

Child Protection Guidelines for Participants of The Russell Festival Weekend

The Russell Festival Weekend is a local Traditional Arts festival, taking place in Doolin, Co.Clare annually. As part of the festival there are workshops and kids/teen sessions, which are given by tutors/volunteers, for children (under 18 years of age). In the following document the Committee will outline how the children's safety has been taken into consideration.

Recruitment:

When recruiting tutors and volunteers working with children, the Festival Committee will ensure that the tutors have been garda vetted and have completed "Children First" training and are aware of the Festivals Child Safeguarding document.

General Guidelines:

The rights of children are enshrined in the constitution of Ireland and international and domestic law. In Ireland, the key legislative provisions regarding the safety, well-being, and protection of children are as follows:

The Child Care Act, 1991 Domestic Violence Act, 1996 Protections for Persons reporting Act, 1998 The Education Act, 1998 The Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act, 1997 Freedom of Information Act, 1997 The Education and Welfare Act, 2000 Children's Act, 2001 Ombudsman for Children Act, 2002

The Statutory Authorities with responsibility for the protection and welfare of children are; The Health Service Executive An Garda Siochana The Department of Health and Children published the document, 'National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children ',' Children First, in 1999.

"Children First", the national child protection guidelines, published in September 1999, it called on organisations working with children to put in place clear procedures which staff & volunteers must follow where they suspect or are alerted to, possible child abuse.

Every tutor/volunteer working with children of during events for the Russell Festival weekend will be given the child safeguarding guidelines and must make themselves familiar with these guidelines by completing the following short course @:

<https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/children-first-e-learning-programme/>

Any tutor or volunteer will be instructed as to who to contact for guidance as part of Festival events in relation to child safeguarding. The Guidelines below provide staff with guidance in relation to recognizing the signs and symptoms of child abuse and with procedures for dealing immediately with such concerns. The Guidelines should be taken in conjunction with Children First and not as a stand-alone document.

A central facet of the Guidelines is the requirement for there to be a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) for the organisation. The DLP (In this case the Secretary of the festival: Kate Daly) will act as a liaison with outside agencies such as health boards and as a resource person to any staff/volunteer member who has child protection concerns. As a visiting tutor, you should make yourself familiar with all the guidelines policies and have the contact number & email address for the Secretary, **Kate Daly, DLP (085 11 44 715), therussellfestival@gmail.com**.

Recognizing child abuse

Child abuse can take different forms, but usually consists of one or more of the following:

- **Neglect:** Where a child's needs for food, warmth, shelter, nurturance, and safety are not provided to the extent that the child suffers significant harm.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Where a child's need for affection, approval, consistency, and security is not being met.
- **Physical Abuse:** Where a child is assaulted or injured in some way that is deliberate.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Where a child is used for the sexual gratification of another. The Guidelines provide advice on the signs and behaviors that may be indicative of child abuse.

What responsibilities have you to your participants who are children?

In situations where a person suspects that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse, they should ensure that such concerns are reported in accordance with the procedures outlined in these Guidelines. It is important that tutors/volunteers keep their eyes and ears open at all times. If there is an incident or accident during a festival event with children under your care as a tutor/volunteer: you can deal with the situation leaving the remainder of child participants supervised at all times. If you cannot ensure there is a designated assistant available to you during your organised tutoring time (one can be organised with the Russell committee), it is advised if dealing with an accident that you never tend to a child's needs alone. Make sure you bring 2 or more children from the class with you to supervise.

The risk of abuse of a minor can also be from a parent/carer and in instances where concern is raised by a tutor about a child in a Festival event this will be brought to the DLP, or directly to Tusla. It is the standing of the Festival Committee that no sign of risk of abuse should go undisclosed and tutors will be encouraged to keep note of the wellbeing of the children within their care for the duration of the festival event and to report anything to the DLP or directly to Tusla if any concern is raised. It is noted by the Festival that for a tutor/volunteer that they can pass this information on to the DLP to follow up with the outside agencies on their behalf.

Code of Conduct:

It will be outlined to tutors what is considered acceptable behaviour when dealing with minors:

No sharing of personal information e.g. telephone number with a minor.

No being alone in a room with a minor unless there are two other children present also.

No physical touching of a minor

No profane language to be used in the presence of a minor.

Having consideration for the whole group of children in attendance, creating an atmosphere for learning and enjoyment which is inclusive of all participants.

Reporting concerns to a Health Board

If you have a suspicion that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse you should, without delay, report the matter to the Health Board Official. You should make yourself familiar with the contact number of your local health board or a contact number for your local Gardaí.

What will the Health Board do with a report?

Once a report of suspected child abuse has been made to a health board, it is then a matter for that health board to decide upon the action, if any, which is necessitated by that report. The social worker handling the case may need to seek further clarification from the person who first raised the concerns. In some cases, the response of the health board will be to call a child protection conference.

