



BE YOUNG - BE CREATIVE

**Newtownabbey Arts & Cultural Network
PROTECTION OF CHILDREN & VULNERABLE ADULTS**

1. INTRODUCTION

This policy is applicable to staff and volunteers working with children or vulnerable adults.

Within this policy the term “staff” refers to any adult, paid or voluntary, who engages with young people within a NACN programme. This applies to the management and domestic dimensions of the organisation as well as the practical programme.

A child / young person is defined as aged 18 years and below.

The definition of a Vulnerable Adult may be a person who:

- Is elderly or frail
- Has learning disabilities
- Suffers from mental illness (e.g. dementia, personality disorder)
- Has a physical disability
- Is a substance misuser
- Is homeless
- Is in an abusive relationship

2. POLICY STATEMENT

NACN is committed to practice, (and the promotion of this practice), which protects children, young people and vulnerable adults from harm. We accept this on two levels; firstly, there is a moral obligation on anyone who is involved with children, young people and vulnerable adults to provide them with the highest possible standard of care; secondly, there is a legal basis as those who accept responsibility for children, young people and vulnerable adults may be legally liable if they (or their organisation) fail to provide adequate care.

Staff within NACN accept and recognise our responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children, young people and vulnerable adults harm.

We will endeavour to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults by:

- Adopting, and promoting with our staff and users, a set of guidelines contained within a **“Code of Behaviour”** for staff members
- Having an effective procedure for **reporting** children, young people and vulnerable adult **protection concerns** within NACN. All staff of NACN will be made fully aware of this procedure.
- **Sharing information about** children, young people and vulnerable adults around protection and good practice with staff, parents, and young people.
- Following carefully the procedures for **recruitment and selection** of paid and unpaid staff.
- Providing effective management for all staff through, **supervision, support and training.**

The procedures for the Policy Statement will be reviewed at regular intervals, at least on a yearly basis.

3. DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE

It needs to be recognised that the term **‘abuse’** can be subject to wide interpretation. The starting point for a definition is the following statement:

“Abuse is a violation of an individual’s human and civil rights by any other person or persons. “

A consensus has emerged identifying the following main different forms of abuse:

- **Physical abuse**, including; hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions;
- **Sexual abuse**, including; rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not consented, or could not consent or was pressured into consenting;
- **Psychological abuse**, including; emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks;

- **Financial or material abuse**, including; theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits;
- **Neglect and acts of omission**, including; ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating; and
- **Discriminatory abuse**, including racist, sexist, that based on a person's disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Because children can be abused in a number of ways the harm caused cannot always be easily categorised. The Children (NI) Order 1995 defines 5 categories of abuse:

- **Neglect** - the actual or likely persistent or significant neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold and starvation.
- **Physical** - actual or likely deliberate physical injury to a child, or wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering to a child.
- **Sexual** - actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child. The involvement of children and adolescents in sexual activities they do not truly comprehend.
- **Emotional** - actual or likely persistent or significant emotional ill-treatment or rejection, resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of a child.
- **Bullying** - Although bullying has not been defined as abuse within the Children (NI) Order 1995, a child who is bullied may be suffering any type of abuse as defined. It may take many forms but the main types are; physical (eg hitting, kicking, theft); verbal (eg sectarian/racist remarks, name calling); indirect (eg spreading rumours)

It is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or where it has already taken place. It is unlikely that staff will be experts and it should be stressed that in accordance with the Children (N.I.) Order 1995, the Health and Social Services have a statutory duty to ensure the welfare of a child.

4. CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR ALL STAFF

Implementing this “Code of Behaviour” for all staff will protect children, young people and vulnerable adults and staff. It sets boundaries on acceptable staff practice, and avoids high risk areas in which children, young people and vulnerable adults can be harmed and serious allegations made against staff.

By adopting this code NACN sets out to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults and staff from being placed in harmful situations.

NACN’s primary goal in working with children, young people and vulnerable adults is to contribute to their growth of self confidence and esteem. How staff behave, and their attitude towards children, young people and vulnerable adults will contribute to the way children, young people and vulnerable adults feel towards themselves.

