



# Child Protection Policy and Procedures

## **Introduction**

Ulster Touring Opera aims to provide young people with the opportunity to experience all aspects of opera and both staff and volunteers must be committed to ensuring that young people are able to do this in an environment where their safety and welfare are of primary concern. We believe that all children have the right to be protected from harm at all times and in all situations and that all children who participate can do so in an enjoyable and safe environment in which they can have fun and feel valued. To ensure that a culture of safety informs all that we do, Ulster Touring Opera has developed this Child Protection Policy and associated Code of Practice.

## **The Aims of the Policy**

The aim of the policy is to safeguard the personal safety of all children who take part in our activities through actively promoting awareness, good practice and appropriate and effective procedures.

Taken together the following elements underpin the procedures:

- Code of Conduct
- Good recruitment and Vetting Procedures
- Staff Training
- Reporting Guidelines
- Recognising Signs and Symptoms of Abuse
- Role of the Designated Officer
- Dealing with Disclosures
- Methods of Recording Information

## **Ulster Touring Opera's Child Protection Policy Statement on Child Protection**

Our aim is to provide young people with the opportunity to experience all aspects of opera and both staff and volunteers are committed to ensuring that young people are able to do this in an environment where their safety and welfare are of primary concern.

We wish to ensure that all children participate in an enjoyable and safe environment in which they can have fun and feel valued.

Staff and volunteers in Ulster Touring Opera accept and recognise our responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm, and to establish and maintain a safe environment for them. We are committed to reviewing our policy, procedures and practice at regular intervals, at least every year.

We will endeavor to safeguard children by:-

- Following carefully the procedures laid down for recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers who will deal directly with children through Access NI, and ensure that all staff and volunteers are informed and make themselves familiar with the company's Child Protection Policy.

- Provide effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.
- Employing registered chaperones for each production involving children.
- Obtaining performance licenses from individual education and library boards.
- Reporting concerns to statutory agencies who need to know and involving parents and children appropriately.
- Adopting child protection guidelines through a code of behaviour for staff and volunteers.
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers.
- Carry out risk assessments at rehearsal, accommodation and performance venues and ensure that safety procedures are adhered to.

### **Area Child Protection Committees:**

- Eastern Health & Social Services Board, Champion House, 12-22 Linenhall Street, Belfast, BT2 8BS (Tel: 028 90 321313; [www.ehbc.n-i.nhs.uk](http://www.ehbc.n-i.nhs.uk))
- Northern Health & Social Service Board, County Hall, 182 Galgorm Road, Ballymena, BT42 1QB (Tel: 028 2565 3333; [www.nhssb.n-i.nhs.uk](http://www.nhssb.n-i.nhs.uk))
- Southern Health & Social Services Board, Tower Hill, Armagh, BT61 9DR (Tel: 028 37 410041; [www.shssb.org](http://www.shssb.org))
- Western Health & Social Services Board, Londonderry, BT47 1TG (Tel: 028 71 860086; [www.whssb.org](http://www.whssb.org))

### **NSPCC Child Protection Helpline: 0808 800 5000**

Ulster Touring Opera's Child Protection policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if there are changes in government directives or requirements.

Information about our Child Protection Policy and Code of Behaviour will be provided to children, parents, staff, artists, facilitators and volunteers.

## **Definitions of Abuse**

The Children (NI) Order 1995 defines abuse under 4 headings:

- **Physical Abuse**
- **Emotional Abuse**
- **Sexual Abuse**
- **Neglect**

## **Indicators of Abuse**

Although our staff will be trained to recognise and report abuse they are not experts. Under the Children (NI) Order 1995, the relevant Health and Social Services Trust has a statutory duty to ensure the welfare of a child but we have responsibility to provide a safe environment for children by employing people who are suitable to work with, or to have contact with, children and who, if the situation should arise will follow our procedures to report any suspicions of abuse to the relevant Health and Social Services Trust.

## **Supervision of Children**

Children should be supervised at all times and we will appoint the necessary number of chaperones to ensure that this is done. The Designated Officer will oversee the appointment of chaperones who will be responsible for the children during our projects. We will appoint sufficient chaperones to meet the required ratio of child adult supervision. A Head Chaperone will be appointed to oversee the chaperoning team if a large number of chaperones are needed.

A chaperone acts in 'loco parentis' and are expected to exercise the same care and control as a good parent would with a view to securing the health and kind treatment of all children on the project.

Dangerous behaviour by children should not be allowed.

The children will be working with a professional artistic team and will be expected to behave in a professional manner at all times. Offensive behaviour will not be tolerated or accepted, and any child whose behaviour endangers the safety and welfare of either themselves or any other company member may be asked to leave the project. They must not turn up to rehearsals late, or over tired. They must bring with them the appropriate equipment/materials for rehearsals. The team of Chaperones will be on hand to provide support and clear boundaries, and will have a set of house rules i.e. no smoking, drinking or chewing gum, use of mobile telephones and children under 16 years will not be allowed to leave the theatre without permission from a chaperone.

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We wish to ensure that all children participate in an enjoyable and safe environment in which they can have fun and feel valued.

