

ARTS COUNCIL OF NORTHERN IRELAND

SAFE GUARDING POLICY STATEMENT

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland is the lead development agency for the arts in Northern Ireland. We are the main support for artists and arts organisations offering a broad range of funding opportunities through our Exchequer and National Lottery funds.

The Arts Council is committed to providing a high level of service to all our clients whether individual artists or arts organisations.

As the lead development organisation for the arts in Northern Ireland, we believe that:

- The welfare of the child, young person and vulnerable adult is paramount.
- All children, young person and vulnerable adult whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and / or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and in an informed manner.
- Staff and volunteers should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

The Arts Council will take every reasonable step to ensure that children, young people and vulnerable adults are protected where:

- Our own staff are directly involved in the delivery of an arts project
- Our staff recruit or broker relationships between an artist or arts facilitator and a third party
- We fund an arts organisation for a programme of work, or for core work
- We seek to promote a positive ethos of collaborative work between the professional arts sector and children, young people and/or vulnerable adults

If a complaint or criminal proceeding occurs between an artist and arts facilitator and a third party, as a result of the Arts Council's direct or indirect involvement, the Arts Council will treat the situation with the utmost urgency. All concerns, disclosures and allegations are dealt with by the Arts Council's Designated or Deputy Designated Officer for Child Protection .

The Arts Council's Designated / Deputy Designated Officer is responsible for acting as a source of advice on child protection matters, for coordinating action within the Arts Council and for liaising with Health and Social Services Trusts and other agencies about suspected or actual cases of child abuse.

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland with the support of The Volunteer Development Agency has developed overarching child protection guidelines for use by organisations within the arts sector in Northern Ireland. This resource document outlines legislative and good practice

guidelines for working with children. Organisations should take these guidelines and adapt them to suit their specific activities and organisational structure.

It is a requirement of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland funding conditions that an organisation intending to work with children and young people commits to a Child Protection Policy, namely that an Arts Organisation;

"are committed to practice which protects children from harm. Staff, volunteers and artists in this organisation accept and recognise their responsibilities under the Children (NI) Order 1995, about safeguarding children, and will endeavour to carry these out by":

- Having an awareness of the issues which cause children harm;
- Adopting child protection guidelines for staff, leaders, volunteers and artists;
- Providing information about child protection and good practice to children, parents, staff, volunteers and artists;
- Sharing information about concerns with children, parents and others who need to know; following carefully the procedures and recruitment and selection of helpers (staff, volunteers, artists) and the management of the group;
- Undertaking appropriate training;
- Keeping child protection policies under regular review; and
- Providing information as required to management committees/funders.

The Arts Council insists that all those in receipt of funding submit a copy of their Child Protection Policy (if applicable) (signed and dated as adopted)

Organisations that develop procedures and guidelines in relation to the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults will help to reduce the possibility of abuse.

An organisation working with children should aim to provide fun activities that will encourage learning and developmental opportunities and assist them to develop new skills within a safe environment. By developing procedures and guidelines, organisations will help to minimize the potential for abuse and create a positive environment for everyone involved. A child protection policy is therefore designed to protect children from harm and abuse, protect workers against false allegations and protect the reputation of the organisation.

There is a moral obligation on anyone who is involved with children to provide them with the highest possible standard of care. Secondly, there is a legal responsibility, under the common law Duty of Care, for all organisations to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children in their care.

The fundamental principle in childcare law and practice is that the welfare of the child must always be the paramount consideration in decisions taken about them. This is set out in The

Children (NI) Order 1995, which provides the legislative basis for child protection practice in Northern Ireland and which is underpinned by the standards of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland are committed to reviewing our policy and guidelines at regular intervals, at least every three years, gaining further advice and information wherever possible and ensuring that those in the Arts sector review and update their policies and procedures in line with best practice and legislation relating to protection issues.

Please note that the term Vulnerable Adult used in this document is inclusive of Older People.