



This policy was authored by Jodi Wichers on 10/11/16. A digital copy can be found on our website at theorchardchurch.co.nz

This policy was updated 30/03/2025.

The policy is due to be updated on 30/03/2026.

It is consistent with Oranga Tamariki and Police guidelines and will be updated when new guidance is issued.

Contents/Quick Reference

- 1. Policy Purpose Pg. 4**
- 2. Policy Pg. 4/5**
- 3. Police Check/Recruitment Pg. 5**
- 4. Supervision of Children Pg. 6**
 - 4.1 Sign In/Out Pg. 6
 - 4.2 General Supervision Pg. 6
 - 4.3 Expectation of Staff/Volunteers Pg. 6/7
 - 4.4 Child Safe Practice Guidelines Pg. 7
 - 4.5 Digital Safety and Bullying Pg. 7
- 5. Children's Toileting Pg. 8**
 - 5.1 Infants in Nappies Pg. 8
 - 5.2 Preschoolers Pg. 8
 - 5.3 School Aged Children Pg. 8
 - 5.4 Further Guidelines Pg. 8
- 6. Suspicion or Disclosure of Abuse of Children Pg. 9/10**
 - 6.1 Consultation & Reporting Pg. 9
 - 6.2 Recording of Information Pg. 10
 - 6.3 Confidentiality and Information Sharing Pg. 10
- 7. Responding to Suicidal Ideation Pg. 10/11**
- 8. Threats to Safety of Child/Young Person Pg. 11/12**
 - 8.1 Known/Potential Offenders Pg. 11
 - 8.2 Responding to Children Who Pose a Potential Threat Pg. 11/12
 - 8.3 Safety Concerns Pg. 12
- 9. Designated Person for Protection Policy Pg. 12**
- 10. Definitions Pg. 13**
- 11. Appendixes Pg. 14**
 1. The Vulnerable Children's Act 2014
 2. The Children, Young Person's and Their Families Act 1989
 3. Guidance on Identifying Possible Abuse
 4. Contact List
 5. Risk Assessment Form
 6. Police Check Form
 7. Report of Concern Form
 8. Guidance on Identifying Suicidal Ideation

1. Policy Purpose (Pg. 4)

The Vulnerable Person's Protection Policy ensures that The Orchard's Children's and Youth Ministries meet legislative, ethical, and professional standards in the process of working with children and young people.

The wellbeing and safety of children, including prevention of child abuse and maltreatment, is a paramount goal of The Orchard Children's Ministries, and this policy confirms our commitment to this purpose. This policy also respects cultural values and diversity in promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

SCOPE:

This policy also ensures that staff and volunteers of The Orchard are not placed in a vulnerable position and are protected as much as reasonably possible from unfounded complaints. They will also be given clear guidelines on acceptable and appropriate behaviour.

This policy applies to all The Orchard including Staff, Elders, Children and Youth Ministry Leaders, Volunteers, and Workers. This policy is also for the purposes of ensuring safe practices for all people who engage with The Orchard Church.

2. Policy (Pg. 4/5)

2.1 Children and Young People

- It is the policy for all staff and volunteers of The Orchard to ensure that, to the best of their ability, children and young people are safe from physical, emotional, sexual abuse, and neglect.
 - It is also the policy of The Orchard staff and volunteers to work within the Principles and Objectives of the Children and Young Person's Well-being Act 1989 and the Principles and Objectives of The Children's Act 2014.
 - The welfare and interests of any child or young person must be the first and paramount consideration. This policy provides a framework and expectations to protect children, including staff behaviours in response to actual or suspected child abuse and neglect.
 - That clear guidelines are managed and reviewed regarding the identification and reporting of any child abuse or neglect. Staff will not assume responsibility beyond the level of their training and experience. The Orchard will periodically assess training needs and ensure funding or resources are available for staff/volunteers to attend relevant child protection training.
 - A person is designated for child protection – and is responsible for providing advice and support to staff/volunteers where they have a concern about an individual child/youth or who want advice about child protection policy. (See Section 9)
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3. Police Checks and Recruitment (Pg. 5)

3.1 Any adult volunteer, leader, or staff member who interacts with people who may be vulnerable must be known to The Orchard and have completed a Police Check* before being permitted to act with children or young people in a role on behalf of The Orchard.

Police checks must be renewed every three years for ongoing staff/volunteers, or sooner if concerns arise.