All children, young people and vulnerable adults should be treated with respect. This includes –

- Language used towards them;
- When possible they should be included in decisions taken about them (appropriate to age / maturity etc);
- They are offered the time to explain their actions/thoughts etc;
- They are listened to;
- Their views/opinions are valued not ridiculed.

As well as being authority figures the staff need to befriend children, young people and vulnerable adults and form close working relationships in order to achieve the range of programme goals which would be set.

However, all staff are expected to follow good practice rules

- Staff should not spend excessive time alone with children, young people and vulnerable adults away from others. Meeting with an individual child, young person or vulnerable adult should take place as openly as possible. If privacy is needed, the door should be left open and other staff informed. These informed staff should periodically check the room.
- Staff should not make unnecessary physical contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults. There will be times when physical contact has to be made, eg providing comfort and reassurance, or physical support in a sport activity. However all physical contact should take place with the consent of the children, young people or vulnerable adult involved , be governed by the age and development stage of the child, young people or vulnerable adult and be in response to the child, young person or vulnerable adults need.
- Staff should avoid, where possible taking children, young people and vulnerable adults in their private cars. When unavoidable, and insurance permits, it should be several children, young people and vulnerable adults and with the consent of

all parents and with the permission of NACN. Avoid situations where a single child, young people or vulnerable adult are in a vehicle with a single staff member.

- There will be occasions when staff must shout for the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults. The effective use of a loud voice is reduced if staff continually shouts. Staff should not shout at children, young people or vulnerable adults as a matter of course. Shouting should only be to avoid harm to children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- Staff should not meet with children, young people and vulnerable adults outside of the organised activities unless it is with the knowledge and consent of all parents and NACN
- Staff should never engage in sexually provocative or rough physical games.
- Staff should not allow children, young people and vulnerable adults to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Staff should never make sexually suggestive comments about, or to, a child, young person or vulnerable adult, even in fun.
- Staff should not do things of a personal nature for children, young people or vulnerable adults that they can do for themselves. Any requirement to do things of a personal nature need to be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the parent.
- Staff should take any allegation against them very seriously, even if made in jest by a child, young person or vulnerable adult. This form of joke needs to be addressed. All statements should be recorded in writing and reported to NACN.
- Individual children, young people and vulnerable adults should never be brought to a staff member's house.
- Staff need to be conscious of gender issues at all times. In mixed gender groups, male and female staff should if possible be present.

5. PHOTOGRAPHIC POLICY

Staff and volunteers must never take photographs of children without the permission of a parent or guardian. The parent or guardian must be made aware of any photographs or use of the child's name to be used for publicity purposes and provide written consent prior to this taking place. Detailed policy and form in Appendix 2

6. RATIOS

For working with children under 12 years of age, the Children (NI) Order 1995 requires the following ratios.

On Site Activities

- 1 to 8 for children 4 – 12 years

Off Site Activities

- 1 to 5 for children 4 – 12 years

Although children over 12 are not covered within legislation, NACN requires the following ratios for working with young people

On site Activities

- 1 to 15 for young people over 12 years

Off Site Activities

- 1 to 10 for young people over 12 years

Appropriate adult child ratios must be adhered to at all times. There should be a minimum of two adults supervising each activity even if only one appears to be required in the ratios. Children under 8 years are not allowed in swimming pools unless there is an adult child ratio of 1:1 in the water with the children. When working with a mixed sex group or female only, there should be at least one female supervising the group.

7. REPORTING CONCERNS

This is an area which requires a high level of confidentiality and strict “need to know” inclusion of information. It is also an area where the “Paramountcy Principle” applies in law i.e. the considerations of confidentiality should not be allowed to override the rights of children, young people or vulnerable adults to be protected from harm.

