

## Musical Youth Foundation - Child Protection Policy

Following is the Musical Youth Foundation Child Protection Policy. This document is under constant review. If you have any questions, queries or suggestions in relation to helping us improve this policy document please don't hesitate to get in contact with us.

### 1. CHILD PROTECTION POLICY STATEMENT

- Although the Musical Youth Foundation will not have any direct involvement with children benefiting from its activities it is fully committed to safeguarding the well being of students engaged in any activities supported by Musical Youth Foundation funding.
- All organizations in receipt of funding support from the Musical Youth Foundation for the purpose of providing children with access to a musical education must have a satisfactory Child Protection Policy in place.
- The staff of any organisation in receipt of funding support must at all times, show respect and understanding for the rights, safety and welfare of students and conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles of the organisation.
- The aim of the Musical Youth Foundation Child Protection Policy is to promote best practice in protection and set out a procedural framework to ensure that partner organisations are equipped to make informed responses to specific issues and minimise risk with regard to protection and welfare issues.
- Organisations in receipt Musical Youth Foundation funding will adhere to the recommendations of *Children First – National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (Department of Health and Children, 1999) and *Our Duty to Care – The Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People* (Department of Health and Children, 2002) and any future documents and guidelines deemed appropriate by the state for the protection and welfare of children.
- Organisations in receipt of funding support from the Musical Youth Foundation must have in place proper procedures covering:
  - Code of behaviour for staff
  - Procedures for reporting suspected cases of abuse
  - Allegations of misconduct or abuse by staff
  - Recruitment and selection practices
  - Complaints and accidents procedure
- In the event of an allegation being made, the organisation in question will be required to inform the Musical Youth Foundation .
- If the complaint relates directly to activity supported by the Musical Youth Foundation, the activity in question may be postponed until such time as the outcome of the complaint has been reached.
- The Musical Youth Foundation can terminate support, with immediate effect in the event it deems the partner organisation to be in breach of Child Protection Policies.
- Any complaint made and subsequently upheld in a Court of Law will result in the immediate cessation of the Musical Youth Foundations involvement with the organisation in question.

Below are *guidelines* for the aforementioned required procedures:

## 2. CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

- Children are to be treated with dignity, sensitivity and respect.
- Staff must be sensitive to the risks involved in interacting with children in a one-to-one setting.
- While physical contact may be necessary to instruct a child how to hold/play an instrument, it should be appropriate to the lesson or class, and only take place when it is acceptable to all concerned.
- While physical contact is a valid way of comforting, reassuring and showing concern for children, it should only take place when it is acceptable to all concerned.
- School staff should never physically punish or be in any way verbally abusive to a child, nor should they tell jokes of a sexual nature in the presence of children.
- School staff should be sensitive to the possibility of developing favouritism, or becoming over involved or spending a great deal of time with any one child.
- Children should be encouraged to report cases of bullying to either the child protection officer or a staff member of their choice. Complaints will be brought to the attention of management.
- All complaints and allegations will be met with a response.
- Everyone involved in the School should respect the personal space, safety and privacy of individuals.

## 3. PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED CASES OF ABUSE

Child abuse can be categorised into four types: neglect, emotional, physical and sexual. The National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children have adopted the following definitions of child abuse:

- **Neglect** - This is where a child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, or medical care.
- **Emotional Abuse** - This is normally found in the *relationship* between a caregiver and a child. It occurs when a child's needs for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met.
- **Physical Abuse** - Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury that causes significant harm to a child.
- **Sexual Abuse** - Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or arousal, or for that of others. Any person who suspects that a child is being abused or is at risk of abuse has a responsibility to report their concerns to the health board (via the on-site child protection officer). 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 designated officers of health boards or any member of An Garda Síochána. Within the School, the report should be made to the child protection officer, who will then report to the health board or An Garda Síochána, and management. The person who first reported the matter will normally be required to talk to the duty social worker. When reporting, as much information as possible should be provided, i.e. names, addresses, full account of the concern for the child, dates of incidents, circumstances, and the child's own statement, if relevant. In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk, An Garda Síochána will be contacted. A suspicion, which is not supported by any objective signs of abuse, would not constitute a reasonable suspicion, or

reasonable grounds for concern. Any information provided to the health board and An Garda Síochána will remain confidential.

#### **4. ACTION TO BE TAKEN IF AN ALLEGATION IS MADE AGAINST A MEMBER OF STAFF**

- The applicable employment contract and the laws of natural justice are to be followed.
- The School director will be informed as soon as possible.
- The first priority is that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk, and the director will take the relevant protective measures.
- These measures will be proportionate to the level of risk, and will not unreasonably penalise the staff member. Where protective measures, such as suspension, do penalise the staff member, early consideration will be given to the case.
- Any action following the allegation of abuse against a staff member will be taken in consultation with the health board and An Garda Síochána. An immediate meeting with these two agencies will be arranged.
- After these consultations, the accused person will be informed by the director of his/her future in the School.
- The School will ensure that all is done to assist the health board and An Garda Síochána in their investigation of the matter.

#### **5. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PRACTICES**

- When a vacancy opens up, a clear description of the job is to be provided. The minimum level of personal qualities required to fill the post are to be made clear.
- All applicants are required to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be unsuitable to work with children, and declaring any past criminal convictions or cases pending against them.
- Applicants are interviewed by at least two representatives of the School. The information supplied by the applicant and any other information supplied on their behalf will only be seen by persons directly involved in the recruitment procedure.
- Applicants are to supply the names of two referees who will testify as to their character, their suitability to the job and any other issues, which may affect their ability to perform the required tasks. At least one referee should have first hand knowledge of the applicant's previous work or contact with children.
- The applicant will be required to confirm his/her identity against some documentation, which gives his or her full name and address together with a signature or photograph.

#### **6. COMPLAINTS AND ACCIDENTS PROCEDURE**

- Emergency numbers are prominently displayed, and known by office staff.
- The telephone in the office is available for emergency purposes.
- A first aid box is kept close at hand.
- All accidents and complaints are to be reported to the child protection officer, who will then enter them in a logbook.
- The School director will be informed of any new entries in this book.