

## NZSSC POLICY STATEMENT: VULNERABLE STUDENT POLICY

### SUMMARY

This policy outlines the NZSSC's commitment to child protection. It includes protocols when child abuse is reported or suspected. It also includes practice notes on measures to be taken to prevent child abuse. All staff are expected to be familiar with this policy and to abide by it.

### PURPOSE STATEMENT

NZSSC has an obligation to ensure the wellbeing of students in our care and are committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and to the protection of student choir members. The safety and wellbeing of the child is a top priority when investigating suspected or alleged abuse.

NZSSC provides a safe environment, free from physical, emotional, verbal or sexual abuse.

### POLICY PRINCIPLES

- The interest and protection of students is paramount in all actions.
- NZSSC has a commitment to ensure that all staff have access to guidance in identification of signs and symptoms of potential abuse and neglect, and are supported in taking appropriate action in response.
- NZSSC will always comply with relevant legislative responsibilities.
- NZSSC is committed to share information in a timely way and to discuss any concerns about an individual child with colleagues or the Student Wellbeing and Course Logistics Manager.
- NZSSC is committed to promote a culture where staff feel confident that they can constructively raise issues of concern.
- NZSSC is committed to promoting the well-being of all members by taking all reasonable steps to provide and maintain an environment that is physically, socially, culturally and emotionally safe.
- NZSSC recognises the rights of family to participate in the decision-making about their children.
- NZSSC will ensure that a named pastoral care contact is identified for all students (e.g. School Dean, Counsellor) who supports student wellbeing and continuity of care.

### Definitions

**Child abuse:** Includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse as well as neglect which is the direct consequence of a deliberate act or omission by an adult and which has the potential or effect of serious harm to the child.

### Identifying possible abuse or neglect

NZSSC staff can download the Child, Youth and Family 'Signs of abuse and neglect' chart for guidance from: [https://www.ecc.org.nz/Folder?Action=View File&Folder\\_id=107&File=Signs of Abuse and Neglect.pdf](https://www.ecc.org.nz/Folder?Action=View File&Folder_id=107&File=Signs of Abuse and Neglect.pdf)

For additional information about identifying child abuse see:

<http://www.cyf.govt.nz/documents/aboutus/publications/27713-working-together-3-0-45ppi.pdf>

Note: This resource produced by Child, Youth and Family is for staff in social service agencies, schools, healthcare organisations, community and other groups who have close contact with

children and families It includes useful information about identifying possible child abuse and an assessment framework.

### **Responding to suspected abuse or neglect**

To download the 'Child Abuse Reporting Process' flowchart see 5:

[https://www.ecc.org.nz/Folder?Action=View%20File&Folder\\_id=107&File=Reporting%20Process%20for%20Child%20Abuse.pdf](https://www.ecc.org.nz/Folder?Action=View%20File&Folder_id=107&File=Reporting%20Process%20for%20Child%20Abuse.pdf)

All suspicions, observed incidents or reports of incidents should be reported directly to the Student Wellbeing and Course Logistics Manager as soon as possible, who will immediately take steps to support the student(s). They will record the report and report the concern to the student's nominated pastoral care contact (e.g. School Dean, Counsellor).

If there is clear evidence or reasonable cause to believe an instance of child abuse or neglect has taken place, the Student Wellbeing and Course Logistics Manager shall notify the Police. Staff members will discuss concerns with a senior staff member.

Where appropriate, the person making the allegation will be given a copy of this policy.

### **Allegations or concerns about staff**

When a staff member is suspected, the same processes apply.

If there is a need to pursue an allegation as an employer, consultation will take place with the Board and/or the Police before advising the person concerned, informing them that they have a right to seek legal advice and providing them with an opportunity to respond. They should also be informed of their right to seek support from the relevant union/representative body. It is vital to follow ordinary disciplinary policies, guided by the employment contract/collective employment contract and relevant statutory obligations.

We commit not to use 'settlement agreements', where these are contrary to a culture of child protection. Some settlement agreements allow a member of staff to agree to resign provided that no disciplinary action is taken, and a future reference is agreed. Where the conduct at issue concerned the safety or wellbeing of a child, use of such agreements is contrary to a culture of child protection.

### **Confidentiality and information sharing**

The Privacy Act 1993 and the Children, Young Persons, and their Families Act 1989 allow information to be shared to keep children safe when abuse or suspected abuse is reported or investigated. Note that under sections 15 and 16 of the CYPF Act, 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.

### **Recruitment and employment (safety checking)**

Safety checking will be carried out for all adults who have direct contact with the students in accordance with the Vulnerable Children Act 2014. This will include: a police vet; identity verification; references and an interview. A work history/curriculum vitae will be sought and referees/previous employers will be contacted. Guest tutors will require a police vet if working with students unsupervised. If there is any suspicion that an applicant might pose a risk to a child, that applicant will not be employed.

As student host families constitute 'volunteers' under the Vulnerable Children Act 2014, they are not subject to the same verification processes as NZSSC staff. This policy notes however that students will be placed in a minimum of pairs in billeting situations.

### **Supervision and support**

Resources and/or advice will be available to ensure that all staff can carry out their roles in terms of this policy, particularly:

- Understanding child abuse and indicators of child abuse.
- Understanding and complying with legal obligations in regard to child abuse.
- Working with relevant agencies (eg the student's school) if there are concerns.
- Planning of environment and supervision to minimise risk.
- Dealing with child/parents/family

### **Related documentation and review**

This policy will be reviewed at least every three years.

Policy review date: September 2019

NZSSC Trust Board Chair \_\_\_\_\_ Dated \_\_\_\_\_ 2016

### **Recommendations**

- That an additional sentence is added to CEO emails sent out to schools when a student is offered membership of NZSSC, asking the school to identify a member of staff who can act as named pastoral contact (eg Dean, Counsellor etc).
- That the Student Wellbeing and Course Logistics Manager be added to the SAP as the named point of contact for issues relating to this policy.
- That the SAP and billeting communications include reference to a 'minimum of two students' in billeting arrangements.
- That going forward, we look at what training might be available for the Student Wellbeing and Course Logistics Manager with regard to identification and reporting.