



Standard 7 Team Management

'We respect and embrace the Aboriginal people of this region as the traditional custodians and cultural knowledge holders of this land.'

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7.1 Principles

- Recognising that our Educators are our most valuable asset in the provision of quality Children's Services it is essential that the policies and procedures for team management;
 - Protect our team, by providing guidelines for expectations
 - Inform our team of their obligations

7.2 HOME VISIT POLICY

This policy applies to: Samaritans Family Day Care
Samaritans In Home Child Care

Practice Statement:

It is imperative that educators comply with current regulations and policies to ensure a quality child care service is provided, home visits provide the opportunity for ongoing support and advice.

The Co-ordination Unit will conduct home visits on a regular basis, where there will be opportunity to monitor and give feedback in regard to the service offered to families and the quality of care for the child. Home visits will be consistent for all Carers and follow a written format and procedure, allowing for flexibility if required. Educators will be given opportunity to interact with Coordination Unit staff to seek resources, and gain further knowledge if required. Professional courtesy should be given by all parties during the course of a visit.

7.2.1 Procedure

- Educators will receive an impromptu monthly home visit from a staff member, usually a CDO.
- Educators are only to be visited if they are working.
- The Educator must be present for a home visit to take place.
- The CDO will complete a home visit form which covers the following areas:
 - The Children in care.
 - Other adults and children present at the time of the visit.
 - Time of arrival and departure.
 - Regulatory requirements.
 - Whether the visit is announced /unannounced.
 - Occupational Health and Safety.
 - Interactions.
 - The Physical Environment.
 - Children's experiences and development.
 - Health, hygiene, nutrition, safety and well being.
 - Carer/co-ordination management.
 - Carer comment.
 - CDO/staff comment
- If the Educator feels that a child may need referral and/or additional support they can request a specific appointment for a Co-ordination Unit staff member to observe the child in care. The CDO will document their observations and discuss with the educator and the family
- If a child has been observed by the CDO feedback will be given to the Educator at the time. A copy of the observation will be placed in the child's file.

- The parent/guardian will be contacted and feedback given about the child's developmental progress.
- CDO's may provide an experience for the children to participate in during the visit.
- The Educator will be invited to comment about the visit and give feedback to the coordination unit.
- CDO's are to be respectful of Educators written programs and routines, and wherever possible ensure minimal disruption to the routine.
- If whilst attending a home visit and something is noticed that is unsatisfactory, it is to be noted on the home visit sheet, and the Educator asked to rectify the concern. If it is a safety concern the CDO won't leave until the problem has been fixed. If it is something the Educator doesn't need to do immediately then the CDO will follow up on the next visit, or give a time frame to be completed by.
- If major concerns are noted the CDO will contact the authorised supervisor before leaving the premises, i.e.; going over numbers, serious breaches in safety, educator not in attendance, child protection issues, or consuming alcohol.
- Each family whose child was visited on the day will be left a note advising of the visit and/or a photo of the child in care will be sent to the family home.

First Home Visit Procedures

- Co-ordination Unit staff MUST at all times ensure their own safety. When planning to visit an unfamiliar environment for the first time it is important to take appropriate measures to ensure safety (please also refer to the Team Member Self Protective Behaviours Policy).
- Coordination Unit staff should alert the co-ordination unit to their whereabouts prior to entering the premises and confirm with them again upon leaving the premises
- Two staff should conduct the initial home visit together
- Staff should carry with them a mobile phone
- Staff should be aware of their surroundings and any other individuals who may be in the vicinity
- If staff travel to the premises separately they should wait outside until joined by their partner before entering the premises.

7.2.2 References

- Quality Practices Guide 2nd Edition, NCAC
- Guiding Children's Behaviour in Positive Ways [NCAC, Ref #6]
- Hewitt, D., So this is normal too! Red Leaf Press. 1995.
- Stonehouse, A., Dimensions – Excellence in many ways. NFDCA 2004.
- Stonehouse, A & Duffie, J. The Practice of Relationships. NSW Curriculum Framework. 2001.

7.2.3 Person Responsible

Educators are responsible for adhering to policies and regulations and allowing the CDO entry to their home.

Co-ordination Unit is responsible for:

- conducting home visits to educators homes, and providing feedback to both educators and families
- ensuring educators follow up and rectify any breaches in regulations and or policies. This may include referral to Samaritans Human Resources or management.

7.2.4 Implementation and Evaluation

The Home Visit form will be completed at the time of the visit, with the educator and CDO signing.

The home visit will be discussed by the CDO with the authorised supervisor monthly. Any serious concerns/ breaches will be discussed immediately.

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years in accordance with Samaritans Standard 6.2 Policy Development and Review.

7.2.5 Documentation

Home Visit forms- one copy to the Carer, one copy on the Carer's file.
Children's Home Visit Observation forms- one copy discussed/sent to the parent, and one copy to the child's file.

7.3 RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF FOSTER CARERS

This policy applies to: Samaritans Out of Home Care

Practice Statement:

Children and young persons entering out-of-home care come from a wide range of ethnic, indigenous, religious, cultural and language backgrounds. Each child or young person entering out-of-home care is an individual with their own specific needs. They enter care with a family and life history. Providing out-of-home care is about maintaining identity and providing for the safety, welfare, well-being and any special needs of children and young persons.

A wide range of carers and carer families are needed with different skills, abilities, religions, ethnic, indigenous, religious, cultural and language backgrounds and household circumstances. Samaritans Intensive Out of Home Care Service will target their recruitment activities to find carers who meet the diverse needs of the children and young persons the agency assists.

The recruitment and selection of carers is a major component of ensuring the provision of quality out-of-home care services. Samaritans Intensive Out of Home Care Service will select and assess carers carefully, prepare them well, and engage them in a partnership approach to provide out-of-home care.

Recruitment is a structured process designed to attract possible carers based on the understood needs of children and young persons or may be targeted to meet their specific individual needs. In recruiting carers Samaritans will provide information and project ideas and images about the agency's role and the expectations and role of carers. Information should be presented in a way that makes it readily accessible to a wide range of prospective carers.

Effective recruitment requires a media strategy outlining what type of carers are needed and how and where to reach them. For example advertisements and/or articles can be run in newspapers, newsletters and church bulletins. It might also be necessary to hold information talks at cultural associations, clubs or other community groups. If recruitment processes result in gaps in the range of *authorised* carers required, designated agencies need to develop planned approaches such as targeted recruitments.

Samaritans will endeavour to recruit carers from non-English speaking backgrounds to ensure children and young persons, where appropriate, can be placed with carers who can help support the maintenance of language, cultural identity and community ties. Samaritans will ensure that the pool of authorised carers is reflective of the community at large with respect to indigenous, ethnic and cultural mix.

Samaritans needs to give prospective carers accurate information before accepting a formal application about the general qualities and skills needed by *authorised* carers, legislative and other requirements. These include:

- the obligation to uphold the Charter of Rights for children and young persons in out-of-home care
- the Code of Conduct for Authorised Carers
- the Working with Children Check; and
- delegations for decision-making.

Samaritans Intensive Out of Home Care Service will utilise the Step By Step package to assess potential Authorised Carers. Carers will understand the difference between crisis, short and long term carers. Applicants who achieve authorised status will be given a written agreement which sets out any conditions of authorisation, any agency expectations, the role of the Authorised Carer, their responsibilities, rights and complaints procedures.

Guidelines

Under section 136 of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* only an authorised carer may provide out-of-home care for a child or young person. The regulations make provision for the making and determination of applications for authorisation of a carer by a designated agency.

Clause 20(3) of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Regulation 2000* provides that a designated agency may not determine that an individual is suitable to be an authorised carer unless they have provided information required to assess their suitability. In addition they need to successfully complete a training course and the designated agency is required to carry out employment screening. Schedule 2 of the regulations sets out the Code of Conduct for Authorised Carers.

Clause 22 of the Regulations provides that the designated agency must give the carer a copy of the authorisation in writing, which sets out any conditions of the authorisation imposed by the designated agency.

Standard 2.1 relates to the recruitment and selection of authorised carers. Requirements inherent in standard 2.1 are the establishment of agency policies and procedures and the development of specific criteria for the recruitment, selection and approval of authorised carers from a variety of ethnic, indigenous, religious and cultural backgrounds.

The *Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Act 1998* makes it an offence for a person convicted of a serious sex offence (a prohibited person) or a registrable person under the *Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000* to apply for, undertake or remain an authorised (foster) carer.

7.3.1 Procedures

In order to ensure that Samaritans carers meet the needs of the wide range of children who might require care, it is essential that Samaritans recruitment processes targets the broader community and encompasses a range of social, cultural and ethnic communities. Recruitment should ensure that Samaritans pool of carers reflects the social, cultural, and ethnic mix of the community it serves.