Staff and volunteers in Ulster Touring Opera accept and recognise our responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm, and to establish and maintain a safe environment for them. We are committed to reviewing our policy, procedures and practice at regular intervals, at least every three years.

We will endeavour to safeguard children by:-

- Following carefully the procedures laid down for recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers who will deal directly with children through Access NI, and ensure that all staff and volunteers are informed and make themselves familiar with the company's Child Protection Policy.
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- Carry out risk assessments at rehearsal, accommodation and performance venues and ensure that safety procedures are adhered to.

***The above policy statement applies to all paid staff, and all volunteers.***

Dafydd Hall Williams  
Artistic Director  
Ulster Touring Opera

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## **Codes of Behaviour**

All Ulster Touring Opera Staff and Volunteers should:

- **Set a good example**
- **Treat everyone with respect**
- **Respect a young person's right to personal privacy**
- **Explain to the young people why an activity should involve contact.**
- **Be vigilant in case an innocent action might be misinterpreted.**
- **Not have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with a young person in their care.**
- **Staff should avoid situations where they are left alone with a child.**

Unless in case of emergency, it is advisable that staff should not be alone in a vehicle with a young child.

## **Procedure of reporting accidents and guidelines relating to First Aid**

All accidents must be logged into the Ulster Touring Opera accident report book.

## **Guidelines for anti-bullying policy and sanctions for children who break the code of behaviour.**

Bullying will not be accepted or condoned in any activities run by Ulster Touring Opera. All forms of bullying will be addressed.

Bullying can include:

- Physical pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching etc.
- Name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing and deliberate isolating of a child.
- Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures etc.
- Sexual/homophobic comments and or/suggestions
- Unwanted physical contact.

Offensive behaviour will not be accepted or tolerated by Ulster Touring Opera, and any child's behaviour which threatens or endangers the safety and welfare of either themselves or any other company member may be asked to leave the project.

## **Physical Restraint**

Ulster Touring Opera staff/volunteers must never physically restrain a child except in the following situations:

- To prevent physical injury to the child, or to other children, or to him/herself or other staff members
- To prevent damage to property
- To prevent the young person committing a criminal offence

If physical restraint is deemed necessary it must always be appropriate and reasonable.

### **How to recognise inappropriate behaviour between an adult and a child**

Signs and Symptoms:

- Inappropriate physical contact between an adult and a child.
- Adults behaving suspiciously; hanging around the toilet or changing area when there is no good reason to be there.
- Indulging in gratuitous horseplay with a child.
- Using inappropriate language in front of a child.

### **Reporting Procedure**

#### **Procedure for dealing with an allegation of child abuse against a member of staff.**

1. All staff should be made aware that allegations can be made and that there is a procedure to deal with that laid down in the Child Protection Policy.
2. In all circumstances all allegations should be reported to the Designated Officer.
3. If the Designated Officer is unavailable, the Deputy Designated Officer should be contacted.

#### **Designated Officer**

**Dafydd Hall Williams – 07891 961342**

#### **Deputy Designated Officer**

**Dawn Burns – 07712 509397**

#### **Following a preliminary investigation, decisions will be taken with regard to:-**

Whether there is a need for a full investigation

Whether the employee should be suspended pending the results of a full investigation.

Whether there is a need for a full investigation.

Or

Whether the Department of Health and Social Services/Police should be informed.

#### **If there is an allegation of gross misconduct, the employee will be suspended from work on full pay.**

The two independent investigation officers, as named above, will conduct a formal investigation. They will report on their findings to the Board of Directors.

## PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING CONCERNS



- The reporting process need to be made clear to all workers before a project starts
- Minimise the number of individuals that come across the information
- Follow up a vocal concern / disclosure or allegation with a pro-forma (keep factual)

## **Induction and Training for Staff**

Ulster Touring Opera needs to ensure that, once recruited, all staff should be well informed, trained, supervised and supported so that they are less likely to become involved in actions which can be open to misinterpretation or cause harm.

This process should cover the following:

- Induction – The need to be familiar with Ulster Touring Opera’s Child Protection Policy, Code of Behaviour and Health and Safety Policies.
- Probationary Period – Review suitability of new staff within six months.
- Supervision and support.

## Recruitment and Selection Guidelines

- When recruiting for staff, Ulster Touring Opera is responsible for reviewing the job description to assess if it involves unavoidable access to children. If this is the case, whether permanent, temporary, fulltime or part time job applicants must be asked to consent to a police check being carried out to check the existence and content of any criminal record they may have and for ACCESS NI to check the individuals suitability to work with children.
- Point out that if the applicant refuses to grant consent for such checks that would be sufficient grounds for Ulster Touring Opera not to progress any further with the application.

When the short listed candidates have been interviewed and a recommended candidate emerges, a nominated officer will request ACCESS NI to make the relevant checks. In order to conduct the checks, ACCESS NI will have to be furnished with photographic ID and two other forms of appropriate identification. The confidential results of the checks will be forwarded by ACCESS NI to Ulster Touring Opera.

