

015 Child Protection Policy

Big Brothers Big Sisters is committed to ensuring the safety, wellbeing and protection of all children and young people in the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programme, as well as children and young people who come into contact with Big Brothers Big Sisters staff and volunteers through the course of our work. We will ensure that our staff and volunteers are trained to recognise indicators of child vulnerability, neglect and abuse, and are confident and able to respond to situations in an appropriate and timely manner. The wellbeing of the child is paramount in all situations and will be the focus of our decision-making process. We are committed to ensuring that all children with whom we come into contact during our work are safe, healthy, and supported in the different contexts of their lives.

Purpose

The safety and wellbeing of the child is our prime consideration at all times.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure staff and volunteers are able to protect the wellbeing of children and young people by identifying and reporting actual, suspected or potential cases of child vulnerability, abuse and neglect. The policy applies to all children and young people up to the age of 18, who are clients of Big Brothers Big Sisters, as well as those who come into contact with Big Brothers Big Sisters through the course of our work.

- The policy applies to: Staff, volunteers, management and board of trustees of Big Brothers Big Sisters.
- Students on placement with Big Brothers Big Sisters.
- Any personnel contracted to provide services for Big Brothers Big Sisters who may come into contact with children and young people.

Responsibilities

The Trust Board shall appoint the Child Protection Coordinator. This person will be responsible for all matters related to child protection concerns. The Child Protection Coordinator will be responsible for the implementation, monitoring and annual review of the Child Protection Procedures. Any concerns identified by staff, volunteers or management should be taken into account to ensure these procedures are current, accurate and applicable in the context of practice.

Role of the Child Protection Coordinator

The Child Protection Coordinator will:

- Be available for face to face meetings, telephone conversations and/or email correspondence to support and guide staff and volunteers with any Child Protection concerns.
- Advise staff and volunteers of Best Practice in relation to child vulnerability, suspected abuse and/or neglect or disclosures of child abuse and/or neglect.
- Ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child is the paramount consideration in any decision-making process.
- Assess information to make a decision as to whether the concern warrants a Report of Concern to Oranga Tamariki or a notification to Police, and work in partnership with the staff members to ensure that this is done in accordance with the procedures in this policy.
- Maintain effective relationships with agencies such as Oranga Tamariki and the Police

- Meet weekly with staff members to discuss, review and monitor any active entries in the Report of Concerns Register regarding concerns about a child.
- Ensure that staff and volunteers are adequately trained in identifying, responding to and reporting actual or potential cases of child vulnerability, abuse or neglect.
- Ensure that any Child Protection concerns are responded to by Big Brothers Big Sisters in an appropriate and timely manner.
- Follow up any Report of Concerns made with Oranga Tamariki within 3 days if no response has been received from the agency..
- Ensure that any Report of Concern to Oranga Tamariki or to the Police, which has not been dealt with in a satisfactory manner, or where there are still concerns held by Big Brothers Big Sisters, is advocated for at senior levels of Oranga Tamariki.
- Ensure that Reports of Concerns are filed to Oranga Tamariki, in accordance with the procedures in this policy, in any case where there are ongoing concerns or situations that may cause harm to the child.

Training

Big Brothers Big Sisters is committed to ensuring that all staff and volunteers are trained to identify and respond effectively to concerns of child abuse, neglect or vulnerability in an appropriate and timely manner.

The Child Protection Coordinator will be expected to complete the Child Matters 5 day Child Protection Programme and to participate in regular ongoing professional development opportunities in regard to Child Protection.

Staff will be expected to complete the Safeguarding Children E-learning programme during induction and to participate in regular ongoing professional development opportunities in regard to Child Protection.

Volunteer orientation training will include identifying and responding to Child Protection concerns. Ongoing training and resources will be offered to volunteers every year.

Definitions of abuse

Physical abuse is the intentional physical harming of a child or young person. It may include, but is not limited to: hitting, slapping, biting, punching, kicking, scratching, burning, misuse of medication or intentionally causing illness.

Emotional abuse is persistent ill treatment of a child or young person's emotional wellbeing to cause a negative impact on a child or young person's emotional development. Emotional abuse may include, but is not limited to: degradation, name-calling, isolation, corruption, exploitation, repeated patterns of ignoring or rejecting. It also includes the witnessing, hearing, or seeing evidence of the ill treatment of other people animals.

