

Methodist Mission

**CHILD PROTECTION
POLICY**

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Purpose and Overview

CMM's vision is of a fair, safe, caring and sustainable society, where every citizen is valued and respected and enjoys equal opportunity to lead a fulfilled life.

Our mission is to promote social justice through partnerships that strengthen families and build fair and safe communities.

We believe keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility. Our services work with children and their families in the following ways:

- Preschool and Nursery - for children aged 0 - 6 years. Children are in the direct care of CMM staff
- In-home services working with families to develop understanding of children's needs and development; effective parenting skills, family relationship building skills
- Group programmes with parents and carers
- Individual and group programmes with children and young people (in schools, at home and in the community). These include life skills and support for children experiencing major change or loss in their lives
- Support programmes delivered in schools

CMM is committed to the prevention of abuse of children and young persons and works with regard to the general objects, principles and duties of the Vulnerable Children Act 2014, the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989, and any amendments. This commitment means that the interests, needs, safety and security of children and young people are the first consideration in all service provision and decision making about abuse and neglect. CMM is committed to working in partnership with other agencies to meet the needs of vulnerable children.

This policy applies to all CMM staff and contractors working with children and families in order that children and staff are kept safe and any suspicions of child abuse or neglect are recognised and reported.

Objectives

- All staff are aware of a clear process for responding to suspicions of and/or disclosure of child abuse that they understand and follow
- Staff have access to, and training on, guidelines for recognising signs of abuse and neglect
- Strategies are in place to protect all children and young people accessing CMM services from abuse by staff members, other adults, children or young people and to protect CMM staff from unfounded accusations of child abuse

Roles and Responsibilities

Service Managers:

Each CMM service working with children and families has a Manager who holds responsibility for child protection for their services and ensuring child protection is a key focus:

- Ensuring child protection policy and procedures are followed, reviewed regularly and staff are well informed
- Providing advice and support for staff who may have child protection concerns
- Ensuring child protection training is received and recorded
- Ensuring all practices and procedures have a child protection lens applied
- Maintaining child protection records and documentation confidentially

Team Leaders:

Each CMM service working with children and families also has a Team Leader who backs up the role and responsibility of the Manager and in particular provides professional supervision and support to staff with care and protection concerns.

Staff:

All CMM staff have a responsibility to understand the signs of child abuse and neglect, and if abuse or neglect is suspected to follow CMM procedures for reporting and consult with their manager or team leader as soon as possible.

Guidelines for Recognising Abuse

When considering signs, changes in behaviours and other concerns it is important to think about the overall wellbeing or risk of harm to the child.

Listed below are recognised signs that could indicate a child or young person is being abused. None of these signs individually should be interpreted as conclusive proof of child abuse but must be considered as warning signs to review the child and family circumstances. It is important to consider the whole child's life and environment as sometimes these signs could be indicative of developmental difficulties or the result of life events, accidental injury etc.

When communicating with a child and you suspect abuse maybe occurring do not attempt to correct them or use your language for their experience.

Definitions of abuse

The Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989 defines child abuse as “the harming (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect, or deprivation of any child or young person”.

There are four types of recognised child abuse.

- 1) **Physical abuse:** any act that results in physical harm to a child.
- 2) **Emotional abuse:** any act or omission that results in adverse or impaired psychological, social, intellectual and emotional functioning or development of a child, including exposure to violence.
- 3) **Sexual Abuse:** any act when an adult or more powerful person uses a child or young person for a sexual purpose, whether consensual or not.
- 4) **Neglect:** failure to provide a child's basic needs (food, clothing, medical attention, shelter, supervision and education)

Further information is available from Child, Youth and Family. Please see

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

Signs of abuse

1: Physical Abuse

Child may

- Have burns, cuts, bruises, fractures or marks (in the shape of an object) that the child cannot/ will not explain especially in unusual places (like the face, on their back or tummy, buttocks, or the backs of their legs)
- Have frequent signs of injury
- be inappropriately dressed (to hide bruises or other injuries)
- fear adults or a particular individual (child is flinching or cowering)
- become withdrawn
- physically bully other children or be violent to animals
- exhibit out of character and/or anti-social behaviour
- abuse drugs or alcohol
- exhibit self-destructive or suicidal behaviour

The behaviour of an adult may also be indicative of possible abuse.