**N.B. Since most child abusers have not been convicted in a court of law there may be no records for ACCESS NI to check. However it is still a valuable service for employers although it cannot be totally conclusive in its findings.**

## **References**

Ulster Touring Opera may in addition ask for references from two referees who are not related to the candidate. We must inform the referees that this post involves working with children and ask about the candidate’s suitability in this context.

## **Volunteers**

If Ulster Touring Opera is using unpaid volunteers who may have access to children the following procedures must be adopted.

- Is he/she the right person for this type of work?
- Ask each volunteer to fill in an application form.
- Each volunteer must be in possession of valid I.D
- Each volunteer must be asked for written references.
- When interviewing the volunteer Ulster Touring Opera must make them aware of Ulster Touring Opera's child protection policy.
- If the volunteers work involves unavoidable substantial access to children then an ACCESS NI check must be done.
- Volunteers should be offered training and support.

## **Disciplinary Procedure - Following the outcome of the investigation**

- Dismissal may occur
- The police may be informed
- The Department of Health and Social Services may be informed.

The employer must set out in writing the employee's alleged conduct or other circumstances which have led them to contemplate dismissal or disciplinary action. The employer must send the statement or a copy of it to the employee and invite the employee to attend a meeting to discuss the matter.

The meeting must take place before action is taken, except in the case where the disciplinary action consists of suspension.

After the meeting the employer must inform the employee of their decision and notify them of the right to appeal against the decision if they are not satisfied with it.

If the employee wished to appeal, they must inform the employer. The appeal should be dealt with by a more senior manager than attended the first meeting. After the appeal meeting, the employer must inform the employee of their final decision.

## **Designated Officer**

The Role and Responsibility of the Designated Officer is to:

- Provide information and advice on child protection within Ulster Touring Opera.
- Ensure that Ulster Touring Opera's Child Protection Policy and Procedures are followed and if the situation arises inform Social Services of concerns about individual children.

- Advice about training needs.
- Act as the first point of contact and support.
- Record an allegation of abuse made by a child to a member of staff.
- Discuss future action with the person who made the report.
- Record all action taken and report to the Board of Directors within 24 hours.

Press photographers may attend workshops/performances at the request of Ulster Touring Opera to take pictures for publicity purposes. At least one member of staff should be present at all times while press photographs are being taken.

### **Confidentiality**

All personal and sensitive details which have been confided to Ulster Touring Opera (re: family situations, personal details etc.) will not be talked about or passed on to others without prior consent.

Information of a confidential nature will only be communicated on a 'need to know' basis.

### **Complaints and Grievance procedure**

At the outset of any Ulster Touring Opera project involving children, all parents / guardians will be provided with detailed information of the project. A registration form with all relevant details about the child plus contact numbers, including emergency contact numbers should be completed before the child/young person starts the project.

In the event of a parent/guardian making a complaint or voicing a concern to a member of the supervisory staff, the complaint/reporting procedure laid down in the child protection policy must be followed. Parents/guardians must be supplied with the relevant contact numbers for Ulster Touring Opera and the postal address if they wish to contact Ulster Touring Opera in writing.

If you are unhappy or concerned about anything involving the organisation the first stage would be to try to resolve the issue informally through dialogue with Ulster Touring Opera – the first point of contact is the Manager.

If the issue cannot be dealt with at this stage then you must set out the grievance in writing and send the statement or a copy of it to the Board of Directors.

In extreme cases the Board may request a meeting to discuss the grievance. After the meeting the Board must relay their response and inform of the right of appeal against the decision if you are not satisfied with it.

We have procedures in place to ensure a speedy and effective response to all complaints.

*Employees have the right to be accompanied to all meetings (usually by a friend or colleague for moral support)*

**Appendix One**  
**Reporting Procedure Form/Cause for Concern Form**

To be filled in if an employee suspects child abuse.

Please complete in block capitals

Name of Child ..... Age .....

Any special factors .....

Name of parent (s) .....

Home address .....

.....

Phone number .....

Own concerns or passing on somebody else's .....

.....

What prompted the concern .....

.....

Date ...../ ...../ ..... Time ..... of specific incident

Any physical signs / behavioural / indirect .....

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Has the child been spoken to? If so, what was said .....

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Have parents been contacted? If so, what was said .....

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Has anybody been alleged to be the abuser? If so, record details .....

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.....

Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details .....

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**Useful Contacts/ Numbers**

**Dafydd Hall Williams / Designated Officer**

**Mobile:** 07891 961342

**Email:** ulstertouringopera@gmail.com

**Dawn Burns / Deputy Designated Officer**

**Mobile:** 07712 509397

**Email** ulstertouringopera@gmail.com

**NSPCC**

Northern Ireland Divisional Office

Jennymount Court

North Derby Street

Belfast BT15 3HN

Tel: 028 9035 1135

[www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

**Childline NI**

14 Queen Street

Belfast

BT1 6ED

Tel: 0870 3362945

Northern Ireland Number for Childline 90327773

**Child Protection Helpline** 0808 800 5000

**Childline Helpline for Children and Young People** 0800 1111