Allegations or suspicions of child abuse concerning you the tutor/volunteer

As a tutors/volunteer, the most important consideration to be taken into account is the protection of children, and their safety and well-being must be the priority.

As a tutors/volunteers, you may be subject to malicious allegations. If you do find yourself in this situation you can refer to your event notes (which we recommend you keep) and have these available for further investigation. It is important to note that there are two procedures to be followed by you in respect of an allegation:

- The reporting of your notes to the investigation unit.
- The procedure for dealing with the allegation as outlined by the organisation. Child Protection Guidelines. Child Protection Guidelines will advise that the accused should maintain strict confidentiality.

Feedback from Health Boards.

The Children First guidelines place an onus on health boards to ensure that arrangements are put in place to provide feedback to parents/guardians in regard to the progress of a child abuse investigation regarding a tutor. It is clearly stated in those guidelines that efforts should be made to investigate complaints against a tutors/volunteer promptly bearing in mind the serious implications for an innocent tutors/volunteer.

Peer abuse and bullying.

The Guidelines provide advice on the recognition and reporting of abuse perpetrated by a child's peers. It is important that potentially abusive behavior between children is not ignored and, as appropriate, certain cases should be referred to the health board or dealt with by reporting your concerns to the parents of the children involved. Tutors/volunteers are responsible, in the first instance, for dealing with bullying in class. The more extreme forms of bullying behavior, when perpetrated by adults rather than children, would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse. Only such serious incidences of bullying should be referred to the health board.

Russell Festival Weekend Committee

Within this framework, The Russell Festival Weekend Committee accepts our responsibility and obligation to safeguard the protection and welfare of children in our care, we undertake to ensure a best practice response to child protection issues by having a clear child protection policy and procedures which are designed to underpin and demonstrate our commitment to our duty of care. The welfare of the child is paramount in every circumstance. The guidelines outlined, give clear direction and guidance on child protection issues. It is incumbent upon every adult working with children to practice their 'moral responsibility' in reporting concerns, allegations, suspicions or a disclosure about child abuse to the Designated Officer for Child Protection in any event.

- Having an obligation on tutors/volunteers to observe this code of good practice;

- Ensuring all tutors have completed Child Protection Training and are vetted.

Having procedures in place for tutors/volunteer to report disclosures, allegations, suspicions, and awareness of all forms of abuse to the civil authorities.

All child protection concerns relating to tutors countrywide should be reported to the CYC Child Protection Officer in the health board official in their local area.

In making any report an individual needs to take the following into consideration:

- 1: The protection and safety of the child is paramount;
- 2: The principle of natural justice – a person is innocent until proven otherwise.
- 3: The principle of confidentiality – only those that need to know should be told of a suspicion/allegation/disclosure of abuse and that the number that needs to be kept informed should be kept to a minimum.

In the case of a disclosure/suspicion or allegation of child abuse, the tutors/volunteers must report without delay to the Child Protection Liaison Person. The Child Protection Liaison Person will contact a Health Board Official or Local Gardaí. The Child Protection Officer will fulfill the function of ‘Designated Officer’ and follow procedures as outlined in the guidelines above. Where an allegation is made against a tutors/volunteers or an organization, the staff member receiving the allegation should make contact with the local Child Protection Liaison person.

Where an allegation is made against a tutors/volunteers, the staff member receiving the allegation should make contact with the Child Protection Liaison person of the Russell Festival Weekend Committee.

In the case of an emergency, where a child is deemed at serious risk and where no contact can be made with the CPO in the committee, they should contact the local Garda station. Any intentional breach of these Guidelines is a disciplinary matter and will be dealt with by the Russell Festival Weekend Committee.

It is important to note the following:

When tutoring or volunteering, do so in a room with a window or door with a window. If this is not available the door to the room must be ajar/open.

Where possible tutors/volunteers should have an assistant in class to help supervise children. Children should never be left unattended. Tutors should at all times have access to a phone.

When tending to the needs of a sick child there must always be two or more children in attendance also. A parent/guardian should be contacted immediately. All accidents will be recorded and parents informed of intervention and outcomes.

Parent’s permission should be sought if a tutor/volunteer wishes to use camera equipment in class. Parents can agree or disagree with their use on a signed permission form.

Contacts:

THE CHILD PROTECTION UNIT NYCI 3 Montague Street, Dublin 2, Ireland. Tel: 01-4784122 Fax: 01-4783974 Email: childprotection@nyci.ie

Websites of interest:

www.childprotection.ie www.hse.ie

Publications of interest:

Our Duty to Care downloadable from www.dohc.ie/publications Child Care act available to view from www.irishstatutebook.ie Children First available to view from www.dohc.ie/publications

Ennistymon Garda Station: Call: +353 65 70 72180

Tusla, Limerick Office: +353 61 588 688