Sexual abuse involves forcing, coercing or enticing a child or young person to partake in sexual activities (penetrative, non-penetrative contact acts e.g. kissing, touching, rape). It also includes non-physical acts such as exposure, involving children in the production of pornographic images, sexual activity and sexual behaviour. This includes showing children or young people sexual images and inappropriate sexual conversation or around children. Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse. This involves the production of images, videos or live streams of abuse of people under the age of 18 and the sharing of this material online. Online child sexual exploitation is constantly changing and evolving due to technological innovation, increasing connectivity and

growing internet coverage. Staff should always be aware of their 'duty of care' and their responsibilities. A sexual relationship with a child or young person will always be wrong, unequal and unacceptable.

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet the developmental, psychological, physical and emotional needs of a child or young person, which could result in serious, long term or permanent harm to a child's health and wellbeing. *Cumulative harm* refers to the harm caused by patterns of events and circumstances that adversely affect the safety, stability and wellbeing of a child or young person. Cumulative harm is multiple experiences or reoccurrences of neglect that negatively impact a child or young person daily and in different areas of their life.

Vulnerability is the culmination of different factors, which increase the risk of children and can make them more vulnerable to abuse. These may be parental factors, environmental contexts or the needs of the child themselves. More information about vulnerability risk factors can be found at appendix 1(b)

Intimate partner violence is any action within a relationship, which causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to the people in that relationship.

Bullying is a form of aggressive behaviour that can be covert or overt. Bullying is intentional behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm to another person. It involves a power imbalance between the target and the bully/ initiator, which may be based on size, age, gender, status, access, ability. Bullying is usually a repeated incident in which fear and anxiety are instilled into the target regarding the possibility of further incidents. Bullying can cause harm to the target both short-term and long-term. *Cyberbullying* is the use of electronic communication to bully a person. Often this is by sending messages or pictures of an intimidating or threatening nature.

Relevant Legislation

This child protection policy adhere to the following Acts;

- Oranga Tamariki Act 1989
- Vulnerable Children's Act 2014
- Domestic Violence Act 1995
- Care of Children Act 2004
- Employment Relations Act 2000
- Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989
- Vulnerable Children's Act 2014
- Domestic Violence Act 1995
- Care of Children Act 2004
- Employment Relations Act 2000
- Treaty of Waitangi 1840

Related Documents/ Policies

- Review Policy
- Volunteer Behaviour Policy
- Volunteer Intake Policy
- Volunteer Code of Conduct
- Staffing Policy
- Report of Concerns Register
- Child Protection Flowcharts

- Abuse Indicators, Risk Factors, Dealing with Disclosures Information
- Occupational Safety and Health Policy
- Crisis Communications Plan
- Incident Report Form

Child Protection Procedures

As well as the procedures outlines below, flowcharts of the process are also available.

Procedures for Responding to Vulnerability

Big Brothers Big Sisters recognises the importance of responding to risk factors that cause vulnerability as early as possible. Early intervention and prevention is important to provide families with support for their child or young person before the situation escalates. For more information on risk factors that cause child vulnerability refer to appendix 1(b).

Any concerns about the wellbeing or vulnerability of a child or young person will be reported by staff and volunteers to the Child Protection Coordinator. The Child Protection Coordinator will record the concerns with the child's name, date and details of concern in the Child Safety Register. The Register will be reviewed at weekly at staff meetings and any ongoing concerns will be discussed. The Child Safety Register will be used to keep a running log of any minor concerns that are not of a nature serious enough to warrant filing a Report of Concern.

If, on review of the Register, staff or the Child Protection Coordinator feel that the concerns are becoming more serious, or revealing patterns of events the Child Protection Coordinator will follow the Procedures for Responding to Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect.

The Child Protection Coordinator will report any vulnerability concerns to Trust Board meetings.

If at any time, staff or volunteers are concerned about the care, protection or wellbeing of a child or young person, and are dissatisfied with the actions of the Child Protection Coordinator, they may file a Report of Concern with Oranga Tamariki.

