

POLICY: CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

RATIONALE

The well-being and safety of children and young people is a paramount concern of RLHS. 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. RLHS 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.

RLHS 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 organisation 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, mistreatment or safety of children. This includes recording concerns, if a child discloses abuse, suspected abuse by a staff member or suspected abuse between students at the school, suicide attempt / disclosure or risk of self harm / suicide.
- 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.

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. TRAINING

RLHS is committed to maintaining and increasing staff awareness of how to prevent, recognize and respond to abuse through appropriate training. As part of their induction, new staff are taken through the school’s policy on child abuse.

3. 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.

Some signs of potential abuse / neglect

- 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 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, and obsessive behavior, 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 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 recognize the whole range of concerning signs.

4. 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.

RLHS 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.

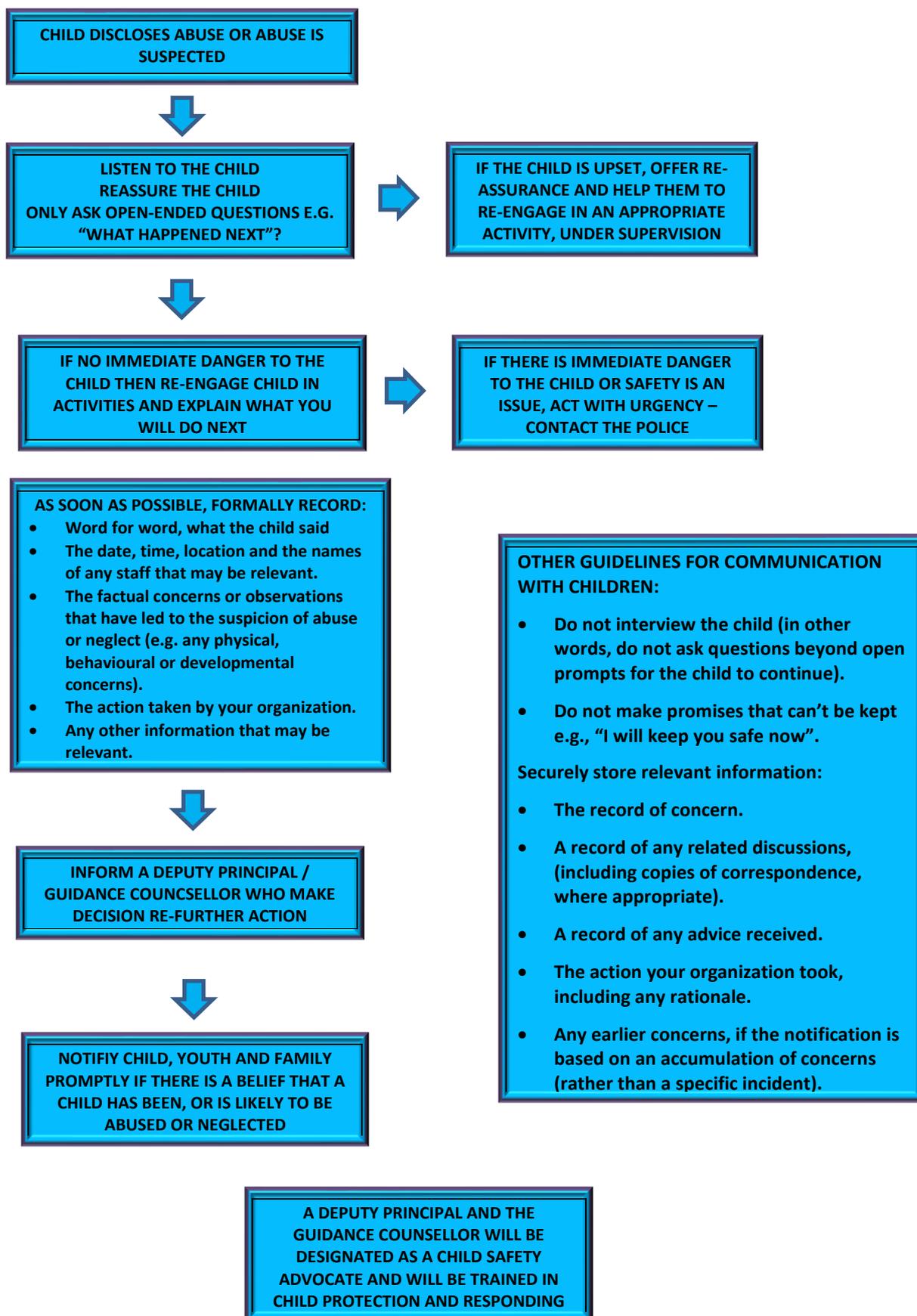
Staff will respond to suspected child abuse or any concerning behavior by writing down observations, impressions and communications in a confidential register. This will be kept separate from programme diaries, day books communication books and enrolment information etc.

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

No staff member will act alone about suspected child abuse but will consult with management. Where staff and management suspect child abuse has occurred and a child is unsafe, management is committed to promptly reporting the matter to the Police or the Child, Youth and Family.