- Where volunteers (Capernwray/YWAM, WOL Holiday Programme, Visiting Guests, etc.) only attend for a short time, but would be considered for service due to the nature of their situation, a Risk Assessment** needs to be completed including a verbal reference from a supervisor.
- Any volunteer, leader, staff member, or intern who is under 18 years of age, and is therefore ineligible for a police check, must be directly supervised by a vetted adult at all times.

**Police checks may have a delay before results - during this time risk must be assessed and managed by Ministry Leaders (Staff or Volunteer) in consultation with the Children's Pastor before allowing work with Children/Young People. See Appendix 9.4*

***Risk Assessment See Appendix 9.3*

3.2 Diligence in selection of workers will be used by expecting the following standards:

- A committed member of the church and faithful in attending regular church services (ideally from The Orchard but exceptions are allowed for volunteers from other churches – dependent on them meeting the same criteria as The Orchard volunteers).
- Be loyal and respectful to the leaders of the Church and Ministry Leaders.
- Agree with The Orchard's Protection Policy and Police Screening process.
- Live a consistent Christian life.
- Be prepared to attend training, development, and meetings regarding their ministry area as required including Protection policy training. As part of their induction, new staff/volunteers will be made aware of the policy on child protection.

4. Supervision of Children – Safe Working Practices (Pg. 6)

4.1 Sign In/Out

- Whenever primary school age children or preschoolers are left in the care of volunteers or staff they are to be checked in and their safety becomes the paramount responsibility of The Orchard.
- The Orchard volunteer staff will check in all children who come to them during the Sunday school slot.

Juniors - Parents will collect children at the completion of the programme.

Middles - Parents will collect children at the completion of the programme unless they have signed a form allowing their children to be dismissed.

Seniors – No collection by parents required.

- Once children have been released, they are no longer the responsibility of The Orchard volunteers/staff even if they remain on The Orchard property. Parents must be informed and reminded of this periodically throughout the year. Although not directly responsible, staff still have a duty to promote safety and act in accordance with the policies of The Orchard. (See General Supervision 4.2)
- For those events at The Orchard that do not have a check in/out, full responsibility remains with the parents.

4.2 General Supervision

While children are under the responsibility of the parent/caregiver (i.e., not checked in), if an Orchard staff member or children's ministry volunteer sees a child who is unsafe, they have a duty of care to intervene in an appropriate manner. Interventions may include redirecting the child to a safe area, notifying a parent, or reporting to a Ministry Leader if the situation escalates. If there is ongoing concern regarding a child who is regularly unsupervised, then please inform the Ministry Leader or Orchard staff member.

Except in an emergency, children and young people are not to be taken from our organisation's premises, or from the programme we provide, without written parental consent.

4.3 Expectations of Staff and Volunteers

- Treat all children/young people with kindness, whilst modelling a high standard of personal respect.
- Physical interaction with children/young people should be minimal and appropriate and always in public view to not appear secretive.
- Discourage children/young people from engaging in overly physical play with each other and with church workers, i.e., playfighting, piggy backing etc. Actively intervene to prevent any verbal, emotional, physical, spiritual, or sexual abuse between children/young people and/or adults.
- Ensure appropriate levels of supervision are maintained and seek assistance when required in a timely manner.
- Staff or volunteers can feel confident that they can raise issues of concern about other church workers or children, to their leader or the Designated Person for Child Protection, without fear of reprisal.

4.4 Child Safe Practice Guidelines

- If it is necessary to do things of a personal nature for a child, make sure you have another adult accompanying you. Get the consent of the parent/caregiver and, if possible, the child. Let them know what you are doing and why.
- Avoid situations where you are alone with a child. While acknowledging that occasionally there may be no alternative, for example, in an emergency (e.g., a child needing immediate

medical attention), notify another adult as soon as possible. However, one-to-one contact must never be allowed to occur on a regular basis.

- Ensure that any claims of abuse by a child are taken seriously and that the guide to report suspected or actual abuse included in this policy as an appendix is followed.
- When working with Children and Preschoolers (under 10's) there must be a two-worker minimum supervising the children.
- Use only rooms that have adequate visibility, i.e., rooms with windows or keep the doors open.

4.5 Digital Safety and Bullying

- **Purpose:**

The Orchard recognizes that children and young people engage with digital platforms (e.g., social media, Zoom, messaging apps) and that these spaces, along with in-person interactions, can pose risks such as cyberbullying, inappropriate content, or unsafe contact. This section ensures safe digital practices and addresses bullying in all forms to protect children, young people, staff, and volunteers within the church context.

