

# CITY OF DERRY DRAMA FESTIVAL CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

## The purpose of this policy is to:

- protect children and young people involved in our discipline
- protect children and young people through their involvement in drama
- protect members and volunteers from wrongful allegations

## Definitions

- For the purposes of this document the term “ child/children/minor(s)/young people includes everyone under 18 years of age, as defined under The Children (NI) Order 1995 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Under the heading “potential areas of harm” are included all the normal risks associated with stagecraft. In addition we need to recognise physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect.
- “**The Association**” refers to the Association of the City of Derry Drama Festival, its officers, members, volunteers and employees.

The Association, recognising its duty of care, is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of its members, and, to this end, the following procedures have been agreed specifically to protect the well-being and to promote the interests of children and young people.

At City of Derry Drama Festival we believe that taking part in our activities should be a positive and enjoyable part of the lives of children and young people. We aim to ensure that children and young people are protected and kept safe from harm and that their rights, wishes and feeling are respected. Our primary concern is for young people who are participating in our activities under the leadership of directors, helpers and other volunteers. However, we recognise that we also have a responsibility towards young people who may be at risk from people or activities that have nothing to do with The Association.

## Principles

- The child’s welfare is paramount
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately

## Procedures

- The Association will appoint a Designated Officer and Deputy Designated Officer whose role it is to deal with any issues relating to child protection and to whom members must report any concerns they have regarding child protection and, in particular, any children or young people they believe to be “at risk”.
- Child protection is the concern of every member of the Association. We appreciate that members are not all experts in this field and that recognising situations in which abuse may occur or has already taken place is often difficult. For this reason any member who suspects there may be a child or young person “at risk” must pass on

this information even if it looks as if it might be a false alarm. By someone “at risk” we mean anyone who could be suffering harm to themselves or who could be harming others. If you think that this is happening you cannot keep it confidential under any circumstances and you should not make promises of confidentiality to children where you suspect that harm could occur.

- Members of the Association will attend a seminar on child protection before being allowed to work with children and young people. A record will be held by The Association of all those who have attended such a seminar.
- At the Committee’s discretion those involved with children and young people may be required to submit themselves to a “police check”. Before the “police check” is carried out the Association will inform the individual and give the reasons for the check. However the Group recognises that this is in itself no guarantee that an adult is a suitable person to be in charge of children and young people and the Group reserves the right to refuse a member access to young people even though he or she has “passed “ the “police check”

### **Involvement of visiting amateur companies**

- All visiting companies must advise on the presence in their company of any minor, detailing their age, name, medical problems or disabilities and their role within the company
- A signed parental release form must be provided in advance for each minor agreeing to their participation in the company and acknowledging the responsibility of a designated chaperone
- The chaperone must provide a signed acknowledgement of responsibility for the minor while engaged in any City of Derry Drama Festival activity or event.

### **Advice for Members**

If you suspect the existence of actual/potential harm and /or a child makes a disclosure to you:

- take what the child says seriously
- react calmly so as not to frighten the child
- reassure the child, but do not make promises of confidentiality
- do not question the child unnecessarily
- make a full record of what was said etc as soon as possible

It is not your responsibility to decide if abuse has taken place, but you must take action ie pass on your concerns to either the Designated Officer or Deputy Designated Officer.

### **Appropriate Behaviour and Good Practice**

- You are advised not to spend excessive amounts of time with young people, away from others
- Don’t take children to your home where they are alone with you
- Transporting children in your car can lay you open to insurance problems/risk of accusations
- It is not a good idea to be alone with a child in the dressing rooms

**Vulnerable adults (defined as any person aged 18 and over who is, or may be, unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.) are also covered by this policy.**

**This policy will be reviewed at least once every three years or earlier if there has been a change in legislation.**