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### **Policy Statement**

Moira Players works with children and families as part of its activities. These include our annual pantomime performance, children's workshops, and also as part of our support team during regular shows and performances (ushering, raffle tickets, refreshments etc)

#### **The purpose of this policy statement is:**

- to protect children and young people who receive Moira Players' services. This includes the children of adults who use our services or are members/volunteers
- to provide parents, staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection.

This policy statement applies to anyone working on behalf of Moira Players, including committee members, senior managers/board of trustees, paid staff, volunteers, sessional workers, agency staff and students.

#### **Legal framework**

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children in Northern Ireland. A summary of the key legislation and guidance is available from [nspcc.org.uk/childprotection](http://nspcc.org.uk/childprotection).

### **Moira Players**

#### **We believe that:**

- children and young people should never experience abuse of any kind
- we have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, to keep them safe and to practise in a way that protects them.

#### **We recognise that:**

- the welfare of the child is paramount
- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

- valuing, listening to and respecting them
- appointing a nominated child protection/safeguarding lead, a deputy child protection/safeguarding lead and a lead trustee/board member for safeguarding
- developing child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures which reflect best practice
- using our safeguarding procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving children, young people, parents, families and carers appropriately

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- creating and maintaining an anti-bullying environment and ensuring that we have a policy and procedure to help us deal effectively with any bullying that does arise
  - developing and implementing an effective online safety policy and related procedures
- sharing information about child protection and safeguarding best practice with children, their families, staff and volunteers via leaflets, posters, group work and one-to-one discussions
- recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support, training and quality assurance measures
- implementing a code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- using our procedures to manage any allegations against staff and volunteers appropriately
- ensuring that we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place
- ensuring that we provide a safe physical environment for our children, young people, staff and volunteers, by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance.
- recording and storing information professionally and securely.

### **To protect our children, we endeavour to adhere to the following:**

- Full implementation of the child protection policy.
- Providing regular training for everyone involved in caring for children. This will specifically relate to child protection information and promotion of good practice.
- Adhering to procedures for appointment of leaders and helpers involved in regulated activity with children and young people.
- Following procedures for the reporting of concerns which will involve parents, children and people working with them.
- Ensuring health and safety procedures are followed.

**Code of Behaviour for Adults working with children in regulated activity**

We expect anyone involved in working with children to fully adhere to the following guidelines for good practice:

- We will praise and promote good behaviour.
- Children and young people will be encouraged, but not forced to participate fully in activities.
- We will value children and young people by providing a high quality of teaching, worship and resources.
- Everyone involved in regulated activity with children or young people will attend all relevant training.
- We will always respect a child or young person by listening to them when they come to us.
- We will treat all children and young people fairly, equally and consistently.
- Physical punishment is strictly forbidden. Any concerns regarding a child or young person will involve a discussion with their parents / guardians.
- Verbal abuse or shouting at a child or young person is strictly forbidden. We appreciate that a leader may on specific occasions need to shout, for example, to warn a child of danger, but shouting should never be used as a tool for managing challenging behaviour.
- An appropriate ratio of adults to children will be maintained at all times (see appendices for recommended figures). It is never appropriate for a child to be alone with an adult.
- Any personal information regarding children will be kept confidential and will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.
- Appropriate physical contact is always in direct response to a child's need. It will always be ability and age appropriate.

**Code of Behaviour for Children and Young People**

- Positive behaviour will be encouraged, recognised and rewarded at all times.
- Children will be encouraged to respect other people at all times.
- In light of this ethos, physical fighting is never acceptable. Children who intentionally harm another child physically (e.g. punching, kicking) will be taken back to their parents/guardians for the remainder of the service. Time will be set aside after the activity for the leader to talk through what has happened with the child and their parents. The safety of children and young people attending is paramount, and if the child or young person repeats an offence, they will face a ban from attending further activities. This will be for a length of time agreed with the parents/guardians of the child and the activity leader in consultation with the Designated Officer.

