



Child Protection Policy

**54th Annual
Birr Vintage Week & Arts Festival**

August 2022

Section 1 – Policy Statement

DECLARATION OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Birr Vintage Week & Arts Festival provides the following services/activities to children and young people:

- Children's arts workshops and children's entertainment.

It is the policy of Birr Vintage Week & Arts Festival to safeguard the welfare of all children. We believe that all children attending the Festival have the right to be protected, treated with respect, listened to and to have their views taken into consideration in all decisions affecting them. Our guiding principles are underpinned by **Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and current legislation such as the Children First Act 2015, Child Care Act 1991, Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 and the National Vetting Bureau Act 2012.**

Our guiding principles apply to all volunteers, committee/board members and persons employed by the Festival. All committee/board members, volunteers and persons employed by the Festival must sign up to and abide by these guiding principles and our child safeguarding procedures.

We will review our guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures every two years or sooner if necessary due to service issues or changes in legislation or national policy.

Designated Person: Jamie Dooley-McCormack

Deputy Designated Person: Caroline Conway

We have implemented procedures covering:

- Code of behaviour for all Committee members and volunteers;
- Reporting of suspected or disclosed abuse;
- Confidentiality;
- Recruitment and selecting Committee members and volunteers;
- Managing and supervising Committee members and volunteers;
- Involvement of primary carers;
- Allegations of misconduct or abuse by committee members and volunteers;
- Complaints and comments;
- Incidents and accidents.

The policy will be reviewed: May 2022

Signed by Designated Person: Jamie Dooley-McCormack

Date: 29th May 2022

Section 2

Code of Behaviour for Committee members and volunteers

The code of behaviour can be categorised under the following headings:

1. Child-centred approach
2. Good practice
3. Inappropriate behaviour
4. Physical contact
5. Health and safety

1. Child-centred approach

It is the policy of Birr Vintage Week & Arts Festival to:

- 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;
- Agree facilitator 'contract' before beginning session;
- Encourage feedback from group and record same;
- Use age-appropriate teaching aids and materials;
- Lead by example;
- Be aware of a child's or young person's other commitments when scheduling 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.

2. Good practice

All volunteers, committee members and persons employed by the Festival who have direct contact with children must be Garda vetted through Create and these disclosures retained on file.

In accordance with good practice it is our intention to:

- Register each child/young person for each workshop/activity that they participate on. Information recorded to include: name, address, phone, special requirements, attendance, emergency contact while attending the activity. The following question will also be on registration forms: *Do you consent to your child being photographed during activities at the venue for the purpose of in-house records that from time to time may be made available to funders to show record of activities or for publicity purposes.*
- Make primary carers, children/young people, visitors and facilitators aware of the Child Protection Policy and procedures;
- Be inclusive of children and young people with special needs;
- Plan and be sufficiently prepared, both mentally and physically;

- Report any concerns to the Designated Person and follow reporting procedures;
- Encourage children and young people to report any bullying, concerns or worries;
- Observe appropriate dress and behaviour;
- Evaluate work practices on a regular basis;
- Provide appropriate training for committee members or volunteers where required;
- 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;
- Ensure clear communication between artist and organisations; have written record of agreements;
- Have a written agreement with any external organisation that an artist is working with;
- Not be passive in relation to concerns, i.e., don't 'do nothing';
- Not let a problem get out of control;
- Ensure sessions are not taken alone. If this is not possible then it should be in an open environment with the full knowledge and consent of primary carers;
- Avoid, if at all possible, giving a lift to a child/young person and if you do 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. Health and safety

- Don't leave children unattended or unsupervised;
- Manage any dangerous materials;
- Provide a safe environment;
- Committee members and volunteers should be aware of accident procedure and follow accordingly.

Section 3 – Reporting Procedures

Who to contact about issues related to child protection and welfare

Regardless of how a concern comes to a worker/volunteer's attention, it should be reported to the Designated Liaison.

Jamie Dooley-McCormack 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 her responsibility to support and advise committee members and volunteers about policy and procedures in relation to child protection and to ensure that procedures are followed. It is also her responsibility to liaise with TUSLA or Gardaí where appropriate.

Designated Liaison Person: Jamie Dooley-McCormack

Deputy Designated Liaison Person: Caroline Conway

The Designated Liaison Person, in consultation with the person who raised the concern, will decide if reasonable grounds for concern exist. If reasonable grounds for concern exist, the Designated Liaison Person will report to Tusla through either the Tusla Web Portal or relevant Dedicated Contact Point - **Child and Family Agency, Primary Care Centre, Harbour Road, Mullingar, Co Westmeath, 044 9353997**

The Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook, p.6, defines a child welfare concern as “a problem experienced directly by a child, or the family of a child, that is seen to impact negatively on the child's health, development and welfare, and that warrants assessment and support, but may not require a child protection response”.

