Holland Park Child Care Centre

Child Protection Policy

Reviewed by Management/Staff and Families Jan 2011

Dhawrida caruta

Link to CCQA Principles

Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS)

Policy statement

This service is committed to child protection and child safe environments.

A child is any person aged from birth to eighteen years (UNICEF).

Holland Park Child Care Centre is committed to the safety, wellbeing and support of all young people within our centre. Management, Staff and volunteers will treat all children with the utmost respect and understanding. In making this commitment to provide a safe and friendly environment, all children will be made to:

* Feel safe and protected from harm.
* Be heard.
* Be respected and have input into planning and activities.
* Have their best interests considered and upheld.

The centre acknowledges that in order to maintain a safe and nurturing environment a strong commitment must be made to the training and development of management, staff and volunteers. To this end we will ensure:

* That we all build upon our knowledge of:
  - Child abuse and protection.
  - How to access support services.
  - Risk management processes
  - The handling of complaints and disclosures.
  - The rights and expectations of parents and of children.

The centre strongly supports an environment where children and young people feel happy and comfortable. We understand that this directly relates to our staff who manage our classrooms and management who oversee the centre's key operational procedures. To ensure that all staff and volunteers have a clear understanding of their role the centre has developed specific job descriptions and processes outlined in the centre handbook.
Holland Park requires all staff to hold a blue card as outlined in the Child Protection Act 1999. From January 17th 2005 all staff must have a ‘Working with children check” and hold a blue card before they start work. Failure to comply with this obligation is an offence and may result in fines or imprisonment. In accordance with the Act the centre will complete the following documentation as a way of ensuring accountability:

- Risk Management register.
- Register of Volunteers
- Training Register
- Incident Register

In addition:

- Holland Park Child Care has a duty of care to ensure that all persons are provided with a high level of safety and protection during the hours of the service’s operation.
- It is understood by staff, children and families that there is a shared responsibility between the service and all stakeholders that the Child Protection Policy and procedures are accepted as a high priority.

What is harm to children?

The child protection Act 1999 states:

1. Harm to a child is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child’s physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing.
2. It is immaterial how the harm is caused.
3. Harm can be caused by-
   i. physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect, or
   ii. sexual abuse or exploitation.

Child abuse is anything that comes under the following headings:

1. Physical abuse – includes beating, shaking, burning, biting or grabbing hard enough to leave a mark, throwing a child or strangulation to the effect that there are lasting physical effects. The administration of illegal or inappropriate drugs and medications may also be a form of harm. The fact that an injury is inflicted determines the existence of harm and the need for intervention. Practices such as giving extra tasks to children as a ‘punishment’ can be dangerous to the health, especially if they are tired.
2. **Emotional abuse and/or deprivation** - includes constant criticism, belittling, teasing, or withholding praise and affection and constant yelling. It can also be caused by a failure to provide psychological nurturing necessary for a child or young person's physical and emotional growth and development. Drawing attention to a child's shortcomings or failures, or demeaning their performance in front of others is inappropriate and can constitute emotional abuse.

3. **Physical neglect and/or inadequate supervision** - includes the ongoing failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life and adequate supervision needed for optimal growth and development. It also includes a failure to use available resources to seek treatment to meet the child or young persons needs. In an extreme form of this could involve abandonment of the child or young person.

4. **Sexual abuse and/or exploitation** - may take many forms from sexual jokes or innuendo in conversation through to showing pornographic images to a child. It can also include exposure, fondling, voyeurism, sexual intercourse, involvement in child pornography and child prostitution. This can occur between a child or young person who is older, or has the power authority or control over a child. This authority provides an opportunity for the older person to use force, trickery, emotional bribery or blackmail or other emotional pressure. It is important to note that children under the age of 16 cannot legally consent to sexual acts. Sexual activity is a criminal offence even if the child has, or appears to have, consented.

**The possible effects of harm:**

- Bruising
- Broken bones
- Possible brain damage
- Anxiety or low self esteem
- May become abusive
- Malnutrition or poor weight gain
- Insufficient medical care
- Begging or stealing money due to hunger
- Missing a substantial amount of school
- Physical or intellectual delays
- Lack of hygiene and clothing appropriate to weather and the occasion
- Inappropriate supervision
- Being required to supervise other children to a non-age appropriate degree
- Engaging in destructive behaviour
- Eating disorders
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Strategies and practices

Receiving and reporting a disclosure of harm

When confronted with disclosures of harm to children, organisations should respond professionally and in the best interests of the child or young person subjected to the alleged harm. Any disclosure must be acted upon.

