

## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY STATEMENT 2026

### INTRODUCTION

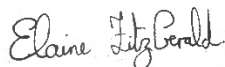
The following procedures are based on the guidelines issued by the Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Departments of Health & Children. It sets out the steps to be taken within Cork International Choral Festival when dealing with concerns of child abuse and neglect.

It should be understood, however that the contents of the document are intended as guidelines and that their adoption is not mandatory in nature and in the event of court proceedings arising, each case would fall to be judged on its own merits. There is an expectation that all persons working in Cork International Choral Festival -staff and volunteers- will follow these guidelines.

We, the Cork International Choral Festival, are committed to a child-centred approach to our work with children and young people. We undertake to provide a safe environment and experience, where the welfare of the child / young person is paramount. Our policy is in accordance with "Children's First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children" (Department of Children We will adhere to the recommendations of *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children*, of *Our Duty to Care: the Principle of Good Practice for the Protection of Children & Young People* published by the Department of Health and Children and also to the Arts Council publication *Guidelines for the Protection & Welfare of Children & Young People in the Arts Sector*. We have implemented the following procedures to be in place for our visiting Youth Choirs, Cork Children's Choir, and Schools Competitions:

- Code of behaviour for all staff
- Reporting of suspected or disclosed abuse
- Confidentiality
- Recruitment and selecting staff
- Managing and supervising staff
- Involvement of primary carers
- Allegations of misconduct or abuse by staff
- Complaints and comments
- Incidents and accidents

This policy will be reviewed on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2026



Signed:

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> February 2026

## **CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR STAFF**

### **Child Centred Approach**

- Treat all children and young people equally;
- Listen to and respect children and young people;
- Involve children and young people in decision making, as appropriate;
- Provide encouragement, support and praise (regardless of ability);
- Use appropriate language (physical and verbal);
- Have fun and encourage a positive atmosphere;
- Offer constructive criticism when needed;
- Treat all children and young people as individuals;
- Respect a child's or young person's personal space;
- Discuss boundaries on behaviour and related sanctions, as appropriate, with children and young people and their primary carers;
- Encourage feedback from the group;
- Use age-appropriate teaching aids and materials;
- Lead by example;
- Be aware of a child's or young person's other commitments when scheduling rehearsals or activities, e.g. school or exams;
- Be cognisant of a child's or young person's limitations, due to a medical condition for example;
- Create an atmosphere of trust;
- Respect differences of ability, culture, religion, race and sexual orientation.

### **Good Practice**

- Make primary carers, children/young people, visitors and facilitators and festival volunteers aware of the Child Protection Policy and procedures;
- Have emergency procedures in place and make all staff aware of these procedures;
- Observe appropriate dress and behaviour;
- Evaluate work practices on a regular basis;
- Provide appropriate training for all staff and volunteers;
- Report and record any incidents and accidents;
- Update and review policies and procedures regularly;
- Keep primary carers informed of any issues that concern their children;
- Ensure proper supervision based on adequate ratios according to age, abilities and activities involved; observe appropriate gender balance for residential;
- Ensure clear communication between artist and organisations; have guidelines and a prompt sheet for artists;
- Don't be passive in relation to concerns i.e. don't do nothing
- Don't let a problem get out of control
- Avoid taking a session on your own. If this is not possible then it should be an open environment with the full knowledge and consent of primary carers; Insofar as is possible, work with children and young people within the presence of their teachers/ those in loco parentis when attending festival events
- Avoid if at all possible giving a lift to a child/young person and if you do then make sure that primary carers are informed;

- Maintain awareness around language and comments made. If you think that something you said may have caused offence or upset, then try to address it in a sensitive manner.

### **Inappropriate Behaviour**

- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with children/young people;
- Don't use or allow offensive or sexually suggestive physical and/or verbal language
- Don't single out a particular child/young person for unfair favouritism, criticism, ridicule, or unwelcome focus or attention;
- Don't allow / engage in inappropriate touching of any form;
- Don't hit or physically chastise children / young people;
- Don't socialise inappropriately with children / young people, e.g. outside of structured organisational activities.

### **Physical Contact**

- Seek consent of child/young person in relation to physical contact (except in an emergency or a dangerous situation);
- Avoid horseplay or 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;
- Be aware of accident procedure and follow accordingly.

## REPORTING PROCEDURES

**Elaine FitzGerald** has been designated as the person to contact if you have an issue or concern about any aspect of a child's or young person's safety and welfare. It is the responsibility of this person to support and advise staff about policy and procedures in relation to child protection and to ensure that procedures are followed. It is also the responsibility of **Elaine FitzGerald** to liaise with the Health Service Executive of Gardaí where appropriate.

**Elaine FitzGerald** can be contacted at: Cork International Choral Festival – 021 4215125  
**Gerard Breen** has been designated as deputy to **Elaine FitzGerald** at the choral festival's primary venue of Cork City Hall for the duration of the festival.

### Reasonable grounds for concerns:

(Excerpt from *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (4.3.2 – p.38))

- i. Specific indication from the child or young person that s/he has been abused;
- ii. An account by a person who says the child/young person is being abused;
- iii. Evidence, such as 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, and 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.

