

The new Licensing Criteria HS125 (April 2026 - Child Protection) requires you to evaluate how well your policy and procedure works using at least one example of either:

- how well your policy and procedure have supported your service to respond; **or**
- how well Your policy and procedure would support your service to respond to concerns using a **hypothetical scenario**.

The hypothetical scenarios in this document can be used to practice and review your policy and procedures. We suggest that all staff should be involved to ensure everyone understands. Perhaps consider using a breakout approach (small groups focussing on a scenario) and then coming back together to report on their discussion in plenary.

Managers should remember to document this procedure giving dates and outcomes, recording any refinement to policy or procedure that occurs as a result of this process.

Scenario 1

Jack is nearly 4 years old. He is in receipt of the 30 hours funding. His attendance is good and Jack appears to thoroughly enjoy being at Centre. At snack time you notice that Jack is very hungry, he tells you there was 'no breakfast'. In the morning, you observe him being very subdued from his friends. In the afternoon he tells you that 'mummy is sad'. What are your next steps?

- How do you approach this sensitively with whānau?
- What support systems can be activated for the family?
 - Are signs of neglect present?
 - What makes poverty different from neglect?

Scenario 2

Lucy has been at your pre-school for six months. You have noticed that her parents have very different relationships with her. Her mum is very anxious about whether she is meeting her targets and working at the 'same level' as her friends. She constantly asks for advice and guidance, and you have noticed that she seems to question everything she does. Her father is quite abrupt with staff, and with Lucy. He frequently comments she needs to be 'braver' and 'toughen up' and Lucy is noticeably subdued when she is with him. At parents evening, her father talks over her mother and you find it challenging to engage them both in conversations about Lucy's development. What will you do?

Scenario 3

Whilst supporting children in the bathroom you notice that three year old Susie is very subdued. She is reluctant to go to the toilet despite looking uncomfortable and as though she needs to go. You ask her if she needs some help, and when you are supporting notice that her genital area is very sore and red. What are your next steps?

- How should you respond immediately to your observation?
 - Would you take a photo?
- What are your immediate responsibilities under your policy?

Scenario 4

You have a new parent joining your setting with their child. On arriving mum attends alone. She is very quiet and listens carefully when you are touring her around the nursery. When you sit together to review the policies and procedures she discloses that she was subjected to FGM (female genital mutilation) as a child and is scared that her family may try to force this upon her baby daughter. What are your next steps?

- How do you make sure the parent safe and supported?
- What are your immediate responsibilities under the policy?
 - Which support services can be initiated for the family?
 - Where and how do you document this incident?

Scenario 5

Joe is a father of a 3 year old in your setting. Recently, on a number of occasions, his son, Luke, has commented that 'mummy and daddy were shouting'. Luke has always been keen on rough and tumble play but in the last few weeks this has escalated. When Joe arrives to pick Luke up you notice that he has a bruise on the side of his face. On asking if he is ok, Luke shouts 'mummy did it'. Joe laughs, changes the subject and takes Luke home. What are your next steps?

- What are your immediate responsibilities to the child?
- How do you approach the parent respectfully while assessing risk?
 - According to your policy, what actions must you take?

Scenario 6

Beth is known for being an inquisitive and chatty member of the class. However, recently you have noticed a complete change in her behaviour. For the last few weeks Beth has become much quieter and withdrawn. You also notice that in spite of the hot summer weather, Beth has started consistently wearing clothes that cover her whole body, despite the fact she was wearing dresses a few weeks ago.

- What clues here might raise your concern here?

Scenario 7

You work in a classroom that has a window that looks out into the parking lot of your childcare centre. One afternoon you look outside and see one of the children from your class and his mom walking out to their car. The little boy is screaming and crying because he was acting up when his mom picked him up. Mom is a smoker, and it appears she's become extremely frustrated. She reaches down and touches the boy on the arm with what appears to be the end of her cigarette, which only makes the little boy scream louder. You're not sure if that's what happened or not, but you see the burn mark on the boy's arm the next day at preschool.

- What type of abuse is this?
 - Should you report the mother?
- What does your policy mandate in this situation?
- Where and how do you document this incident?

Scenario 8

You are concerned about a 3 year-old girl that has been coming to your Centre for over a year. Recently she has been demonstrating some of the behaviours of someone that has been sexually abused. You are concerned about the child because today she told you that her mommy's boyfriend likes to play the "touching" game.

- What is your immediate response to the disclosure?
- How do you make sure the child feels heard and safe?
- Is it OK for you to do a little more investigating of your own?
- Based on your policy, what is your next course of action?

Scenario 9

There's a 4 year-old boy that you suspect is being neglected. He comes to the Centre every morning and eats at least 3 times the amount of breakfast as the others. He's made some comments to you about sometimes having rice for dinner but most evenings and weekends he gets sent to bed without food.

- How do you approach this sensitively with whānau?
- What external support can be accessed for the family?
 - Are signs of neglect present?

Scenario 10

A 13-month-old girl is brought in by her mom and her mom's boyfriend with swelling and pain to the left leg and hip and a bruise on her forehead. The mom reports that her daughter won't stop crying. During care duties, you notice bruising of various sizes and colours on her trunk, including the abdomen and back.