Types of Abuse and how they might be Recognised

- Evidence, for example an injury or behaviour, that is consistent with abuse and is unlikely to have been caused in any other way;
- Any concern about possible sexual abuse;
- Consistent signs that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect;
- A child saying or indicating by other means that he or she has been abused;
- Admission or indication by an adult or a child of an alleged abuse they committed;
- An account from a person who saw a child being abused

The following excerpt from *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (4.3.2 - p.38) shows what would constitute **reasonable grounds for concern**:

- (i) specific indication from the child or young person that s/he has been abused;
- (ii) an account by a person who saw the child/young person being abused;
- (iii) evidence, such as an injury or behaviour, which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way;
- (iv) 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, an implausible explanation, other indications of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour];
- (v) consistent indication, over a period of time, that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

Recording procedures

Committee members or volunteers with the organisation may come across actual or suspected child abuse in the course of their work. They are advised to raise this concern with the designated officer who will keep a written record of the concern.

Instances of abuse should be recorded on the TUSLA Child Protection and Welfare Report Form and for retrospective incidents on the TUSLA Retrospective Abuse Report Form both available here <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/publications-and-forms/#SRP>.

Guidelines for dealing with retrospective abuse reports are available here https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/RARF_Guidance_Note_FINAL.pdf

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children states that if a Designated Liaison Person decides not to report a concern to Tusla, the following steps should be taken:

- The reasons for not reporting are to be recorded;
- If any actions are taken as a result of the concern, these should be recorded;
- The worker or volunteer who raised the concern should be given a clear written explanation of the reasons why the concern is not being reported to Tusla;
- The worker or volunteer should be advised that if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free to make a report to Tusla or The Garda Síochána. The worker or volunteer who raised the concern should also be reassured that if they do choose to report to Tusla, they are covered by the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998.

Committee members and volunteers should record the following information in relation to children and young people:

- Suspicions;
- Concerns;
- Worrying observations;
- Behavioural changes;
- Actions and outcomes.

While it is important for Festival volunteers to be alert to signs of child abuse, it is also important not to create an environment of intense anxiety where everyone is suspicious all the time.

The actual decision whether abuse is likely to have happened must be left to the professionals. It is important that everyone in the company is aware that the person who first encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred. Under no circumstances should an individual committee member or volunteers of the festival attempt to deal with a concern alone.

Reports are held in an incident book separate to that of the Health & Safety incident book.

Dealing with a disclosure

- 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; Any complaint must be raised with the designated officer and the child should be informed of this. The child should be assured of discretion at all times.
- 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).

Reporting procedures

It is the designated officers duty to report any suspected information to Tusla. In an emergency, a report must be made directly to An Garda Síochána.

- The person who expresses the concern should be involved and kept informed;
- Actions and outcomes should be noted;
- Inform the Designated Person or his or her deputy, if unavailable;
- Record all details, including the date, time and people involved in the concern or disclosure and the facts in the incident book. Information recorded should be factual. Any opinions should be supported by facts;
- The process for discussing a concern with parents/guardians before reporting is not advised. It is best practice to inform parents/guardians that you are reporting a concern about a child, however, they do not need to be informed that a report is being made if by doing so the child will be placed at further risk or if the family's knowledge of the report could impair Tusla's ability to carry out an assessment
- The Designated Person may contact Tusla Dedicated contact person for an informal consultation prior to making a report;
- Information will be shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis
- If there are reasonable grounds for concern as outlined above, the designated
- person will contact Tusla using the standard reporting form available from Tusla or through the Tusla Portal. Reports can be made verbally initially and then followed by the standard reporting form.
- Reports should be made to Tusla without delay;
- If the Designated Person or Deputy Designated Person is not available, committee members or volunteers are advised to contact a member of the Board before contacting the Tusla directly;
- In case of emergencies outside of Tusla hours, contact the Gardaí. In situations that threaten the immediate safety of a child/ young person, it may be necessary to contact the Gardaí.
- **Instances of abuse should be recorded on the TUSLA Child Protection and Welfare Report and for retrospective incidents on the TUSLA Retrospective Abuse Report Form both available here <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/publications-and-forms/#SRP>** Guidelines for dealing with retrospective abuse reports are available here https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/RARF_Guidance_Note_FINAL.pdf

Section 4 - Confidentiality Statement

Birr Vintage Week & Arts Festival is committed to ensuring peoples' rights to confidentiality. However, in relation to child protection and welfare we undertake that:

- Information will only be forwarded 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;
- 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, while we request it, we cannot guarantee that cameras/videos will not be used at public performances);
- Procedures will also be put in place for the recording and storing of information in line with our confidentiality policy.

Section 5

Recruiting and Selecting Committee members & volunteers

All committee members and volunteers who will have or are likely to have substantial contact with children and young people should undergo a recruitment process in line with the procedures below and appropriate to their level of contact with children and young people.

We will ensure that committee members and volunteers 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);
- We will endeavour to select the most suitably qualified personnel;
- Candidates will be asked to sign a declaration form;
- No person who would be deemed to constitute a 'risk' will be employed/permitted to volunteer;
- 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 committee members or volunteers will be required to consent to Garda clearance, and where available, this will be sought.

