



Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

For Working With Children And Young People

January 2026

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Introduction

Sing Ireland/Cumann Náisiúnta na gCór was established in 1980 as a national resource organisation to advance the art and public performance of choral music in Ireland. Funded by the Arts Council/ An Chomhairle Ealaíon, Sing Ireland provides and advocates for the needs of everyone involved with Irish choirs by creating opportunities for enjoyment and excellence in choral singing.

Sing Ireland is committed to furthering educational and performance opportunities of children and young people within the choral community of Ireland. As provider of an extensive range of education and training initiatives including singing workshops, choral days and membership of the Irish Youth Choir, Sing Ireland is aware of its responsibility towards children/young people. The following Child Safeguarding Policy has been implemented to minimise risk and foster an awareness of child protection issues among staff, volunteers, primary carers and children or young people who are involved in Sing Ireland activities.

Definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following definitions will apply:

'Child/Young Person'

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and The Child Care Act, 1991 defines a child as a person under 18 years of age.

'Primary Carer/s'

Parent/s or guardian/s of a child/young person. Please note that other agencies working in partnership with the Organisation e.g., Schools, are acting in loco parentis while in attendance at Sing Ireland events.

'Staff Member/Volunteer'

Any person engaged by the organisation to render professional services as appropriate, whether on a permanent, contract or freelance basis, be it paid or unpaid.

This policy is underpinned and informed by the following documents:

Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017

The Children First Guidelines were issued by the Department of Health and Children

in 2017 and outline procedures, which all organisations dealing with children and young people should put in place. They state that all such organisations should complete a risk assessment and put in place a Child Safeguarding Policy, which will outline the procedures and arrangements in place to protect children in line with 'Children First'. Equally, the policy will provide protection for staff of the Sing Ireland in their work with children.

Our Duty to Care

Our Duty to Care was published by the Department of Health and Children in October 2002. It offers a practical guide to staff and volunteers who work with children by outlining a number of fundamental principles of good practice.

Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Young People in the Arts Sector

Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Young People in the Arts Sector was published by the Arts Council in 2006. The Arts Council together with members of the arts community, the Council of National Cultural Institutions and facilitated by the Health Service Executive, has produced this document to assist arts organisations in the development of their own individual child protection and welfare policies and procedures.

The guidelines have been devised with the arts sector in mind and are a guide to good practice. They privilege a child-centred approach where the developmental needs of the child/young person are to the fore and aim to provide a practical framework to be adapted by organisations to suit their own unique circumstances and practices.

Code of Good Practice-Child Protection for the Youth Work Sector

Published by the Department of Education and Science in May 2003. The primary aim of this Code of Good Practice for the Youth Work Sector is to give direction and guidance to youth work sector personnel in dealing with allegations/suspicions and disclosures of child abuse. In addition, it also aims to provide sufficient information for those involved in the youth work sector to be vigilant and to be aware of what to do in situations where child abuse may be a concern or suspicion.

Child Safeguarding Policy Statement

Sing Ireland/Cumann Náisiúnta na gCór is fully committed to a child-centred approach to our work with children and young people. We are fully committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of all the children and young people who attend our events. We accept that the welfare of the child/young person is paramount and therefore recognise our duty to provide a safe environment and positive experience for children/young people in our care.

Our policy on child protection is in accordance with 'Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children', published by the Department of Health and Children.

All staff, facilitators and volunteers who come into contact with children through Sing Ireland must adhere to child safeguarding guidelines and procedures covering:

- Code of Good Practice for staff.
- Recruitment and selection of staff.
- Communication with primary carers.
- Travel involving children/young people.
- Training, managing and supervising staff.
- Challenging or disruptive behaviour.
- Bullying, including homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying.
- Accidents/incidents.
- Reporting of suspected or disclosed abuse.
- Allegations of misconduct or abuse by staff.
- Confidentiality.
- Record keeping.
- Complaints and comments.

This Child Safeguarding Policy will be reviewed January 2027.

Signed: 

Dermot O'Callaghan, Designated Officer

Date: 23/01/2026

Signed: 

Jennifer O'Connor-Madsen, Deputy Designated Officer

Date: 23/01/2026

Code of Behaviour for Staff and Volunteers

Everybody who works with children has a duty of care to them and this is a responsibility taken seriously by Sing Ireland. We aim to provide information and promote good practice for those involved in working with children in our care. Guidelines have been categorised under the following headings:

- Child-centered approach.
- Good practice.
- Inappropriate behavior.
- Physical contact.
- Health and safety.

Child-centred approach

Sing Ireland has devised good practice guidelines based on a child-centred approach which engages with children and young people (as audience members, as performers or in workshop/residential situations). In accordance, staff are required to:

- Treat all children/young people equally, but also as individuals.
- Listen to and respect children/young people.
- Involve children/young people in decision making, as appropriate.
- Provide encouragement, support and praise (regardless of ability).
- Use appropriate physical and verbal language.
- Make events and activities fun and enjoyable.
- Have a fun and encourage a positive atmosphere.
- Lead by example.
- Offer enthusiastic, constructive feedback when needed rather than negative criticism.
- Respects a child's/young person's personal space.
- Respect differences of ability, culture, religion, race and sexual orientation.
- Address children and Young People with the pronouns that they choose.
- Consider the use of gender specific terminology in relation to voice parts and repertoire.
- Agree a group 'contract' before beginning a session.
- Discuss boundaries on behaviours and related sanctions, as appropriate, with children and young people and their primary carers.
- Ensure that activities and instruction materials are customised to suit the needs of those involved with reference to age, ability, experience and maturity.
- Recognise the developmental needs of children/young people e.g., avoid over-rehearsal/over-performance, where possible, for their age and ability.
- Be aware of a child's/young person's limitations due to special needs/medical

condition.