- **Digital Safety Guidelines:**

- All digital interactions with children or young people organized by The Orchard (e.g., online youth events, virtual classes) must occur through official church channels (e.g., The Orchard's Zoom account or email) and require written parental consent for participation.
- A Ministry Leader or designated staff/volunteer must monitor all digital activities involving children or young people in real-time, ensuring at least two adults are present for supervision (mirroring in-person two-worker minimums).
- Staff and volunteers must not share personal contact details (e.g., phone numbers, social media profiles) with children or young people, nor accept friend requests or private messages from them on personal accounts. All communications must go through parents/caregivers or official church channels.
- Any digital content shared with children (e.g., videos, links) must be pre-approved by a Ministry Leader to ensure age-appropriateness and alignment with church values.
- Use of photographic images or videos of children online must comply with The Orchard's privacy policies and require explicit parental consent.

- **Bullying Prevention and Response:**

- Bullying is defined as repeated, intentional behaviour (physical, verbal, emotional, or digital) that causes harm, distress, or intimidation. Examples include name-calling, exclusion, spreading rumours, or cyberbullying via messages or posts.
- Staff and volunteers must actively monitor for signs of bullying during church activities (in-person or online), such as withdrawal, fearfulness, or aggressive behaviour, and intervene promptly to stop it.

- If bullying is observed or reported:
 - Separate the individuals involved to ensure safety and provide support to the affected child/young person.
 - Inform the Ministry Leader or Designated Person for Child Protection within 24 hours.
 - Document the incident using a Report of Concern form (Appendix 9.7), noting specifics like dates, times, and behaviours observed, including any digital evidence (e.g., screenshots) if applicable.
 - Notify parents/caregivers of all involved parties, unless doing so risks further harm (e.g., if a parent is implicated), in which case consult the Children's Pastor or Lead Pastor.
- For cyberbullying reported to staff/volunteers that occurs outside church activities but involves Orchard children/youth (e.g., on personal social media), staff must encourage the affected party to inform their parents/caregivers and document any church-related concerns via a Report of Concern form for follow-up by the Ministry Leader. If it constitutes a serious threat, it may be reported to Oranga Tamariki or Police.
- Repeated or severe bullying may result in disciplinary measures, such as temporary exclusion from programs, in consultation with the Lead Pastor and parents/caregivers.
- **Education and Awareness:**
 - The Orchard aspires to provide periodic training for staff and volunteers on recognizing and addressing digital risks and bullying, as resources allow, integrated into existing child protection training where feasible.

5. Children's Toileting (Pg. 8)

- On Sundays, one of the disability toilets will be temporarily labelled as a "child only" toilet. Children are to be asked to "only use this toilet" for the duration of the Sunday morning. The entrance to the bathrooms in the hallway is now monitored through surveillance cameras. Camera footage will be used solely for safety monitoring and accessed only by authorized staff in case of an incident.

5.1 Infants in Nappies

- When an infant in the care of The Orchard Volunteer requires a nappy change then all efforts will be made to call upon the parents to undertake this task.
- If all reasonable attempts have failed to find the parents, in order to minimize harm to the child a staff member/volunteer will change the nappy with another volunteer present.

5.2 Preschoolers

- Some children may need accompanying to the bathroom if they are still learning to toilet themselves in which case the staff/volunteer is to make sure that they are not left in a position where they are left unsupervised with a child.
- Older preschoolers can be escorted to the toilet room entrance but not accompanied into the toilet.

5.3 School Aged Children

- The Orchard volunteer staff will be aware of where the school aged child is when they have left the room and monitor their return.
 - Children will be encouraged to use the toilet one-at-a-time.
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6. Suspicion or Disclosure of Abuse of Children (Pg. 9/10)

6.1 Consultation and Reporting

- If a child or young person discloses information regarding abuse* of a child/young person to a staff member or a volunteer, or if they have reason to believe that a child/young person may have been abused, is being abused, or is at serious risk, they are to consult with the Children's Pastor or Leader in Charge within 24 hours, or immediately if the child is at imminent risk.

*Indicators of potential abuse are physical signs, behavioural concerns, neglect – medical or supervisory, emotional abuse, developmental delays, or if the child is talking about things that indicate abuse. See Appendix 9.6 for greater detail.

- Staff and Volunteers should not:
 - Question the child further than what has been disclosed.
 - Make the child repeat the story unnecessarily.
 - Enquire into the details of the alleged abuse.
 - Promise to keep secrets.
- If a child discloses, the church worker needs to:
 - Stay calm.
 - Listen and hear.
 - Give time to the child to say what they want.
 - Reassure them they were right to tell.
 - Tell the child that they are being taken seriously and not to blame.
 - Explain that they must pass on what the child has told them as soon as they are aware the child is making a disclosure.
 - Give an age-appropriate explanation of what they can expect to happen next.