Section 6

Managing and supervising Committee members or volunteers

New members/volunteers 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;

All members/volunteers will:

- Be expected to have read and signed the Child Protection Policy Statement.

Section 7 – Involvement of primary carers

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 in a summary document advising of the accessibility of the full document;
- Issue registration/consent forms where relevant;
- 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 we 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 Tusla and, in an emergency, the Gardaí;
- In the event of a complaint against a committee members or volunteers, we will immediately ensure the safety of the child/young person and inform 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 Tusla 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 a designated contact person available for consultation with primary carers in the case of any concern over a child or young person's welfare.

Section 8

Dealing with allegations against member/volunteers

In the event of allegations being made against a member/volunteer, the protection of the child/young person is the first and paramount consideration. The organisation has a dual responsibility in respect of both the child/young person and committee members or volunteers. The same person must not have responsibility for dealing with the child/young person welfare issues and the committee members or volunteers issues.

Dealing with an allegation against committee members and volunteers

Two separate procedures must be followed:

1. In respect of the child/young person the Designated Person or Deputy Designated Person (whomever appropriate) will deal with issues related to the child/young person.
 2. In respect of the person against whom the allegation is made the Chairperson of the Committee will deal with issues related to the committee members and volunteers member.
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- 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 who will inform the Chairperson of the Board immediately ;
 - The reporting procedures outlined in Section 3 of these guidelines should be followed. Both the primary carers and 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 committee members or volunteers will be informed as soon as possible
 - of the nature of the allegation;
 - the committee members or volunteers should be given the opportunity to respond;
 - Any action following an allegation of abuse against an committee members or volunteers should be taken in consultation with Health Service Executive and Gardaí;
 - After consultation, the chairperson/head of the organisation should advise the person accused and agreed procedures will be followed.

Section 9 - Complaints and Comments Procedures

In the event of complaints or comments:

- Complaints or comments will be responded to within a reasonable period of time;
- The Designated Officer (Deputy Designated Officer) has responsibility for directing complaints/comments to the appropriate person;
- Verbal complaints will be logged, recorded and responded to.

Section 10 - Accidents procedure

Accidents procedure

- The organisation must create a register of the contact details of all children/young people attending events without their parents/carers;
- Children/young people's details should be cross-referenced between the incident book and file;
- External organisations with whom the organisation has dealings must provide proof that they have public liability insurance;
- First-aid boxes are available and regularly re-stocked; Committee members, volunteers and workshop facilitators need to be aware of their whereabouts.
- Availability of first-aid should be in accordance with the organisation's Health and Safety guidelines. The location of accident/incident books must be made known to committee members and volunteers;
- Children and young people must be advised of risks of dangerous material if applicable;
- Take cognisance of responsibility for first-aid on off-site trips.

Protection of Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998

The Protection of Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 came into operation on 23 January 2009. It's main provisions are:

The provision of immunity from civil liability of any person who reports child abuse "reasonably and in good faith" to designated officers of health boards or any member of the Garda Síochána.

The provision of significant protections for employees who report child abuse. These protections cover all employees and all forms of discrimination up to and including, dismissal.

The creation of a new offence of false reporting of child abuse where a person makes a report of child abuse to the appropriate authorities "known that statement to be false". This is a new criminal offence designated to protect innocent person from malicious reports.

Forms:

- Volunteer Reference Form – Confidential (attached)
- Declaration Form – Confidential (attached)
- Standard form for reporting child protection and/or welfare concerns can be obtained from the Festival Secretary.

BIRR VINTAGE WEEK & ARTS FESTIVAL
Volunteer Reference Form

CONFIDENTIAL

_____ has expressed an interest in becoming a volunteer with Birr Vintage Week & Arts Festival and has given your name as a referee.

This post involves substantial access to children and as an organisation committed to the welfare and protection of children, we are anxious to know if you have any reason, at all, to be concerned about the above named being in contact with children or young people? YES NO
 (If you have answered yes, we will contact you in confidence.)

If you are happy to complete this reference form, all information contained on the form will remain confidential and will only be shared with the applicant's immediate supervisor, should they be offered a volunteer position. We would appreciate you being extremely candid in your evaluation of this person.

How long have you known the above named?

In what capacity?

What attributes does this person have which you would consider makes them a suitable volunteer?

How would you describe their personality?

Please rate this person on the following (please tick):

	Poor	Average	Good	V/Good	Excellent
Responsibility					
Maturity					
Self-motivation					
Motivation of others					
Energy					
Trustworthiness					
Reliability					

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Occupation: _____

**BIRR VINTAGE WEEK & ARTS FESTIVAL
Volunteer Declaration**

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To be completed by volunteers and employees of the Festival working with children and young people.

First Name:	Surname:
Date of Birth:	Place of Birth:
Address:	
Tel No:	Mobile No:
Any other name(s) previous known as:	

Is there any reason that you would be considered unsuitable to work with children and young people:

YES NO

If yes, please outline the reason below:

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence? YES NO

If yes, please state below the nature and date(s) of the offence(s)?

Signed: _____ Date: _____