

The Navan Shamrock Festival undertakes to promote the general welfare, health and enjoyment of children and protect them from harm of all kinds, in line with articles 19 and 34 of the United Nations Convention on the rights of the Child. (See Appendix IV). The festival also undertakes to protect the personal integrity, safety and well-being of each child in the festival in line with the provisions of the National Child Protection Guidelines – Children First.

Child Protection Procedures:

The festival is committed to training volunteers to be aware of childcare protection issues and the guidelines for events and stewarding. The festival is committed to developing positive relationships

The chairperson will have a copy of 'Children First', the National Protection Guidelines on the premises and will ensure that it is available to be read by all members of committee, volunteers and trainees.

- Designated Officer
- Recruitment:

- At least 2 members of the committee will attend the Child Protection training provided by the local Health Board and will encourage all adults involved in the festival to take advantage of such training.

- The festival is not a children's minding service and as such, Parents are responsible for their children during festival events.

- In the case of disclosure by a child, it is essential that direct questions, name of a specific person or any other intimate details are not asked, as such questions could complicate an official investigation at a later stage.

- Following the raising of concerns, observations will be made and records will be kept on the individual child.

These confidential records will include:

- Name, address and age of child
- Circumstances in which the concern arose or a particular incident occurred
- Time and date of observations
- A factual description of the child's behaviour/appearance, without comment or interpretation
- The exact words spoken by the Child
- Signature of the recorder
- Name, address and age of the Child



- Contact the Public Health Nurse, Social Worker or designated Officer in the local Health Board for advice and support and the Gardai.



- It is important to be aware of the sensitive nature of these matters but to ensure that no commitments regarding secrecy be made.
- **Procedure for Reporting Abuse:**
- If there are still concerns, the chairperson must contact the designated Health Board person and discuss the concerns with him/her, prior to putting them in writing. At this stage all records and observations must be made available to the Health Board and staff must be aware that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.
- The chairperson must inform the directors through the secretary, in confidence, without mentioning the child's name.
- Parents should be informed when a case is referred to the Health Board. Sensitive handling will be required based on advice from the Health Board staff.
- A crisis may arise at any time, resulting in the necessity for a case to be referred to the Health Board immediately.
- With the proviso that the safety and welfare of the child is paramount, the festival will do all in its power to support the child and family.
- Procedure to address Allegations of Abuse against an Employee/Employer:
- Employers have a dual responsibility in respect of both the child and employee. (Note: Employee in this context includes unpaid volunteers).
- There are two procedures to be followed here:
- The reporting procedure in respect of the Childcare
- The procedure for dealing with the employee
- It is preferable to separate these two procedures and appoint different people to deal with the issues independently.
- It is important to treat the employee/volunteer fairly but the primary goal is the protection of the child.
- Any allegations of abuse against an employee/volunteer must be dealt with sensitively and support provided for the person, including counselling where necessary.
- When an allegation is made against an employee, the following steps should be taken:-
- Action should be guided by the agreed procedures, the applicable employment contract and the rules of natural justice.
- The Chairperson of the committee should be informed as soon as possible.

- The first priority should be to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk. The employer should as a matter of urgency take any necessary protective measures. These measures should be proportionate to the level of risk and should not unreasonably penalise the employee, financially or otherwise, unless necessary to protect children. Where protective measures do penalise the employee, it is important that early consideration be given to the case.
- The follow-up on the allegation of abuse against an employee should be made in consultation with the Health Board and An Garda Síochána. An immediate meeting should be arranged with these two agencies for this purpose.
- After these consultations referred to above and when pursuing the question of the future position of the employee, the Chairperson should advise the person accused of the allegation and the agreed procedures followed.
- Employers/chairpersons should take care to ensure actions taken by them do not undermine or frustrate any investigations being conducted by the Health Board or An Garda Síochána. It is strongly recommended that employers maintain a close liaison with these authorities to achieve this.

(Source: Children First: 12.5.1, Page 111)

- Protections for Persons reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998
-
- This act came into operation on 23rd January 1999. The main provision of the act is:
-
- The provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse "reasonably and in good faith" to designated officers of health boards or any member of An Garda Síochána.
-
- The provision of significant protections for employees who report child abuse. These protections cover all employees and all forms of discrimination up to, and including dismissal.
-
- The creation of a new offence of false reporting of child abuse where a person makes a report of child abuse to the appropriate authorities "knowing the statement to be false". This is a new criminal offence designed to protect innocent persons from malicious reports.

