

# CAIRDE

## Sligo Arts Festival

### Child Welfare Policies and Procedures

Updated May 25<sup>th</sup> 2022

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## 1. Child Protection Policy Statement

'Cairde Sligo Arts Festival' is committed to ensuring a child-centred approach to any work we do with children and young people. We undertake to provide a safe environment and experience, where the welfare of the children/young person is paramount. We will adhere to the *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection a Welfare of Children* by implementing procedures covering:

- Safe recruitment, training and management/supervision off staff
- Code of behaviour for staff
- Incidents and accidents
- Complaints procedure
- Reporting of suspected or disclosed abuse (see appendix 1)
- Confidentiality
- Circulation of information to staff on what we do, and what they should expect from us, including information on policies and procedures.
- Allegations of misconduct or abuse by staff and/or other participating tutors.

### Child-centred approach

- Treat all children and young people equally.
- Use appropriate language (physical and verbal)
- Treat all children and young people as individuals
- Boundaries on behaviour and related sanctions, as appropriate, to be discussed and agreed with parents/responsible adults
- Respect difference of ability, culture, religion, race and sexual orientation
- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with children/young people.

## Inappropriate Behaviour

- Do not use/allow or sexually suggestive physical and/or verbal language.
- Do not single out a particular child/young person (for unfair criticism, favouritism, ridicule, focus or attention).
- Do not allow/engage in inappropriate touching of any form.
- Do not hit or physically chastise children/young people.
- Do not socialise inappropriately with children/young people eg outside of structured organisational activities.

## **2. Code of Behaviour for Staff**

### Physical contact

- Seek consent of child/young person in relation to physical contact (except in emergency when a child is in danger)
- Avoid horseplay, inappropriate touch.
- Check with children/young people about their level of comfort when doing touch exercises

### Health and Safety

- Don't leave children unattended or unsupervised
- Manage any dangerous materials
- Provide a safe environment

- In the case of an accident, procedures outlined for this situation should be followed.

### **3. Reporting Procedures**

#### **3.1 Role and Responsibility of Designated Person**

The Designated Person (Tara McGowan, Director of Cairde Sligo Arts Festival) is the main point of contact where there is an issue or concern about any aspect of a child's or young person's safety or welfare. It is her responsibility to advise staff about policy and procedures in relation to child protection and to ensure that procedures are followed.

The Designated Person (Stephanie Pawula, Administrator of Cairde Sligo Arts Festival) will support and advise staff in the event of a concern regarding child protection and welfare. It is also her responsibility to liaise with the HSE or Gardai where appropriate.

The following would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

- i. Specific indication from the child/young person that's/he is being abused.
- ii. An account by a person who saw the child/young person being abused.
- iii. An injury or behaviour which is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse. An example of this would be a pattern of injuries, as implausible explanation, other indications of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour.
- iv. Consistent indication, over a period of time, that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

*(Children First 4.3.2, p. 38)*

#### **3.2. What a staff member should do**

If the concern is about a child you meet whilst working in the service of Cairde Sligo Arts Festival you should do the following:

- Speak to the person who is the Designated Person
- Record in writing the concern
- Although other staff in the host organization may be in position to pass on information/concern to HSE, you should be aware that the Social

Worker from the HSE may want to talk directly to you to hear your observations or what the child said to you.

### **3.3. General HSE Guidelines**

1. Record the concern, including the date, time and people involved in the concern/disclosure and the facts (for example in the Incident Book). Information recorded should be factual. Any opinions recorded should be supported by facts.
2. Inform the Designated Person or, if available, their deputy
3. The most appropriate person should discuss the concern/consult with the parents/carers/responsible adults.
4. Parents/carers/responsible adults should be told of a report to the HSE unless it is likely to put the child/young person at further risk.
5. The Designated Person may contact the HSE Social Work Department for an informal consultation prior to making the report.
6. Information will be shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis (see confidentiality statement).
7. If there are reasonable grounds for concern as outlined above, the Designated Person will contact the duty social worker in the HSE using the standard reporting form (see appendix 2 for sample). Reports to the duty social worker can be made verbally initially and then followed by the standard reporting form. Reports should be made to the HSE without delay.
8. If the Designated Person/Deputy is not available then contact the local Social Worker of the HSE directly.
9. In emergencies out of the HSE hours contact the Gardai. There may be situations that threaten the immediate safety of the child/young person where it is necessary to contact the Gardai.

