

**The Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre
Naul
Co. Dublin**

Tel: (01) 8020898

**Protection Policy for
Children/Young People/Vulnerable Adults**

The Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre **Child Protection Policy SEC01**

The Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre regards child protection and good working practice as a priority. In the interests of the safety and well being of all children and young people, it has developed and operates a formal child protection policy.

We adhere to the recommendations of *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children*, published by the Department of Health and Children.

The Centre is committed to ensuring that everyone working with children or young people:

- have undergone a Criminal Records Bureau check at enhanced level;
- are adequately trained and supervised;
- understand and follow the Centre's Child Protection Policy.

The Child Protection Policy may be viewed and/or a copy obtained from The Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre.

As part of this Centre's commitment to children and young people it has appointed **Seán MacPhilibín** as Child Protection Co-ordinator and **Colette Lawless** as Deputy Child Protection Co-ordinator. All the children and young People involved in activities within the Centre will be informed as to who they are and how they can be contacted.

Should the Centre have any child protection concerns it will seek the advice of the Health Service Executive and if appropriate, contact the Gardai.

The Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre:

- recognises that child protection is everyone's responsibility;
- is committed to supporting parents and families;
- recognises the unique and individual worth of each child;
- is committed to nurturing, protecting and safeguarding children & young children;
- exercises care in the appointment of all those working with children and young people in the Centre, working to 'Our Duty to Care' principles (Fact Sheet 2, Department of Health & Children, 2002);
- is committed to following statutory and specialist guidelines in working with children and young people;
- seeks to support all those affected by abuse;
- is committed to supporting, training and resourcing those who work with children and young people and provide regular supervision;
- will review its child protection policy annually and register it with the Arts Council.

The Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre Code of Behaviour for Staff SEC02

Staff must not:-

- spend excessive amounts of time alone with children, away from others. Meetings with individual children should be avoided or take place within sight of others. If privacy is needed, the door should remain open and other staff or volunteers should be aware of the meeting;
- make unnecessary physical contact with children. However, there may be occasions when physical contact is unavoidable, such as providing comfort at times of distress, or physical support in contact sports or similar. In all such cases contact should only take place with the consent of the child;
- take children alone in a car, however short the journey. Where this is unavoidable, it should be with the full knowledge and consent of the parents (or guardians) and the person in charge of the Centre event.
- meet children outside of organised activities, unless it is with the knowledge and consent of the parents and the person in charge of the event;
- start an investigation or question anyone after an allegation or concern has been raised. This is the job of the authorities. You should just record the facts and report these to a designated person;
- (even in fun):
Initiate or engage in sexually provocative conversations or activity;

Allow the use of inappropriate language to go unchallenged;

Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do themselves;

Allow any allegations made by a child go without being reported and addressed, or either trivialise or exaggerate child abuse issues;

Make promises or keep any disclosure confidential from relevant authorities;

Show favouritism to any one child, nor should they issue or threaten any form of physical punishment.

Staff must:

- respect children's rights to privacy and encourage children and adults to feel comfortable enough to report attitudes or behaviour they do not like;
- act with discretion with regards to their personal relationships. They should ensure their personal relationships do not affect their leadership role within the organisation;
- refrain from consuming alcohol for a period of at least 12 hours prior to assuming responsibility for any child or children; or if they have been identified as a duty officer for any period of time;
- be aware of the procedures for reporting concerns or incidents, and should familiarise themselves with the contact details of the designated persons;
- make others aware if he/she finds himself or herself the subject of inappropriate affection of attention from a child;
- report to a designated person if he/she has any concerns relating to the welfare of a child in their care, be it concerns about actions/behaviour of another staff member or volunteer or concerns based on any conversation with the child; particularly where the child makes an allegation.

Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre Reporting Procedures: SEC 03:

SEC03: 01 Recognition of Abuse:

Child abuse can and does occur both within a child's family and in institutional or community settings. The Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre acknowledges that some individuals seek to use voluntary and community organisations to gain access to children, and that it is necessary to have an open mind when the possibility arises that a member of the Centre Staff is suspected of abuse or inappropriate activity. The following may indicate that a child is being or has been abused:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries, particularly if such an injury is unlikely to have occurred accidentally;
- An injury for which the child's or adult's explanation appears Inconsistent;
- The child describes an abusive act or situation;
- Unexplained changes in behaviour;
- Inappropriate sexual awareness or sexually explicit behaviour;
- The child appears distrustful of adults;
- The child is not allowed to be involved in normal social activities;
- The child becomes increasingly dirty or shabby.