### Dealing with a procedure

- Stay calm and listen to the child/young person, allow him or her enough time to say what s/he needs to say;
- Don't use leading questions or prompt details;
- Reassure the child/young person but do not promise to keep anything secret;
- Don't make the child/young person repeat the details unnecessarily;
- Explain to the child/young person what will happen next (explanation should be age appropriate);

### Recording procedures

- All concerns regarding the protection of children and young people should be recorded on incident forms. Incident forms are available from the Cork International Choral Festival Office (Civic Trust House, 50 Pope's Quay, Cork / 021 4215125).
- All details should be recorded in the Incident Form and all information should be factual.
- Incident forms must be brought to the attention of **Elaine FitzGerald**
- All actions and outcomes will be recorded.
- An appropriate person will be assigned to discuss the concern with primary carers.
- **Elaine FitzGerald** may contact the Health Service Executive for an informal consultation prior to making a report.

- Parents, carers or responsible adults should be made aware of a report to the Health Service Executive unless it is likely to put the child/young person at further risk.
- If there are reasonable grounds for concern as outlined above, the designated person will contact the Duty Social Worker in the Health Service Executive area using the standard reporting form available from the Health Service Executive.

**Social Work Departments:**

*South Lee Child Protection Services*

Social Work Department

St Fin Barre's Hospital

Cork

Ph: 021 4923001

Fax: 021 4312960

*North Lee Child Protection Services*

Social Work Department

Floor 2 (adjacent to Blackpool S/C)

Blackpool

Cork

Ph: 021 4927000

Fax: 021 4927001 / 4927002

*North Cork*

North Gouldshill House

Mallow

Co Cork

Ph: 022 21484

*West Cork Child Protection Services*

Social Work Department

Coolnagarrane

Skibbereen

Cork

Ph: 028 40447 / 028 40456

Fax: 028 23172

## **CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT**

We in the Cork International Choral Festival are committed to ensuring peoples' rights to confidentiality. However in relation to child protection we undertake that:

- Information will only be forwarded on a “need to know” basis in order to safeguard the 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;
- Primary carers, children and young people have a right to know if personal information is being shared and/or a report is being made to the Health Service Executive, 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 will not be used at public performances);
- Procedures will be put in place in relation to the use of images of children/young people;
- Procedures will also be put in place for the recording and storing of information in line with our confidentiality policy.

## **RECRUITING AND SELECTING STAFF POLICY STATEMENT**

We will ensure that staff are carefully selected, trained and supervised to provide a safe environment for all children and young people, by observing the following principles:

- Roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined for every job (paid or voluntary)
- Posts will be advertised widely
- We will endeavour to select the most suitably qualified personnel
- Candidates will be required to complete an application form
- No person who would be deemed to constitute a “risk” will be employed
- Some of the exclusions would include:
  - Any child related convictions
  - 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 will be required to consent to Garda clearance, and where available, this will be sought.

## **STAFF MANAGEMENT STATEMENT**

To protect both staff (paid and voluntary) and children/young people, we undertake that:

New staff will:

- Be made aware of the organisation's code of conduct, child protection procedures, and the identity and role of who has been designated to deal with issues of concern
- Undergo a probationary or trial period

All staff will:

- Receive an adequate level of supervision and review of their work practices;
- Be expected to have read and signed the Child Protection Policy Statement

## **POLICY STATEMENT ON THE INVOLVEMENT OF PRIMARY CARERS**

We are committed to being open with all primary carers.

We undertake to:

- Advise primary carers of our child protection policy;
- Inform primary carers and schools of all activities and potential activities;
- Issue contact/consent forms where Designated Liaison Person;
- Comply with health and safety practices;
- Operate child-centred policies in accordance with best practice;
- Adhere to our recruitment guidelines;
- Ensure as far as possible that the activities are age-appropriate;
- Encourage and facilitate the involvement of parent(s), carer(s) or responsible adult(s), where appropriate.

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

- Respond to the needs of the child or young person;
- Inform the primary carers on an on-going basis unless this action puts the child or young person at further risk;
- 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 Gardaí;
- In the event of a complaint against a member of staff we will immediately ensure the safety of the child/young person and inform the primary carers as appropriate.

As a child centred organisation, we are committed to putting the interest of the child/young person first. To that end we will:

- Contact local Health Service Executive and Gardaí where there is a child protection welfare concern;
- Encourage primary carers to work in partnership with us under the guidelines set out by our organisation to ensure the safety of their children;
- Have designated contact person **Elaine FitzGerald** available for consultation with primary carers in the case of any concern over a child or young person's welfare.

## DEALING WITH AN ALLEGATION AGAINST STAFF

1. In respect to the child/young person **Elaine FitzGerald** will deal with issues related to the child/young person.
  2. In respect to the person against whom the allegation is being made **Elaine FitzGerald** will deal with issues related to the staff member.
- The first priority is to ensure that no child or young person is exposed to unnecessary risk;
  - If allegations are made against the Designated Person, then the Deputy Designated Person should be contacted;
  - The reporting procedures outlined in page 4/5 should be followed. Both the primary carers and the child/young person should be informed of actions planned and taken. The child/young person should be dealt with in an age appropriate manner.
  - The staff member will be informed as soon as possible
    - Of the nature of the allegation
    - The staff member should be given the opportunity to respond
  - The chairperson/head of the organisation should be informed as soon as possible.
  - Any action following an allegation of abuse against an employee should be taken in consultation with Health Service Executive and Gardaí;
  - After consultation, the chairperson/head of organisation should advise the person accused and agreed procedures will be followed.