Recruitment will occur on a regular basis, at least once a year to ensure that Samaritans maintains a suitable pool of carers. Advertising will be drafted by the Support Worker, and will utilise print and electronic media as well as established networks such as parish newsletters, etc. All advertising must be approved by the Samaritans Human Resources.

The Samaritans Intensive Out of Home Care Service will assess, prepare and select authorised carers using the "Step by Step" package. Compliance with the program will ensure that prospective carers receive adequate information and preparation required to make an informed choice about fostering, and will

provide Samaritans with a competency based program with which to make objective assessments about the qualities and skills the applicants possess.

All carers are required to undertake the preparation program provided by the Samaritans Out of Home Care Service, or a program deemed by the Samaritans to be equivalent if they have recently provided care for another agency. Carer applicants must provide the agency with information required to assess their suitability, and must agree to the agency carrying out appropriate pre-employment screening checks (such as the Working With Children Check and referee checks).

At the completion of the Step by Step process, the Support Worker will complete an analysis report and submit that report, along with the competency package, to the Team Leader for approval.

At the time of approval, the agency will provide the Authorised Carer with a copy of their authorisation, setting out any conditions of the authorisation imposed by the agency.

Where an applicant has been declined and is dissatisfied with the outcome, or where there is some doubt as to the suitability of the applicant/s to become authorised carers, the matter will be referred to the Manager Youth Services, who will review the assessment and the decision. The Manager Youth Services may endorse the decision made on the basis of the current assessment, or may arrange for an independent review of the assessment by another suitably qualified caseworker/manager within Samaritans, or by an independent, suitably qualified consultant.

7.3.3 Person Responsible

Recruitment and selection of authorised carers can be a complex task, and may require input from a number of people. The primary responsibility for recruitment and selection lies with the Support Worker. Recruitment campaigns, advertising and responding to enquiries will be undertaken by the Support Worker. All advertising must be approved by the Team Leader and the Samaritans Human Resources.

It is generally beneficial to have more than one person undertaking an assessment to ensure that a balanced assessment is made, and that the Support Worker has the opportunity to discuss their observations with another worker. Where possible two Support Workers will undertake assessments, or in the event of there not being a second Support Worker or peer available, the Team Leader will assist in the assessment of carers. All persons undertaking assessments need to have completed the Step by Step training program.

Support Workers will undertake ongoing assessment and review of authorised carers as a routine function.

Approval of authorised carers is the responsibility of the Team Leader, and no placements should be made with a carer until they have been formally

assessed, and approved by the Team Leader. Where the Team Leader has been involved in the assessment process, the delegation for approval should lie with the Manager Youth Services.

The Manager Youth Services is responsible for managing appeals that result from applicants being dissatisfied with a decision regarding their approval applications.

7.3.4 Implementation and Evaluation

This policy is effective immediately.

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years in accordance with Samaritans Standard 6.2 Policy Development and Review.

The policy will be supported by awareness training and publication.

7.3.5 Documentation

Advertising for recruitment purposes

Information packs for applicants

Written assessment reports.

7.4 FOSTER CARER TRAINING POLICY

This policy applies to: Samaritans Out of Home Care

Practice Statement:

While the selection and assessment of potential carers is of fundamental importance, Samaritans also needs to prepare them for their role as authorised carers. Initial and ongoing training is critical to ensuring that carers have the knowledge, skills and understanding to provide quality out-of-home care. Samaritans needs to work together with other designated agencies to meet the ongoing training needs of carers.

Samaritans will have clear protocols about how they will identify and address carers' training needs and will establish a schedule of compulsory training for carers for continuation of approval as authorised carers. Initial training for authorised carers and residential staff must include Child Protection training. Ongoing training may include such areas as First Aid, Child Protection, Managing Difficult Behaviour, Working with Natural Families, Facilitating Participation, etc. Carers who fail to maintain an acceptable level of training and skill development may risk having their authorisation cancelled.

Guidelines

Samaritans ensures authorised (foster) carers receive appropriate training for their role as authorised carers, including initial and ongoing training.

The objects and principles of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 provide guidance and direction to people working with children and young persons in out-of-home care.

Schedule 2 of the regulations sets out the care and conduct requirements for authorised carers who provide out-of-home care to children and young persons in their own residence.

Children and young persons are to be given the opportunity to freely express views about their welfare. Their views should be given due weight in accordance with their developmental capacity and circumstances. They are to be supported to take part in making decisions that may have a significant impact on their life. Unless contrary to their best interests, and taking into account their wishes, this will include the retention of relationships with people significant to them including parents. Their name, identity, language, cultural and religious ties should as far as possible be preserved. If a child or young person is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, case planning must show support for the principles of self-determination, participation and placement as provided by sections 11, 12 & 13 of the Act.

The designated agency should give children and young persons information about the proposed authorised carer before placement and must respect the

child's or young person's wishes about disclosure of information to authorised carers.

Clause 20(3)(b) of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Regulation 2000 provides that a designated agency may not determine that an individual is suitable to be an authorised carer unless that individual has successfully completed 'such course of training as the designated agency may reasonably require in order to ensure that the individual is capable of exercising the functions of an authorised carer.'

Section 157 of the Act provides authority for the authorised carer to exercise care responsibility. The exercise of a function under this section is 'subject to any written direction' given to the authorised carer by the designated agency or the Children's Guardian.

Section 158 provides for the authorised carer to physically restrain a child or young person, if they are behaving in such a manner that unless restrained they might seriously injure themselves or another person. While acknowledging this section, Samaritans encourages authorised carers to develop other methods of managing the behaviours of children and young people to ensure that physical restraint is not necessary.

Section 162 provides that designated agencies and authorised carers have an 'obligation' to uphold the 'rights conferred by the charter of rights for all children and young persons in out-of-home care.'

Clause 25 of the regulations provides that an authorised carer is personally responsible for carrying out the carer's functions and duties as an authorised carer.

Clause 31 of the regulations provides that the designated agency may cancel or suspend the authorisation of an authorised carer who fails to comply with any obligation or restriction under the Act or regulations.

7.4.1 Procedures

The Office of the Children's Guardian requires that carers complete initial training before being authorised and before any placement of a child or young person in their care. Initial training must include Child Protection, information about the respective roles and responsibilities of carers and of designated agencies, as provided by the Act, the Regulations and the relevant standards.

Prospective carers for children or young persons with high support needs must be provided with appropriate information and training before placement. This will ensure they are fully aware of their care responsibilities and can provide safe and adequate care that meets the special care needs of the particular child or young person.

Carer training must support the provision of quality out-of-home care consistent with the principles of the Act. Training should include information

about child development and the different needs, tasks and challenges associated with the different ages of children and young persons. Carers should get clear information about their role in supporting children and young persons to keep their identity and in providing for their safety, welfare, well-being and any special needs.

Carers must be willing and able to work in partnership with agency staff and other health and welfare professionals to support and assist children and young persons to make sense of their life experience, keep connected with family and significant others and participate in decisions that affect them. Carers are to be made aware of their special responsibilities with respect to supporting children or young persons from different ethnic, indigenous, religious, cultural and language backgrounds to themselves. All trainers need to challenge the carer's resources and abilities to meet the diverse needs of children and young persons that may enter their care. Trainers should also ensure carers are both willing and able to help them maintain family contact, language, cultural identity and community ties.

Samaritans will endeavour to recruit carers from indigenous and ethnic communities to reflect the cultural and ethnic mix of the community they serve. Initial and ongoing training to these carers will be supported by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and ethnic accredited trainers. Different communities have differing needs, learning styles and local priorities. Therefore trainers providing initial and ongoing training will need to consult with each community and community elders where appropriate.

In addition to training authorised carers, Samaritans needs to determine who else within a household will need to attend training. Spouses / de factos / partners of applicants will be required to participate in the Step by Step training programs, as well as regular update training for carers. Consideration should be given to providing training and/or information to the children of carers, at an age appropriate level.

It is the responsibility of both the Samaritans and the authorised carer to ensure steps are taken to remove or redress any barriers to training. Samaritans will provide a venue for training that has disabled access. Where necessary, Samaritans can provide training and development programs to people within their homes. Assistance with literacy issues will also be supported.

7.4.2 References

- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998.
- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Regulation 2000
- Samaritans Youth Services Access and Equity Statement

7.4.3 Persons Responsible

The Support Worker is responsible for:

- training of authorised carers. Support Workers will be skilled in preparation and presentation of training for carers, and for ensuring that, where necessary, guest presenters are arranged for specialist material such as advanced behaviour management techniques.
- ensuring that a schedule of ongoing training is established and that authorised carers maintain their level of knowledge and skills by attending such training as is considered necessary.