- If, after consultation with the Leader in Charge, it is identified that a child/young person is abused or is at risk of abuse, a written Report of Concern* should be made to Oranga Tamariki. This report must be made with the full knowledge and consent of the Lead Pastor or Chairman of the Elders.
- If the abuse is recent, acute, current then the child/young person is at immediate risk. A report needs to be made to the Police or Oranga Tamariki immediately. An emergency requires the Police to be contacted. Whilst the notification of the Lead Pastor or Chairman of the Elders first is preferable to informing an outside agency, the safety of the child is paramount and must be considered ahead of any other procedure.
- Staff/volunteers should offer ongoing reassurance and check-ins with the child, as appropriate, after a disclosure.

6.2 Recording of Information

- It is important that documentation of concerns about children and young people be undertaken in writing, so that they are not distorted when passed from staff member to Pastor or from The Orchard to the outside agency.
- Reports of Concern are to be objective; include details of the conversation, as well as notes about any physical signs of abuse. Completed Reports of Concern will be securely stored by the Designated Person for Child Protection in a locked file or encrypted digital format, accessible only to authorized personnel. See Appendix 7 *Report of Concern

6.3 Confidentiality and Information Sharing

- Under the Privacy Act 2020, the giving of information to protect children is not a breach of confidentiality. The sharing of personal information is allowed if “disclosure of the information to prevent or lessen a serious threat” (Principle 11 of the Privacy Act 2020).
- If a church worker raises a concern in good faith which proves to be unfounded, no civil, criminal, or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against the church worker (Under the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989). The Orchard will support staff/volunteers who report concerns in good faith, including providing guidance during any investigation.
- Before any information is shared, advice should be sought from Oranga Tamariki and/or the Police.

7. Responding to Suicidal Ideation (Pg. 10/11)

- **Purpose:** The Orchard is committed to supporting the wellbeing of children, young people, staff, and volunteers by responding effectively to disclosures or signs of suicidal thoughts or intentions (suicidal ideation). This procedure ensures a safe, compassionate response while connecting individuals to appropriate support.
- **Recognizing Signs:** Staff and volunteers should be alert to changes in behaviour that may indicate suicidal ideation, such as:
 - Expressing a desire to die or end their life.

- Withdrawing from others, showing hopelessness, or accessing means to harm themselves (e.g., ropes, weapons).
 - Mood shifts (e.g., depression, rage), self-harm, or sudden calm after distress.
 - Giving away possessions or tying up loose ends.
(Note: A full list of signs is available in Appendix 9.8.)
 - **Response Steps:** If a child, young person, or anyone at The Orchard discloses suicidal thoughts or exhibits concerning behaviour:
 - Ensure your safety and, to the best of your ability, theirs. Do not leave them alone until help is secured.
 - Ask directly, “Are you thinking about suicide?” and listen without judgment, reassuring them you take them seriously and care.
 - Inform them you must seek help and contact your direct supervisor (e.g., Youth Leader, Ministry Leader, or Pastoral Staff) within 24 hours, or immediately if they are in acute danger. This will be shared discreetly with church Elders as overseers, respecting privacy where possible.
 - In consultation with your supervisor and the individual (if appropriate), contact a close family member or trusted support person (e.g., friend, kaumātua, or community leader).
 - If they pose an immediate physical risk to themselves or others, call 111 and stay with them until emergency services arrive.
 - Offer to call a helpline together:
 - Lifeline: 0800 543 354 or text 4357 (HELP)
 - Youthline: 0800 376 633 or text 234
 - Suicide Crisis Helpline: 0508 828 865
 - Document the disclosure or observations using the Report of Concern form (Appendix 9.7), noting specific statements, behaviours, and actions taken.
 - Encourage and support them to access professional help (e.g., doctor, counsellor) as soon as possible, helping with arrangements if needed.
 - **Key Principles:**
 - Asking about suicide does not plant the idea; it can open a life-saving conversation.
 - If they have a specific plan, urgent help is required.
 - Stay calm, keep them talking, and connect them to trusted support networks.
 - **Resources:** Further guidance is available from the Mental Health Foundation (<https://mentalhealth.org.nz/suicide-prevention>) and the church office.
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8. Threats to Safety of Child/Young Person (Pg. 11/12)

