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| XYZ Centre | **Policy** |
| **Policy Category: GMA7a** |
| Date Created: June 2023 |
| **Policy Name: Staff Safety Checking Policy** |

This operational policy describes our procedure to ensure all those working at our childcare centre meet the safety check requirements specified in the Children’s Act 2014. This policy also contributes to the human resource management policies operated by this Centre and ensures we comply with the Ministry of Education’s Early Childhood Education Licensing Criteria HS31 and GMA7a.

**Position Statement**

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| Our Centre ensures the safety of children through a robust staff selection process. We want our staff to:   * be safe to work with our children; * understand the needs and development of children and know how to act to ensure these are met; * actively contribute to our culture of child protection; * support and adhere to our child protection and child abuse policies * be prepared to make child safety at our Centre their top priority.   A breach of this policy will be regarded as serious misconduct and subject to disciplinary action. |

**Issue Outline**

Not all children have the support and protection of a trusted adult, but they must do so at our centre.

**Policy principles**

A **Full Safety Check** will be completed before a new worker is employed or has access to children. Thereafter, a **Periodic Safety Check** involving only steps 1, 3 and 7 below will be completed every three years.

To ensure our children are safe, we undertake a series of steps for a **Full Safety Check** when appointing all new staff at this Centre:

1. Verification of identity
2. Search of records
3. Acceptance of a satisfactory Police vet check report, **OR**

information from any relevant professional organisation or registration body

1. Information about work history
2. Referee checks
3. An interview focussing on the person’s safety to have access to children
4. **Risk Assessment**: On the basis of the previous six safety checking steps, we form a view about the suitability of a candidate to work as a “Children’s Worker” under the Children’s Act 2014. This view will be documented and, along with copies of all original documents described above, will be maintained on the staff member’s personnel file for as long as they are employed in this organisation.

**Detail**

**Verification of identity**

We always meet the candidate face-to-face at least once in the safety checking process. This is when we sight their original ID documents, copy them and retain them.

We require two forms of identity documents from prospective staff when applying for roles with us: a primary and a secondary document, one of which must be photographic as specified in the Children’s Regulations 2015. These documents ***must be current***, the originals seen, a copy kept and annotated with the words “original sighted **DATE** by **NAME**”. We ensure that the documents are not fraudulent.

Where an individual has changed their name and their new name is not on the identity document, we will need to obtain evidence of a change of name (e.g. marriage certificate). The document ***must be current***, the original sighted, a copy kept and annotated with the words “original sighted **DATE** by **NAME**”

**Search of records**

We search our records to ensure that the identity is not being used or has never been used by any other person associated with our organisation.

**Acceptance of a Police vet check report**

We will obtain a current Police vet report for all staff at our centre to identify any issue in the individual’s recent background that would mean children at our centre might be at risk.

We accept a registered teacher’s current practicing certificate as evidence that a current Police vet check report has been obtained by the Teaching Council and that this has met their criteria for being of good character and fit to be a teacher. Where a teachers practising certificate expires, the teacher will be excluded from all access to children until it is either renewed or we obtain a current police vet ourselves.

**Information from any relevant professional organisation or registration body**

We will seek information from any relevant professional organisation or registration authority to confirm if the candidate is a current member, registered or certificated by the authority. For teachers we will do this by confirming with the Teaching Council that they have a current Practising Certificate. For all teaching staff with a current Practicing Certificate, we will make a copy of the original Practicing Certificate annotated with the words “original sighted **DATE** by **NAME**”. We will check the Teaching Council register to ensure that the Practicing Certificate is valid and that there are no endorsements that reflect concerns over safe practice with children. We will take a screenshot of this and file it with other documents annotated with the words “Screenshot taken **DATE** by **NAME**”

***All staff will be required to undertake a periodic safety check every three years.***

***See note at the end of this policy regarding expired Practicing Certificates.***

#### Overseas Police Certificates

M.o.E. recommends that children’s workers who have lived overseas should provide copies of police certificates from their countries of citizenship and from any country in which they have lived for one or more years within the last ten years.

When a person cannot provide an overseas police certificate, they should provide evidence of their attempts to obtain one. They should also make a statutory declaration ([Schedule 1 of the Oaths and Declarations Act 1957)](http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1957/0088/latest/DLM314553.html) that states whether they have any overseas criminal convictions or not. It is important to remember that just because a person is not recorded as having a criminal record, does not mean they have not engaged in behaviour that is an offence in New Zealand.

**Information about work history**

We look for a work history that is clear and transparent, covering the previous five years. We always follow up any gaps in work history or other issues in the candidate’s interview.

**Referee information**

For the purpose of Safety Checking, references must be **verbal** and ***not*** written. We obtain a minimum of one referee check and preferably two. One of the references must be from the most recent employer, and we will examine matters of safe practices as part of the discussion.

**Interview**

All prospective staff must participate in a full child safety interview. The interview not only examine the background and attitudes of the candidate, but also their suitability to demonstrate the values of our Centre in a manner that meets the expectations of our policy.

**Risk assessment**

In making an appointment we apply a **risk assessment** by weighing up all of the information gathered to ensure that we select a person who we believe

* is a safe person to work with children.
* understands the needs and development of children and knows how to act to ensure these are met.
* supports and adheres to our child protection and child abuse policies
* will make the safety of children at our Centre a priority.

We will justify our decision by writing at least 80 words in the risk assessment.

**Personnel records**

We retain information gathered to comply with this Staff Safety Checking Policy in individual personnel files. Police vet check reports, where gathered, are retained for audit purposes, even where replaced with a more current version. All personnel records are kept strictly confidential in secure storage. Safety check records are kept for as long as the person is employed by us.

**The Person Responsible will:**

* Always prioritise the safety and wellbeing of the child;
* Carry out or staff safety checking (including Police vetting) in accordance with the Children (Requirements for Safety Checks of Children’s Workers) Regulations 2015;
* Maintain appropriate records.

In teacher-led, centre-based services, the Person Responsible is directly involved in and primarily responsible for, the day-to-day education and care, comfort and health and safety of the children.

**Students and Volunteers**

Whilst volunteers do not need to be safety checked according to the Children’s Act 2014, it is our policy to safety check volunteers.

All students need to be safety checked.

**Alignment with the Centre Philosophy**

This policy is aligned with the centre’s philosophy.

**Implementation**

The implementation of this policy influences the Centre’s recruitment and HR policies and will form part of all staff induction and in-service training where appropriate.

**Alignment with Other Policies**

* Personnel policies – Police checks and careful employment of temporary staff, casual staff, volunteers
* Child Protection Policy
* Whistle Blowing Policy
* Goals for Adult Behaviour

**Relevant Background of this Safety checking Policy (including legislation/regulation references)**

Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008

Ministry of Education Early Childhood Education Licensing Criteria Governance and Management: GMA7a

Children’s Act 2014 and associated regulations (2015).

**Review**

Review bi-annually or when there is a significant change in the area of the policy topic.

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| **Authorised:** |  |
| **Date:** | June 2023 |
| **Review Date:** | June 2025 |
| **Consultation:** |  |

**Note: Expired Practicing Certificates**

Teachers who have an expired Practising Certificate cannot have access to children because their Police vet will have expired also. This can be avoided by services completing their own police vet checks on all teachers.

While a teacher may remain registered after the expiry of their practising certificate, they are not permitted to have access to children without holding a current police vet.

Some of the policy detail relating to this can be found in the Teaching Council’s Registration and Certification Policy (see page 33):

<https://teachingcouncil.nz/getting-certificated/getting-started/what-is-registration-and-certification/registration-policy/>