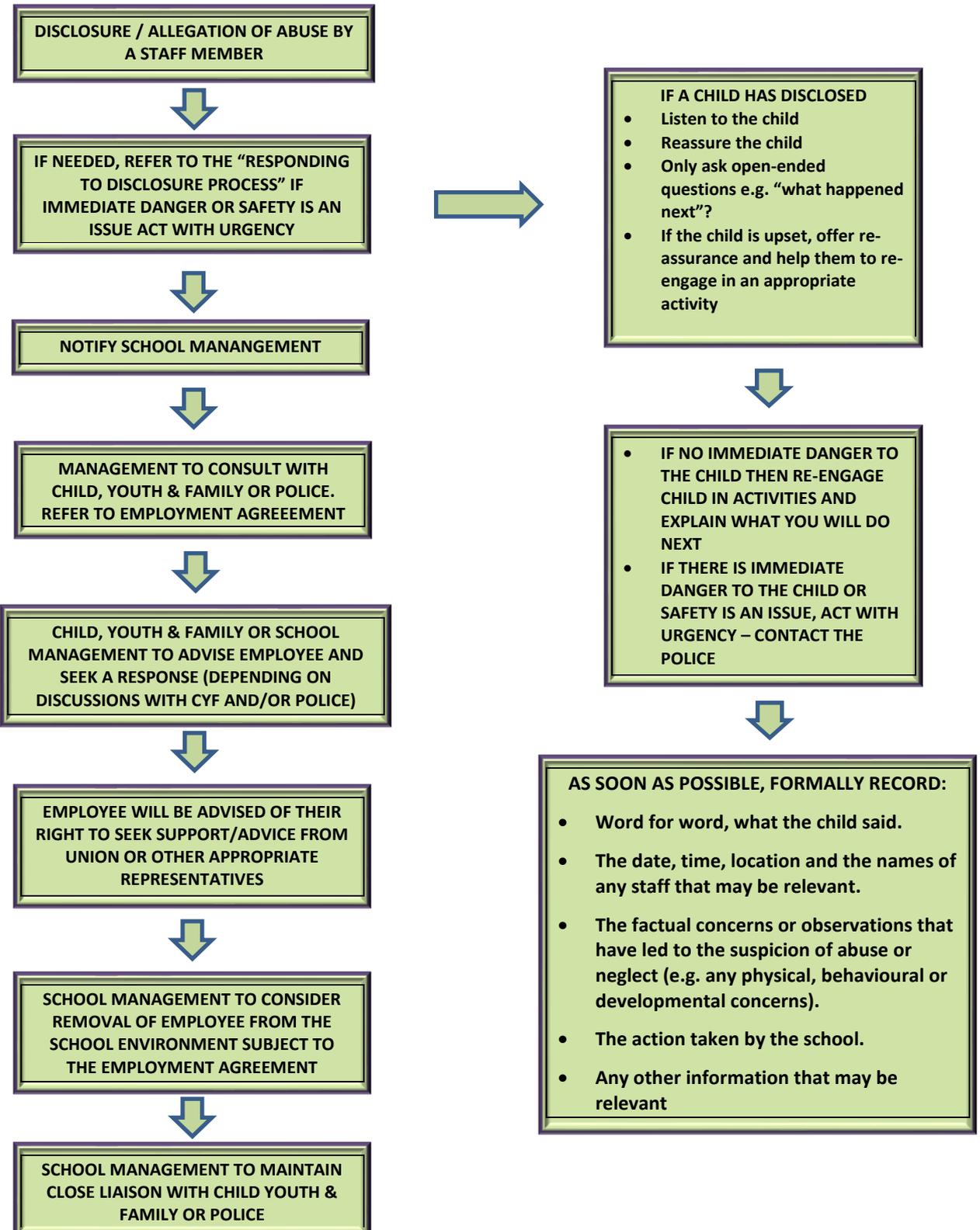
Staff who are responding to cases of suspected child abuse are entitled to have support. The school will offer counselling and support via EAP and / or the school's own personnel.

Responding to a disclosure / concern about abuse:



5. 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 other role), the matter must be reported promptly to management. Under no circumstances should the child making the allegation be exposed to unnecessary risk. This may require management to consider removal of the staff member from the school environment subject to the requirements of the applicable employment contract. All actions will be undertaken with appropriate care to maintain confidentiality.



6. 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 Principal and designated child safety advocate in the school.

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

7. PEER ABUSE

RLHS 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.

8. 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).

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

All volunteers and outside instructors should be monitored by staff.

In some situations a child or young person may require 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. Except in an emergency, children and young people are not to be taken from the school without parental consent.

RELEVANT PROCEDURES: See RLHS Police Safety and Vetting Procedures for details of the police vetting and process

RELEVANT LEGISLATION: Education Act 1989
State Sector Act 1988
Vulnerable Children Act 2014

REVIEW: This policy shall be reviewed according to the Board of Trustees triennial programme of self review in 2022.

DATE CONFIRMED: September 2019