



## **Child Protection Policy**

### Rationale:

The Aere Tai Collective and/or the Collective Providers are fully committed to the prevention of child abuse and maintaining the wellbeing and safety of children and young people. Children's safety is our paramount consideration when and if any action is taken against suspected child abuse. We will work collaboratively with statutory agencies such as Police and Child, Youth and Family. We will report suspected child abuse cases to these two agencies and support them in their investigation of abuse and maintain a good working relationships with these statutory agencies.

### Aim:

This policy is intended to provide Aere Tai Collective and/or the Collective Providers with a framework to identify and manage actual and / or suspected child abuse and neglect.

### Scope:

This policy outlines the steps the Collective Providers will undertake to ensure children are safe.

This policy applies to all children who are clients of Aere Tai Collective and/or the Collective Providers, and to those with whom personnel come into contact in the course of their work with Aere Tai Collective and/or the Collective Providers.

It applies to all staff of the Aere Tai Collective and/or the Collective Providers including Management and volunteers.

It also applies to any contracted personnel providing support services to families, communities and staff of the Aere Tai Collective and/or the Collective Providers.



Definition:

*“Child abuse means the harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation of any child or young person”* (Section 15, Children and Young Persons Amendment Act, 1994)

Types of abuse:

**Physical Abuse:** Is a non-accidental act on a child that results in physical harm, e.g. smacking, hitting, beating, kicking, shaking, biting, burning or throwing the child.

**Sexual Abuse:** Refers to any actions or behaviors where an adult forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities.

**Emotional Abuse:** Is an act or omission that results in impaired psychological, social and or emotional functioning and development of a child or young person

**Neglect:** The failure to provide for children’s needs and wants

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Management Responsibilities

Worker safety checklists will be undertaken as required by the Vulnerable Children Act 2014. (See section 6)

Each worker safety check will be repeated within 3 years of the previous check.

- Staff responsibilities

Staff must be alert to the signs and symptoms of neglect or abuse and take appropriate action to protect the wellbeing and safety of children and young people, whether the child / young person is directly or indirectly a client / patient of Aere Tai Collective and/or the Collective Providers.

All staff members who identify child protection concerns should follow the Aere Tai Collective Child Protection Procedure. See appendix 1.

- Staff Safety Checklist:



The recruitment of all staff including volunteers must be carefully chosen and go through the following process to ensure they are safe to work with children. All applicants:

- Must fill in the application form and submitted together with their CV
- All applications will include a form of identity verification. E.g.: Driver License / Passport
- Will undergo a thorough reference check and Police Criminal check for suitability and safety to work with children. The existing staff will have their police criminal check reviewed every three years. (NB: The Police Check is a “point in time” check, and results should not be kept and relied on for a long period of time.)
- Will be interviewed in person by an appropriately trained person to ascertain their suitability for a position with children
- Interviews will include questions to gather information on the applicants past attitudes or behaviours towards children, to ascertain their suitability for a position with children
- Will be expected to sign an Employment Contract and Code of Conduct, in which they agree to the requirements of the Aere Tai Collective and/or the Collective Providers regarding their behavior towards children. The Aere Tai Collective and/or the Collective Providers will keep full and complete records under the Human Resource department.
- Offers of appointment will remain conditional until such time as the Police Criminal Check has been completed and is satisfactory.

Practices:

- Professionalism

The professional and personal lives between all staff and clients must be kept separate. No staff is allowed to develop any personal relationships with any clients



during and after working hours and outside working environments. All staff working with children are encouraged to work under parents/ caregivers' supervision or any other person recommended. Meantime they will require practicing according to the Code of Conduct which will be reviewed annually to ensure performances and guidelines are met.

- Responding to suspected child abuse and neglect

The staff will respond to suspicions and allegations of suspected child abuse in a manner which best ensure children's immediate long term safety. The designated staff is to record, date and file all observations, impressions and communications about children suspected of being abuse. The staff will not act alone about suspicions but consult with the team leader and other team members. The designated staff can refer the case to the team leader if there is any conflict of interest and will not perform beyond their capacity and expertise. The suspected child abuse will be referred to the Police or Child, Youth and Family in writing and should be done after full consultation with designated officer and General Manager or CEO.

#### Security:

For circumstances where the safety of the child, family or staff member is at high risk:

Consult with a senior member of staff

Arrange appointments with the family at a venue outside of the home

Visit in pairs, and carry a mobile phone.

- Responding to allegations of abuse against staff

The child's safety is the first and paramount consideration when any staff member suspects child abuse. The suspected abuse must be responded to immediately and staff member will report directly to the team leader and management on receipt of complaint. If not, he or she may be liable to suspension from work while



investigation is under progress. The Aere Tai Collective and/or the Collective Providers will not act alone but work alongside and support the Police and CYFS in their investigation of the suspected child abuse. The decision on the suspected staff member will be finalized upon the investigation outcome. All actions taken will be stated in a full report, signed and filed.

- Relationship with statutory agencies

The Aere Tai Collective and/or the Collective Providers will maintain close liaison with the Police and CYF to guide and direct us with laws and regulations which serve to protect children from abuse. The Aere Tai Collective and/or the Collective Providers will consult with CYF, the Police and with other relevant agencies that have specialist knowledge to help us protect children from abuse. Staff will not act in a way that is beyond their expertise and capacity.

- Photographing children

The parents or guardians of the child must consent for the child (ren) to participate in taking photos or videos and should be taken in their presence. The images and videos will be treated confidentially and used only for the research and activity purposes.

- Communication

The health or social service team or designated senior staff member of the Aere Tai Collective and/or the Collective Providers will inform the parents as soon as practically possible unless there is a risk to the child if doing so. Informing the parents or caregivers should be undertaken in a safe environment e.g. Face to face in the office or via phone. If a family member or someone close to the family is suspected of child abuse, the family will not be informed of our decision to report or consult initially but ensure they are informed by the Police or CYF at the appropriate time.

Referral to the Police, CYF and other agencies must be in writing with a brief summary of the factual incident. A copy must be filed and kept under the client's file.



Reporting of suspected child abuse to CYF should be done only after full consultation between the designated officer, team leaders and general manager or CEO.

Referral to CYF are made by phone or fax. See appendix 2.

A letter to the child's GP must be completed informing him/her of a referral to CYF.

- Child Protection Alert

A highlighted quotation of "**Child Protection Alert**" has to be placed on the first page of the child's file and or the parents or caregiver's note to inform others dealing with the client. The child protection concern is still valid even there is no alert on the child's clinical note.

- Staff support

The Aere Tai Collective and/or the Collective Providers provide internal peer support to help staff debrief after dealing with a child abuse case and their stresses are taken into consideration as well. The health team leader is responsible for Registered Nurses and the social service's team leader for Social Workers. (Designated team leader structure may differ within the Collective Providers). The staff will also receive support through the Employee Assistance Programme.

- Training

The Aere Tai Collective and/or the Collective Providers are committed to maintaining and increasing the staff awareness on how to recognize, prevent and respond to child abuse through appropriate training at the level of their position. The child protection policy will be presented to new staff during their induction.

- Review

This child protection policy and all its sub policies will be reviewed every 3 years and or when deemed necessary.



## References

Child Matters “Creating a safe organization”

<http://www.childmatters.org.nz/225/child-protection-policy>

Child, Youth and Family “Working together to keep children and young people safe”

<http://www.cyf.govt.nz/working-with-others/working-together-to-keep-children-and-young-people-safe.html>

Legislation – Vulnerable Children Act 2014

<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2014/0040/latest/whole.html>