- Be aware of a child's/young person's other commitments when scheduling rehearsals or activities, e.g., school or exams.
- Ensure feedback from the group.
- Ensure the code of behaviour for children/young people is adhered to

Good Practice Procedures

As safe practice is essential to our work, we have put in place the following procedures to govern our work with children and young people:

- A clear system of registration and departure of participants is in place at all events.
- All staff, volunteers and those assisting Sing Ireland at our events are aware of the good practice guidelines and are familiar with the overall Child Safeguarding Policy.
- Induction of staff with respect to Sing Ireland's Safeguarding Policy is carried out in advance of each course. All staff must sign a form acknowledging that they have received this, have read and understood this policy, and will abide by it.
- There will be adequate insurance cover for the activities undertaken.
- Children and young people involved with the work of Sing Ireland, along with their primary carers and/or teachers are informed of our guidelines and procedures.
- Hard copies of our Child Safeguarding Policy are available on request.
- Sing Ireland has appointed a 'Designated Liaison Officer' and a 'Deputy Designated Liaison Officer' to deal with any complaints or issues arising, that concern the safety or welfare of any child or young person who attends any events organised by the Organisation. This person is appropriately trained and familiar with the procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation, concern or disclosure of child abuse.
- Inappropriate behaviour or language used by a child/young person does not go unchallenged.
- Sing Ireland has put in place an Anti-bullying Policy (cf. Appendix 10).
- When organising events for children or young people, the following information/documentation is requested by the organisation in relation to each child or young person attending the event:
 - A Parental Consent Form - particularly for events involving long distance travel or overnight stays.
 - Parental consent in writing for Sing Ireland to act in loco parentis if the need arises, to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
 - Contact details of primary carers, including emergency contact numbers of primary carers and another person named by the primary carer in the event of the primary carer not being available in an emergency.
 - All relevant medical information.
 - Information relating to any additional needs which the child or young person may have in terms of access, diet, language assistance, etc.
- Adequate and safe transport arrangements will be made.
- All relevant information including contact details, allergies, medicines, dietary needs etc. for the child or young person will be kept with a staff member.

- Primary carers will be fully informed of the programme or timetable for the event and will receive a copy of the programme.
- Parents will be given full contact details of the centre/hotel/accommodation and also of the staff member in charge of the event.
- Adequate staff and volunteer supervision will be provided at all events involving children/young people, where an appropriate ratio of adults to young people is put in place for each event. This ratio may vary depending on the particular situation including the age or gender of participants and their disability or other special needs.
- Appropriate, gender-specific supervision is provided for events involving overnight stays, ensuring mixed groups are accompanied at all times by an adult male and an adult female and dormitories will not be shared with non-group members. Accommodation will be assigned for overnight courses by gender and will have gender appropriate staff supervision. (E.g.: A block of apartments of participants will contain a separate apartment of Pastoral Care Staff)
- One staff person will be designated as the 'key contact person' for the event and parents/guardians and participants will be given contact details of this person. All complaints, concerns, etc. should be directed to this person (with the exception of complaints in relation to the safety and welfare of the children/young people).
- Parents/guardians will be given the contact details of the Designated Officer. (Complaints in relation to the safety and welfare of children/young people should be made to the Designated Officer as per Section 15).
- The Designated Liaison Person and the Deputy Designated Liaison Person are mandated persons under the Children First Act 2015- Dermot O'Callaghan - CEO, Jenny O'Connor-Madsen - General Manager. Contact details are below on page 25. Mandated persons have two main legal obligations under the Children First Act 2015.
- To report harm of children, above a defined threshold, to Tusla.
- To assist Tusla, if requested, in assessing a concern which has been the subject of a mandated report.
- As a mandated person, under the legislation you are required to report any knowledge, belief or reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed, is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed. The Act defines harm as assault, ill-treatment, neglect or sexual abuse, and covers single and multiple instances.
- Appropriate supervision and support will be provided for staff.
- A system is in place for recording any incidents or accidents while the child is in the care of the organisation.
- Sing Ireland has put in place a complaint procedure.
- Every effort will be made to ensure that during events, the physical surroundings are comfortable, fully accessible and appropriate for the work being undertaken.
- Policies and procedures are updated annually.

Good Practice Guidelines for Staff

- Plan and be sufficiently prepared, both mentally and physically.
- Show respect and understanding for the rights, safety and welfare of the children and young people.
- Maintain awareness around language and comments made. If you think that something said may have caused offence or upset, then try to address it in a sensitive manner.
- Observe appropriate dress and behaviour.
- Be an excellent role model - this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of children/young people.
- Follow and enforce the Anti-bullying Policy (cf. Appendix 10).
- Do not send messages, whether voice, text or email, to children/young people. Any messages should be in writing and directed to the primary carers by designated member of staff.
- While we recognise that sometimes it is appropriate for staff to work on a one-to-one basis with a child or young person, such practice should take place in an open environment, avoiding private or unobserved situations.
- Ensure that primary carers are informed of any issues concerning their children;
- Report any child protection concerns to the Designated Officer and follow the reporting procedures outlined in this document (cf. Section 15).
- Staff should not take one young person alone in a car on journeys. Where this is unavoidable, it should be done in consultation with a permanent member of Sing Ireland staff and with the consent of primary carers, where possible.
- Following any incident where a member of staff feels their actions could be misinterpreted a written report should be submitted to the Designated Officer.