The Team Leader is responsible for:

- approving authorised carers;
- approving the schedule of training for authorised carers.
- In the event that an Authorised Carer has not maintained an acceptable level of training, the Support Worker can request that the Team Leader revoke the authorisation of the Authorised Carer.
- Where an applicant wishes to have a decision regarding their failure to achieve accreditation as an authorised carer reviewed, they can appeal to the Manager Youth Services, who will review the assessment report and decision.

7.4.4 Implementation and Evaluation

This policy is effective immediately.

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years in accordance with Samaritans Standard 6.2 Policy Development and Review.

The policy will be supported by awareness training and publication.

7.4.5 Documentation

Details of training received by carers will be maintained on Authorised Carers files.

A schedule of training will be established to ensure that carers have access to, and forward notice of, available training.

The agency will maintain a library of appropriate literature available to Authorised Carers.

Authorised Carer assessment report – attached to Carer file.

7.5 FOSTER CARER SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT POLICY

This policy applies to: Samaritans Out of Home Care

Practice Statement:

This policy ensures that authorised carers receive such supervision and support as they require assisting them in providing quality care for the children placed with them, and in feeling more confident in their ability to manage situations that may arise. The provision of quality supervision to carers is a demonstration of the value that the agency places on them. This policy highlights the shared responsibility of the agency and the carers for the successful placement of children with high needs.

Ideology

Section 140 of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* requires the designated agency that places a child or young person in out-of-home care to supervise the placement. Under Section 141 if an agency is unable to meet its supervisory responsibilities for a child or young person, the agency is required to inform the Department of Community Services. If the child or young person is subject to an order of the Children's Court the agency is also required to approach the Children's Court for an order to vary the out-of-home care arrangement.

Standard 2.3 of the *NSW Out-of-Home Care Standards* pertains to supervision and requires:

- A designated agency to provide regular opportunities for authorised carers to link with each other.
- When a new placement occurs, arrangements should be made to enable the caseworker to maintain regular contact with the carer and child or young person.
- The designated agency to provide each carer with appropriate after hours contact number/s in case of an emergency.
- The caseworker needs to be easily accessible to each carer and provide information and advice on the care of the child or young person.
- Support is provided to a carer if a critical incident has occurred.
- The designated agency to arrange for the caseworker to maintain regular contact with the carer to ensure effective support and supervision, while not being intrusive.
- The designated agency to have strategies to minimise or address aggressive behaviour towards carers.

Supervision has the twin objectives of:

- Ensuring the safety, welfare and well-being of children and young persons in out-of-home care.
- Providing carers with support and ensuring they comply with legislative requirements and the policies of the designated agency.
- Designated agencies have an obligation to supervise each placement and to support the carer and the child or young person. The quality of supervision that a designated agency provides reflects the value that is placed on carers. Carers feel more valued and confident when actively supervised and supported.
- Active supervision enhances a carer's performance as it recognises their importance and their contribution to the safety, welfare and well-being of the child or young person. Active supervision also promotes carer self-esteem and an understanding of the purpose of foster care. The aim of a supervisory relationship is to develop a partnership with the carer in providing out-of-home care.
- The provision of active supervision is a significant factor in the success of a placement through the support and assistance given to the foster carer. Designated agency staff can assist carers with understanding difficult behaviours and providing suggestions for behaviour management. The nature and frequency of supervision will vary according to the carer's needs and experience, the child or young person's needs and the requirements of the care plan or restoration plan.
- Placement supervision requires the caseworker to assist all parties to maintain an effective, positive, stable and supportive environment for the child or young person.
- Carer supervision is a formal contact arrangement between a carer and their allocated caseworker. Supervision should create a safe space to enable a foster carer to develop and enhance their skills and the work they do. Caseworkers can assist carers by offering new ways of working and providing up-to-date materials, videos and techniques for working with children and young persons in care.
- Designated agencies have a responsibility to ensure a carer, child or young person can always have access to a caseworker. Agency procedures should make clear who a carer, child or young person can contact at any time of the day or night if they need advice.

Supervision:

- Can be used to review the placement.

- Is giving directions to carers in relation to the care of the child or young person.
- Helps and maintains relationships with people who are significant to the child and young person.
- Acknowledges that caring for a child or young person can be stressful.
- Can be a time to resolve problems/issues.
- Can be a time of development for a carer.
- Enables contact and the development of rapport with a carer and child or young person.
- Is a time to work out with a carer the goals to be achieved by the carer and child or young person and a time to establish strategies to achieve them.
- Enables progress of assessments, care plans and restoration plans to be regularly updated.
- Enables the participation of a carer and child or young person in making decisions that affect them.
- Can be used to ensure a carer is regularly updated with important information to enable them to make informed decisions about the child or young person.
- Helps a carer cope with the stresses involved.
- Involves supporting carers in implementing the care plan or restoration plan.
- Supports a carer and their family by providing advice and consultation from supervisors and other specialist sources.
- Ensures a carer understands their role and responsibilities.
- Provides a carer with opportunities to receive feedback about their work.
- Ensures a carer has opportunities to develop through appropriate training.
- Monitors the activities of the carer in line with agency guidelines.

Supervision requires the caseworker to assist the foster carer to maintain an effective, positive, stable and supportive environment for the child or young person. Designated agencies have a responsibility to ensure a carer can always have access to a caseworker. Agency procedures should make clear who a carer can contact at any time of the day or night should they need advice.

7.5.1 Procedures

Regular supervision is an essential part of the relationship between authorised carers and Support Workers. A schedule of supervision will be established with each carer to ensure that carers are seen on a monthly basis. Dates should be established in advance to highlight the importance of supervision as part of the professional relationship, rather than attempting to “fit it in” around other events.

The Support Worker will maintain a record of the material covered in each supervision session, to ensure that issues raised are followed through

between sessions. Those records to be maintained on the file of the carer and might also include articles or material that might assist a carer in working with a child or young person in their care. Authorised carers should be encouraged to keep a notebook between supervision sessions, detailing issues or problems that arise around which they may need guidance or development. The Support Worker will ensure that they are accessible to carers to provide information and advice on the care of children or young persons

In planning for the placement of a child or young person with a carer, the Support Worker will identify any issues in the management of the child's behaviour, with family contact, or other significant issue which may require additional support. Those issues should be highlighted in the supervision file of the carer and followed through at subsequent supervision sessions to ensure that supervision is relevant to the needs of the carer and the child or young person in their care.

Carers have the right to seek periodic or emergency respite care. Wherever possible the respite should be consistent and aim to provide familiar relationships and environment for the child or young person. Respite should be considered as an area of discussion in the planning of a placement and in regular support sessions with carers.

Regular supervision should take place in a setting where interruption is unlikely to occur. The home of the carer, or the Samaritans office may be appropriate as a venue. Discussions with the carer as to where they feel most comfortable will help to determine the most appropriate venue for supervision.

While appropriate ongoing supervision may lessen the need for carers to call for assistance out of office hours, Support Workers need to ensure that Authorised Carers have the ability to contact a Support Worker in the event of a crisis. All Authorised Carers will have a contact number for an on-call Support Worker.

Carers will receive an allowance for the support of the child or young person in their care. Payments will be processed fortnightly by electronic funds transfer. Any additional or contingency payments will be processed promptly on presentation of documentation.

The authorisation for each carer will be reviewed annually on the anniversary date of their original approval. Any changes within the environment must be noted and any endorsements to alter the type or number of placements on the authorisation considered.

If consideration is given to the cancellation of a carer's authorisation, this should be discussed openly with the carer, with substantial grounds established for the cancellation. The carer will be given information on their rights to appeal the decision to the Manager Youth Services.

7.5.2 References

- The Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA) 2000, *Standards in Foster Care*, Issue paper 6
- Samaritans Youth Services Access and Equity Statement

7.5.3 Persons Responsible

The Support Worker:

- is responsible for ensuring that each Authorised Carer receives regular quality supervision and support, and that the details of each session are recorded in the file of the Authorised Carer.
- should be vigilant in identifying areas of development for carers, and in seeking appropriate literature or other materials to assist carers in the development of their skills.

The Team Leader:

- is responsible for monitoring the supervision processes and ensuring that all Authorised Carers are receiving regular quality supervision.
- is responsible for ensuring that Support Workers maintain an appropriate skill level in the area of supervision to be able to support Authorised Carers. This requires that Support Workers themselves receive regular professional supervision.

7.5.4 Implementation and Evaluation

This policy is effective immediately.

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years in accordance with Samaritans Standard 6.2 Policy Development and Review.

The policy will be supported by awareness training and publication.