Suspicion of harm

You have reasonable grounds to suspect harm if:

- A child tells you that they have been harmed.
- Someone else tells you e.g. another child or a staff member tells you that harm has occurred.
- You are concerned at significant changes with the behaviour of a child or the presence of unexplained and suspicious injuries
- You see the harm occur.

Disclosures may sound like:

- "I think I saw"
- "Somebody told me"
- "I think you should know"
- "I'm not sure what I want you to do but...."

What to do when a Disclosure is made-

Stage One- There are no set rules but don't panic, find a private place to talk, listen. Reassure the person that they have done the right thing by telling, but don't promise to keep secrets.

Explain that you need to tell someone else who can help. Believe the person, take detailed notes but do not ask leading questions.
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Stage Two - Suspicion of harm must always be taken seriously and be reported to the Queensland Police service. They will follow up with officers from Juvenile Aid or the Child Abuse Unit. Disclosure of harm caused by a family member, or where parents have not been acting to protect their child from harm, the incident must be reported to the Department of Families.

Stage Three - once the Queensland police service and Department of Families, have been notified policies and procedures should continue to be followed. While formal investigations continue the centre will seek guidance from the investigating agency and get independent legal advice.

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<th>Source of Harm</th>
<th>Possible Action</th>
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<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Immediate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Contact the Queensland Police Service or the Department of Families.</td>
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| Clients | Support all parties, including:  
- the person making the disclosure.  
- the person receiving the disclosure.  
- the child or young person who has been harmed, and  
- the alleged perpetrator  
Determine whether the client, as an alleged perpetrator, is allowed:  
- back on the premises  
- to participate in activities  
- in areas where children and young people are while the matter is being investigated by the Queensland Police Service or Department of Families. | If allegation is proven:  
- Determine if the client's involvement with the organisation will be allowed to continue.  
If allegation is not proven:  
- Activate grievance procedures |
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<td>External</td>
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- Allow the Queensland police service or the Department of Families to undertake an official investigation.  
- Support the person who made the disclosure, the person who received the disclosure and the young |
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Strategies to Minimise harm.

Holland Park Child Care Centre is committed to developing partnerships with parents and carers of young people. Management and staff have developed systems whereby:

- They know who has parental responsibility for each child or young person in their care.
- Have a record of the name, address and contact numbers of the parent or carer as well as those of an additional person in the event of an emergency.
- Know how to contact the parent or carer as quickly as possible.
- They inform parents, carers, children and young people about what they can do if they are unhappy about anything within the centre.

Adapted from the Child Protection Act (Qld) 1999.

Participation and empowerment of children

- All forms of abuse are a symbolic representation of 'power' and of the offender's need to control. The promotion of children’s participation in the development of child safe strategies and policies is a beneficial step in creating child safe environments.

What can we do to help kids feel safe?

- Be available to listen to children in your life.
- What they say is important—and their non-verbal communication is important too.
- Offer parents support instead of criticism. Raising children can be hard.
- Ask for help if you are stressed and caring for a child.
- Act if you suspect abuse. Talk to child abuse prevention services.

Custodial Parent Procedure
The centre cannot legally prevent a mother or father if she/he is known to staff or can present appropriate identification, from collecting their child unless a photocopy of a Court Order restrains that parent and gives sole custody to the other parent. If no photocopy is available but the parent who enrolled the child informs the centre that they have separated from their partner, staff will attempt to delay the child from being taken while another staff member attempts to telephone the other parent.

Where the centre has a photocopy of a Court Order the following shall apply:

- The non-custodial parent is informed that the centre has a copy of the Court Order.
- Should the non-custodial parent attempt to take the child and is causing a disturbance, the local police station is telephoned and the matter reported. It will be stressed to the police if the non-custodial parent causes a nuisance, is abusive, or under the influence of alcohol, whichever may apply at the time.
- The custodial parent is contacted and informed of the situation.

If after this procedure has been followed it is no longer possible to prevent the child being taken without risk to other children and staff, then regretfully, the centre must allow the parent to take the child. If Federal Police arrive with a warrant to collect a child, the staff must carefully check the warrant to ensure it states that the child is to be taken. If correct, the parent who enrolled the child must be contacted and informed before the child is allowed to leave with the Police.