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- Bullying is never acceptable. Physical verbal and cyber bullying will not be tolerated and if persistent may also result in a ban. Again this will be based on discussion with the activity Leader, the child and their parents/guardian.

### **Sharing and Storing Information**

- **Information from parents**

Any essential information will be gained by completion of parental consent forms for every child age 0-16 years. These will include details regarding special needs, dietary information, medical conditions and toileting. Emergency contacts will also be obtained. Medical conditions that volunteers need to know about, e.g. nut allergies, asthma, etc, will be documented and stored and the leader in charge informed.

- **Confidentiality**

Information regarding children or young people will only be shared on a need to know basis. Information and consent forms will be stored as confidential information within the church office. They are only to be accessed by the nominated officers and the parents of the child concerned. It is the responsibility of the parents to inform us of any changes regarding their child's needs.

- **Record Keeping**

The volunteer team will be aware of record keeping procedures. All children aged 0-11 years, being left in the care of our volunteer teams must be registered when they arrive and signed out on collection by an adult with parental responsibility. Accidents should always be documented no matter how minor, using an accident report form (see appendices). Parents should be informed as soon as possible.

- **Use of photography**

We may use photographs of children or young people for projects or marketing purposes. We may also use these photos for announcements and for publicity on the webpage. We will always gain additional consent and show these to parents for review before publishing.

### **What is Child Abuse?**

Child abuse occurs when the behaviour of someone in a position of greater power than a child causes them harm. Fundamentally, all forms of child abuse arise with the misuse of adult power over children.

Abusers can be from any background. Abusers are generally known to the child and are often trusted adult figures. Child abusers are often highly skilled, manipulative individuals, whose primary intention is to get close to children in order to gain their trust and co-operation. They might single out a child for special attention, or target vulnerable children and families. Since children don't expect adults to harm them, especially those who take care of them, and are generally taught to be obedient and to believe adults, it is only too easy for abusers to persuade children that there is nothing wrong and that they shouldn't tell. It is our responsibility to accept that both victims of abuse and child abusers may attend our church and we must therefore do our utmost to protect children by being aware of the types and signs of abuse.

The recognition of child abuse is never a black and white issue. As a church community we have a responsibility for the protection of our children. There are different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one type of abuse. As children can be abused in a number of ways, the harm caused cannot always be easily categorised, but we can identify four broad definitions of abuse:

#### **Physical Abuse**

This is the deliberate physical injury of a child or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating. For children with disabilities it may include confinement to a room or cot, or incorrectly given drugs to control behaviour.

Signs of physical abuse may include unexplained recurrent injuries or burns, unlikely explanations for injuries or refusal to explain, self-destructive tendencies, fear of physical contact, or shrinking back if touched.

#### **Emotional Abuse**

This is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Over protection can also be a form of abuse. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Domestic

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violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose children to emotional abuse.

Signs of emotional abuse may include delayed physical, emotional and social development, extreme fear of new situations, poor self esteem and sense of own worth, over reaction to mistakes, inappropriate response to pain, or neurotic behaviour.

### **Sexual Abuse**

This involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative and non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Signs of sexual abuse may include sexual knowledge that is inappropriate for the child's age and level of understanding, sexualised behaviour towards self or others, regression to younger behaviour patterns such as thumb sucking, self-mutilation, suicide attempts, running away, overdoses, anorexia, or sudden loss of appetite/overeating.

### **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm. It may involve a parent or a carer failing to provide adequate foods, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation, or lack of supervision. It may also include neglect of or unresponsiveness to a child's basic emotional needs.

Signs of neglect may include constant hunger, inadequate clothing, constant tiredness, pale and generally unkempt appearance, or poor personal hygiene.

