



WEXFORD
FESTIVAL OPERA

Wexford Festival Opera

CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT



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FESTIVAL OPERA

Nature of service:

- We are a production company presenting an annual Opera festival.
- We provide training /education and performance opportunities for children and young people.
- Our staff interaction with children varies depending on the event/rehearsal/performance schedule.
 - Age range from 3-18 years
- Some participants would be vulnerable adults

Risk assessment:

Risks identified	Procedures in place to manage risk identified
Inappropriate behaviour towards a child	Provision of child safeguarding statement and child protection training
Physical contact	Code of behaviour for Staff and volunteers
Specific individuals assigned to supervise children during opera rehearsal and performance schedule.	Garda clearance will be sought and training in child protection will be required and safeguarding statement will be provided

Wexford Festival Opera is committed to a child-centred approach to our work with children and young people.

We undertake to provide a safe environment and experience, where the welfare of the child/young person is paramount. We will adhere to the recommendations of Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017, published by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

We have implemented procedures covering:

- *Code of behaviour for all staff;*
- *Reporting of Child Protection Concerns;*
- *Confidentiality;*
- *Working safely with Children;*
- *Recruitment and selecting staff;*
- *Managing and supervising staff;*
- *Involvement of primary carers;*
- *Allegations of misconduct or abuse by staff;*
- *Complaints and comments;*
- *Incidents and accidents;*
- *Training for staff/volunteers on Child protection and safeguarding matters;*

This policy will be reviewed in June 2025.

Date: June 2023

Child-centred approach

- Treat all children and young people equally;
- Listen to and respect children and young people;
- 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 group 'contract' before beginning session;
- Use age-appropriate teaching aids and materials;
- Lead by example;
- Be aware of a child's or young person's other commitments when scheduling rehearsals or 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

Good practice

- Have emergency procedures in place and make all staff aware of these procedures;
- Report any concerns to the Designated Liaison Person and follow reporting procedures;
- Organisations should have an anti-bullying policy. Encourage children and young people to report any bullying, concerns or worries and to be aware of anti-bullying policy.
- Provide appropriate training for staff and volunteers;
- 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, organisations and ourselves; have guidelines and a prompt sheet for artists;
- Have a written agreement with any external organisation that an artist is working with;
- Don't be passive in relation to concerns, i.e., don't 'do nothing';
- Don't let a problem get out of control;
- Avoid if at all possible giving a lift to a child/young person and if you do then make sure that primary carers are informed;
- We will seek permission of Parents before taking photographs that will be used for public use or publicity.

Inappropriate behaviour

- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with children/young people;
- Will use appropriate language and refrain from using offensive language.
- Will not single out a particular child/young person for unfair favouritism, criticism, ridicule, or unwelcome focus or attention;
- Will not allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form;
- Will not hit or physically chastise children/young people;
- Will not socialise inappropriately with children/young people, e.g., outside of structured organisational activities.

Physical contact (Physical inappropriate contact is not allowed under our guidelines, the following guidelines need to be followed)

- 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.

Health and safety

- Don't leave children unattended or unsupervised;
- Manage any dangerous materials;
- Provide a safe environment;
- Be aware of accident procedure and follow accordingly

Who to contact about issues related to child protection and welfare

Nora Cosgrave 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 the responsibility of this person to support and advise staff about policy and procedures in relation to child protection and to ensure that procedures are followed. It is also the responsibility of the Designated Liaison Person to liaise with Tusla or Gardaí where appropriate.

Nora Cosgrave can be contacted using the following details: Wexford Festival Opera, High Street, Wexford, Y35 FEP3 or at 053/9122400 Ext: 5522.

Nicky Kehoe has been designated as deputy to **Nora Cosgrave** and can be contacted using the same address and phone number above and at Ext: 5553.

Confidentiality statement

- We in Wexford Festival Opera are 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 Tusla, 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, we cannot guarantee that cameras/videos will not be used at public performances);
- Procedures will be put in place in relation to the use of images of children/ young people;
- Procedures will also be put in place for the recording and storing of information in line with our confidentiality policy.

Recruitment and selection policy statement

- *We will ensure that staff 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);*
- *Posts will be advertised widely;*
- *We will endeavour to select the most suitably qualified personnel;*
- *Candidates will be required to complete an application form;*
- *Candidates will be asked to sign a declaration form;*
- *At least three written references that are recent, relevant, independent and verbally confirmed will be necessary;*
- *Staff will be selected by a panel of at least two (or more) representatives through an interview process;*
- *No person who would be deemed to constitute a 'risk' will be employed;*
- *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*
- *There will be a relevant probationary period;*
- *All relevant staff will be required to consent to Garda clearance.*

Staff management policy statement

- *To protect both staff (paid and voluntary) and children/young people, we undertake that:*
- New staff will:*
- *Take part in a mandatory child protection induction training;*
 - *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;*
 - *Undergo a probationary or trial period.*
- All staff will:*
- *Receive an adequate level of supervision and review of their work practices;*
 - *Be expected to have read and signed the Child Safeguarding Statement;*
 - *Be provided with child protection training.*

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 safeguarding policy;
- Inform primary carers and schools of all activities and potential activities;
- Issue contact/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 the Duty Social Worker in Tusla and, in an emergency, the Gardaí;
- In the event of a complaint against a member of staff, 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 local 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.