Inappropriate behaviour

In addition, staff should never:

- Exert undue influence over a child/young person in order to gain personal benefit or reward.
- Take any child involved in activities to their home or spend excessive time alone with children;
- Single out a particular child/young person for unfair favouritism, criticism, ridicule or unwelcome attention;
- Hit or physically chastise children/young people.
- Socialise inappropriately with children i.e. Outside of structured organisational activities;
- Perform tasks of a personal nature for children/young people that they can do

for themselves;

- Not to single out a particular child/young person for unfair favouritism, criticism, ridicule, or unwelcome focus or attention;
- Allow or engage in rough contact, sexually provocative games, inappropriate touching of any kind, and/or make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child/young person.
- Let allegations or accusations made by a child/young person go unrecorded;
- Share a room alone with a child/young person on residential courses.
- Engage in a sexual relationship with a young person. This is considered a breach of trust and a disciplinary matter. If the young person is below the age of consent, it may be illegal and hence a criminal matter.

Physical Contact

Sing Ireland acknowledges that staff involved in teaching singing and conducting work in an environment where a 'hands on' approach may sometimes be necessary, e.g., demonstrating breathing technique/baton skill. In such circumstances the following guidelines must be observed:

- Ensure that physical contact is in response to the child/young person's need only and is appropriate to the age and level of development of the child.
- Always seek consent of a child/young person before making physical contact with them (except in an appropriate emergency or dangerous situation).
- Consistently check the child/young person's level of comfort by way of asking, when teaching exercises that involve physical contact.
- Avoid horseplay or inappropriate touch.

Note: Minimum reasonable restraint may be used in exceptional circumstances i.e., self-defence or preventing injury or damage to property. Such incidents must be reported without delay to the Designated Officer and recorded appropriately.

Health and Safety

Staff should do the following at all events

- Be vigilant in providing a safe environment
- Avoid leaving children/young people unattended or unsupervised.
- Provide a safe environment.
- Be aware of accident, emergency and evacuation procedures and follow them accordingly.
- It is our policy to inform parents/guardians of an incident of self-harm if it comes to our attention, unless doing so is likely to place the child at further risk.

Ratios

A Record of the incident will be submitted to Tusla.

- While Sing Ireland recognises that different groups and situations, will require different levels of supervision, we do subscribe to the following key principles that are recommended as good practice in the youth work sector
- Sing Ireland adheres to the following advice on ratios as outlines in the Code of Good Practice- Child Protection for The Youth Work Sector (2003); “The minimum adult/young person ratio should ideally be one adult per group of eight plus one other adult and allowing an additional adult for each group of ten thereafter. Local circumstance, the ages of children, the experience of the volunteers and the staff should be taken into consideration”
- When planning activities/events, one of the considerations is the most appropriate adult/young person ratio.
- Sing Ireland takes all reasonable measures to ensure that the gender of the staff/volunteers reflects the group.

Dealing with Challenging or Disruptive Behaviour

Sing Ireland ensures that the safety and welfare of the children and young people is a priority, and that staff will deal sensitively and professionally with any difficult issues that may arise.

Staff who deal directly with children and young people will be given guidance and support in dealing with difficult behaviour.

Where instances of challenging or disruptive behaviour occur with children or young people, a record will be kept of this where the instance requires the intervention of a staff member or where the safety and wellbeing of others are at risk. In case of such behaviour, two members of staff should be present in dealing with the situation. Staff members who are present at the time should complete an Incident/Accident Report Form (cf. Appendix 6).

The report of the incident should include:

- The programme or activity which was happening at the time.
- The date and time of incident.
- A record of what happened.
- Details of who was involved.
- Details of where it happened and the duration.
- A record of any significant comments.
- A record of any injury to person or property.
- Details of how the situation was resolved or left.

Bullying

Bullying is behaviour that can be defined as repeated aggression, be it verbal, psychological or physical, which is conducted by an individual or group, against others.

Sing Ireland will not tolerate any bullying behaviour by children, young people or adults and will deal with any incidents immediately in accordance with the Organisation's Anti-bullying Policy when working with children and young people (cf. Appendix 10)

Recruiting and Selecting Staff and Volunteers

Sing Ireland will ensure that staff are carefully selected, trained and supervised to provide a safe environment for all children, by implementing the following procedures:

- Roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined for every position, paid or voluntary.
- Posts will be advertised widely.
- Candidates will be required to complete an application form. The application form should elicit information about the applicant's past and include a
- self-disclosure about any criminal record.
- Candidates will be asked to sign a declaration form (cf. Appendix 5).
- Staff will be selected by a panel of at least two (or more) representatives through a process.
- Every effort will be made to select the most suitably qualified personnel.
- At least two written references, including one regarding previous work with children, will be sought for all staff using a confidential reference form.
- References must be recent, relevant, independent and verbally confirmed.
- References cannot be supplied by family members.
- There will be a probationary period of six months for each permanent member of staff recruited. For contract positions, a relevant probationary period will apply.
- No person deemed to constitute a 'risk' will be permitted to work in any capacity for Sing Ireland. Grounds for exclusion include:
 - Any child related convictions.
 - Refusal to sign application form and/or declaration form.
 - Insufficient documentary evidence of identification.
 - Concealing information regarding one's suitability to working with children.
- All staff will be asked to sign a document certifying that they have read and agree to abide by the contents of the Sing Ireland Child Safeguarding Policy and that there is no reason why they would be considered unsuitable for working with children/young people.
- All staff will be required to consent to Garda clearance and where available, this will be sought.
- All permanent and contract staff will be required to sign a contract.
- Evidence of identity (passport or driving licence with photo) of all staff will be requested and kept on file by Sing Ireland.
- All pastoral staff receive safeguarding training and are required to adhere to Sing Ireland safeguarding procedures and Children First guidance.

Training, Managing and Supervising Staff/Volunteers

It is the policy of Sing Ireland to establish and maintain effective, responsible management practices in order to protect both staff and children/young people. To ensure that all staff are appropriately supported and supervised, the following procedures are in place:

New staff will:

- Take part in a pre-induction e-learning training programme called 'Introduction to Children First' through Tusla online. This can be accessed through www.tusla.ie.
- Take part in a mandatory induction session, to include the organisation's Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and the identity and role of Designated Liaison Officer.
- Undergo an appropriate probationary period and be subject to the recruitment procedures outlined in Section 6.

All staff will:

- Complete an induction session prior to each event concerning issues relating to the Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and Health & Safety procedures. Induction in child protection issues will be facilitated by the Designated Officer or another member of staff trained in child protection.
- Receive an adequate level of supervision and review of their work practices.
- Be expected to have read and signed the Child Safeguarding Policy.
- Be expected to complete an e-learning training programme called 'Introduction to Children First' through Tusla online. This can be accessed through www.tusla.ie.
- Be given appropriate training.
- Be given a certificate of attendance of training.

All staff of Sing Ireland will be expected to participate in relevant training from time to time. Those working directly with children/young people must have received training on child protection issues.

Where young people under 18 years are assisting in the work of the organisation, they will receive appropriate information on the Child Safeguarding Policy at a level suitable to their age and experience. These young people will always work in partnership with, or under the supervision of an adult.

Staff will be supplied with contact information for counselling services should they be required, in the event of a disclosure or allegation of abuse.

Procedures for Travel involving Children/Young People

When travelling to and from events organised by Sing Ireland, responsibility or 'duty of care' for children/young people remains with the primary carer/s or school until such time as the child/young person is present at the event venue, and from such time as the child/young person is dismissed from the event venue.

Where the organisation arranges transport for children/young people, consent will be requested from the primary carers, which will indicate an agreed pick-up and drop-off point.

The organisation will take all reasonable steps to ensure that any drivers engaged to transport children and young people will have been selected in accordance with recruitment and training procedures, as outlined in Sections 6 and 7.

Where a child/young person travels with a member of staff /volunteer of the organisation to an activity or an event, the organisation will be responsible for the welfare of the young person while travelling and while at the event. This includes travel abroad. In these instances, consent forms must be completed by primary carer/s and a record kept of emergency contact numbers supplied.

Residentials

Sing Ireland organises a programme (Irish Youth Training Choir) that involves overnight stays for young people. We adhere to the following procedures for this programme and any other that may be organised.

- Pastoral Care Staff are contracted for any programme that involves overnight stays.
- All Pastoral Care Staff are provided with a clear role description. All Pastoral Care Staff are subject to garda vetting and will be inducted in Sing Ireland's Code of Behaviour for Staff/Volunteers.
- All Pastoral Care Staff receive safeguarding training and are required to report any safeguarding concerns in accordance with Children First guidance and Sing Ireland safeguarding procedures.
- All Pastoral Care Staff are provided with Accident/Incident forms, Sing Ireland Internal Reporting Forms and the HSE Standard Reporting form.
- They are provided with contact details for Sing Ireland's Designated Person and are instructed to contact him should an accident occur or if a child protection concern arises.
- It is Sing Ireland's policy that pastoral staff as mandated personnel, that any report is jointly filed with the Designated Liaison Person to Tusla.
- They are also instructed that in the case of a child protection emergency they can report a concern directly to the HSE/A Garda Siochana and are given details for these authorities.
- Clear information about the programme and the overnight element of it is provided to parents/primary carers. Parental consent and contact details are requested for all participants aged under 18. Dietary and medical requirements are requested for all participants. Parents are requested to ensure that the young people have an adequate supply of any necessary medication with them. If participants are doing additional activities that involved a higher risk or risk than usual activities, permission will be sought. All personal information will be treated in line with Sing Ireland's Confidentiality Policy.
- Parents/primary carers are informed that in the event of an emergency that renders the young person unable to travel home by themselves or if the young person is hospitalised, they will have to travel to the location.
- All Sing Ireland events involving young people are alcohol and drug free for all participants regardless of age.
- Sing Ireland has developed a Health and Safety Policy. All Pastoral Care Staff are provided with a copy and may discuss any questions regarding the policy during induction with an appropriately trained member of staff.
- Pastoral Care Staff will have access to money in cash form in case of an emergency.
- If there is an issue in relation to the accommodation/venues used, Pastoral Staff should inform Sing Ireland Staff.