## **4. Confidentiality Statement**

"Cairde Sligo Arts Festival" is committed to ensuring people's rights of confidentiality. However in relation to child protection and welfare we undertake that:

Information will only be passed on, on a 'need to know' basis in order to safeguard the child/young person.

Giving such information to others for the protection of a child or young person is not a breach of confidentiality.

We cannot guarantee total confidentiality where the best interests of the child or young person are at risk.

Parents/carers/responsible adults, children and young adults have the right to know if personal information is being shared and/or a report is being made to the HSE, unless doing so could put the child/young person at further risk.

Images of a child/young person will not be used for any reason without the consent of the parent/carer (however we cannot guarantee that cameras, videos etc will not be used at public events).

Procedures will be put in place around the use of images of children/young people.

Procedures will be put in place for the recording and storing of information in line with our confidentiality policy.

## **5. Safe Recruitment and Selection Procedures**

We will ensure that our staff will be carefully selected, trained and supervised to provide a safe environment for all children and young people.

- It is good practice that staff is recruited along the following lines:
- There are clearly defined roles and responsibilities for every job (paid or otherwise)
- We will endeavor to select the most suitable qualified personnel.
- Candidates will be asked to sign a declaration form
- At least two written references, which are recent, relevant, independent and verbally confirmed, will be necessary.
- Staff will be selected by a panel of at least two (or more) representatives through the interview process
- No person who would be deemed to constitute a 'risk' will be employed
- Some of the exclusions would include:
  - Any child-related conviction
  - Refusal to sign application form and declaration form
  - Insufficient documentary evidence of identification
  - Concealing information on one's suitability to working with children

All staff and volunteers will be required to consent to Garda clearance, and where available this will be sought.

## **6. Safe Management of Staff**

To protect staff and young people new staff will:

- Be made aware of the organisation's code of conduct, Designated Person and their role, and the child protection procedures.
- Be expected to read and sign the child protection policy
- Undergo a mentoring/probation period

All staff will:

- Be provided with an adequate level of supervision
- Be provided with child protection training (volunteers will be required to read the company's child protection policy)
- Tutors doing one-off sessional work will be issued with the information pack required to sign a copy of the child protection guidelines

## **7. Responsible Adult Involvement and sharing of Information**

We are committed to putting the interest of the child/young person first. To this event we will:

- a. Work the responsible adult or contact the HSE/Gardai where there is a child protection welfare concern.
- b. Work in partnership with responsible adults under the guidelines set out by SLPC in order to ensure safety of children.
- c. Have a designated contact person who is available for consultations

We undertake to:

- a. Comply with health and safety practices
- b. Operate child-centered policies in accordance with best practice
- c. Ensure as far as possible that all activities are age appropriate

If we have concerns about the welfare of the child/young person we will:

1. Respond to the needs of the child or young person
2. Inform responsible adults on an ongoing basis unless this action puts the child or young person at risk
3. Where there are child protection and welfare concerns we are obliged to pass these on to the duty social worker and, in an emergency, the Gardai.
4. In the event of a complaint against a member of staff we will immediately ensure the safety of the child/young person and inform responsible adults as appropriate.

## **8. Incidences of poor Practice and Allegations against staff**

In the event of an allegation against staff there are two separate procedures to be followed:

- i. The reporting procedure in respect of the child/young person
- ii. The procedure for dealing with the worker.

The first priority is to ensure that no child or young person is exposed to unnecessary risk. The reporting procedure as outlined in Section 3 of these guidelines will be followed. Parents/carers/guardians/responsible adults and child/young person should be informed of actions planned and taken. The staff member will be informed as soon as possible

- i. that an allegation has been made against him/her
  - ii. the nature of the allegation.
- The staff member will be given an opportunity to respond
  - The CEO/chairperson will be informed
  - Any action following an allegation of abuse against an employee will be taken in consultation with the HSE and the Gardai
  - After consultation the CEO will advise the person accused and agreed procedures will be followed
  - Cairde Festival will also follow best practice and contact the HSE team involved, acknowledging and ensuring that the complaint has been received
  - The Designated Person will act in accordance with their role with the person against whom the allegation was received and advise the organization that these procedures are being followed

## **9. Complaints and Comments Procedures**

Complaints will be responded to within three weeks.  
Verbal complaints will be logged and responded to

## **10. Accidents Procedures**

- First aid boxes will be available and regularly restocked
- Incidents books and first aid boxes will be clearly labeled and easily marked
- Children and young people will be advised of any dangerous materials
- Details of risky equipment used will be recorded and steps taken to minimize risk.