### **Bullying**

Bullying in itself is not a form of abuse, but a child who is bullied may suffer any of the four types of abuse defined above. It may take many forms, but the main types are:

- Physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, theft);
- Verbal (e.g. sectarian/racist remarks, name calling, telling someone they are worthless);
- Indirect (e.g. spreading rumours)

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The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to children to the extent that it affects their health and development or, at the extreme, causes them significant harm. In these circumstances bullying should be considered as child abuse and treated as such.

### **What might constitute a concern?**

If you become aware of anything which causes you to feel uncomfortable, you should talk about it with someone else. This means being aware of the attitudes of church staff, leaders and volunteers, and of interactions between them and the children and between each other. You should be alert to any unusual incidents or activities which take place where you felt that staff and volunteers are putting themselves or others in a vulnerable position. All concerns, whether related to activities within Moira Players or not, should be reported to the designated officer. This includes concerns relating to a child's family or school situation. Concerns include sudden unexplained or worrying changes in behaviour, physical signs or symptoms that may be indicative of abuse, worrying remarks made by a child.

### **Incidents**

An incident is *"a situation where a child or young person, staff or volunteer is affected by a breach of the Code of Behaviour during organisational activities"*, e.g. verbal abuse, deliberate harm of another person, etc. (V.D.A 2003). All incidents must be recorded and reported to the designated officer.

### **Disclosures**

A disclosure is *"when a child or young person tells a staff member/volunteer that they have been or are being harmed or abused in some way,"* (V.D.A 2003). This may be physical, sexual or emotional abuse, neglect or bullying. It is important that the person who has made the disclosure is supported and that a report is made immediately.

### **Concerns/Allegations about Behaviour of Leaders**

Inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour, favouritism or negligence regarding conduct of an adult working with children, may lead you to feel concerned. If you are concerned you should report your concern to the leader in charge. All concerns will be recorded and the Leader will follow the concern up with the designated officer.

It may be that you need to make an allegation about the behaviour of a leader or volunteer in Moira Players. Such an allegation should be directly reported to the designated officer. Should the designated officer be the subject of allegation, report any concerns to either one of the other identified child protection officers as identified within the policy. The designated officer or child protection officer will complete a

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form for 'Allegation of abuse,' and provide you with feedback (see appendices for form).

### **Becoming Aware Of Abuse**

There are a number of ways in which you may become aware of abuse:

- A child may tell you.
- Someone else may tell you that a child has told them or that they strongly believe a child has been or is being abused.
- A child may show some signs of physical injury for which there appears to be no satisfactory explanation.
- A child's behaviour may indicate to you that it is likely that he/she is being abused.
- Your awareness of, or suspicion about abuse may come about as a result of something disclosed by a third party (parent, friend, co-worker) who suspects or has been told of the abuse.
- Something in the behaviour of one of the workers or in the way a worker relates to a child alerts you or makes you feel uncomfortable in some way.

While it is difficult to accept that abuse may happen within this setting, and equally difficult to express our concerns, it is important that you communicate your concerns to the designated officer. You must not attempt to deal with this alone and you will be fully supported throughout the reporting process. It is your primary responsibility to report actual or likely abuse and to ensure that your concern is taken seriously. You are not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred. That is a task for the professional agencies following a referral to them of concern about a child.

### **Sharing Significant Information**

It is the statutory responsibility of Moira Players to report any concerns regarding a child's safety or well being. It is essential that all members of the group remain informed and alert to circumstances in which a child may be ill-treated. If you do have knowledge or a suspicion that a child is at risk, you should immediately inform the designated officer, who will then consider appropriate action. It is not the responsibility of anyone attending Moira Players to identify and investigate possible instances of abuse of children. This is the role of Social services and the PSNI. The role of the designated officer is to make contact with the relevant agencies and to report any allegations against staff, incidents, disclosures or concerns, as appropriate. Moira Players will endeavour to fully support anyone through the reporting process.