- What are your immediate concerns?
- What steps should you take based on your child protection policy and procedure?
 - Where and how do you document this incident?
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Scenario 11

Amira is three years old. Today, she arrives late when she is usually on time; Her Mother is upset and says they over slept. Amira becomes tearful when her Mother leaves and wants only to sit and look out of the window. She is normally happy and engages in lots of play. Later that morning, you see Amira playing with two dolls. She is bashing them together and repeating "you dirty cow". The child sees you watching, stops playing and bursts into tears.

- What are your immediate responsibilities to the child?
- How do you balance professional risk assessment with respectful communication?
 - What is the policy procedure for this?

Scenario 12

Rakesh (nearly 5 years old) starts giggling and laughing and said that last night he saw something rude on Mummy's iPad. When you ask what he saw, he said that he saw someone's privates. Rakesh says that he uses the iPad a lot when he's at home and that Mummy lets him go on it.

- What is your immediate response to the disclosure?
- What are the best practices for protecting a child while adhering to confidentiality and reporting requirements?
 - What steps should you take based on your child protection policy and procedure?

Scenario 13

Three month old Sasha has a small bruise, the size of a 5 pence coin, just below their ear. Dad says that Sasha fell off the changing table and bumped their head on a toy on the floor.

- What are your immediate concerns?
- What does your policy require of you?

Scenario 14

Lucy is nearly 5 years old. She has long hair that she normally wears tied back, but today it is down. You notice that there is a bruise behind her ear, and she isn't using her right arm as much as she normally does, and seems to be holding it as still as possible. A member of staff accidentally bumps into her and Lucy grabs her own arm and begins to cry. She does not want to tell you what has happened, she says it needs to stay secret and telling will make it worse.

- How do you make sure the child feels safe and supported?
 - What are your immediate concerns?
- What is the required procedure for responding to a child protection concern?

Scenario 15

Patrick lived with his grandparents, Karen and Geoff following the death of both his parents in a car accident in March 2023. Shortly after, Geoff (Patrick's grandfather) ended the relationship with Karen and left the property in about August 2023. Patrick seems to be always absent and has only attended about 30% of the time. When he has attended, he is withdrawn and appears fearful of speaking with other adults or children. He is always sick. The manager has attempted to discuss with Karen but have had no response. Patrick has told his teacher that he is locked in the room all day. He is severely underweight.

- What are your immediate concerns?
- How do you make sure the child feels safe and supported?
 - What are the required procedures to follow under your child protection policy?
 - Who do you need to contact (for example, another Person Responsible, caregiver, supervisor, Oranga Tamariki, Police)?

Scenario 16

One of our 4 year old boys arrived yesterday with a bite mark bruise on his cheek. During a discussion he advised "Mummy bited me" and repeated later "Mummy bited me last night."

- What steps should you take based on your child protection policy and procedure?
 - What would be your purpose for engaging with the carer?
 - How would you phrase your questions?

Scenario 17

A staff member comes to you upset. She says she doesn't know what to do about Dora's father. Every day when he comes to pick Dora up from the program he says mean things to her. Today he told her to stop being "slow and stupid like her mum." Yesterday he said how much easier life would be if he didn't have to worry about her.

- How do you balance respectful communication with risk assessment?
 - Do you recognise any abuse here?
 - Why is this causing you concern?
 - According to your policy, what actions must you take?

Scenario 18

A child was pulled by the wrist and into a bathroom by colleague who then dragged the crying child back to their classroom.

- Have you defined ill-treatment or boundaries of physical intervention?
 - How do you investigate the complaint fairly without bias?
 - According to your policy, what actions must you take?

Scenario 19

A screaming child was found locked in a preschool van 80 minutes after the class had returned from a trip.

- What constitutes ill-treatment in an early childhood education and care setting?
 - How do you support the child?
- Under your child protection policy and procedure what steps should you take?
 - Do you need to report this incident to any external agency?

Scenario 20

A 4-year-old child arrives with bruises on their upper arms and back. When asked, the child says they "fell down," but the explanation does not match the injury pattern. This is the first time you have noticed anything concerning about the child.

- What are the required procedures to follow under your child protection policy?
 - What are your immediate concerns?
 - Where and how do you document this incident?

Scenario 21

You are sitting on the floor working with children. You were about to stand up to turn the tap off when Ms X walked out of the sleep room, approached Child A and yelled at him for turning the tap on. Using one hand, Ms X then grabbed Child A on his upper right arm with a firm grip. She lifted him up off the ground approximately 350 millimetres, moved him forward while he was off the ground and then placed him back on the ground.

- How do you make sure the child feels safe and supported?
 - What are your immediate concerns?
 - How should you address your colleague's behaviour?
- What do you need to do to document and report this incident?
- Outline the steps to take in line with your child protection policy and procedure?
 - Where and how do you document this incident?

Further scenarios may be found on the Ministry of Education website under Early-Learning/Licensing Criteria HS125.

Look for 'Tools to help you comply': [CLICK HERE](#)

For guidance in understanding of sexualised behaviour in young children:

Visit: <https://www.stop.org.nz/tools-to-help>

Or:

<https://sexualabuse.org.nz/resources/childhood-sexual-behaviours/>