- On-going dialogue should take place between pastoral, artistic and management teams on an event so that the relevant people are aware of any difficulties that a young person is experiencing and can offer them the necessary support. Any discussions should be conducted in the strictest confidentiality and any written records should be treated in line with Sing Ireland's Confidentiality Policy.
- There needs to be a balance struck between the participants' privacy and the necessity of supervision especially when they are in the accommodation. All staff need to be mindful of this. They should avoid being alone with a young person. If they need to talk to a young person individually, they should do so in a public place where they are visible to other adults.
- Any supervisory rounds will be conducted in pairs and staff should always knock before entering participants' accommodation.
- Appropriate, gender-specific supervision is provided for events involving overnight stays, ensuring mixed groups are accompanied at all times by an adult male and an adult female and dormitories will not be shared with non-group members. Dormitories will be assigned for overnight courses by gender and will have gender appropriate staff supervision. (A block of apartments of participants will contain an apartment of Pastoral Care Staff)

Working in Partnership with other Agencies

Sing Ireland may work collaboratively with other agencies in organising events involving children/young people. There are many different forms that this work may take. Where the event is being run in the name of the Sing Ireland, the Sing Ireland Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures will apply.

Staff and volunteers from another agency/organisation

- Recruitment practices will apply as per standard recruitment and selection policies of the organisation, where reasonable (cf. Section 6).
- In facilitating an event involving children/young people, staff from another agency/organisation will be made aware of the Sing Ireland Child Safeguarding Policy.
- Staff will be asked to sign a document certifying that they have read the Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and agree to abide by its contents and that there is no reason why they would be considered unsuitable for working with children/young people.

Involvement of Primary Carers

Sing Ireland is committed to transparent and open communication with primary carers with respect to all aspects of the programme that their child is involved in. In keeping with the child-centred approach, which informs our policies and procedures, Sing Ireland will do the following, either directly or through schools, as appropriate:

- Advise primary carer/s of the Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and make a copy available on request.
- Share information with primary carers relating to the programme of activities, transport to and from events etc.
- Issue contact/consent forms for events, where relevant.
- Comply with Health and Safety practices.
- Adhere to staff recruitment and management guidelines as outlined in Sections 6 and 7.
- Ensure as far as possible, that activities are age appropriate.
- Encourage and facilitate the involvement of primary carer/s, where appropriate.

If Sing Ireland has a concern about the welfare of a young person/child, we will:

- Respond to the needs of the child/young person.
- Inform primary carer(s) first and on an on-going basis in the event of a child/young person disclosing an incident of abuse, unless this could put the child/young person at further risk.
- Immediately ensure the safety of the child/young person in the event of a complaint against a member of staff, and inform primary carer(s), as appropriate.
- Be obliged, in line with Reporting Procedures (Section 15), to pass concerns on to the Duty Social Worker and in an emergency, the Gardaí.
- Have a Designated Officer available for consultation with primary carer(s) in the case of a concern over a child/young person's welfare.

It is brought to the attention of all primary carer/s and schools that Sing Ireland provides a venue-based service. In practice, this means that responsibility or 'duty of care' for children/young people remains with the primary carer/s or school until such time as the child/young person is present at the event venue, and from such time as the child/young person is dismissed from the event venue.

Confidentiality Statement

Sing Ireland is committed to ensuring peoples' rights to confidentiality. In accordance with child protection and welfare guidelines however, the organisation undertakes that:

- It is not a breach of confidentiality to give appropriate information to others where the best interests of the child or young person are at risk, therefore total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.
- Information is handled and disseminated on a need-to-know basis only, in order to safeguard the child/young person. In accordance with reporting procedures, the number of people that need to be informed will be kept to a minimum and should only include the Designated Liaison Officer, Primary Carer/s of the child/young person (unless doing so could further endanger the child), Board member with responsibility for child protection and the HSE/Social Services/Gardaí /PSNI.
- Primary carers and children/young people have the right to know if personal information is being shared and/or a report being made to the HSE, unless doing so could put the child/young person at further risk;
- Procedures will be put in place for the recording and storage of information in accordance with the organisation's Confidentiality Policy. Information will be kept in a locked cabinet at the offices of Sing Ireland with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws, i.e. That information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure.
- Any reports completed at events outside of the office will be kept safely by the Designated Liaison Officer until they can be added to the file in the office.

Use of Photographic and Filming Equipment

Sing Ireland is aware that choral events may provide an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of children/young people. In recognition of this, the following guidelines will be adhered to:

- When commissioning professional photographers or inviting the press to an activity or an event, they will be made aware of what is expected of them in terms of the Sing Ireland Child Safeguarding Policy.
- Photographers will be issued with identification that is to be worn at all times.
- Individuals/schools participating in events run by the organisation will be required to obtain the consent of primary carers to use images of children/young people for publicity purposes.
- Images of a child/young person containing identifying information will not be used for any reason by Sing Ireland without the consent of the primary carer/s.
- When using images of children/young people, use of the first and surname of individuals in photos will be avoided. If a child/young person is named, an

accompanying photo will be avoided.