**Inclusive and empowering language**

- The centre acknowledges everyday speech which may assist staff when developing inclusive strategies with children. In particular, school age children often use words out
of context which may confuse the adult listening to children's conversations. For example, 'sexing' can be used by some school age children to mean 'kissing'; the sentence 'he was sexing me' could be interpreted by a staff/carer as a sexual act when the intent of the sentence may mean 'he was kissing me'.

Employee recruitment and selection

The centre understands that child protection within the centre hinges on the employment, screening and selection of the right employees. Documented guidelines for recruitment and selection of paid and volunteer staff, including specific screening requirements, are an essential component of a risk management strategy required by law.

* New obligations for employers began 2 June 2008; these new laws further strengthen current legislation preventing certain people from applying for a blue card.
  o Employees must warn all potential staff that it is an offence for a disqualified person to sign a blue card application.
  o It is an offence for an employee not to provide this warning.
  o Employers must ensure they use the current blue card application form.
  o Verbally advise a staff member “That it is an offence for a disqualified person to sign a blue card application form and I am legally obliged to warn you of this”
  o All volunteers must have a current blue card.
  o Paid employees have lodged a Blue Card application before commencing employment.

Where a paid employees blue card application has been withdrawn by the Commission you do not allow this person to work in regulated employment until a new application has been lodged.

Job descriptions or duty statements

* The centre job descriptions support the recruitment practices by targeting specific skills that are required when working with children. The centre's job descriptions let staff know what is expected of them in each position, what is acceptable or not acceptable. As the centre developed its job descriptions it considered our Child Protection policy and Code of Conduct, this sends a clear message that our centre provides a safe and friendly environment for all our children.

Email and Internet Usage Policy

* While use of the computer, email and Internet is intended for job related activities, incidental and occasional brief use is permitted within reasonable limits as long as it does not interfere with the employee's work.

Holland Park Child Care specifically prohibits the use of computers (including Internet access) and the email system in ways that are disruptive, offensive to others or harmful to morale, including sexually explicit messages, images and cartoons, ethnic slurs, racial comments, off-colour jokes or anything that could be construed as harassment or shows disrespect for others, defames or slanders others, or otherwise harms another person or business.

Employees may not access the Internet to log onto any Web sites that contain any such material, including any pornographic website, or any website that contains any discriminatory message or disparages any group. Employees may not use computers or the email system for
commercial messages of any kind or for messages of a religious or political nature, chain letters, solicitations, gambling or other inappropriate usage. Email and Internet access should be used in such a way that all transmissions, whether internal or external, are accurate, appropriate, ethical and lawful.

Illegal duplication of software or violation of copyright laws by the duplication or sharing of software, or the distribution of copyrighted material is strictly prohibited. Also, an employee should not use a password, access a file or retrieve a stored communication that is not normally accessible to the employee.

In order to enforce these policies, computer, Internet and email usage may be monitored by the company, including retrieving and reading e-mail messages and other computer files, and monitoring of Internet traffic. Therefore e-mail and messages and other use of the company's computers is NOT confidential and even though you may be issued a private password or other private access code to log in to the computer, you should have no expectation of privacy with regard to your use of the system. Employees should immediately notify their supervisor or manager of any violations of this policy. Employees who violate this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Children enrolled at the centre are not to have access to the internet due to the nature of some of its content. It would be deemed acceptable however for an older child to help a staff member to look at a web site they are attending for an excursion. Children are able to use the computers in the learning rooms but have no internet access.

Photos of children are only to be used on daily slideshows, learning folders and displays in the foyer. Photos of children in care are never to be loaded on to the internet or be displayed on social networking sites by staff or students. It will be acceptable for families to receive emailed photos of their children but if the photo involves other children written permission will be sought by all parties before photos are shared.

Sourced in parts: Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian “Child Protection; Managing the risks” Implemented Jan 07.

Grievances and complaints management (including disciplinary proceedings)
* Grievances and complaints procedures reflect fairness and natural justice concepts.
* This policy is linked to the service’s Grievances and Complaints Management Policy.

Support agencies
* Useful advice can be found at [www.ccypcqld.gov.au](http://www.ccypcqld.gov.au)
* The centre may engage support agencies as they feel are necessary.

Protective behaviours and practices
Staff, carers, students and volunteers as role models
* Children learn through example and role modelling is an important strategy in teaching children about protective behaviours.
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- Staff, students and volunteers comply with the Child Protection Policy and additional legislative or regulatory requirements as outlined in the Child Protection Act.