7.5.5 Documentation

Supervision schedule on file the of the Authorised Carer

Details of supervision session content on the file of the Authorised Carer

Authorised Carers Supervision Notebook to be maintained by them to detail issues that they may want to discuss at their next supervision session.

7.6 FOSTER CARER PARTICIPATION AND RIGHTS POLICY

This policy applies to: Samaritans Out of Home Care

Practice Statement:

This policy ensures that staff are aware of the significant role that carers play in the overall wellbeing of the children in their care, and the need to work with carers as part of the Out of Home Care Team, to work with them as professional carers, and to facilitate their participation in the planning for the child or young person in their care. The policy applies to all placements and care arrangements, and all authorised carers with the Samaritans Out of Home Care Service.

Ideology

Sections 143 and 144 of the Act establish rights for authorised carers to receive information (including medical information) about children and young persons that may enter their care, if under order of the Children's Court. This information is to assist the carer to make an informed decision about whether to accept the placement, to enable them to provide appropriate care and to ensure their safety and that of other members of their household.

Section 146 of the Act establishes a right for authorised carers to participate in decision-making beyond those relating to daily care and control concerning the safety, welfare and well-being of the child or young person in their care, if subject to an order of the Children's Court.

Section 147 of the Act provides that the authorised carer is entitled to be indemnified by the Minister for any loss or damage suffered by the authorised carer that is caused by a child or young person while in their care, if subject to an order of the Children's Court.

Section 157 of the Act provides for the authorised carer to exercise elements of care responsibility. The exercise of any function under this section is however, subject to any written direction that may be given to the carer by the designated agency or the Children's Guardian.

Section 245 of the Act provides that an authorised carer may seek a review in the Administrative Decisions Tribunal of any conditions imposed on their authorisation, any decision to cancel or suspend their authorisation or any decision to remove from them the responsibility for the daily care and control of a child or young person.

Past practices have seen foster parents commonly regarded as 'quasi clients' by agencies and not generally expected to participate in any therapeutic or service delivery activities. Carers need to be regarded as members of the out-

of-home care service delivery team and a participant in case planning activities.

Samaritans will include carers in case planning activities and work in partnership with them, in relation to each child or young person in their care. It is important that there is a strong bond between the Support Worker and the Authorised Carer based on mutual respect and trust.

The *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* includes a range of provisions that confer rights at law on authorised carers. It is the responsibility of Samaritans to ensure authorised carers are aware of their rights. They should receive written information about those rights and the internal and external avenues for review and appeal.

The policies and practices of Samaritans must reflect a respectful working relationship with carers. Samaritans will ensure that guidelines clearly outline the entitlement of carers to be involved in decision making processes about matters affecting them and any child or young person in their care.

Carers need to be well briefed before deciding to accept the placement of a child or young person. Carers are entitled to get information directly related to the care of the child or young person (including medical information) or about the impact that accepting the child or young person into their household may have.

In providing information to carers designated agencies must take the following matters into account:

- Any wishes expressed by any child or young person in out-of-home care under order of the Children's Court concerning the disclosure.
- Any views expressed by the child or young person about their care and well-being
- The participation of children and young persons in decisions that have a significant impact on their life as provided by the Act.
- The rights of children and young persons as provided by the Charter of Rights for all children and young persons in out-of-home care (when developed by the Minister).

Authorised Carers must ensure that where information is provided to them in relation to a child who may be placed in their care, that information is maintained in the strictest confidence, and medical information may only be disclosed for the purposes of medical or dental treatment, or in circumstances approved by the Minister¹. Failure to comply would breach Section 144 of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* and may result in the cancellation of a carer's authorisation. Carers must be familiar with, and comply with, the Samaritans Confidentiality Policy.

7.6.1 Procedures

Throughout their training, and as part of their approval process and documentation, carers will be given information and written documentation of their rights, particularly with respect to their rights to receive information about a child or young person prior to placement, their rights to be involved in ongoing planning and decisions about that child or young person, going beyond day to day care and control issues.

Prior to a placement being made, the proposed carer will have access to all relevant reports (taking into account the wishes of the child or young person in this respect) and material to assist the carer to determine whether the placement is appropriate for them, and what ongoing assistance and support they may require. The care plan should detail care responsibility functions which the carer will be authorised to carry out.

Such assistance as is identified for the carer should then be incorporated into the case plan for the child or young person, and recorded in the supervision notes for the carer to ensure that ongoing support is available to the carer, and the situation receives appropriate monitoring.

Carers will be invited to participate in the planning process for children and young persons in their care on an ongoing basis, and will be treated as part of the professional Out of Home Care Team. They will be invited to participate in Case Conferences and will have access to all relevant reports and material in relation to the child or young person in their care. Where appropriate, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support people will be made available.

Carers will be given written information on their avenues of appeal both within Samaritans and to external avenues of review. This material will be included in the training material for authorised carers.

7.6.2 References

- Kadushin and Martin, 1988. Pecora, Whittaker and Maluccio, 1992 in Sanchirico, A, & Jablonka, K 2000 'Keeping Foster Children Connected to their Biological Parents: The Impact of Foster Parent Training and Support' *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, vol.17, no.3, pp185-203.
- Baker in Redding, R.E, Fried, M A, & Britner, P A, 2000, 'Predictors of Placement Outcomes in Treatment Foster Care: Implications for Foster Parent Selection and Service Delivery' *Journal Child and Family Studies*, Vol. 9, no.4, pp425-447.
- Parkinson et al 1997, Review of the Children (Care and Protection) Act 1987. The Government's Responsibility for the Care and Protection of Children and Young People: Recommendations for Law Reform, p 109.

- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998

7.6.3 Persons Responsible

It is the responsibility of the Support Worker to ensure that material regarding the rights of Authorised Carers is included in the training and preparation materials. Support Workers are required to maintain a professional relationship with carers and to facilitate their participation in the ongoing planning for children and young people in their care.

The Team Leader is responsible for monitoring the professional interactions and relationships with Authorised Carers, and ensuring that they receive such information as they are entitled to.

7.6.4 Implementation and Evaluation

This policy is effective immediately.

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years in accordance with Samaritans Standard 6.2 Policy Development and Review.

The policy will be supported by awareness training and publication.

7.6.5 Documentation

A copy of all information provided to carers will be maintained on file

Training material for carers will include details of carers' rights and appeal processes.

7.7 RESIDENTIAL CARE WORKER EMPLOYMENT, RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION POLICY

This policy applies to: Samaritans Out of Home Care

Practice Statement:

This policy ensures a clear procedure for the recruitment and selection of all residential care staff employed by Samaritans Out of Home Care Program that complies with relevant legislation and guidelines.

This policy will ensure that all employment decisions will be based on objective assessments of merit and excellence, whilst ensuring that Samaritans consider appropriate duty of care towards prospective employees and these employees are sourced from a variety of cultural and indigenous back grounds.

This policy and procedure applies to recruitment and selection for all Out of Home Care positions at all levels in Samaritans.

Ideology

Samaritans policy is user friendly and will be applied consistently and fairly in all cases.

Samaritans is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Selection decisions will be based on merit and excellence. Considerations for merit include experience, skills, education, behaviour and aptitude.

All information relating to a recruitment and selection process must be maintained and managed in a confidential manner.

Further to Samaritans Recruitment and Selection Policy HR – POL 00116 this policy applies to the recruitment and selection of Out of Home Care residential staff.

Samaritans position advertisements be designed to try and attract a culturally diverse and appropriately skilled applicant pool to provided the best possible outcomes for clients.

Each position will have position description that is reviewed prior to advertisements being placed outlining the selection criteria and advising applicants of the need for Working with Children Checks where the position is deemed to be Child Related Employment.

Prior to participating in the recruitment process each panel member will have undertaken Samaritans Recruitment and Selection Training package and read and agreed to the conditions outlined in the Guide for Panel Members

handbook. Children and young People should be provided with the opportunity of participating in the recruitment and selection process of out of home care residential staff. In this instance the Supervisor of the service is responsible for ensuring the child and or young person has been taken through Guide for Panel members on an appropriate level and has an understanding of their role in the process.

Advertising

All position advertisements must be arranged through Human Resources.

All advertisements will include Samaritans standard diversity statement of *'Samaritans welcomes all applications including those from indigenous people and people from culturally diverse backgrounds. Samaritans is fully committed to providing every employee with an inclusive workplace that offers respect, training and opportunities to succeed. Successful applicants must uphold the mission, vision and values of the Samaritans Foundation. All criteria must be addressed.'*

Out of Home Care advertisements will be circulated via the most appropriate means to allow exposure to potential staff from a variety of cultural and indigenous backgrounds. This may include print media, identified recruitment web sites, circulation through indigenous, CALD and youth networks, position vacancy boards at tertiary institutions. In addition positions vacant will also be placed on Samaritans web site and distributed to services via fax, e-mail through Samaritans Bulletin and where appropriate directly to specific staff and may be placed in other relevant places as deemed by the manager or other authorised person.