Use of Photography /Videography as a Teaching Aid

Sing Ireland fully endorses the use of photography/videography as a legitimate teaching aid, where appropriate. The organisation will ensure that children/young people and their primary carer/s will be made aware that this practice may take place in advance of such event. Care will be taken in the storing of such films/photographs.

Note: we cannot guarantee that cameras/videos will not be used at public events.

Dealing with a Disclosure of Abuse

Child abuse, in any form, can arouse strong emotions. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take. Sing Ireland staff/volunteers do not hold responsibility for deciding whether or not abuse has taken place. It is the role of statutory agencies to make enquiries to assess whether a child is at risk of abuse and to take any necessary action to protect that child or young person. The following are guidelines to support staff in the event of a disclosure of abuse by a child/young person:

- If a child or young person talks to you about a concern, or if the child tells you about their abuse, listen carefully and compassionately. Take the child/young person seriously.
- React calmly and try not to display any sign of shock or disapproval or any extreme reaction and do not jump to conclusions. The child/young person is taking a risk by telling you this and you should ensure that the child's experience of telling is a positive one.
- Reassure the child/young person that they have taken the right action in talking to you and are that they are not to blame.
- Do not use leading questions or prompt details to encourage the child to talk. Ask open-ended questions for clarification only. However, the child/young person should not be prevented from recalling events.
- Do not promise to keep anything secret.
- Check back with the child/young person that what you have heard is correct and understood.
- No judgmental statement should be made about the person against whom the allegation is made.
- Recognise the inherent difficulties in interpreting what is said by young children or children with communication difficulties.
- Be honest with the child about what you can and cannot do. Tell them you are not able to keep what they have told you secret and that you will try to find them the help they need. Tell them what is likely to happen and ensure that the child/young person understands the procedures which will follow.
- Record the conversation as soon as possible, in as much detail as possible. Sign and date the record.
- Do not destroy any evidence as it may be useful in a court of law: initial disclosure, even if retracted, must still be referred.
- Pass all information to the Designated Officer.
- It is Sing Ireland's policy that any mandated personnel jointly file reports with the Designated Liaison Person to Tusla.
- Do not attempt to deal with the issue alone.

Role of the Designated Officer

The Designated Officer has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures are promoted and implemented. A Deputy Designated Officer will take over the responsibilities of Designated Officer if they are unavailable or if they are directly involved in an incident, suspicion or accusation.

The role of the Designated Officer involves the following duties:

- To be familiar with Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Our Duty to Care: The Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children & Young People and to have responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the Child Safeguarding Policy.
- To receive, in confidence, reports of alleged/suspected or actual child abuse and act on these without delay in accordance with the guidelines.
- To ensure that training is provided for all new and existing staff of Sing Ireland on the Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.
- To build a working relationship with the HSE, An Garda Síochána and other agencies, as appropriate.
- To ensure that supports are put in place for the child/young person, employee or volunteer in cases of allegations being made.
- To undertake relevant training on child protection policies and practice, in order to ensure the relevance and appropriateness of the Organisation's policy and procedures in this area.
- To review this Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures on an annual basis and amend, as appropriate.
- To ensure that systems are in place for recording and retaining all relevant documentation in relation to child protection issues.

Contact Details:

Designated Officer

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Limerick
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Deputy Designated Officer

Jennifer O'Connor-Madsen
General Manager
Sing Ireland
Irish World Academy
University of Limerick
Limerick
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Recording Procedures & Record Keeping

Recording Procedures

- All records should be signed and dated.
- Sing Ireland will provide attendance records for all events.
- All accidents and incidents will be recorded on an Incident/Accident Report Form (cf. Appendix 6) and kept in the Incident/Accident Book by the Designated Officer.
- Staff should report directly to the Designated Liaison Officer any suspicions, concerns, worrying observations, behavioural changes, actions or outcomes with regard to the welfare of children/young persons without delay.

Recording Procedure in respect of a disclosure of abuse

- When recording a disclosure of abuse, a written record of the conversation should be drafted by the person to whom the disclosure has been made as soon as possible, in as much detail as possible, and in total confidentiality.
- Facts should be recorded, not interpretations i.e., if the child uses sexual phrases, record the actual words used and not their formal interpretation.
- Any noticeable non-verbal behaviour (gestures) should be recorded.
- Record any injuries observed on a diagram illustrating their positioning and extent.
- Refer to the Incident/Accident Book for any previous observations, concerns or reports that may be relevant.
- It is essential that the details of the alleged abuse be recorded correctly and legibly, as this will be critical later on in the proceedings.
- The report should be submitted to the Designated Liaison Officer and written acknowledgement of receipt requested. This should be done immediately and certainly within 24 hours.
- A disclosure form is available (cf. Appendix 2) as a guide to show the type of information that should be recorded.

Record Keeping

The Designated Officer is responsible for keeping records related to child protection in a locked filing cabinet. The Designated Liaison Officer and Deputy Designated Liaison Officer of Sing Ireland are the only persons who should have access to these records, which may include:

- Any complaints about the safety and welfare of children/young people while working with Sing Ireland.
- Any concerns, disclosures or allegations of child abuse.
- The follow up to any complaints, disclosure, concerns or allegations, including informal advice from Tusla, reports to the Tusla and informing

of primary carer/s.