Adult may

- be vague about the details of the cause of injury to the child and the account of the injury may change from time to time
- blame the child's accident on a sibling, friend, relative or the injured child
- Shake an infant
- Threaten or attempt to injure a child
- Be aggressive towards a child in front of others
- delay in seeking medical attention for a child

2: Emotional abuse

Child may

- appear to be unhappy
- be apathetic
- be hostile
- have severe symptoms of depression or anxiety
- have suicidal thoughts
- be failing to thrive

- exhibit out of character behaviour (withdrawn/rebellious)
- lack concentration
- be experiencing sleep problems with no medical cause (bed wetting and soiling, nightmares, poor sleep patterns)
- frequently complain of physical complaints (headaches, nausea, abdominal pains)
- not attain significant developmental milestones
- be overly compliant; too well-mannered; too neat and clean
- model negative behaviour and language used at home when at play

The behaviour of an adult may also be indicative of possible abuse.

Adult may

- Ignore or reject the child
- Frequently yell and scream at child
- Belittle the child and use derogatory names
- Publicly humiliate the child
- Threaten child

3: Sexual Abuse

Child may

- have inappropriate interest in or knowledge of sexual acts
- exhibit sexualised behaviour
- Inappropriately touch other children
- Have a drastic change in appetite
- Fear certain places (e.g. bedroom or bathroom)
- fear a particular person or family member
- make comments such as “I’ve got a secret”, or “I don’t like XXX”
- have physical injuries (e.g. Bruises, lacerations, redness, swelling or bleeding in genital, vaginal or anal area)
- have torn, stained or bloody underclothing
- exhibit out of character behaviour (withdrawn/rebellious)
- have nightmares and bed wetting
- suddenly fear the dark
- develop suicidal or self-harming behaviour
- be avoided by other children

The behaviour of an adult may also be indicative of possible abuse.

Adult may

- be unusually over-protective of a child
- become jealous of a child’s relationships with peers or other adults
- be controlling of the child
- demonstrate physical contact or affection to a child which appears sexual in nature or has sexual overtones
- favour child over others
- Seek inappropriate/unusual opportunities to be alone with child/children

4: Neglect

Child may

- Wear inappropriate clothing for weather
- Have poor hygiene - Being dirty or unbathed
- Lack food for school lunch
- lack supervision
- have untreated health needs
- Steal food from other children
- Be lethargic
- Fail to thrive (being small or underweight for their age)
- Strong affection and attachment to adults
- Have poor school attendance or performance
- Be at risk in the community eg offending or mixing with unsafe people

The behaviour of an adult may also be indicative of possible neglect.

Adult may

- Fail to provide for the child's basic needs, such as housing, nutrition, medical and psychological care
- Fail to enrol child in school or permits truancy
- Leaves the child home alone
- Is overwhelmed with own problems and puts own needs ahead of the child's needs
- Does not set safe boundaries around where the child/young person is and who they are with

5. Other Factors to Consider in the Child's environment

- Evidence or suspicions of family violence; there is a strong link between family violence, intimate partner violence and child abuse
- Anger/Aggression
- Use of alcohol, drugs and other substances
- Gang affiliations
- Mental health of people they are interacting with
- Unsafe people visiting the home

Process for reporting possible abuse and neglect

In an emergency situation do not hesitate to Ring 111 and talk to the Police

- Because of the complexity of decision making it is CMM policy that staff should not act alone in making decisions about child abuse and neglect. All staff must report and discuss any concerns they have with their team leader and or manager as soon as possible. This ensures consultation on the appropriate response and safety and support for the staff member. For

example, it can be important to consider the safety implications of who is told of the concerns and when.

- However any staff have the right under section 15 of the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989 to contact Child Youth and Family or the Police should they wish:
“Any person who believes that any child or young person has been, or is likely to be, harmed (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), ill-treated, abused, neglected, or deprived may report the matter to a social worker or a constable.”

If a child discloses abuse:

LISTEN

- Listen to exactly what the child is saying
- Stay calm and do not overreact
- Avoid in-depth questioning – allow the child to tell you what they want to tell you and do not press for more information

BELIEVE

- Accept what the child has told you

REASSURE

- Make the child feel safe
- Tell them it’s good they told you about it
- Let the child know it’s not their fault
- Tell the child it’s not ok for things like this to happen to children
- Tell them you will get help
- Tell the child you need to write down what they have told you
- Do not make promises or commitments you cannot keep (eg: “It will be ok”)
- Tell them you need to tell other people – identify safe people