Communication with different stakeholders

Children
Holland Park Child Care Centre understands that the most effective way to minimise harm to children and young people is to be proactive. Within our teaching and centre activities we include strategies that:
  * Teach children to say “no” to anything that makes them feel unsafe in a manner appropriate to their age, understanding and the activity.
  * Teach them to ask questions if they are unsure of anything.
  * Teach them that nothing is so bad that they can’t talk about it.
  * Teach them that they make the decision about who is allowed to touch them.
  * Teach them what is safe and what is unsafe conduct.
  * Develop support networks.
  * Talk through issues with them.
  * Monitor their activities.
  * Allow them to be involved in the decision making process where possible.

Families
Child protection behaviours and practices and child safe environments are outlined in the Parent Handbook, enrolment forms, newsletters and excursion permission forms.
  * Child protection and safety information will be displayed on noticeboards.
  * Families will be encouraged to implement the service’s child protection behaviours and practices when engaged in service experiences and excursions.

Staff support, supervision, performance review and professional development

The centre ensures that staff will be monitored during their duties. This will be achieved by;
  o Supervising staff
  o Conducting random audits of activities
  o Doing performance appraisals for employees
  o Conducting surveys to find out how families feel
  o Rotating staff to supervise various activities
  o Professional development

Management/Coordination unit staff
  * Management will provide training on child protection, they will source information that challenges staff and their thinking in order to promote growth and learning.
  * Management will develop and maintain policies and procedures that promote child protection.

Experiences
  * When planning experiences within the centre it is important to be aware of the child and youth friendly policies that the centre implements. An important part of ensuring
everyone's safety is assessing the actual and potential risks to everyone involved. Conduct a risk assessment with your Director.

* When doing a risk assessment and planning activities we may consider:
  o The number of people
  o The age group of the children
  o The type of activity
  o The environment where the activity is to take place
  o The particular needs of individual participants
  o The policies and procedures of the centre

In addition there are a few basic principles to consider when planning an activity:
  o Ensure your activity supports the interests and wellbeing of the centre.
  o Be aware that children should not be left unattended
  o Ensure staff know where the children in their group are at all times
  o Provide constant supervision of potentially dangerous equipment
  o Ensure no dangerous behaviour is entered into.

Excursions
It is important to consider whether the place is safe and friendly. Conduct a risk assessment with the Director for your excursion. Things to consider would be:
  o Inspecting the location to ensure its safety
  o Inspecting the location to ensure its suitability for the activity
  o Ensure the availability of first aid equipment
  o Address transport issues
  o Check for adequate shade and toilet facilities / water
  o Ensure there is adequate lighting
  o Ensure there are no potential risks created by nearby activities.

Community
* Child abuse affects the whole community and stopping it involves everyone in our community.
* Staff can ensure that the community is included in our centre by inviting the local Police/ Fire Brigade to talk about staying safe

Policy review

* The service will review the Child Protection Policy and procedures, and related documents, including behaviours and practices every 18 months.
* Children and families are encouraged to collaborate with the service to review the policy and procedures.
* Staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be encouraged to be actively involved.

Procedures
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The following are examples of procedures that the service employs as part of its practices.

Examples:

- Documenting and reporting suspected child abuse or neglect, including the procedures for reporting to a regulatory authority or external agency.
- Employee induction procedure.
- Planning, implementing and evaluating an effective child protection and safe environment awareness program for children and families.
- Policy development and review procedure.
- Procedure for handling complaints against a staff, carer, student, volunteer and/or visitor.
- Procedure for non-compliance of the Child Protection Policy and procedures by a:
  - child;
  - staff/carer;
  - parent or family member;
  - student/volunteer; or
  - visitor.
- Procedures for supporting an individual returning to work after a false allegation.
- Procedure and support mechanisms for children, families and staff/carers when an allegation is made.
- Student and volunteer induction procedure.

Measuring tools

Holland Park will use Risk Management Assessments, Staff appraisals, Staff work plans, Parent communication both formal and informal to ensure that policies and procedures remain fair and just. Staff will be monitored for policy compliance and this will be documented.

Links to other policies

- Confidentiality and privacy
- Employment of child care professionals
- Enrolment of new children and families to the service
- Grievance and complaints management
- Hygiene and infection control
- Illness
- Occupational health and safety
- Staff as role models
- Supervision
- Supporting children’s individual health needs