Any position identified as “child related” must carry a statement to that effect in the advertisement, with a warning that it is an offence for a prohibited person to apply for the position.

Position Descriptions

A position description must be reviewed for every position prior to the advertisement being placed. The position description should outline the following:

- Organisational context of the position including, funding body, reporting relationships, delegations.
- Position Conditions including relevant award category, hours of work, company and any other special conditions such as on-call etc.
- Main functions and responsibilities of the position.
- Whether the position is “child related employment”.
- Selection criteria for the position including but not limited to, knowledge, skills, qualifications, experience required to undertake the position. The selection criteria should be separated into two categories;
- Essential – that is, the applicant must meet this criteria or they cannot be interviewed or appointed to the position. That is the absolute

minimum required for success in the position. The following must be included as Essential Criteria for Out of Home Care workers

- Demonstrated experience in the care of children and young people
- Demonstrated to commitment to working in a personalised care environment for children and young people
- Desirable – the “nice to have” criteria. If an applicant meets these criteria they may be more suitable to the position. If there are too many applicants remaining after the short list on essential criteria this is the second shortlist and may be referred to in the selection decision.

Short Listing Applicants

Short listing is undertaken to determine those applicants who meet the position selection criteria. Each panel member must assess each individual application received against stated position selection criteria, both essential and desirable to determine whether or not applicants progress to the next stage of the recruitment process.

Where children and young people are involved in the recruitment process they should be part of the short-listing process where appropriate.

Interview Panels

Samaritans are required to ensure, that as far as possible, all applicants are provided with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their suitability for the position.

An interview panel is nominated by the convenor at the time the position is advertised. The convenor of the panel must either be the relevant Manager or the Human Resources Manager or delegate of either.

It is usual that the direct supervisor is involved in the selection process with one other panel member. Where possible, Out of Home Care Residential Worker interview panels should include children and young people as panel members.

The style of questioning for interviews shall preferably include a variety of theory based, practical, aptitude and behavioural-based questions that cover the selection criteria. The process shall not be varied between applicants; however, interviewers are encouraged to ask additional questions, which explore the applicants' answers in greater detail.

Where children and young people are involved in the process the panel convenor will discuss with them questions they would like to ask and ensure that they are comfortable with the wording.

Equal Employment Opportunity is a policy of Samaritans and selection to a permanent position will be based on merit judged against the person's ability to fulfil the requirements stated in the job description and the advertisement.

7.8 RESIDENTIAL CARE WORKER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Practice Statement:

Samaritans recognises and understands that continuous feedback and learning is essential for employees to develop and grow, and for the organisation to continually provide effective and professional social welfare services to our community. Employees, in partnership with their Supervisor, are responsible for fostering their learning, development and performance.

All training will be monitored for effectiveness by conducting 6 monthly survey's with staff and clients of the service to identify any gaps or suggestions for improvements.

Staff will be provided with the opportunity to participate in discussions about practice and theory relevant to their work via the supervision process, team meetings, portfolio meetings and where appropriate participation in youth networks.

Learning and Development at Samaritans is aimed at:

- promoting access to Learning and Development opportunities that develop transferable skills for current and future work roles within Samaritans
- providing an environment that encourages employees to identify their career goals and then contribute to their personal development
- promoting joint planning between employees and Supervisors to identify and address development needs
- providing and maintaining the skills and knowledge necessary for effective work performance.
- ensuring awareness and compliance with relevant legislation.

Samaritans residential care staff will be provided with all necessary training, information, resources and support to ensure they acquire the skills and knowledge required to effectively carry out their duties and provide best possible outcomes for Out of Home Care clients.

Orientation of New Residential Staff

In addition to the compulsory training of

- Organisational Induction
- Child Protection - including workers legal responsibilities as a mandatory reporter
- Manual Handling
- Performance Enhancement Plan for New Starters
- Therapeutic Crisis Intervention
- Mental Health First Aid

- Strengths Based Approach
- Providing a Personalised and Positive Care Environment
- Behaviour Intervention and Support
- Case Planning with Clients including roles and responsibilities of staff
- Medication administration
- Documentation
- Nutrition
- Group Management

All residential staff will be provided with a comprehensive service induction which covers their rights and responsibilities, duties, OH&S requirements, appropriate client information and introduction, workplace layout, location of key work aids and tools, location of client and organisational information and be provided with a list of on-call telephone numbers. They will also be advised of their reporting requirements and advised of the standard in which reporting is to take place.

Ongoing Training and Development for Residential Staff

Each residential service will have a training and development budget for the staff set at the beginning of the financial year. In addition to the compulsory training listed above staff will have the opportunity to identify their training requirements via the supervision and Performance Enhancement Plan processes. Staff training requirements will be identified with the input of staff, supervisors and the children and young people of the service and tailored to individual staff need.

Where a service is supporting children and or young people with special needs the supervisor in conjunction their manager will be responsible for sourcing appropriate training to allow staff to effectively support clients.

Resources for Residential Staff

All residential care staff will have access to resource materials and information relating to the work of the service and organisation.

Resources will include access to text books, internet, staff intranet, relevant industry specific publications and where appropriate participation in local youth networks.

7.9 RESIDENTIAL CARE WORKER SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT POLICY

This policy applies to: Samaritans Out of Home Care

Practice Statement:

The Samaritans Foundation aims to ensure a consistent and high standard of practice through staff recruitment and induction practices, supervision, training and appraisal. Samaritans provide opportunities for staff to receive feedback about their performance, to reflect on their practice and their role in the organisation and to receive information and education. We utilise outcomes of supervision to update procedures, encourage efficiency and enhance job satisfaction.

This policy and procedure applies to recruitment and selection for all Out of Home Care positions at all levels in Samaritans.

Samaritans will ensure that all residential care staff have the information, support and supervision required to undertake their duties in the most effective manner.

Staff will be supported by Supervisors, Human Resources and Managers as well as via the Employee Assistance and Wellness programs to ensure they are able to carry out their role in a safe and productive environment.

Role Requirements

On commencement in a service staff will be introduced to their supervisor as identified in position descriptions. In addition they will be shown where to locate a copy of the organisational chart (to understand the chain of command) and internal telephone directory on the staff intranet.

All residential care staff will be provided with a copy of their position description upon commencement along with any other service specific documents such as cleaning rosters, meal plans etc to ensure staff have a clear understanding of what the expectations for the role are. The supervisor will discuss these documents with the staff person to answer any questions.

At the time of commencement in a service, as part of their service orientation, staff will be provided with all necessary information, for each child and young person prior to commencing client work. They will also be shown the location of on-call details and processes for emergencies and after hour back up.

Where a child or young person enters the service all staff will be provided with the necessary information to care for that young person before the start of their placement.

Staff Supervision

Once a month staff will be provided with a formal supervision process with their supervisor. This will usually be a one hour process in a non-disruptive environment at a mutually agreeable time.

The aims of Supervision are to:

- continually improve the working **relationship**.
- provide opportunities to model professional behaviour.
- **communicate** changes in work practice and ensure conformity with policy.
- set expectations for staff performance.
- praise and recognise good work performance.
- update employees on changes to organisational structure or policies.
- discuss issues that employees may have to work towards resolving.
- Develop and monitor individual **action plans**.
- Discuss implementation of the strategic plan.
- Give and receive **feedback**, (2-way-communication).
- Identify strengths and weaknesses of the employee
- Identify and offer training specific to individual employee needs.
- Remind every employee of the code of ethics and **values** of organisation.
- Provide staff with an opportunity to debrief about work related stress and set a plan in place to manage it such as regular informal supervision and debriefing sessions, identify and required training to manage a stressful situation and or arrange attendance with an employee assistance program provider.

Supervision for residential care staff will be carried out via a number of methods including mentoring, modelling and case discussion.

All staff supervision sessions are to be documented and include an action plan for both the staff member and the supervisor with agreed timeframes. This will be reviewed at each supervision sessions to ensure both parties are undertaking agreed actions and provide an opportunity to review the success of goals and need to re-evaluate.

Children and young people will be advised how to provide feedback on staff performance as part of their orientation to a service. Children and staff will be encouraged to provide feedback that will be discussed with staff during supervision sessions.

7.10 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY

This policy applies to: Samaritans Family Day Care
Samaritans In Home Child Care
Samaritans Early Learning Centre – Newcastle
Samaritans Early Learning Centre - Woodberry

Practice Statement:

Samaritans Children's Services has a commitment to life long learning and professionalism within the childcare and education field. All educators are expected as part of their employment to complete ongoing professional development, including on the job training and personal development as well as attendance at professional development seminars, courses and team member meetings etc.