## Definition and Recognition of Child Abuse

### Introduction

Child abuse can be categorized into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to more than one form of abuse at any given time. The National Guidelines have adopted the following definitions of child abuse:

### Neglect

Neglect is normally defined in terms of an *omission*, where a child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, or medical care.

*Harm* can be defined as the ill-treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child. Whether it is *significant* is determined by his/her health and development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child.

Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways *over a period of time* rather than at one specific point. For instance, a child who suffers a series of minor injuries is not having his or her needs met for supervision and safety. A child whose ongoing failure to gain weight or whose height is significantly below average may be being deprived of adequate nutrition. A child who consistently misses school may be being deprived of intellectual stimulation. The *threshold of significant harm* is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that his or her well-being and/or development are severely affected.

### Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the *relationship* between caregiver and a child rather than a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's needs for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. It is rarely manifested in terms of physical symptoms. Examples of emotional abuse are:

- i. Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility and blaming
- ii. Conditional parenting in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on his or her behaviours or actions
- iii. Emotional unavailability by the child's parent/carer
- iv. Unresponsiveness, inconsistent, or inappropriate expectations of a child
- v. Premature imposition of responsibility on a child
- vi. Unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of a child's capacity to understand something or to behave and control himself in a certain way
- vii. Under or over-protection of a child
- viii. Failure to show interest in, or to provide age-appropriate opportunities for, a child's cognitive and emotional development
- ix. Use of unreasonable or over-harsh disciplinary measures
- x. Exposure to domestic violence

Children show signs of emotional abuse by their behaviour (for example, excessive clinginess to or avoidance of the parent/carer), their emotional state (low self-esteem, unhappiness), or their development (non-organic failure to thrive). The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/carer.

### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury that causes significant harm to a child, including:

- i. Shaking
- ii. Use of excessive force of handling
- iii. Deliberate poisoning
- iv. Suffocating
- v. Munchausen's syndrome by proxy (where parents fabricate stories of illness about their child or cause physical signs of illness)
- vi. Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child.

### **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others. For example:

- i. Exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of the child

- ii. Intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification
- iii. Masturbation in the presence of a child or involvement of the child in the act of masturbation
- iv. Sexual intercourse with the child, whether oral, vaginal, or anal
- v. Sexual exploitation of a child
- vi. Consensual sexual activity between an adult and a child under 17 years. In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that, for the purpose of criminal law, the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years. This means, for example, that sexual intercourse between a 16 year old girl and her 17 year old boyfriend is illegal, although it might not be regarded as constituting child sexual abuse.

### **Recognizing Child Abuse**

The ability to recognize child abuse depends as much on a person's willingness to accept the possibility of its existence as it does on knowledge and information. It is important to note that child abuse is not always readily visible, and may not be as clearly observable as the 'text book' scenarios outlined in these guidelines suggest. The recognition of abuse normally runs along three stages:

- i. Considering the possibility – if a child appears to have suffered in inexplicable and suspicious looking injury, seems distressed without obvious reason, displays unusual behavioural problems or appears fearful in the company of parents/carers
- ii. Observing signs of abuse – a cluster or pattern of signs is the most reliable indicator of abuse. Children may have direct or indirect disclosures, which should always be taken seriously. Less obvious disclosures may be gently explored with a child, without direct questioning (which may be more usefully carried out by the health board or An Garda Siochana). Play situations such as drawing or story telling may reveal significant information. Indications of harm must always be considered in relation to child's social and family context, and it is important to always be open to alternative explanations.
- iii. Recording of information – it is important to establish the grounds for concern by obtaining as much detailed information as possible. Observations should be recorded and should include dates, times, names, locations, context and any other information which might facilitate further assessment/investigation.