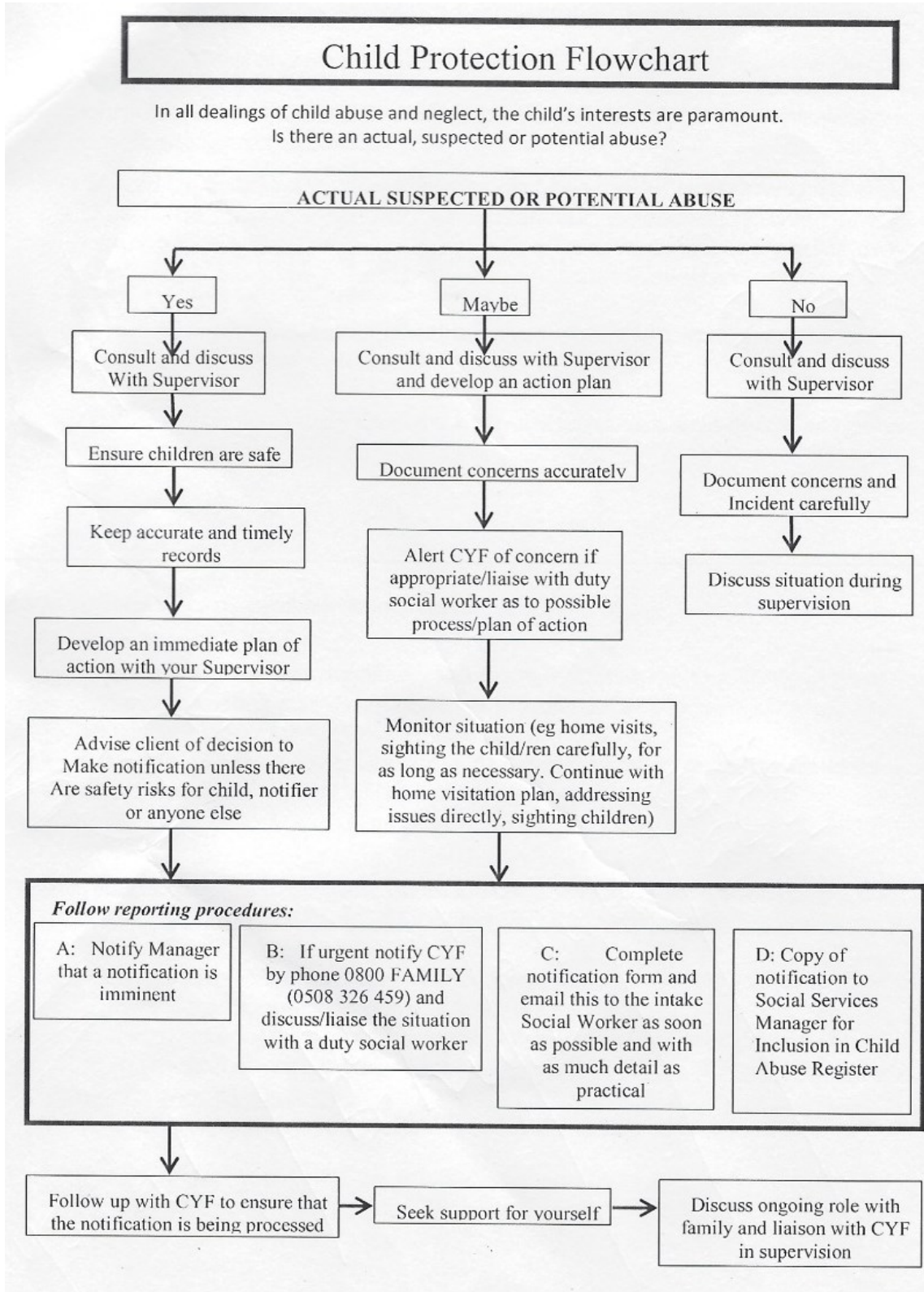
RECORD REPORT

- Write down exactly what the child has said
- Use their words. Do not summarise or put the disclosure into your own words
- Inform manager/team leader; follow Child Protection Flowchart
- DO NOT confront or discuss the disclosure with any person/s the child has named as a possible perpetrator of the abuse

If a third party, e.g. another adult, raises abuse or neglect concerns:

They should be encouraged and supported to contact Child Youth and Family or the Police directly with their information. However staff must still discuss this disclosure with their team leader and or manager, to ascertain whether any additional action is required.

The flow chart below outlines the CMM process for staff making a notification of concern to Child Youth and Family and is to be followed when required, in consultation with team leader and manager.



If you suspect a staff member of abuse:

- Where it is suspected that the child abuse has been perpetrated by a staff member or other person assisting with CMM services, the matter must be reported immediately to the Manager and/or Executive Director
- If a child directly discloses, follow the procedure above
- Under no circumstances should the child making the allegation be exposed to unnecessary risk
- The staff member/s suspected of abuse will be suspended from child-related duties while the matter is being investigated
- Staff member/s will be advised of their right to seek support/advice from union or other appropriate representatives
- All actions will be undertaken discretely and as confidentially as possible
- Manager/Executive Director will maintain close liaison with Child Youth and Family and/or Police
- CMM will provide the child and family with support, if appropriate, or direct them to agencies who can assist

Safe practices for service delivery

CMM believes that all adults who work with, and on behalf of children are accountable for the way in which they exercise authority; manage risk; use resources; and safeguard children and young people.