Ongoing training ensures that our team are appropriately qualified and skilled who are aware of and complies with regulatory requirements; ongoing training assists educators to perform to their optimum capability and provides opportunities for advancement and learning.

We acknowledge, respect and value the diversity of each individual; meet the changing needs of families and children; provide opportunity and encouragement for personal growth and development of carers, staff and children towards achieving their own potential.

7.10.1 Procedures

- All educators employed in the direct provision or supervision of care shall have appropriate qualifications in accordance with the Regulations.
- Training for new Educators commences immediately upon being offered a position within our service. Educators MUST participate in the induction process which details their responsibilities with regards to the state Regulations and Act, Child Protection, National Childcare Accreditation Council requirements, food safety requirements as well as company policies and procedures. Educators are required to be familiar with the abovementioned legislation and company policies, procedures and job descriptions. Educators will be assigned a mentor to assist them through the induction process.
- For Family Day Care and In Home Child Care - All carers registered with the service shall on initial registration participate in Orientation Training according to the service's Orientation Protocols.
- For ELC - All educators participate in a thorough induction process upon employment at the service
- While registered with or employed by Samaritans, educators shall be required to attend professional development sessions either provided

by the service or by other organisations relevant to the provision of childcare and their professional development as childcare workers.

- While employed with Samaritans Family Day Care, Co-ordination Unit staff members involved in the supervision or support of care provision shall be required to attend professional development sessions either provided by the service or by other organizations relevant to the provision of childcare and their professional development as childcare workers.
- Professional development sessions provided by other organizations intended to be included as fulfilling a training requirement under this policy by any educator, shall first be approved by the Authorised Supervisor as appropriate to the interests of quality child care.
- Evidence of training provided by other organizations shall be required to be provided to the Authorised Supervisor on completion of the training and shall include:
 - Certificate of attendance noting date of training, name of carer/staff member and hours of attendance
 - Statement of content of training session and notation of satisfactory completion, where appropriate

Additional Requirement for Family Day Care

- To be eligible to continue registration, carers shall be required each year registered to attend a minimum of three workshops/training sessions relating to children's development, health, welfare or care and/or professional development in the interests of quality childcare
- Staff shall be required each year to obtain a minimum of three workshops/training sessions relating to children's development, health, welfare or care and/or professional development in the interests of quality childcare as identified within their performance enhancement plan
- First aid updates required under the Children's Services Regulation 2004 shall not be considered in the three additional training sessions.
- Carers commencing registration or staff members who have taken extended leave of absence during the year, shall be required to obtain training only on a pro-rata basis according to the number of months he/she has been registered or employed with the Scheme.
- Failure to obtain minimum professional development requirements:
 - Carers and staff shall be required to record each training session attended and provide evidence of training to the Authorised Supervisor at registration or in supervision.
 - Should a carer or staff member be in danger of failing to complete sufficient training that carer or staff member shall be required to develop with the Authorised Supervisor a plan to meet training requirements

- Should a carer or staff member be unwilling to develop a plan to meet training requirements or fails to fulfil the conditions of such a plan:
- In the case of a carer, procedures under the Scheme's Termination of Access Policy may be commenced.
- In the case of a staff member Samaritans Foundation Disciplinary Proceedings may be commenced.

A plan to meet training requirements may include:

- Self-paced learning modules to be done in the carer's/staff member's home
- Attendance at training sessions provided by the Scheme
- Attendance at training sessions provided by other organizations
- Individual face-to-face training provided by staff members

7.10.2 References

- Children's Services Regulation 2004

7.10.3 Person Responsible

Co-ordination Unit Staff:

- To assist with the provision of training, to provide carers with information regarding training opportunities and to continue to develop professionally.

Authorised Supervisor:

- To co-ordinate training for the Scheme and ensuring that training opportunities are provided on an equitable basis to all staff and carers.
- To provide opportunity for input into training needs and encourage evaluation.
- To continue to develop professionally.

Educators/Carers:

- To inform the service of professional development needs, complete and evaluate training.
- To continue to develop professionally.

7.10.4 Implementation and Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years in accordance with Samaritans Standard 6.2 Policy Development and Review.

7.10.5 Documentation

Termination of Access Policy
Samaritans Foundation Disciplinary Procedures

7.11 TEAM MEMBER COMMUNICATION

This policy applies to: Samaritans Children's Services

Practice Statement:

Quality care is dependant upon clear and open communication between all stakeholders. Samaritans Children's Services believes that open communication encourages positive partnerships to develop which benefits families in care.

Providing educators with effective communication strategies prepares the team for success.

7.11.1 Procedures

Interviews

Prior to employment/registration each prospective educators shall be required to attend an appointment with the Authorised Supervisor to discuss the service requirements and expectations, service policies, procedures and guidelines.

Educators shall be encouraged to contact the Authorised Supervisor or their representative by the telephone or in person should they wish to seek clarification of the service requirements or policies, the Children's Services Regulation 2004 or to discuss any difficulties which may arise in care provision or concerns relating to children's development.

All interviews conducted with educators shall remain confidential and shall be discussed with the relevant family/staff member only with the permission of said individual.

Family/Educator Feedback

Educators shall communicate information regarding the child's care experience to the family daily, both verbally and by written communication and the family shall be regularly encouraged to comment on the family's and the child's changing needs and provide feedback on the care provided.

Educators shall provide Newsletters and Bulletins to families at regular intervals and shall encourage their feedback, comments and suggestions either in person, by telephone or by letter. (For FDC/IHC these will be provided by the Co-ordination Unit).

Educators shall be encouraged to provide articles and information for service newsletters.

At the Authorised Supervisors discretion, surveys shall be distributed (to educators and/or families) at intervals for the purpose of gaining feedback on issues of relevance to the service operation. Co-operation in completing and returning surveys shall assist the service to refine procedures and improve the quality of care and support offered.

Information Booklet

On employment for centre based carers or upon application for registration for prospective FDC/IHC Carers shall be provided with a copy of the Service Educator Information Booklet containing outlines of all service policies, procedures and expectations.

Copies of Regulations

- All educators will be required to have an understanding of the Children's Services Regulations.
- For centre based educators a full copy of the regulations will be made available at the service for perusal.
- For home based educators - prospective Carers shall be provided with a full copy of the Children's Services Regulation 2004 prior to completion of registration as a carer with the service.
- Copies of Children's Services Regulation 2004 shall be provided to families on request.

Internal Memos

Any message to be forwarded to an educator who is absent or unavailable shall be recorded on an internal memo form and placed in their incoming mail tray or e-mailed.

All internal memos shall refrain from providing details of confidential or sensitive information.

Reports to Licensee

All staff shall prepare such reports as requested by the Licensee or their representative from time to time relating to their dealings with families, children and educators.

All reports shall be stored and forwarded in accordance with the service Confidentiality Policy.

Reports to Governmental Departments

The Authorised Supervisor shall prepare and forward to Commonwealth Government Departments such reports as are required under the provision of the DEEWR Child Care Services Handbook 2010 – 2011 and funding agreement.

All reports shall be stored and forwarded in accordance with the service Confidentiality Policy.

Responding to Requests

All requests by Government agencies, for information, telephone messages and internal memos shall be responded to promptly by the Authorised Supervisor (or their representative) receiving such request and in all cases shall be given within 24 hours of receipt of the request.

FDC/IHC Service/Carer Meeting:

- Service Meetings shall be held quarterly for the purpose of:
 - addressing issues arising within the Service
 - setting service fees and charges
 - providing a forum for suggestion and comment on the Service's operation
 - review and development of Service's policies, procedures and guidelines.
- Notice of Service Meetings together with a proposed Agenda shall be given to each carer registered with the Scheme by advertising the date, time and location of the meeting in the Scheme's Newsletter a minimum of two weeks prior to each Scheme Meeting.
- All Carers registered with the Scheme shall be encouraged to attend Scheme meetings to ensure balance of opinion is received on matters affecting the Scheme's operation and the provision of care.
- Matters to be included on the agenda for discussion at any Scheme Meeting must be forwarded to the Authorised Supervisor in writing a minimum of four weeks prior to the meeting or added to general business.
- Where a matter for discussion is to be decided at a meeting this shall be done by a majority vote of those attending the meeting.

FDC/IHC - Telephone Contact

Hours of operation of the office premises shall be advertised to Carers through the service Newsletter and the Carer's Information Booklet to facilitate telephone contact for carer with the Co-ordination Unit. During out of hours periods the service shall provide an answering service containing out of hours emergency telephone details.