- Any bullying complaints related to the Organisation's work with children/young people and the follow-up action.
- Signed Staff Declaration Forms (cf. Appendix 6) to include acceptance of the Sing Ireland Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures by all staff members, whether permanent, contract or volunteer.
- All Garda Clearance Forms, where applicable.
- All Consent Forms from Primary Carers.

Reporting Procedure in respect of Child Abuse

Sing Ireland has put in place a standard reporting procedure for dealing with disclosures, concerns or allegations of child abuse.

Responsibility to Report Child Abuse

Everyone must be alert to the possibility that children with whom they are in contact may be experiencing abuse or have been abused in the past. This is an important responsibility for staff when working with children and young people. The guiding principles in regard to reporting child abuse are as follows:

- The safety and wellbeing of the child or young person must take priority. No child/young person should ever be left in an unsafe situation.
- Reports should be made without delay to the Tusla.
- Primary carers of the child must be informed of the allegation, concern or disclosure, unless doing so is likely to endanger the child.

Reporting procedure for dealing with disclosures, concerns or allegations of child abuse

- The reporting procedure should be known and accessible to all staff.
- The member of staff who has received a disclosure of child abuse or who has concerns of abuse, should bring it to the attention of the Designated Officer.
- All mandated persons under the Children First Act 2015 are legally obligated under the Act to report reasonable concerns about a child to Tusla. It is Sing Ireland's policy that this is jointly filed with the Designated Liaison Officer.
- Primary carers should be made aware of a report to the Tusla unless it is likely to put the child at further risk.
- The Designated Officer will assess and review the information that has been provided.
- At this point the Designated Officer should have an informal consultation with the Tusla, where no identifying details are disclosed, to ascertain from them if a formal report should be made or not.
- After consultation with the Tusla officials, the Designated Liaison Officer will then take one of two options:
 - Report the allegation, concern or disclosure to the Tusla, or
 - Not make a formal report to Tusla but keep a record on file.
- The reasons for not reporting the allegation, concern or disclosure will be clearly recorded.
- If they decide not to make a report, then the Designated Liaison Officer must inform the reporting staff in writing, giving reasons.
- The member of staff who made the initial report will be informed if a formal report is not being made by the Organisation to the Tusla and it is open to him/her to make a formal report themselves, directly to the relevant authority if they feel this is necessary.

- Where a formal report is made, the Tusla will then liaise with A Garda Síochána.
- It is likely that the Tusla will want to speak to the person who first made the report to clarify facts and the circumstances of the report.
- All actions and outcomes should be noted.
- If the Designated Liaison Officer or the Deputy Designated Officer is unavailable, contact the local Duty Social Worker of the Tusla directly for advice.
- The Designated Liaison Officer will inform the Member of the Board of Directors assigned to child protection in advance of the next board meeting, that a report has been passed on to the relevant authorities. No details of the report will be disclosed to the Board.
- Records of reports of abuse will be kept in a locked cabinet at the offices of Sing Ireland, where only the Designated Liaison Officer and Deputy Designated Officer will have access to them.

Confidentiality

In matters of child abuse, a member of staff should never promise to keep secret any information divulged. It should be explained to the child/young person that this information cannot be kept secret but only those who need to know will be told. It is essential in reporting any case of alleged/suspected abuse that the principle of confidentiality applies. The information should only be shared on a 'need to know' basis and the number of people that need to be informed should be kept to a minimum. (cf. Section 11)

The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act

In the Republic of Ireland the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to the Child Protection Officer (Designated Officer), the HSE or An Garda Síochána. (cf. Appendix 8)

In case of an emergency outside of Tusla Social Work Department hours, where the immediate safety of a child is threatened, contact An Garda Síochána.

Dealing with Allegations made against Staff & Volunteers

All allegations or accusations against staff and volunteers of Sing Ireland will be recorded and acted upon according to the reporting procedures in this document. Where an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff or volunteer, the protection of the child/young person is the paramount consideration.

Sing Ireland, however, has a dual responsibility with respect to both the child/young person and the staff member, such that two separate procedures must be followed:

- The reporting procedure in respect of the child, to be dealt with by the Designated Liaison Officer.
- The procedure in respect of the staff member, to be dealt with by the Chairman of the Sing Ireland.

The same person will not have responsibility for dealing with both child welfare issues and staff employment issues.

If there is an allegation or suspicion in relation to the Designated Liaison Officer, then the Deputy Designated Liaison Officer will be contacted to assume responsibility of Designated Officer.

If there is an allegation or suspicion in relation to the Chairperson of the Board, a nominee will be appointed by the Board to deal with issues relating to the staff member.

Reporting Procedure in respect of the Child/Young Person

In the event of a child/young person making an allegation of abuse about a staff member, the Designated Liaison Officer will follow the normal reporting procedure, set out in Section 15.

Reporting Procedure in respect of the Staff Member

If an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer of the Sing Ireland, the following steps will be taken:

- The Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Sing Ireland will be informed immediately and deal with all aspects of the case relating to the staff member.
- Any action following an allegation of abuse against staff will be taken in consultation with the Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána.