CMM staff must

- Maintain a professional relationship with children and their families, keeping their personal lives separate
- Only give gifts or rewards that are part of an agreed policy for supporting positive behaviour or recognising achievement and have been authorised by the manager
- Discuss with a manager if a child or young person develops an 'infatuation' for the worker so the situation can be dealt with sensitively, maintaining dignity of child or young person and ensuring staff behaviour is above reproach.
- Provide physical contact only in response to the child's needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background

- Take care that any comforting of a child or young person is age and culturally appropriate and cannot be misconstrued
- Not meet one on one with children or young people in remote, secluded areas. An open door policy is preferred
- Adhere to CMM Child Transport Policy
- Discuss with their manager as soon as possible if any behaviour or situation causes concern when working alone with a child or young person

CMM staff will not

- Invite children or young people they work with into their home
- Share any personal information with a child or young person associated with CMM
- Meet or communicate with any child or young person associated with CMM outside of agreed working hours
- Use any form of degrading treatment to punish a child
- Take children from CMM activities without written parental consent, except in the case of an emergency

Guidelines for Specific areas of CMM's work with children and young people

Early Childhood Education

Staff members and other adults visiting or working in the centre are well supervised and visible in the activities they perform with the children.

There is an open door policy for private spaces where the intimate care of children is required

Opportunities for staff and other adults to be alone with children are kept to a minimum. Except in an emergency, children are not to be taken from the centre without written parental/caregiver permission.

No volunteers or visitors in the centre will participate in care giving routines. Students will only participate in such routines under direct supervision of a staff member.

Work in schools

CMM staff visiting schools in the course of their work are subject to the school's own child protection policy and should familiarise themselves with this policy.

All Work with children, individually and in groups

All individual and group work with children and young people must adhere to the policy and procedures in this document together with all other relevant CMM policies e.g. Social Services Policy and Procedures, Community Settings Policy and Procedures, Health and Safety Policy etc.

Recruitment and Training

Recruitment

All new staff will be subject to safety checks (Vulnerable Children Act 2014) and existing staff will be rechecked every 3 years.

Safety checks include

- Identity verification - proof people are who they say, including former identities
- Information requirement – thorough Police, records, reference history & behaviour checks
- Risk assessment – judgement based process for interviewing staff
- Periodic re-assessment – every three years

Induction

At induction, new staff will be made aware of the CMM Child Protection policy and will familiarise themselves with the procedures to follow if abuse is disclosed or suspected.

Training

To work with children and families, CMM only employs professionally qualified social workers, psychologists and teachers who have been trained in child protection and are either registered with the relevant professional board, or working towards this. In addition staff will receive regular updated child protection as part of their on-going professional development.

All professional staff also receive regular supervision when their work is discussed and any concerns about child protection should be raised.

Privacy issues and working with other agencies

Case files are stored securely in locked cabinets when building is unoccupied.

Computer information is accessed by password only and computers are switched off when the building is unoccupied.

CMM takes a collaborative approach; staff are encouraged, **with client consent**, to include whānau, other supports (e.g: schools and GPs) and agencies including Child Youth and Family, in sharing information relevant to the wellbeing and protection of children. However, this should be restricted on a “need to know” basis.

Sharing information about a child may be essential to their health, safety and wellbeing. The Privacy Commissioner advises that the the Privacy Act generally does not draw a distinction between the privacy rights of adults and those of children but the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families (CYPF) Act allows information held about children to be disclosed if there is any concern for the welfare and wellbeing of that child. Consult their guide on disclosure with or without consent <http://www.childmatters.org.nz/file/Resources-page/privacy-sharing-personal-information.pdf> and the escalation ladder on the following page.

If a person outside of CMM requests information about a child, the staff member will consult their manager unless the client has given written permission for disclosure. Information will only be given after the staff member has identified the person making the request, the actual purpose of the request, what use the information will be put to, and who will see the information.

A child's records will be kept as factual as possible, and nothing will be recorded as fact without evidence to back it up such as appropriate documentation or observations.

