

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Guidelines & Procedures in respect of Craobh Naithí's involvement with children and vulnerable adults

Note: A child or young person is defined as any person less than 18 years.

INTRODUCTION

Craobh Naithí is a branch of **Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann** and it fully recognises its responsibilities for Child Protection. Our policy applies to all branch officers, branch members, tutors and volunteers etc (hereinafter ALL referred to as "members") working with the Branch.

COMHALTAS is an international organisation with many years experience in passing on our cultural traditions to younger generations through music, song, dance and the Irish language.

As a Craobh Naithí officer, member or volunteer, it is important to understand that you are in a position of responsibility, authority and trust with respect to the young people you may work with or come in contact with in the course of Craobh Naithí related activities.

Within Craobh Naithí the welfare of children and young people, their health and well being and their best interests are considered paramount.

Craobh Naithí members 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 working with Craobh Naithí, in whatever capacity, will be a safe and enjoyable experience for all involved.

POLICY STATEMENT

At Craobh Naithí branch of Comhaltas the health, safety and well being of all our children and young people is of paramount importance to all the officers, members, tutors and volunteers. Our children have the right to protection, regardless of age, gender, race, culture or disability. They have a right to be safe in all our 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.

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

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This policy ensures that tutors, branch officers, branch members and volunteers are clear about the actions necessary with regard to child protection issues.

Its aims are:-

- To raise the awareness of all – tutors, branch officers, branch members and volunteers and to identify responsibility in reporting possible cases of abuse.
- To ensure effective communication between tutors, branch officers, branch members and volunteers when dealing with child protection issues.
- To lay down the correct procedures for those who encounter an issue of child protection.

LEGISLATION:

*Under **The Child Care Act of 1991 and Children First – National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children -1999 & 2009**, voluntary sector organisations such as ours have a statutory duty of care for the children and young people to whom we provide services.*

The principle, which should inform best practice in child protection, is that the welfare of the child is of paramount importance.

“All organisations, whether statutory or voluntary, have an overall corporate responsibility to safeguard children, and should pay particular attention to

- *Safe and clearly defined methods of selecting staff and volunteers*
- *Developing effective procedures for the reporting and management of child*

protection concerns

- *Identifying a designated staff member/volunteer to act as a liaison with outside*

agencies and as a resource person to any staff member or volunteer who has child protection concerns. The designated person will be responsible for reporting allegations or suspicions of child abuse to the HSE (Health Service Executive) and/or An Garda Síochána.

(Children First – National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children – 1999 & 2009)

DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON (DLP):

A Designated Liaison Person, Helena Burke and a Deputy Liaison Person, Grace Corrigan have been nominated by Croabh Naithí Branch. The DLP has the responsibility for managing child protection issues within the branch.

The role and responsibilities of the DLP are:

- To implement and promote the Craobh Naithí'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 membership.
- To create awareness of the importance of child protection.
- To communicate with 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

FOUR ELEMENTS:

1. We establish a safe environment in which Children can learn, perform and develop

- a. We create an environment where children feel secure, are encouraged to communicate and are listened to.
- b. We ensure children know that there are adults in Craobh Naithí whom they can approach if they have concerns.
- c. We ensure that adult members of Craobh Naithí and other adults working with Craobh Naithí possess an understanding of the responsibility placed on the organisation for child protection by stating its obligation in this policy.

2. We raise awareness of the child protection issues among members and co-workers

- a. We ensure every member in contact with children is aware of this Policy and Procedures/guidelines and are aware of their inherent responsibilities.
- b. We raise awareness of the Child Protection Policy with all members, officers, parents, tutors and volunteers.

3. We practise safe recruitment and check the suitability of tutors

- a. We recognise the importance of Garda vetting/checking the background of tutors and others who are given responsibility to work with children

4. We implement Procedures in respect of suspect, alleged or confirmed cases of abuse

- a. We recognise that members may in some instances have cause for concern. Should the latter occur guidance should be sought from the DLP Helena Burke or Grace Corrigan who will liaise with statutory agencies, namely the HSE (Health Service Executive) and /or An Garda Síochána.
- b. We will maintain effective links with the relevant agencies and cooperate with any enquiry regarding child protection matters.
- c. We will follow child protection procedures where an allegation is made against a member/volunteer.

CODE OF PRACTICE/ SET OF PROCEDURES

The Code of Practice is to safeguard the welfare of the young 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, staff, branch members and volunteers alike.