If any staff member has reason for concern regarding the well being of a child, young person or vulnerable adult they must report it to the Designated Officer within their organisation. All staff will probably have fears and anxieties about reporting concerns, but under the policy of NACN the **primary role of the staff who first suspects or is told of abuse is to report it.**

A concern may come from a number of sources -

- A child, young person or vulnerable adult may disclose information
- Another person may pass on information regarding what a child, young person or vulnerable adult has told them
- Signs/symptoms are observed by staff e.g. bruising/burns/behaviour etc

- Observed Behaviour of other staff/adults towards children , young people and vulnerable adults

In the case of observed concerns an appropriate check can be completed, for example:

- In the case of a child, young people or vulnerable adult - Asking them for example how they got the bruises etc
- In the case of parents - Asking them how things are at home for example in the case of sudden withdrawn behaviour (bereavement etc can be the reason for sudden behaviour change)
- In the case of other staff - If concerns are with other staff behaviour enquire if things are alright (under stress etc)

If it is inappropriate to check out concerns, or even with checking and you are still concerned, the staff then **MUST REPORT TO THE DESIGNATED OFFICER.**

At this stage it is a staff member expressing their concern -

- I am concerned that person X has unexplained bruising and their behaviour has deteriorated.....;
- Person Y has informed me that child X said they had been.....;
- Child X informed me that person Y has done....to them

8. DEALING WITH DISCLOSURE

In the case of a child, young person or vulnerable adult disclosing abuse, here are important dos and don'ts

DO

Stay calm

Listen

Accept

Reassure

Record in writing

DON'T

Panic

Promise to keep secrets

Ask leading questions

Make the child repeat the story unnecessarily

Delay

Report

Start to investigate

Record your report

The one thing you should not do is to delay

9. RECORDING INFORMATION

All staff should make detailed recording about all concerns. The following information will be required:

- Name/address/DOB of child, young person or vulnerable adult
- Nature of any injury
- Need for medical treatment
- Reasons for concern
- Action taken (talk/telephone visits etc)
- When – dates and times
- Who did staff deal with – staff/parent/adult/young person

10. THE ROLE OF THE DESIGNATED OFFICER WITHIN NACN

- To receive and consider all children, young person and vulnerable adults' protection concerns within NACN activity.
- Where there is uncertainty, to consult with the Social Services to test out whether the concern is serious and should be referred on.
- To make formal referrals to Social Services, N.S.P.C.C. or the police Child Abuse Investigation Units. (Under joint protocol a referral can be made to any of these agencies and will be dealt with jointly by the appropriate agencies).
- Check if an individual coming to work/volunteer is registered with the Independent Safe Guarding Authority prior to commencing employment or volunteering with the organisation.
- Register and de-register an interest in staff/ volunteers as they come and go from the organisation.
- In the event of any harmful behaviour towards children by a member of staff or volunteer refer the case to the Independent Safe Guarding Authority.

Feedback should be given to the staff that raised the original concern. All staff members have the right to ask the Designated Officer about future action of issues. Staff who are not satisfied with the handling of an issue can, as an individual, report personal concerns with the Social Services (however they are then operating outside of NACN and must deal with all events ensuing from this)

11. SHARING INFORMATION ABOUT CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS PROTECTION

NACN recognises parents/carers are responsible for their own children, young people and vulnerable adults' welfare. Parents should be assured that their children, young people or vulnerable adults are being placed within a safe environment when they are involved in a NACN programme.

To enable parents to make informed decisions about their children, young people or vulnerable adults' involvement they should receive:

- Information about the programme their children, young people or vulnerable adults want to participate in. This should include the named activity/venue/cost/means of transport/instructors qualifications.
- Names of the CCF staff who will be in charge of the children, young people and vulnerable adults during the activity/journey.
- Parental consent form which they must complete for their children, young people or vulnerable adults to participate.

NACN recognises parents have the right to:

- Raise concerns/complaints with the NACN staff that are responsible for activities. This right does not permit verbal abuse of NACN staff.
- If a parent feels their concerns are not dealt with satisfactorily, by the responsible staff, they can contact the Management Committee via the Chairperson. All complaints should be dealt with quickly. Contact should be made to the parent within 24 hours by a management representative stating the complaint has been received, and a follow up contact should be made after an investigation has been completed (the context of this contact will depend on the severity of the complaint and the possible legal/professional outcomes).