Sharing personal information of families and vulnerable children



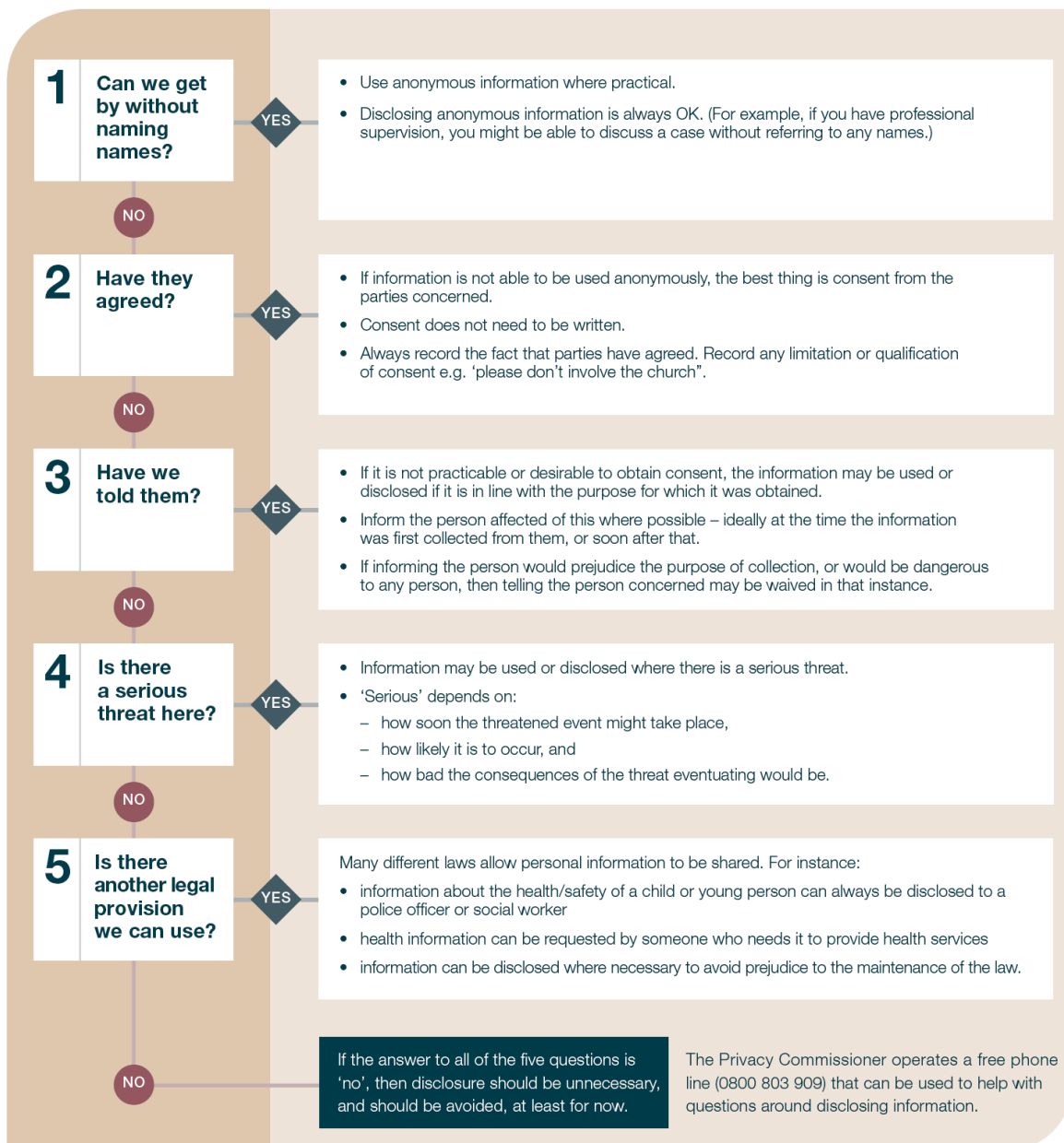
The Escalation Ladder

Sharing information involves both the collection and disclosure of personal information. Deciding which laws apply and what information to share can be complicated, but there are some guiding rules.

How to use the Escalation Ladder

Work through from question 1 to question 5 and stop when you can answer 'yes'. If the answer to all of the five questions is 'no', then disclosure should be unnecessary and should be avoided, at least for now.

Remember that the proportionality principle always applies – you should only provide as much information as is reasonably necessary to achieve your objectives.



Policy Review Process

The CMM Child Protection Policy will be reviewed every three (3) years.

Approved _____ (Date) _____

Due for Review (Date) _____

Reviewed _____ (Date) _____

Other relevant CMM policy documents

- HR Manual
- Health and Safety Policy
- Divisional Policy and Procedures
- Child Rights Policy
- Code of conduct working with children