



COMHALTAS
Salthill
Knocknacarra

Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann
Salthill \ Knocknacarra
(Bóthar na Trá\Cnoc na Cathrach)

Child Protection Policy

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Introduction

Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann is the largest group involved in the preservation and promotion of Irish traditional music. It is a non-profit cultural movement with hundreds of local branches around the world. The Bóthar na Trá/Cnoc na Cathrach branch of Comhaltas has been providing Irish traditional music tuition in the west of Galway city since 2006.

Our branch fully recognises its responsibilities for Child Protection. Our policy applies to all committee members and tutors working with the branch, who understand that they are in a position of responsibility, authority and trust with respect to the young students in our classes, and who partake in our branch sessions.

The welfare, health, wellbeing and best interests of the branch's children and young people are considered paramount. Branch committee members and tutors are required to adhere to the policy, procedures and code of practice in the exercise of their duties.

This document is written to ensure that engaging with our branch of Comhaltas in whatever capacity will be a safe and enjoyable experience for all involved.

All branch personnel, officers, tutors and all other volunteers working with children will be provided with a copy of this policy to raise awareness of child protection and to provide as much information as possible.

For the purpose of this document, a child or young person is defined as any person under 18 years of age.

1. Definitions of child abuse

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs has published guidelines for the protection and welfare of children in their *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* document (see www.dcyh.ie for details). The document sets out four main categories of abuse.

Neglect

“Neglect can be defined as being where the 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, medical care....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.” (Children First p.31)

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse usually happens where there is a relationship between a carer and a child rather than as a specific incident or incidents.

“Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms.” (Children First p.31)

Rather, it can manifest in the child’s behaviour or physical functioning. Examples of these include ‘anxious’ attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement and uncooperative or hostile behaviour.

“The threshold of significant harm is reached when interaction is predominantly abusive and become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/carer.” (Children First p.32)

Examples of emotional abuse in children include:

- Imposition of negative attributes on children, expressed by persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming;
- Emotional unavailability by the child’s parent/carer;
- Unresponsiveness, inconsistent or inappropriate expectations of the child;
- Premature imposition of responsibility on the child;
- Unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of the child’s capacity to understand something or to behave and control him/herself in a certain way;
- Under or over-protection of the child;
- Use of unreasonably harsh discipline;
- Exposure to domestic violence.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child. Examples of physical injury include the following:

- Shaking;
- Use of excessive force in handling;
- Deliberate poisoning;
- Suffocation;
- Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant physical harm to a child.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves the use of a child for gratification or sexual arousal by a person for themselves or others. Examples of sexual abuse include:

- Exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child;
- Intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification;
- Masturbation in the presence of the child or involvement of the child in an act of masturbation;
- Sexual intercourse with a child whether oral, vaginal or anal;
- Sexual exploitation of a child... may also include showing sexually explicit material to children which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse;
- Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an under-age person.

2. Policy statement

The health, safety and well-being of all our children and young people are of paramount importance to all our branch tutors and committee members. The children in our branch have the right to protection, regardless of age, gender, race, culture or disability. They have a right to be safe in all our branch activities.

In our activities we value our children and young people. A culture of mutual respect between children and those who represent the branch in all its activities will be encouraged, with adults modelling good practice in this context.

Our branch recognises that good child protection policies and procedures are of benefit to everyone involved with our branch, including branch officers, tutors and volunteers, as these policies can help protect them from erroneous or malicious allegations.

3. Aims

The aims of our branch Child Protection Policy are:

- To adopt a Policy and Code of Practice on safeguarding the welfare of children in our branch.
- To plan the activities of the branch so as to eliminate situations where the abuse of a child may occur.
- To apply agreed procedures for protecting children to all officers, tutors and volunteers.
- To use supervision as a means of protecting children.
- To ensure that officers, tutors and volunteers are aware of this Policy, Code of Practice and Child Protection procedures to be followed.

4. Designated Liaison Person

At our branch AGM, a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) will be nominated for the coming year. This person will take on the responsibility of managing child protection issues within the branch for the year. The role and responsibilities of the DLP are:

- To implement and promote the branch's Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- To act as the main contact for child protection within the branch.
- To provide information and advice on child protection for the branch officers, tutors and volunteers.
- To create awareness of the importance of child protection.
- To communicate with branch members on child protection issues.
- To keep abreast of developments and understand the most recent information on related issues – data protection, confidentiality, legal and other, that impact on child protection.
- To encourage good practice and support of the procedures involved.
- To maintain confidential records of reported cases and the action taken and to liaise with the statutory agencies and ensure that they have access to all necessary information.
- To regularly monitor and review the branch Policy and Procedures.

5. Procedures

- If a member of our branch receives an allegation, or has a suspicion that a child is being abused, he or she must, in the first instance, consult with the branch Delegated Liaison Officer (DLP).
- All details of an allegation or a suspicion will be recorded by the DLP.
- In cases where an allegation is made, the DLP will report the matter immediately to the relevant authorities, ie. to the designated officer in the HSE or to An Garda Síochána.
- The matters related to child protection issues will be treated in a confidential manner.
- It will not be the responsibility of the DLP or any other branch member to find a resolution or discuss the matter with anyone else except the appropriate agencies.
- All advice proffered by the HSE and An Garda Síochána should be strictly adhered to. From this point on, only the Statutory Authorities should deal with the matter.

6. Code of practice

Our code of practice sets out practical guidelines to be adopted in our normal branch activities. Its purpose is to safeguard the welfare of the children in our charge and to ensure that safe and sensible steps will continue to be taken to ensure the safe practice and environment for young people, tutors, branch officers and volunteers alike.

Branch classes\activities

- The branch chairman shall be responsible for the appointment of tutors. He/she should make appropriate investigations into the background of prospective tutors, and satisfy themselves that the applicant is suitable to work with children.
- Two branch adults, preferably one male and one female, or an adult tutor and one other adult should arrive together to open the venue.
- Seating should be appropriately arranged for both tutor and pupil with respect to physical proximity.
- Venues should be safe from potential hazards.
- Where a tutor is dealing with an individual pupil, another adult, preferably a branch adult should be in close vicinity.
- Tutors should report inappropriate behaviour to a branch officer and to the DLP.
- Trust your intuition if a pupil is acting inappropriately and take action, i.e. share concerns with the DLP and implement measures to reduce risk.
- Verbal affirmation should be used to praise rather than physical touch.
- Physical forms of discipline should never be used.
- Tutors and parents should be made aware of class timetables and location of classrooms.
- All children should be collected promptly after their class and TWO branch adults, preferably one male and one female or a tutor and one other adult should be present to lock up the venue.
- Drop off and collection times should be strictly adhered to.
- There should be adequate supervision of young people while they are waiting for class.
- A branch register and incident book should be kept, in which details of any incident should be recorded – date, time, place and summary of the incident pertaining to children’s welfare etc.

Transport

- Two adults, preferably one male and one female, should travel in the car when only one child is being transported.

- Children should be seated in the back seat of a car. Only the appropriate number of child seats should be transported.
- Journey duration should be reported to another adult.
- A parental consent form should be completed regarding trips /outings.