- The allegation will be assessed by the Designated Liaison Officer to establish if there are reasonable grounds for concern (cf. Appendix 8) and whether a formal report will be made to the statutory authorities at this point. The Designated Liaison Officer may wish to contact the Tusla for advice on the issue.
- The safety of the child is the first priority of Sing Ireland, and all necessary measures will be taken to ensure that the child/young person who made the allegation, is safe;
- Sing Ireland will ensure that no other children/young people are at risk during the period of investigation and will inform other relevant agencies or parents/carers as appropriate.
- The measures which can be taken to ensure the safety of children and young people at this point can include the following: suspension of duties of the person accused, re-assignment of duties where the accused will not have contact with children/young people, working under increased supervision during the period of investigation or other measures, as deemed appropriate.
- Should an allegation take place on a residential course run by Sing Ireland and reasonable grounds for concern exist, the member of staff in question will stop work immediately on that course.
- Following consultation, the Chairperson of the Board will advise the member of staff and take measures appropriate to the level of risk while not unreasonably penalising the worker unless necessary, to protect the child/young person.
- If a formal report is being made to Tusla/An Garda Síochána, the Chairperson of the Board will notify the member of staff that an allegation has been made and what the nature of the allegation is. The staff member has a right to respond to this and this response should be documented and retained.
- Sing Ireland will ensure that the principle of ‘natural justice’ will apply, whereby a person is considered innocent until proven otherwise.
- Sing Ireland will work in co-operation with An Garda Síochána and Tusla, and any decisions on action to be taken in regard to the member of staff will be taken in consultation with these agencies.
- The person against whom the allegation is made will need support during this period and Sing Ireland will provide advice on how to access the relevant support services.
- All members have the option of making a report direct to the statutory authorities if they so wish, or if they are unhappy with how the allegation is being dealt with by Sing Ireland.

If you are a member of staff/volunteer accused of an abusive action:

- Make notes of all your actions/contacts with the child in question as soon as possible and ensure you are no longer working with the child/children making the allegation.
- Consult the Sing Ireland Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and make sure these are followed correctly.
- Seek access to professional and legal advice.

- Any action following an allegation of abuse against an employee should be taken in consultation with Tusla and the Gardaí
- After consultation, the chairman/head of organisation should advise the person accused and agreed procedures will be followed
- Accept that colleagues may be expected not to contact you while an investigation is underway.
- Think about your relationship with a colleague who is under investigation. Ask management to confirm the contact arrangements and what support is available to your colleague and all other staff they work with.

Contact Details

Chairman of the Board

Virginia Kerr

virkerr@gmail.com

Complaints Procedure in relation to Child Safety and Protection

In keeping with our commitment to ensuring the safety and welfare of all children/young people with whom we work, Sing Ireland has put in place a complaints procedure to cover any situations which may arise when children/young people or their primary carers are not happy with the way children/young people have been treated by the Organisation. In the event of a complaint/comment:

- Complaints specifically regarding the safety and welfare of children/young people should be directed to the Designated Liaison Officer of Sing Ireland.
- All other complaints/comments (not relating to child protection) should be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer of Sing Ireland, who has responsibility for directing the complaint to the appropriate person and ensuring it is responded to on time.
- Sing Ireland will seek the advice of a Tusla social worker for an informal discussion in the event of a complaint/comment that may constitute 'reasonable grounds for concern' (cf. Appendix 8).
- Complaints or comments will be responded to in writing within 2 weeks.
- Verbal complaints will be logged and responded to in the same way as written complaints.

Contact Details

Designated Officer

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Accidents Procedure

Sing Ireland is committed to providing suitable, safe and accessible environments for all events to minimise the risk of accident, including:

- Accessible, suitable sanitation facilities.
- Sufficient heating and ventilation.
- Appropriate space.
- Appropriate standards of fire safety.
- Induction in Health & Safety policies/procedures for all staff and participants for the event in question.

Accidents Procedure

- Staff of Sing Ireland will record any accidents that take place during the course of their events in the accident/incident book using the Sing Ireland Confidential Incident/Accident Report Form (Appendix 6).
- The location of accident/incidents files and documents will be made known to all staff in advance of each event.
- A First Aid box will be available and fully stocked at all events and all staff made aware of its location in advance of the event.
- Sing Ireland will maintain an up-to-date register of the contact details of all children/young people who attend our events and will ensure that these details are cross-referenced with Confidential Incident/Accident Report Forms.
- Sing Ireland has its own public liability insurance in place for all events.
- External organisations with whom the Organisation has dealings must provide proof that they have public liability insurance.
- Emergency contact details will be included in all welcome packs given to participants and staff at the beginning of each course.
- Sing Ireland will endeavour to ensure that at least one qualified First Aid Officer will be present at all events.
- Sing Ireland will always advise staff, children and young people of the risks of handling heavy equipment

Appendices - Sample Forms and Supporting Information

Forms

Appendix 1 Sample Parent/Guardian Consent Form

Appendix 2 Sample Disclosure Form

[Appendix 3](#) Standard Form for Reporting Child Protection and/or
Welfare Concerns to Tusla

Appendix 4 Sample Staff Reference Form

Appendix 5 Sample Staff Declaration Form

Appendix 6 Sample Incident/Accident Report Form

Supporting Information

Appendix 7 Recognising Child Abuse: Definitions and Possible
Indicators of Child Abuse

Appendix 8 Reasonable Grounds for Concern with respect to
Child Abuse

Appendix 9 Protection of Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998

Appendix 10 Anti-Bullying Policy

Appendix 11 Contact Details for Tusla Area Social Work Departments