8.1 Known/Potential Offenders

- If any Orchard staff member or volunteer is aware of a person who may pose a threat to a child or young person, they are to inform the Lead Pastor or Chairman of the Elders as soon as practicable, in a way that respects the privacy of the person concerned. The Lead Pastor will then determine the action to be taken. If a known or potential offender attends The Orchard, a safety plan will be developed by the Lead Pastor, which may include supervised attendance or exclusion, prioritizing child safety.
- If a concern or allegation needs to be made that involves a member of The Orchard, then it is to be reported to their Direct Supervisor who will then determine the action to be taken (if that is not possible, then report to their Direct Supervisor and so on).

8.2 Responding to Children Who Pose a Potential Threat to Other Children

- If a staff/volunteer is aware of behaviour from a child/young person that poses a threat to other persons, they are to report that to their Leader.
- The Leader may discuss this concern with the Caregivers or relevant Pastors as required. Guidelines for managing this are as follows:
 - No violent behaviour is to be tolerated and must be acted on immediately.
 - Consider pairing the child with a volunteer. Pairing involves assigning a vetted volunteer to monitor and support the child one-on-one during activities.
 - Discuss the concern with the child's caregiver/parent.
 - As a final resort, a child may be excluded from our program, in consultation with the Pastor.

8.3 Safety Concerns

- If any staff or volunteer is aware of any potential threats whether environmental, procedural, or otherwise they have a duty of concern to inform a Ministry Leader or Pastor in a timely manner.
- The Pastor in consultation with the Lead Pastor will then investigate the concerns and determine what action will be taken. If applicable they will refer the matter to the Health and Safety team.

9. Designated Person for Protection Policy (Pg. 12)

This person will be responsible for the maintenance and annual review of this policy. This role is required to undergo regular child protection training at least every three years and is responsible for ensuring child protection is a key focus within The Orchard Church both at a strategic level and on a day-to-day basis.

The secondary person for this role will be the current Children's Pastor.

If the Designated Person and secondary contact are unavailable, the Lead Pastor will temporarily assume this role until a replacement is appointed.

Staff will not assume responsibility beyond the level of their experience and training. Our organisation commits to ensuring staff have access to the training they need.

The Designated Persons will coordinate an annual child safety awareness session for the church volunteers involved in children and youth work.

At the date of this policy, the Designated Person for Child Protection for The Orchard Church is:

Jodi Wichers

At the date of this policy, the secondary Designated Person for Child Protection for The Orchard Church is:

Mikayla Crawford.

10. Definitions (Pg. 13)

- **Abuse:** Includes physical, emotional, sexual harm, or neglect as outlined in Appendix 9.6.
- **The Orchard:** Our church community.
- **The Orchard Children and Youth Ministry:** Consists of Crèche under 3 years; Juniors ages 3-6 years inclusive; Middles 6-11; Seniors 11-13; Te Puke Junior Rally age 7 – final year of primary; Te Puke Senior Rally school year 7 – 9; Youth - high-school age.
- **Children's Pastor:** The Staff overseer and advocate for The Orchard Children's ministries at The Orchard.
- **Youth Pastor:** The staff overseer and advocate for The Orchard Youth Ministries at The Orchard.
- **Ministry Director/Leader in Charge/Leader:** The Orchard leader (paid or unpaid) who oversees one of the listed above Ministries.
- **Lead Pastor:** The primary leader (aside from the Elders) of The Orchard.
- **Staff Pastor:** A leader at The Orchard who is on staff.
- **Staff Member:** A paid worker at The Orchard.
- **Volunteer:** An unpaid worker in ministry with one of the Children's Ministries as listed above.
- **Chairman of the Elders:** The volunteer leader of the Elders.
- **Health and Safety Team:** A group of people responsible for administering and monitoring the OSH standards at The Orchard.
- **Child/Young Person:** Defined as anyone under the age of 18.
- **Workers:** Anyone (paid or unpaid) who is involved in a capacity of authority (regardless of amount of authority) as either a volunteer or leader and contributes their time to the ministry.