Procedures for Responding to Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

The safety and protection of the child is paramount at all times. Any concerns of abuse or neglect must be taken seriously and acted upon quickly and in an appropriate manner.

If a Big Brothers Big Sisters staff member or volunteer is concerned that a child is at risk of harm from abuse or neglect, or receives information from another person such as a family member, that a child is at risk, the following protocol will be followed:

If the child is in immediate danger;

1. Call 111 for Police, or call Oranga Tamariki on 0508 FAMILY (0508 326 459)
2. Contact the Child Protection Coordinator, INSERT NAME AND CONTACT NUMBER HERE, and give all known information about the situation/event

Once the child is safe;

3. Record all relevant information on an Incident Reporting Form (and send/give this form to the Child Protection Coordinator as soon as possible, but no more than 24 hours after the incident.
4. The Child Protection Coordinator will be responsible for assessing the information to ascertain if the child is considered 'at risk'.
5. If care and/or protection concerns are held the Child Protection Coordinator will complete a Report of Concern with Oranga Tamariki as soon as possible, but no more than 24 hours after the incident.
6. A copy of the Report of Concern will be kept on file, or a record of the Report (if verbal) will be kept on the Incident Reporting Form (Appendix 3).
7. If the child is in a School-Based Mentoring Programme, the child's School Liaison should be notified within 48 hours.
8. If appropriate, and safe for the child, the Child Protection Coordinator should contact the parent or caregiver of the child within 48 hours.
9. If Oranga Tamariki have not responded within 3 days of the Report of Concern being filed, The Child Protection Coordinator will contact the agency and ask to be updated.
10. If no action is taken, the Child Protection Coordinator will re-report to Oranga Tamariki if there are still child safety and/or protection concerns.
11. All active child protection concerns will be monitored on a weekly basis by the Child Protection Coordinator and Big Brothers Big Sisters staff. The review will consider any further actions, follow-ups, referrals or ongoing concerns.
12. Any new or additional Reports of Concern may be made to Oranga Tamariki at any time.
13. Records of reviews will be kept by the Child Protection Coordinator and filed in the Child's file.
14. All recorded information regarding suspicions of neglect and/or abuse is to be handled with the utmost sensitivity and held in strictest confidence. Information is kept in secure storage.

Procedures for responding to Allegations or Disclosure of Abuse against Staff

Big Brothers Big Sisters will respond to concerns and allegations of child abuse by a member of staff/ volunteer in a timely manner which best ensures the child or young person's care, protection and safety. Concerns or allegations against a staff member/ volunteer will be treated with the same seriousness as any concerns or allegations made against any other person.

The Child Protection Coordinator will be responsible for acting on behalf of the child by following these procedures;

If the child is in immediate danger;

1. Call 111 for Police, or call Oranga Tamariki on 0508 FAMILY (0508 326 459)
2. Contact the Child Protection Coordinator, INSERT NAME AND CONTACT NUMBER, and give all known information about the situation/event

Once the child is safe;

3. Record all relevant information on an Incident Reporting Form (Appendix 3) and send/give this form to the Child Protection Coordinator as soon as possible, but no more than 24 hours after the incident.
4. The Child Protection Coordinator will be responsible for assessing the information to ascertain if the child is considered 'at risk'.
5. The Child Protection Coordinator will contact the Chairperson of the Board to inform them of the situation so they can deal with the employment rights and obligations.
6. If care and/or protection concerns are held the Child Protection Coordinator will complete a Report of Concern with Oranga Tamariki as soon as possible, but no more than 24 hours after the incident.
7. A copy of the Report of Concern will be kept on file, or a record of the Report (if verbal) will be kept on the Incident Reporting Form (Appendix 3).
8. If appropriate, and safe for the child, the Child Protection Coordinator should contact the parent or caregiver of the child within 48 hours.
9. If Oranga Tamariki have not responded within 3 days of the Report of Concern being filed, The Child Protection Coordinator will make contact and ask to be updated.
10. If no action is taken, the Child Protection Coordinator will re-report to Oranga Tamariki if there are still child safety and/or protection concerns.
11. All active child protection concerns will be monitored on a weekly basis by the Child Protection Coordinator and Big Brothers Big Sisters staff. The review will consider any further actions, follow-ups, referrals or ongoing concerns.
12. Any new or additional Reports of Concern may be made to Oranga Tamariki at any time.
13. Records of reviews will be kept by the Child Protection Coordinator and filed in the Child's file.
14. All recorded information regarding disclosures of neglect and/or abuse is to be handled with the utmost sensitivity and held in strictest confidence. Information is kept in secure storage.