Children young people and vulnerable adults also have a right to raise areas of concern and complaints. Like adults, if they are not satisfied with the individual staff responses, they can approach the management committee.

When sharing information, it is important that each staff member recognises it is important to be sensitive to the level of understanding and maturity, as well as the level of responsibility, of the people with whom they are sharing, i.e.the sharing of this

policy and procedures will be done differently with parents, or with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

12. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF STAFF

NACN considers the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults from harm must be a primary consideration in developing a thorough method of recruiting and selecting staff and volunteers.

NACN acknowledges that the vast majority of people who want to work with children, young people and vulnerable adults are well motivated people; however this procedure aims to help screen out any of those who are not suitable.

The following procedure will be carried out for any future post (paid or voluntary):

- define the role/duties which will be required
- complete a job description
- Advertise recruitment. For paid employment this will be via public advertisement in Job Centre and or public websites. For voluntary posts this will be via other local groups and agencies.
- Job description, application form, and declaration form to be given to all applicants. All applicants should be asked to sign a declaration form stating that there is no reason why they would be unsuitable to work with young people. In particular, all applicants should be required to declare any past criminal convictions and cases pending against them (this is permitted because of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Exception (N.I.) Order 1978 for employment of working with young people). This information is confidential and should only be accessible to the interviewing members.
- Interview – For paid employment this will be a formal interview. For volunteers this will be a short discussion with two management committee members.
- Identification – Checks should be made to confirm the person is who they claim to be. With paid employment this can be confirmed by National Insurance Number.
- References will be required from two referees who are not family members. Ideally one of these references should have first hand knowledge of the applicant's previous work or contact with young people. Each referee should be asked to confirm they have no concerns about the applicant working with children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- The preferred staff will require an Access NI Check. Only after the vetting will the person be given permission to work alongside the children, young people or vulnerable adult.

13. VETTING

With effect from 12 October 2009, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 will enhance the protection of children and vulnerable adults with the introduction of the following new safeguards.

- There will be a single list of those barred from working with children and a separate, but aligned, list of those barred from working with vulnerable adults. These lists will be administered by the ISA (Independent Safeguarding Authority) and will ensure that those who are known to present a risk of harm to children and/or vulnerable adults are prevented from entering the relevant workforce in the first place.
- All individuals who want to work in child care posts which fall under the definition of 'regulated activity' will be required to register with ISA. This will include those who teach, instruct, train, care for, supervise, advise, treat or transport children or vulnerable adults and who do so once or more per month or two or more days in any 30 day period or overnight activity. Likewise, those who work in specified places, for example, in schools, care homes or child care premises will also be in regulated activity.
- As an organisation, there will be a legal requirement for NACN to check whether an individual working in 'regulated activity' is registered with the ISA prior to either employing them or taking them as a volunteer. This will be done by way of an on-line check.
- All individuals registered with the ISA will be subject to continuous monitoring. When new information becomes known about an ISA – registered individual, the ISA will be automatically informed. The ISA will then reconsider the suitability of the registered individual. If the individual is subsequently placed on one of the Barred Lists, the organisation will immediately be informed. In order to receive such information, NACN must have registered their interest in this individual at the time of their appointment. When individuals leave employment or volunteering with NACN, we must register that we are no longer interested in these individuals.
- In addition, NACN may also conduct enhanced criminal record checks on those working in 'regulated activity' and also with those working with children and vulnerable adults which fall under the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Exceptions Order 1979. These checks will be carried out by Access NI which operates under the provision of Part V of the Police Act 1997 and provides criminal history information about anyone seeking paid or unpaid work in defined areas, such as working with children and vulnerable adults.
- The actual request for an Access NI Check will be the final stage in the selection process and will only be undertaken for the preferred applicant and only following a conditional offer of appointment. Applicants must satisfactorily pass these checks before an appointment can be made.
- Checks can be requested from Access NI by a designated officer of NACN who is authorised to request and receive such information and any results are returned to them for forwarding to the appropriate representative of NACN. The

results are returned to both the Designated Officer and the applicant. This information provided by Access NI is confidential.