- **Disclosure:** Information given to a staff member by a child, parent or caregiver, or a third party in relation to abuse or neglect.
 - **New Zealand Police (Dial 111):** The agency responsible for responding to situations where a child is in immediate danger and for working with Child, Youth and Family in child protection work and investigating cases of abuse or neglect where an offence may have occurred.
 - **Oranga Tamariki:** The agency responsible for investigating and responding to suspected abuse and neglect and for providing care and protection to children found to be in need. (Phone: 0508 FAMILY or 0508 326 459 Email: contact@ot.govt.nz)
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11. Appendixes (Pg. 14)

1. **The Vulnerable Children's Act 2014**
<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2014/0040/latest/whole.html>
2. **Oranga Tamariki Act 1989**
<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1989/0024/latest/DLM147088.html>
3. **Guidance on Identifying Possible Child Abuse**
[Available from the Children's Pastor or The Orchard Office Staff]
4. **Contact List**
 - The Contact List will include emergency after-hours numbers for Oranga Tamariki and Police plus Designated Child Protection Person info and senior leaders info.
[Available from the Children's Pastor or The Orchard Office Staff]
5. **Risk Assessment Form**
[Available from the Children's Pastor or The Orchard Office Staff]
6. **Police Check Form - Vetting Service Request and Consent Form**
[Available from the Children's Pastor or The Orchard Office Staff]
7. **Report of Concern Form -Regarding Potential Child or Youth Abuse or Suicidal Ideation**
8. **Guidance on identifying suicidal ideation**

Report of Concern Form – The Orchard Church.

Instructions: This form is to be used to report any observed or suspected incidents of abuse, neglect, inappropriate behaviour, or suicidal ideation involving a child or youth (under 18 years of age) or any individual at The Orchard. Please complete this form as fully as possible and submit it to the Designated Person for Child Protection immediately. All reports will be handled confidentially and in accordance with church policy and applicable laws.

Section 1: Reporter Information

Are you reporting anonymously? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If "Yes," you may leave the name and contact information fields blank. If "No," please provide the following:

Name of Person Reporting: _____

Contact Information (Phone/Email): _____

Date of Report: _____

Section 2: Incident Details

Date of Incident: _____

Time of Incident (if known): _____

Location of Incident (e.g., Church room, off-site event): _____

Person Involved:

- Name (if known): _____
- Age (approximate if unknown): _____
- Parent/Guardian Name (if known): _____

Type of Concern (check all that apply):

- ☐ Potential Abuse/Neglect
- ☐ Inappropriate Behaviour
- ☐ Digital/Cyberbullying Concern
- ☐ Suicidal Ideation Concern

Description of Concern:

Please provide a detailed account of what you observed or were told, including any specific behaviours, statements, or physical signs that raised concern (e.g., unexplained injuries, fearfulness, suicidal thoughts, online activity). Use additional pages if necessary.

Person(s) Involved or Suspected:

- Name (if known): _____
- Role/Relationship to Person (e.g., volunteer, staff, parent, peer):

- Description (if name unknown): _____

Witnesses (if any):

- Name(s): _____
- Contact Information (if available): _____

Section 3: Actions Taken

Have you spoken to anyone about this concern? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, who? _____ When? _____

Has this been reported to authorities (e.g., police, child protective services, emergency services)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, provide details (agency, date, contact person): _____

Additional Notes:

Section 4: Submission

Signature: _____

Date Signed: _____

Submit this form to: Jodi Wichers, Designated Person for Child Protection

Contact Information for Submission: jodi@orchard.net.nz

Confidentiality Notice: All reports will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and shared only with individuals who need to know in order to ensure the safety of the person and comply with legal requirements.

Reminder: If you believe a person is in immediate danger (e.g., acute risk of suicide or harm), contact local authorities (e.g., 111) first, then complete this form.

8. Guidance on Identifying Suicidal Ideation

- Most people thinking about taking their own life will try to let someone know, often indirectly. Signs may include:
 - Telling you they want to die or kill themselves.
 - Accessing things, they could use to hurt themselves (e.g., rope, gun).
 - Reading or writing about suicide online, or posting related photos/videos.
 - Becoming obsessed with death.
 - Becoming isolated or withdrawn from family, whānau, and friends.
 - Not coping with problems, showing changes in mood (e.g., depression, anger, sudden calm after distress).
 - Hurting themselves (e.g., cutting, overdosing).
 - Feeling worthless, guilty, whakamā, or ashamed.
 - Having no hope for the future.
 - Using drugs/alcohol to cope.
 - Losing/gaining weight, unusual eating patterns, sleeping too much or too little.
 - Losing interest in life or things they enjoyed.
 - Giving away possessions, paying debts, or tying up loose ends.
 - Stopping medication.
- People may hide these signs or pretend they are okay. If someone shows one or more, they may need support.
- Source: Mental Health Foundation NZ (<https://mentalhealth.org.nz/suicide-prevention>)