A) Recruitment procedures

We will co-operate with An Garda Síochána's vetting procedures in relation to volunteers, Branch Officers and tutors.

B) Branch activities and classes.

Craobh Naithí:

- Will be responsible for the appointment of teachers / tutors.
- Register each child/young person (name, address, phone, attendance, emergency contact);
- Ensure that two Branch adults, preferably one male and one female, or an adult tutor and one other adult arrive together to open the venue.
- Arrange seating appropriately for both tutor and pupil with respect to physical proximity.
- Where a tutor is dealing with an individual pupil leave door open unless there is a clear pane of glass on the door
- It is necessary for a tutor to report inappropriate behaviour to a Branch adult and to the DLP
- Trust your intuition if a pupil is acting inappropriately and take action, ie share concerns with the DLP and implement measures to reduce risk.

- Use verbal affirmation to praise rather than physical touch.
- Never use physical forms of discipline.
- Tutors and parents should be made aware of class timetable.
- Ensure that after class all children are collected promptly and two Branch adults, preferably one male and one female or a tutor and one other adult are present to lock up the venue.
- Ensure adequate supervision of young people while waiting for class
- There should be adequate supervision of young people while they are waiting for class.
- Maintain a class register
- Maintain an incident book and record details of any child welfare incident – date, time, place and summary of the incident will be recorded.

C). Travel and overnight accommodation

By Car

- Ensure that two adults, preferably one male and one female, travel in the car when only one child is being transported.
- When transporting young persons seat them in the back seat,
- Only carry the appropriate number vis a vis seat belts.
- Seat belts must always be worn.
- Journey duration should be reported to another adult.
- A parental consent proforma should be completed regarding trips/outings.

By Bus:

- Use a reputable Coach company and check their insurance.
- Ensure all children have seats and that seat belts are used
- Ensure sufficient ratio of adults/supervisors to children during travel.

Trips involving overnight accommodation

- Parents who are present are responsible for the safety of their own children.
- Where a parent is not travelling, a parental consent form should be completed by the parent and another adult nominated to take responsibility for that child.

- Particular care will be taken to ensure that the privacy of children is respected at all times
- Separate accommodation for boys and girls
- Care is taken to ensure that there is adequate gender based supervision in the sleeping area

D) Procedures where there is an allegation or suspicion that a child has been abused

- If a member of Craobh Naithí 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 DLP. Helena Burke
- It is important that the suspicions or allegations are recorded by the DLP.
- In cases where an allegation is made, the DLP must report the matter immediately to the relevant authorities, ie. to the Designated Officer in the HSE or to An Garda Síochána.
- It is essential that at all times the matter is treated in a confidential manner.
- It is NOT the responsibility of the DLP or any other person 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.

Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998

This act was passed on 23rd January 1999. The main provisions of the act are:

- The provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse “reasonably and in good faith” to designated officers of the HSE or An Garda Síochána.
- The creation of a new offence of false reporting of child abuse where a person makes a report “knowing that statement to be false”
- “A person shall not be liable in damages in respect of the communication, whether in writing or otherwise, by him or her to an appropriate person of his or her opinion that
 - A child has been or is being assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused, or
 - A child’s health, development or welfare has been or is being avoidably impaired or neglected
- Unless it is proved that he or she has not acted reasonably and in good faith in forming that opinion and communicating it to the appropriate person”

E) Insurance

Comhaltas Insurance Policy provides cover for Craobh Naithí branch activities. While Comhaltas has an Insurance Policy the following rules must be adhered to:

- Ensure adults are first to arrive at the venue.
- Ensure classes are supervised if or when the tutor has to leave the room.
- Ensure that all pupils have been collected prior to the adults leaving the venue
- Pupils must be supervised at all times.
- Ensure the venues are safe from all / any potential hazards.

F) Authorisation for Photography/Video and Audio recording

Child protection issues and sensitivity towards identity theft have presented challenges to all those involved with recording images of people for promotional purposes. In the same way that video and audio recordings require authorisation and permissions at competitions, it is also important to follow the proper procedures in photographing young persons.

The subjects of any photographs must be informed that their picture has been taken and may be used for promotional purposes by Craobh Naithí. Ideally it is preferable that subjects (if under 18 years) or their guardians sign approval on the official form. All Comhaltas personnel, 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.

Craobh Naithi will review this policy at regular intervals (every 12 months)

and will provide effective management and training for all personnel.