The recognition of abuse is not always easy and the Centre acknowledges that its staff are not experienced in this area and will not easily know whether or not abuse is taking place. Indeed, it is not the place of Staff of the Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre to make a judgement. However, it is their responsibility to act on concerns in order to safeguard the welfare of the child.

RECORDING PROCEDURES SEC03: 02

Staff of the Centre are encouraged to discuss any concerns with the nominated Child Protection Co-ordinator or Deputy for the Centre. If an individual feels that the co-ordinator has not responded appropriately, they are free to contact Health Service Executive.

Every effort should be made to maintain confidentiality. Suspicions **must not** be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above. If the Child Protection Co-ordinator or Deputy is absent then individuals should not delay and should contact Health Service Executive.

The Co-ordinator or Deputy has the responsibility to act on behalf of the Centre in dealing with allegations or suspicion of abuse or neglect. This will include collating

details of the allegation or suspicion and referring the matter to the appropriate statutory authorities. It is the task of the Health Service Executive, not the Centre, to investigate the matter.

Under no circumstances should Staff of the Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre carry out their own investigation into suspicions or allegations of abuse, neither should they question children closely, as to do so, may distort any investigation that may be carried out subsequently by the Gardai or the Health Service Executive.

If a child says something or acts in such a way that abuse is suspected, the person receiving the information should:

- react in a calm but concerned way;
- Tell the child that he/she is right to share what has happened; and that he/she is not responsible for what has happened;
- Find an early opportunity to explain that it is likely that the information will need to be shared - do not promise to keep secrets;
- Take what the child says seriously and allow the child to continue at his/her own pace;
- Keep questions to an absolute minimum only to clarify what the child is saying; not to interrogate. Do not ask a question that suggests a particular answer;
- Not interrupt the child when they are recalling significant events;
- Reassure the child that the problem can be dealt with;
- Tell the child what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared. Say that you cannot promise to keep secrets;
- Make a full record of what is said and done, though this should not result in a delay in reporting the problem.

The record should include:

- A verbatim record of the child's disclosure. This may be used later in a criminal trial and it is vital that what the child discloses is recorded as accurately as possible. Therefore, the record must be drafted in the child's words and should not include the assumptions or opinions of others;
- The nature of the allegation or concern;
- A description of any visible physical injury (clothing should not be removed to inspect the child). Children should not be medically examined by a member of the Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre, except by medical professionals;
- The child's account of what has occurred;
- Any dates, times or places and any other potentially useful information.

The problem should be reported IMMEDIATELY to the Child Protection Co-ordinator or Deputy who will take the appropriate action. If the concern arises out of

normal office hours (evenings and weekends) and it is clear that abuse has occurred or there is an immediate threat, contact should be made with the Gardai. Advice can also be sought from the local Duty Social Worker of the Health Service Executive.

Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre **Confidentiality Statement SEC04**

We in the Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre are committed to ensuring peoples' rights to confidentiality. However, in relation to child protection and welfare we undertake that:

- Any information regarding child protection issues will be stored in a secure place and there will be limited access to this by the Child Protection Co-ordinator and Deputy Child Protection Co-ordinators;
- Information relating to any disclosures will be passed to the Local Health Service Executive, Gardai or other relevant agency only. Concerns relating to child protection which have not been referred to an external body will be retained in a secure location by the Co-ordinator and Deputy Co-ordinators for a period of one year;
- Members of the Centre are expected to follow the procedures Laid out in this policy. The Centre will support and protect those staff and students who, in good faith and without malicious intent, report suspicions of abuse or concerns about colleagues and their actions;
- 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).

Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre **Recruiting and Selecting Staff SEC05:**

The Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre will ensure that staff with access to or working with children, young people or vulnerable adults are carefully selected and supervised by observing the following principles:

- Roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined for all jobs whether paid or voluntary;
- Such positions will be advertised widely;
- We will select the most suitably qualified personnel;
- All candidates will be asked to sign a declaration form;
- Two recent, relevant, independent and verbally confirmed will be required;
- No person deemed to constitute a risk would be employed. Restrictions/prohibitions on recruitment would be based on:
 - Child related convictions;
 - Refusal to sign a declaration form;
 - Insufficient documentary evidence of identification;
 - Concealing information on ones suitability to work with children;
 - Full-time or long term employment will require a relevant probationary period (typically six months);
 - All staff will have to agree to Garda Clearance.

Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre **Managing and Supervising Staff SEC06**

All staff will:

- Be made aware of the organisations code of conduct, child protection procedures and the identity and role of who has been Assigned to deal with issues of concern;
- Be expected to have read and signed the Child Protection Policy Statement;
- Be advised to undertake child protection training;
- Receive an adequate level of supervision and review of their work Practices.

New Staff will:

- Take part in mandatory training/induction session;
- Undergo a probationary period.

Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre **Involvement of Primary Carers SEC07**

We are committed to a policy of openness with primary carers.

We will:

- Advise primary carers of our child protection policy;
- Inform participating primary carers and schools of event content including all activities and potential activities;
- Comply with health and safety practices;
- Operate child-centred policies in accordance with best practice;
- Adhere to our recruitment guidelines;
- Ensure that as far as possible, the activities are age appropriate;
- Ensure and facilitate the involvement of parents/carers/or other responsible adults where appropriate.

If we have any concerns about the welfare of the young person/child/vulnerable adult 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/young person/vulnerable adult 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 Gardai;
- In the event of a complaint against a member of staff/volunteer we will immediately ensure the safety of the child/young person/vulnerable adult and inform primary carers.

Should we in the Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre have any concerns about the safety and welfare of any child/young person/vulnerable adult we will:

- Contact the local HSE and or Gardai as appropriate;
- Encourage primary carers to work with us to ensure the safety and welfare of those concerned;
- Designate a contact person for dealing with any concerns relating to children/young person/vulnerable adult in the case of any concerns over their welfare.

Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre
Dealing with an allegation against staff. SEC 08

Two separate procedures will be followed:

Colette Lawless will handle issues raised/related to the child/young person/vulnerable adult involved;

Seán MacPhilibín, (Director of Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre) will deal with issues relating to the staff member/tutor involved.

If an allegation is made against any of the Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre's designated person(s), Rory O'Byrne (Arts Office, Fingal County Council) should be contacted.

The reporting procedures outlined in section three of this policy will be followed. Both the primary carers and child/young person/vulnerable adult will be informed of actions planned and taken.

The staff member will be informed as soon as possible of the nature of the allegation. The Staff member will be given the opportunity to respond.

The Chairperson and Director of the organisation will be informed as soon as possible.

Any action following an allegation of abuse against an employee/service contractor will be taken in consultation with HSE and Gardaí.

The Chairperson and Director will advise the person accused and agreed procedures will be followed.

Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre
In the event of complaints/comments. SEC09

In the event of complaints/comments:

- Complaints or comments will be responded to within two weeks;
- All such complaints/comments will be forwarded to Seán MacPhilibín;
- Those making verbal complaints will be requested to put them in writing and direct them to Seán MacPhilibín.

Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre
Health and Safety/Accidents Procedures SEC10

The Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre maintains its own Health and Safety Statement (currently under review - March 2008)

- A register of all children/young people/vulnerable adults attending/participating in events in the Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre will be kept;
- Outside groups/organisations with whom the Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre has dealings must provide proof that they have public liability insurance;
- First Aid boxes are available and regularly stocked/restocked and Their locations are made known to staff;
- Availability of first-aid is in accordance with the organisations Health and Safety guidelines. An accident/incident book will be kept and its location made known to staff;
- All dangerous materials solvents/cleaning agents will be kept locked in separate stores.

Documents Consulted/References.

- **Children First:** National Guidelines for the protection and Welfare of Children. Department of Health and Children 1999;
- **Our Duty to Care:** The Principles of good Practice for the Protection Of Children and Young People. Department of Health and Children 2002;
- **Storytellers of Ireland:** Child Protection Policy 2006-2007;
- **Poetry Ireland/Eigse Éireann: Writers in Schools;** Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Young People in the Arts Sector;
- **An Comhdhail na Muinteoirí le Rinci Gaelacha** - Child Protection Policy;
- **Linenhall Arts Centre** - Child Protection Policy 2007.

Appendix 1: Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre Staff/Volunteers.

**Declaration of suitability to work with
Children/Young people/Vulnerable Adults**

I (Name) _____ of

(address) _____

hereby declare that there is no reason known to me which would deem me unsuitable to work with children/young people and carry out my role within or on behalf of this organisation. I further declare that there are no convictions, claims or complaints against me (past or pending) that would deem me to be unsuitable to work with children or young people.

I understand and accept that my making a false declaration would be grounds for dismissal of the termination of my contract with the Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre.

I give my permission to the Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre to contact An Garda Síochána for clearance/vetting purposes.

I declare that I have read the Séamus Ennis Cultural Centres' Child Protection Policy and agree to adhere to it.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

These guidelines are being implemented in conjunction with An Comhairle Ealíon.