FDC/IHC Co-ordination Unit Telephone Communication Register

All co-ordination unit staff shall maintain a register of incoming and outgoing telephone communication with families and home based educators. Such register shall include the time and date of the telephone communication, a brief outline of the content of the conversation, any action required to be taken and details of the person dealing with the telephone communication.

The register of telephone communication shall be retained for the period specified in the Children's Services Regulation 2004 and the DEEWR Child Care Services Handbook 2010 - 2011.

The telephone communication register shall be stored in accordance with the service Confidentiality Policy.

FDC/IHC Access to Policies

Prospective Carers shall be provided with a full copy of the service Information Booklet containing outlines of all service policies and procedures immediately prior to registration with the service as a carer.

A full policy document shall be available on disc/memory stick or as a hard copy for all Carers on registration.

FDC/IHC Records of mail outs

A record of all mail passing through the Co-ordination Unit (both incoming and outgoing) shall be maintained in the Service's mail record book, by the staff member responsible for preparation of the mail or collection of the mail. Such record shall include the date of receipt or posting, the addressee or sender and a brief outline of the content of the document sent or received.

A record of information provided to Carers through newsletters and bulletins, information leaflets, surveys and flyers shall be kept at the office of the service for a period of three (3) years following the date of distribution of such information to Carers.

A record of any written communication sent to a carer shall be kept on the carer's file for the period required under the Children's Services Regulation 2004 and a record of the date of posting of such written communication shall be retained in the service's mail book.

FDC/IHC Carer/Family Information Register

Co-ordination Unit Educators shall maintain a central register of the information distribution to families and /or Carers through newsletters, flyers, information leaflets or other documents. Such register shall include a copy of the information distributed together with the date of forwarding.

The register of information distribution shall be retained for the period specified in the Children's Services Regulation 2004 and the DEEWR Child Care Services Handbook 2009-2010.

7.11.2 References

- DEEWR Child Care Services Handbook 2010 - 2011
- Children's Services Regulation 2004

7.11.3 Person Responsible

Educators are responsible for:

- ensuring that communication systems are understood and utilised to maximise benefits to the service
- ensuring that they participate and utilise effectively all opportunities to communicate

Authorised Supervisor is responsible for:

- ensuring that communication systems are maintained, evaluated and improved and to provide training, resources and support for Educators with communication skills.

7.11.4 Implementation and Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years in accordance with the Samaritans Standard 6.2 Policy Development and Review.

7.11.5 Documentation

Confidentiality Policy
Mail Book
Communication Record
Internal Memo
Carer/Family Information Register

7.12 STUDENT & VOLUNTEER POLICY

This policy applies to: Samaritans Early Learning Centre – Newcastle
Samaritans Early Learning Centre - Woodberry
Samaritans Family Day Care
Samaritans In Home Child Care

Practice Statement:

We recognize that students and volunteers are our future child care professionals. As part of our commitment to the development of qualified educators in the child care industry, Samaritans Children's Services welcomes the involvement of students and volunteers in our services. We believe in the importance of supporting and mentoring students and volunteers to develop the high standards we expect of our team.

This policy has been developed to ensure children's well being is safeguarded and to provide guidelines for those wishing to train within our services.

7.12.1 Procedures

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality regarding Samaritans clients and educators must be maintained at all times. This is particularly important in Family Day Care settings where any details concerning the carer and her family must also not be discussed outside the carers home. Maintaining confidentiality of your observations whilst in the learning environment includes discussing specific details with your own family, your teacher and your classmates. Any written work must include first names of the children and/or the team member/carer only. Photographs may only be taken with parent & team member/carers permission.

REGULATIONS AND POLICIES

Our services are bound by Children's Services Regulation 2004. These Regulations cover a range of issues such as;

- Record keeping
- Child numbers
- Licensing Standards
- Code of Conduct
- All learning environments (centre based and home based) have a copy of the Regulations / Policies / Procedures.

All interactions of volunteers, students and visitors with children in care shall be in accordance with the service policies and procedures (see Care Provision Procedures Interactions).

SUPERVISION

You are not permitted to be left in sole charge of supervising an individual child or a small group of children. Your interactions with the children should always be in view of the educator. While assisting with supervision please DO NOT walk around while carrying babies or young children. ALWAYS remain seated when nursing babies or young children.

NUTRITION / HYGIENE

As young children often have allergies of which you might not be aware please check with the educator before offering food or drink to a child. You should also be aware that children DO NOT share food or drink with each other or with an adult for hygiene reasons. Please remember the importance of hand washing. No student is to toilet or change nappies of the children.

DISCIPLINE

It is the educators sole responsibility to discipline the children. If you are having concerns about a child displaying difficult behaviour please discuss it with the child's carer confidentially, as there may be underlying reasons or behaviour management strategies may already be in place.

NO CHILD MAY BE SMACKED, PLACED IN A ROOM ALONE, MADE IMMOBILE, FRIGHTENED OR HUMILIATED.

Please use children's names (not nicknames). Swearing and/or shouting at children is not permitted.

PROGRAMMING

Educators in each learning environment prepare a written program based on the children's needs/interests each week. We encourage you to be familiar with the program and assist in setting up and presenting the planned experiences to the children. When you feel confident we will encourage you to make some contributions to the children's day in the form of planned experiences. All planned experiences you wish to provide are to be authorised with the Educators prior to presenting.

BEFORE PLACEMENT CAN BE MADE

An interview will occur between the Authorised Supervisor (or their representative) to assess the student/volunteer's suitability for working with young children. At this time they may also possibly match the student/volunteer with a suitable mentor.

Additional Information relating to Family Day Care and In Home Child Care environments

- *Parents of children in care need to sign permission notes prior to students and volunteers attending.*
- *Carers shall make parents / guardians aware of their intention to include volunteers, students and visitors in the provision of activities to the children in care.*

The Student/volunteer is to contact the Authorised Supervisor, carer or playgroup and attend an information session to discuss issues such as:

- Confidentiality
- Regulations
- Discipline
- Supervision
- Programming
- Our expectations.

WHAT THE PLACEMENT INVOLVES - OUR EXPECTATIONS

The Authorised Supervisor (or in the case of Home Based care – a team member from the Co-ordination Unit) will be visiting you to observe how the placement is progressing.

Each learning environment shall keep a record of the days and times attendance at their premises of volunteers, student and visitors. Such record shall be provided to the Authorised Supervisor on request.

If unable to attend your placement for any reason or are going to be late, please contact your Carer / Co-ordination Unit as soon as possible.

We ask you to sign in on arrival, and out on departure, each placement day

Please dress appropriately for working with young children. Do not wear excessive jewellery or thongs, covered in shoes are preferred. Clean, neat, casual dress is most appropriate to wear and please bring a hat.

If any concerns arise through the day please discuss these with the carer. If still concerned please contact the Office/Authorised Supervisor.

Use your initiative wherever possible while staying within the guidelines of being a voluntary / student worker.

Please be discreet. If educators are discussing issues with parents you should move to another area of the room while this takes place.

You will be required to assist in providing a smoke free environment for the children at all times. Smoking either indoors or outdoors while children are in care is not permitted. You should also be aware that smoking immediately prior to commencing your placement often leaves smoke residue on clothing and personal belongings.

Alcohol consumption prior to attendance is in breach of the Regulations.

While on placement you will be in a work situation, please be aware that friends or other adults may NOT visit you at the carer's home / playgroup while on placement.

No personal phone calls unless urgent.

All volunteers, students and visitors will comply with the requirements of the NSW Children's and Young Persons Act 1998 and Regulations 2000

Volunteers and students will comply with Confidentiality.

All interactions of volunteers, students and visitors with children in care shall be in accordance with the service Policies and the Children's Services Regulation 2004.

Educators shall make families aware of their intention to include volunteers, students or visitors in the provision of activities to the children in care. Families shall provide their consent to the inclusion of volunteers, students and/or visitors in the learning environment offered to their child on enrolment with the Service and are at liberty to alter this consent at any time on completion of a new enrolment consent form.

Volunteers, students and visitors attending playgroup sessions shall sign in the Playgroup Fire Evacuation/Attendance Register immediately on entering and on leaving any playgroup session.

Volunteers, students and visitors shall participate in any evacuation drill conducted within the care environment or playgroup session during their presence.

7.12.2 References

- Children's Services regulation 2004
- NSW Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
- NSW Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act Regulations 2000
- NSW Commission for Children and Young Persons Act 1998

7.12.3 Person Responsible

Educators are:

- To keep a record of all students, volunteers and visitors and ensure that all students, volunteers and visitors comply with these guidelines and requirements while on the premises.
- responsible for maintaining the care environment.

