

1. Objective

bestchance is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children. We support children's right to safety and will act without hesitation to ensure a child safe environment is maintained.

bestchance is committed to the protection of children from harm, abuse and exploitation and has a legal, moral and ethical duty of care to ensure the safety and security of all the children who participate in our programs. This includes taking all reasonable steps to prevent or respond to emotional, physical and sexual abuse and neglect.

This policy provides you with information for:-

- understanding what is child abuse,
- recognising child abuse,
- your responsibilities with regard to reporting child abuse
- making a notification of child abuse.

2. Scope

This policy applies to bestchance employees, volunteers, FDC educators, The Cheshire School staff, visitors and contractors (bestchance community). bestchance strives for best practice in relation to our work with children and families, and highly values the importance of all children.

This policy takes into account the diversity of all children, including but not limited to, the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with a disability and children who are vulnerable ensuring sensitivity to our whole community including that of The Cheshire School.

This policy covers the reporting of all disclosed, suspected and/or alleged child abuse as defined in the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, including:-

- a) Any act committed against a child involving –
 - i. A sexual offence; or
 - ii. An offence under section 49B(2) of the *Crimes Act 1958* (Grooming), and
- b) The infliction, on a child, of –
 - i. Physical violence; or
 - ii. Serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- c) Serious neglect of a child

This policy is designed to provide guidance to the bestchance community in making decisions and taking action pertaining to the safety and protection of a child. Application of this policy must be considered in the context of all relevant bestchance policies and procedures.

It is paramount that any concerns are raised with your respective up line Manager who will report to a Child Safety Delegate, prior to taking action.

NOTE: This policy does not diminish your mandatory reporting requirements.

The **Chief Executive Officer** is responsible:-

- for monitoring organisational wide compliance with this procedure
- identifying the reportable instances to the Board

The **Principal** of The Cheshire School is responsible for:-

- Monitoring overall school compliance with this procedure
- Ensuring all staff of The Cheshire School receive annual re-training in Child Safe Standards as well as Mandatory Reporting
- Annual audit of The Cheshire Staff Matrix
- Ensuring that The Cheshire School Community is aware of and has access to all policies, procedures and Codes of Conduct relating to Child Safety, Child Protection and the Reportable Conduct Scheme

The **Board** is responsible for ensuring the following:

- Development of strategies to embed a culture of child safety across the organisation including The Cheshire School
- Allocating roles and responsibilities for achieving the strategies through the four Child Safety Delegates
- The bestchance community (including that of The Cheshire School) are informed about these practices
- That an annual review is conducted on the effectiveness of the strategies and/or that these strategies are viewed following any instances of child abuse

All employees, staff, family day care educators, volunteers, The Cheshire School staff, visitors and contractors are mandated to adhere to the following:-

- Child Safe Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy
- Mandatory Reporting requirements

3. Guiding Principles and Context

bestchance believes that:-

- any form of child abuse and exploitation is unacceptable and has zero tolerance
- all children have a right be safe at all times and that we have an obligation to provide safe protective services and environments
- recognizes our duty of care to take all reasonable steps to ensure that children are safe from harm
- we will take protective steps to create child safe and friendly programs
- all decisions regarding the welfare and protection of children are made on the basis of the best interest of the child
- we will support or assist any child who discloses child abuse, or is otherwise linked to suspected child abuse
- the identify of anyone who makes a report to Child Protection Services is protected under the legislation and that their identify may only be revealed under very specific circumstances, such as when the notifier provides consent in writing for the identify to be disclosed
- the key objective of the Children, Youth and Families Act Is to enable an integrated Child Protection and Family Service system which provides supports to vulnerable children, young people and their families.

This policy is to be implemented in conjunction with:-

- Child Safe Policy/Procedure
- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Reportable Conduct Scheme

4. Definitions

4.1 Child

This means a person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

4.2 Child protection

The term used to describe the responsibilities and activities undertaken to prevent or stop children being abused or harmed.

4.3 Duty of care

Duty of care is a requirement that a person/organisation act toward others with watchfulness, attention, caution and prudence that a reasonable person in the circumstances would. It is the duty of bestchance to protect children from all reasonably foreseeable risk of injury or harm.

4.4 Child abuse

Child abuse happens to male and female children of all ages, ethnicity and social backgrounds, abilities and religious beliefs. Child abuse includes physical, sexual, emotional, neglect, bullying, grooming and domestic violence.

Child abuse is a harmful act or omission by parents, caregivers or other family members which endangers a child or young person's physical or emotional health or development. It can be a single incident but usually takes place over time.