Dealing with an allegation against staff

- *Two separate procedures must be followed:*
- *In respect of the child/young person **Nora Cosgrave** will deal with issues related to the child/young person.*
- *In respect of the person against whom the allegation is made **Nicky Kehoe** will deal with issues related to the staff member.*
- *The first priority is to ensure that no child or young person is exposed to unnecessary risk;*
- *If allegations are made against the Designated Liaison Person, then the Deputy Designated Liaison Person should be contacted;*
- *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 staff member will be informed as soon as possible of the nature of the allegation; the staff member should be given the opportunity to respond;*
- *The chairperson/head of the organisation should be informed as soon as possible;*
- *Any action following an allegation of abuse against an employee should be taken in consultation with Tusla and Gardaí;*
- *After consultation, the chairperson/head of organisation should advise the person accused and agreed procedures will be followed.*

In the event of complaints or comments:

- *Complaints or comments will be responded to within two weeks;*
- **Nora Cosgrave** has responsibility for directing complaints/comments to the appropriate person.
- *Verbal complaints will be logged and responded to.*

Accidents procedure

- *The organisation must maintain an up-to-date register of the contact details of all children/young people involved in the organisation;*
- *Children/young people's details should be cross-referenced between the incident book and file;*
- *External organisations (e.g. Schools, special needs units) with whom your organisation has dealings must provide proof that they have public liability insurance and child Safeguarding policy where appropriate;*
- *First-aid boxes should be available and regularly re-stocked;*
- *The location of the first-aid box(s) must be made known to staff;*
- *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 staff;*
- *Children and young people must be advised of risks of dangerous material;*
- *Record details of risky equipment used and take steps to minimise risk;*
- *Take cognisance of responsibility for first aid on off-site trips.*

APPENDIX 1: Definitions of abuse

TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE AND HOW THEY MAY BE RECOGNISED

NEGLECT:

Neglect occurs when a child does not receive adequate care or supervision to the extent that the child is harmed physically or developmentally. It is generally defined in terms of an omission of care, where a child's health, development or welfare is impaired by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, medical care, intellectual stimulation or supervision and safety. Emotional neglect may also lead to the child having attachment difficulties. The extent of the damage to the child's health, development or welfare is influenced by a range of factors. These factors include the extent, if any, of positive influence in the child's life as well as the age of the child and the frequency and consistency of neglect.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE:

Emotional abuse is the systematic emotional or psychological ill-treatment of a child as part of the overall relationship between a caregiver and a child. Once-off and occasional difficulties between a parent/carer and child are not considered emotional abuse. Abuse occurs when a child's basic need for attention, affection, approval, consistency and security are not met, due to incapacity or indifference from their parent or caregiver. Emotional abuse can also occur when adults responsible for taking care of children are unaware of an unable (for a range of reasons) to meet their children's emotional and developmental needs. Emotional abuse is not easy to recognise because the effects are not easily seen.

PHYSICAL ABUSE:

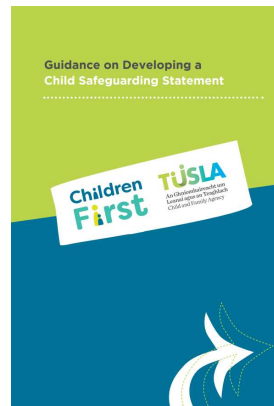
Physical abuse is when someone deliberately hurts a child physically or puts them at risk of being physically hurt. It may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents. A reasonable concern exists where the child's health and/or development is, may be, or has been damaged as a result of suspected physical abuse.

SEXUAL ABUSE:

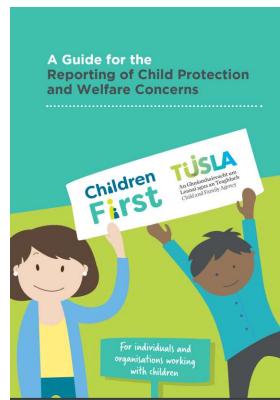
Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or arousal, or for that of others. It includes the child being involved in sexual acts (masturbation, fondling, oral or penetrative sex) or exposing the child to sexual activity directly or through pornography.



Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2017



Guidance on developing a Child Safeguarding Statement, Tusla Child and Family Agency 2017



A Guide for Reporting of Child Protection and Welfare Concerns, Tusla Child and Family Agency 2017