The person delegated to act on behalf on the child will not be the same person delegated to act on behalf of the employee. The Chairperson of the Board will be responsible to act for the employee in relation to Employment Rights and obligations;

- In responding to cases of suspected child abuse by a staff member, both staff and the child's rights must be considered. This means that the safety of the child remains paramount, and that the staff member must have access to legal and professional advice.
- The suspected staff member will be suspended immediately without prejudice.
- The suspected individual must not have contact, at any time, with the child who has made the allegation.
- The suspected staff member (or volunteer) will be prevented from having further unsupervised access to any child during an investigation and will be kept fully informed of their legal rights.
- If Big Brothers Big Sisters is aware that a staff member, who has been placed on precautionary suspension also works with children under another organisation, in the capacity of either employee, or volunteer, it must ensure that the Police is made aware of the suspension.
- Consultation with Oranga Tamariki or the Police will determine how this situation is managed and how the information is shared in a legal and professional manner.
- Big Brothers Big Sisters should check in with the Police to ensure that the other organisations, to which the staff member is connected, are made aware.
- Big Brothers Big Sisters will not undertake any internal disciplinary investigation during ongoing Police or Oranga Tamariki investigations
- If there is insufficient evidence to warrant a criminal prosecution, an internal, disciplinary investigation may still be undertaken if there remains "reasonable cause to suspect" that abuse or neglect may have occurred. Internal disciplinary procedures may also be undertaken in cases of inappropriate behaviour or poor practice by BBBS staff.
- Big Brothers Big Sisters will not enter into any settlement agreements in situations of disclosure of abuse against staff.
- At no time will any Big Brothers Big Sisters staff member collude with any other staff member or volunteer to protect their actions or any allegations made against them.
- If a staff member feels dissatisfied with the process or outcome of an internal investigation into situations of disclosure of abuse against staff, they may contact the Police or Oranga Tamariki..
- Big Brothers Big Sisters recognises the stress caused to co-workers/ fellow staff members in such a situation and will ensure appropriate support is made available to them.

Although the Child Protection Coordinator will usually inform the parent or caregiver of the child of any child protection concerns, there may be situations when those with parental responsibility may not be initially informed. This may occur when:

1. The parent or caregiver is the alleged perpetrator.
2. It is possible that the child may be intimidated into silence or withdrawing.
3. There is a strong likelihood that notifying the parent or caregiver would result in evidence being destroyed.
4. The child does not want their parent or caregiver involved and they are of an age where they are legally competent to make that decision.

Dissatisfaction

It is important that the Child Protection Policies and Procedures are followed by staff/volunteers at all time. If Big Brothers Big Sisters staff are dissatisfied with the management of any situation regarding child protection concerns or incidents they should liaise with the Child Protection Coordinator. If staff are unhappy with the handling of a situation by the Child Protection Coordinator, further steps should be taken to ensure that the Big Brothers Big Sisters Board, and if relevant, the Police or Oranga Tamariki are notified of the complaint and take appropriate action.

If Big Brothers Big Sisters staff are dissatisfied with the management of any situation regarding child protection concerns or incidents staff should notify the Child Protection Coordinator to take further action. This action may include notifying other agencies as seen fit to manage child protection concerns.

Debrief and Counselling for Staff, Volunteers and Families

Big Brothers Big Sisters understands that dealing with suspected child abuse/ neglect or disclosures of child abuse/ neglect can have an emotional impact on the wellbeing of the staff and volunteers involved. Big Brothers Big Sisters aims to support staff and volunteers through this process by providing a debrief session either individually, or as a group, with the Programme Director. Big Brothers Big Sisters will also provide support to families where needed. If required, staff, volunteers and families will be supported to participate in professional counselling sessions.

Agencies for counselling services are as follows:

YET TO BE DETERMINED