4.5 Recognising child abuse

Occasionally there will be physical indicators that a child has been abused. More frequently the indicators are behavioural. Whilst a single or even multiple indicators can be important, it is always important to carefully consider all the information. This includes any known history in formulating an assessment about whether the child is at risk. It is paramount that any concerns be raised with your respective up line manager or Child Safety Delegate, prior to taking any action:

4.5.1 Physical abuse

Physical indicators include:

- bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts
- fractured bones, especially in an infant where a fracture is unlikely to occur accidentally
- poisoning
- internal injuries

Possible behavioural indicators include:

- child disclosing that physical abuse has occurred
- showing wariness or distrust of adults
- wearing long sleeved clothes on hot days to hide bruising or other injury
- demonstrating fear of parents and of going home
- becoming fearful when other children cry or shout
- being excessively friendly to strangers
- being very passive and compliant

4.5.2 Sexual abuse

It is unusual for sexual abuse to be identified through physical indicators. However, the presence of sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy or vaginal or anal bleeding, discharge or redness is indicative of sexual abuse.

Possible behavioural indicators include:

- child disclosing that sexual abuse has occurred
- complaining of headaches or stomach pains
- experiencing problems with learning, playing or following routines
- sexualised behaviour or knowledge which is unusual for the child's age
- frequent rocking, sucking and biting
- sleep difficulties

4.5.3 Emotional abuse

There are few physical indicators, although emotional abuse may cause delays in emotional, cognitive or even physical development.

Possible behavioural indicators include:

- displaying low self esteem
- tending to be withdrawn, passive, tearful
- displaying aggressive or demanding behavior
- being highly anxious
- showing delayed speech
- regressed behavior and acting like a much younger child
- difficulties relating to adults and peers

4.5.4 Neglect

Physical indicators include:

- frequent hunger
- poor hygiene
- inappropriate or inadequate clothing
- being left unsupervised for long periods
- medical needs not attended to

Possible behavioural indicators include:

- stealing food
- often being tired or falling asleep during session
- displaying aggressive behaviour

4.5.5 Grooming

Child grooming is befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child, and sometimes the family, to lower the child's inhibitions with the object of sexual abuse. It also regularly lures minors into child-trafficking situations, illicit businesses such as child prostitution, or the production of child pornography.

Great caution must be exercised when considering these indicators. The presence of one or more indicator does not confirm that a child has been abused.

5. Procedure

5.1 How to make a Notification

All bestchance community (including employees, volunteers, FDC educators, The Cheshire School staff, visitors and contractors) concerned about a child being abused must:-

- Immediately report these concerns to their up line Manager
- the up line Manager will immediately report to a Child Safety Delegate
- the Child Safety Delegate will:-
 - report to the relevant authority, Child First or Child Protection and report all instances of sexual abuse of a child under 16 years of age must be reported to Victoria Police
 - report to the CEO and relevant General Manager of all notifications
- the CEO will determine which instances are reported to the Board

5.2 Who are your Child Safety Delegates

Your Child Safety Delegates are:-

- The Cheshire School Principal
- Early Years Management Manager
- Family Day Care Team Manager
- Team Manager Integrated Services

It is very useful to provide the following information, however, if all information is not available and there is concern about a child, the notification should still be made. The following details must be included in the notification:

1. The child or young person's name, age and address.
2. The reason for believing that the injury or behaviour is the result of abuse or neglect.
3. The reason why the call is being made now.
4. Assessment of immediate danger, for example, information about the whereabouts of the alleged abuser.
5. Description of injury, behaviour or disclosure.
6. The current whereabouts of the child or young person.
7. The immediate support to be provided to the child or young person.
8. Knowledge of any other services involved with the family.
9. Any specific cultural or other details which will help to care for the child.

All records are to be handled confidentially and filed with the General Manager Human Resources.

Note: In Victoria it is mandatory for:-

- any person registered as a teacher or an early childhood teacher under the Training and Reform Act 2006 to report any instances of alleged, disclosed or suspected instances of physical and/or sexual abuse against children.
- any adult to report any instances of suspected, alleged or discloses sexual abuse against a child under the age of 16.

This procedure does not diminish your responsibilities with regard to mandatory reporting. bestchance supports any bestchance community member throughout the notification process.

7. **Relevant Legislation, Sources and Policies**

- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 and Regulations 2011 (Vic)
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006
- Education and Training Reform Regulations 2016
- Victorian Mandatory Reporting Requirements
- Australian Council for Children and Youth Organisation
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (www.unicef.org/crc)

People Principles/Code of Conduct
Child Safety Code of Conduct
Employee Disciplinary Policy
Child Safety Policy and Procedure
Reportable Conduct Scheme
Recruitment and Selection Procedures