The volunteer is responsible for adhering to the volunteer guidelines.

Co-ordination Unit Staff:

- To confirm appropriate interactions of volunteers, students and visitors when observed.

Authorised Supervisor:

- To provide guidelines to volunteers, students and visitors and ensure all staff and carers are aware of these.
- To ensure compliance with all requirements by students, volunteers and visitors.
- To keep a record of all students, volunteers and visitors to the scheme premises.

The Coordination unit is responsible for supervising all student/ volunteer placements.

7.12.4 Implementation and Evaluation

Feedback forms from parents, carers and volunteers.

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years in accordance with Samaritans Standard 6.2 Policy Development and Review

7.12.5 Documentation

Attendance records

Visitors' book

Student Supervision forms

Prohibited Persons Declaration

Working With Children Check Consent

Confidentiality Agreement

Playgroup Fire Evacuation/Attendance Register

Family Registration Agreement/Enrolment Form

Carer Visitors Record

7.13 TOBACCO, ALCOHOL & DRUG FREE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

This policy applies to: Samaritans Children's Services

Practice Statement:

Research has shown that any form of environmental tobacco smoking is a health risk. There is now sufficient evidence to conclude that passive smoking increases the risk of heart disease and lung cancer as well as being responsible for triggering asthma attacks, causing watery eyes, headaches and sore throats (Cancer Council, 1992). The child care environment will also be free of recreational (illicit) drugs and alcohol.

Educators must not be under the influence of alcohol or any other prohibited drug while providing care to children. Educators need to be providing appropriate role models to the children in regard to alcohol, tobacco, and prohibited drug consumption.

Educators must provide a smoke free environment while providing care to children, even in the Carers home. This requirement also includes family members, visitors and parents.

7.13.1 Procedures

Smoke Free Environments

- Educators shall at all times ensure all children in care are provided with a cigarette smoke free environment both indoors and outdoors during care hours. For home based care if the Carer or a family member smokes, Carers are encouraged to inform all new families with the service on initial interview with the Carer.
- Carers shall ensure their premises are well ventilated prior to children arriving for care.
- Educators shall ensure children are provided with a smoke free environment at all times while on excursions and while travelling in vehicles. Educators must ensure families respect the smoke free environment also.
- If families have any concerns in regard to tobacco, alcohol, or prohibited drug use they will be encouraged to either talk to the Carer, or contact the Coordination Unit.

Carers Health

- Carers must not provide care for children unless they are in good health and free from any medical conditions or dependency on any medication or substance that may affect their ability to provide care.

- If a carer requires regular medication they must obtain a medical certificate confirming their ability to care for children.
- Carers must not be under the influence of alcohol or any other drug that may impair responsible behaviour while providing care for children.
- Carers, or any person in the care environment, must not consume any alcohol or unlawful substances while children are in care.

7.13.2 References

- Cancer Council
- Children's Services Regulation 2004
- Samaritans Children's Services Policies and Standards

7.13.3 Person Responsible

Authorised Supervisor are responsible for ensuring that the environment is smoke free at all times and that carers are not caring for children under the influence of drugs that may impair responsible behaviour.

Educators are responsible for:

- ensuring that the environment is smoke free at all times and that they are not caring for children under the influence of drugs that may impair responsible behaviour.
- ensuring a smoke, drug and alcohol free environment is provided.

Families are responsible for ensuring that they don't threaten the smoke-free environment.

Co-ordination Unit Educators are responsible for ensuring that the environment is smoke free at all times and that carers are not caring for children under the influence of drugs that may impair responsible behaviour.

7.13.4 Implementation and Evaluation

Parent surveys and feedback forms

Carer home visits by child development officers.

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years in accordance with Samaritans Standard 6.2 Policy Development and Review.

7.13.5 Documentation

Home visit reports

Survey and feedback forms.

7.14 TEAM MEMBER SELF PROTECTIVE BEHAVIOUR POLICY

This policy applies to: all children and young people

Practice Statement

During the normal working day, situations can arise where an educator's action towards children or others may be misconstrued as inappropriate. It is important that educators have an understanding of self protective behaviours and organisation expectations for behaviour that will reduce the possibility of any opportunity for misinterpretation of educator interactions between colleagues and/or children in their care.

Educators also need to be self aware ensuring that they ensure their own personal safety at all times.

Objective

This policy intends to step out to educators appropriate self protective behaviours and company expectations of interactions and has been developed to assist educators to avoid wherever possible, allegations of inappropriate behaviour which could lead to litigation, suspension, or dismissal.

7.14.1 Procedures

- Educators will, wherever practicable, not place themselves into a situation where they are alone with a child, especially where other Educators are not able to verify the details of any interaction.
- Educators should be aware of their colleague's movements and bring to the notice of the Centre Director or management any Educators who either show a lack of understanding or a wilful disregard of this policy.
- Educators working alone with a group of children should do so within sight of Educators, wherever practicable, and where not possible, Educators should not be alone with only one child at any time.
- Should Educators be required to take a child on their own they must inform other Educators of what they are doing. This practice is strongly discouraged unless there is an urgent requirement for the child to be taken to another part of the centre on their own. Children should be moved in small groups wherever practicable.

Specific Procedures

- Educators will not take any photos of children without express written permission of parents or guardians. You MUST confirm that permission has been obtained.
- Educators will not take photos of colleagues without their express permission.
- Educators will not undress or touch any genital areas of children in isolation from other colleagues. It is satisfactory to conduct nappy changes and toileting of children where bathroom areas are viewable by other Educators.
- Educators will not bath children in isolation. It is satisfactory to conduct bathing where bathroom areas are viewable by other Educators.
- Educators will not change any underwear of children without gloves.
- Educators will notify other Educators should they be required to move a child to another part of the service on their own as the situation permits. This practice is only to be used when other strategies are not appropriate. It is expected that, wherever possible, Educators will take a small group of children with them in an instance such as this.
- Educators are expressly forbidden to interact with children behind closed doors away from others.
- Educators will be mindful of appropriate touch with children. This includes not touching or fondling children on their chests, bottoms, genitals, or any other culturally inappropriate body parts.
- Educators will not kiss children however, should a child wish to kiss you please use your own judgment in receiving a kiss. Any child giving an Educator a kiss should be directed to kissing on the cheeks not mouth.
- Educators should be mindful that children sitting on adult laps can create a situation that is easily misinterpreted. It is preferable to have children stand beside you when comforting or closeness is required.

Personal Safety

- Where possible Educators should refrain from staying in an office or centre based care facility after operating hours by themselves.
- Whenever sitting in an office please ensure that you are facing the door to be able to view anyone entering your space.
- If conducting a meeting with a person you consider may be volatile please notify a colleague (for home based care please call the co-ordination Unit) and if possible have a second person attend the meeting with you for support. Always try to leave the door open so that others can check on you.
- In accordance with the Home Visit Policy, for the first visit to any new private premises for home based care two Educators are to be in attendance and are to notify the Co-ordination Unit of their destination and estimated time of return.

7.14.2 Evaluation and Review

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years in accordance with Samaritans Standard 6.2 Policy Development and Review.

7.15 FAMILY DAY CARER'S AS FOSTER CARER'S

This policy applies to: Samaritans Family Day Care

Practice Statement:

Educators registered with Samaritans Family Day Care may also be registered as a Foster Carer. A conflict of interest may arise when Carer's are requested to provide emergency Foster Care which could impact on the number of children under the carer's direct supervision.

This policy aims to provide clear guidelines for Educators to ensure that CS Regulations are adhered to at all times.

7.15.1 Procedures:

- Educators registered with the Samaritans Family Day Care service must at ALL times adhere to the Children's Services Regulations 2004.
- Carers need to consider if they also choose to be a Foster carer how they will manage this additional responsibility whilst still complying with ratios.
- Some considerations for carers may include:
 - Maintaining one FDC vacancy to allow for the accommodation of a foster child without breaching ratios
 - Only accepting emergency care on the weekends and arranging with your agency for the child to be collected either Sunday afternoon or early Monday morning before booked FDC arrive, thereby not jeopardising ratios.
 - How you will support any additional needs of the foster child without compromising the care afforded to the children attending your FDC.
- Should you be considering becoming a Foster Carer whilst also remaining registered with Samaritans Five Star Family Day Care you will be required to provide a Strategic Plan to the Co-ordination Unit outlining how you will maintain ratios and ensuring quality care for all children under your supervision.

7.15.2 References

- Children's Services Regulations 2004

7.15.3 Implementation and Review

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years in accordance with Samaritans Standard 6.2 Policy Review and Development

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Date	Version	Description	Author	Approved
March 2011	Five	Final Draft	Samaritans Children's Services Leadership Team	Pending
