at all times. We encourage parents and guardians of any children under 14 years to be either onsite with their children, or nearby and immediately contactable to return to the facility if required.

6 Children's Act 2014 checks

- 6.1 Prior to employment with the Manawātū District Council a safety check will be completed on all staff working at the Makino Aquatic Centre, Feilding Public Library, Parks & Property, Native Plant Nursery, the Emergency Management Welfare team and any other staff who regularly interact with children or young people.
- 6.2 As per the Children's Act 2014 Clause 26, (2) (b) safety check renewals will take place every four years.

7 Safe practice guidelines

- 7.1 As far as possible, staff members should avoid situations where they are alone with a child or children.

- 7.2 When contractor maintenance or repairs are taking place in the toilets or other enclosed areas, staff should close the area to the public.

8 Open door policy

- 8.1 When taking children to the toilets or other enclosed areas staff should stand where they are visible to the public.

9 Transportation of children

- 9.1 Except in emergencies, staff members should avoid being alone when transporting a child or children.
- 9.2 Except in emergencies, children are not to be taken from the premises of Manawātū District Council, or from any Manawātū District Council programme, without the written consent of the responsible parent or caregiver.

10 Visitors

- 10.1 Regular monitoring of visitors is required by staff members, while they are in the Feilding Public Library or Makino Aquatic Centre. Anything suspicious or out of the ordinary should be reported to a senior member of staff.

11 Physical contact with children

- 11.1 Parents or caregivers should be advised in advance of any activities which require staff members to have physical contact with a child or children (eg, swimming or gymnastics).
- 11.2 If possible, parents or caregivers or an outside agency should be involved where a child requires assistance (eg, to cope with a physical or intellectual disability). If assistance is not available, staff members must be made aware of the appropriate techniques and procedures for giving assistance.

12 Abandoned children under 8 years

- 12.1 Staff will first try to get a contact name and number for the parents. If unable to get this information from the child then the police will be contacted to come collect the child.

13 Truancy

- 13.1 Children and teens aged 5-15 years who are not home-schooled must be in school on school days from 9.00am to 3.00pm. If a pupil is at the Feilding Public Library or Makino Aquatic Centre during school time without school or adult caregiver supervision, they must show written proof from their school or adult caregiver excusing them from school on that day. Feilding Public Library or Makino Aquatic Centre staff will report instances of truancy to the Truancy officer, the school and/or the Police.

14 Touching or physically restraining children

- 14.1 Staff will not touch or physically restrain any child unless they are in immediate danger or the child is putting others in immediate danger. Instead they will put them in a room while waiting for the parents or police to collect them.

15 Procedure - when disclosure of abuse or neglect is made by a child or young person to a staff member