- NACN will then decide as to the candidate's suitability for working with children or vulnerable adults. In any case, only convictions which are relevant to the post will be taken into consideration.

14. SUPERVISION, SUPPORT AND TRAINING

NACN recognises that working with children, young people and vulnerable adults is both worthwhile and fulfilling, but also challenging. To provide the best service possible to the children, young people and vulnerable adults' all staff need to be well informed trained and supported. With this service, staff are less likely to become involved in actions which can lead to harm, or may be misunderstood.

While NACN accepts training is a continual process it will annually provide awareness training on children, young people and vulnerable adult protection issues covering:

- What is abuse; signs and symptoms?
- Who can abuse
- Dealing with disclosure
- Reporting concerns
- Recording
- Staff code of behaviour
- Staff Ratios
- Visits / residential issues
- As appropriate, arrange issue based training on topics raised by staff
- Provide an induction programme for all new NACN staff during which they can familiarise themselves with all agency policies (including the Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy).
- Review the development and suitability of staff (paid or unpaid) within six months of starting.
- NACN will provide the opportunity for all staff to share concerns, anxieties or worries about their work or the environment. For these meetings action points may be made.

APPENDIX 1

CHILD PROTECTION REPORT FORM

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Please ensure questions are fully answered
This form must be kept in a secure place
PLEASE NOTE THIS IS A DISCOVERABLE DOCUMENT.

Name of child/ young person:
Age:
Parent/ Carer Name(s):
Phone Number:
Home Address:

DISCLOSURE

Please complete the box below if a child has disclosed to you about the alleged abuse.

If the child has not provided any information please state NOT APPLICABLE.

When was the disclosure made? (dates and times)

Where was the disclosure made?

What were the immediate circumstances leading to the disclosure?

Were there others present at the time of disclosure?

YES / **NO** / **DON'T KNOW**

If YES, please state who (name and position) and what role did they play?

What feelings were expressed by the young person before, during and immediately after the disclosure?

SIGNS

Describe any signs of physical injury evident on the child.

Describe any signs of behaviour changes of the child / young person:

Were there others present at that observed the signs/symptoms?

YES / **NO** / **DON'T KNOW**

If YES, please state who (name and position) and what role did they play?

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

**Referred to
Designated Officer** _____ **Date:** _____

APPENDIX 2

PHOTOGRAPHY POLICY

It is recognised that NACN will wish to have a visual record of its activities. When taking these, committee members, staff, volunteers and users should at all times apply the principles of dignity and respect.

The following must be taken into account:

- Parental consent must be sought if the photographs/video recordings are to be used for publicity or public use of any kind.
- The child's permission should be maintained to use their image.
- Where possible, staff will avoid using children's names in photograph captions. Where names of children are published along with photographs/video recordings, their picture will not be used in a way that would allow anyone to associate that picture with a name.
- Photographs/images/videos should not be stored on any staff members/volunteers personal computer/phone etc.
- Photographs or videos should never be taken of children or young people in what could be perceived as compromising situations, eg, in swimming pools, or nightwear on residential.
- In respect of professional photographers, or the press who are invited to an event:
 - They will be provided with a copy of this policy.
 - There will be no unsupervised access to children.
 - There will be no photography sessions outside of the event or at a child's home.

(To be printed on headed paper)

**CONSENT FORM for the use of photographs and video
(For parents/carers and children/young people)**

NACN recognises the need to ensure the welfare and safety of all children. In accordance with our **child protection policy**, we will not permit photographs, video or other images of children and young people to be taken without the consent of parents/carers and children.

NACN will take all steps to ensure these images are used solely for the purposes they were intended for. If you become aware that these images are being used inappropriately you should immediately inform NACN.

Parent/Carer consent.

I _____ (Parent/Carer)

Consent to NACN photographing or videoing –

(Name of child/young person)

Signed _____ Date _____

Child/Young persons consent.

I _____

Consent to NACN photographing or videoing me whilst I am using their services.

Signed _____ Date _____