- **Designated Officers**

<b>Designated Officer</b>	<b>Deputy Designated Officer</b>	<b>Pastoral Support</b>
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Tel:	Tel:	Tel:

- **Additional Contacts**

<b>Social services (Gateway Service)</b>	028 9050 7000 (daytime M - F) 028 9056 5444 (all through the night, at weekends and over Bank Holidays)
<b>PSNI</b>	101

### **Responding To Accidents and Complaints or To Alleged or Suspected Incidents of Child Abuse**

If you have any concern, it is imperative that you take action. Try to remain calm and listen carefully to the child. Reassure them, but under no circumstances should you make promises not to tell. Write down everything the child has told you afterwards. Contact the designated officer. Record your report on an incident/accident report form

#### **Moira Players Referral Procedure**

- Report your concern directly to the designated officer or child protection officer.
- Document your concern appropriately and confidentially.
- It is the responsibility of the designated officer to decide on the appropriate action. If unsure they will consult with Gateway Services for advice.
- A meeting will be organised to give feedback to the person who reported the concern. A record of the decision will be attached to the concern report form and stored as confidential information.

**It is your legal responsibility to report any concern you have about a child and to ensure that your concern is taken seriously. If you are not happy with the decision made, you can approach Social services yourself in an independent capacity.**

### **Recruitment of Volunteers on Regulated Activity**

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- All those volunteers working in regulated activity with children will adhere to the child protection safeguarding policy. Our children and young people deserve the very best in teaching and care.
- All Volunteers working in regulated activity should be vetted by 'Access NI'.
- To encourage good practice, leaders will have access to child protection training. Other volunteers will also be invited to attend in-house child protection training.
- Copies of the Child protection policy will be made available on request to Members, volunteers and parents.

### **Health and Safety**

In rehearsals, workshops and performances, children are in our care from the time that they are signed in/registered, until they are signed out again at the end of the session. In order to ensure the safety of children, it is essential that all members of the volunteer teams are aware of the following:

1. It is important that leaders ensure that the room they are using is a safe environment for children to come in to. Fire exits are to be kept clear at all times. Sanitation facilities should be kept clean at all times. A first aid box should be available and visible.

### **Toileting Procedures**

If the group has both boys and girls there should be at least one male and one female responsible adult supervising visits to the toilet.

Adults who haven't previously volunteered and haven't had the necessary vetting checks shouldn't be left alone with children or take them to the toilet unaccompanied.

In larger groups of children, encourage groups to take a comfort break together with one responsible adult while the other adult(s) supervises the remaining children and keep a head count.

Older children and young people with special needs may be assisted when going to the bathroom by volunteers, following guidance and written permission from a parent / guardian. Whilst it is important that children are never alone with an adult, leaders

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must also do their utmost to protect the dignity of children, when providing care of a personal nature.

### First aid ratios

We recommend that at least one adult is trained in first aid.

If you're running one-off events you will need to carry out a first-aid and medical risk assessment. Many organisations provide medical services but ensure the organisation you select is competent, trained in first aid and able to cope with the demands of your event.

### Fire alarm procedures

Leaders should be well acquainted with procedures for evacuating the building in the event of a fire. Leaders should direct children to the designated assembly area, where leaders should complete a roll call.

### Risk Assessment

An annual 'facilities risk assessment' will be carried out by the leadership team. A risk assessment should also be carried out when planning activities in order to maximise the safety of children. This will be overseen by the designated officer, who take responsibility for health and safety overall. We would however encourage leaders of groups to help us with risk assessment by carefully considering the nature of any the activities they are planning, number of children, age-range, supervision, potential danger of any equipment being used, and the individual needs of the children in the group.

### Accidents

All accidents (children and leaders), no matter how minor, must be reported to the designated officer / child protection officer, and recorded on an accident report form. Completed forms will be stored electronically and confidentially. Parents should be informed as quickly as possible. Emergency telephone numbers should be carried by the Leader in charge.

### Facebook and Social networking policy

Moira Players recognise that social networking sites are an important means of communication for young people and their parents, we welcome contact through our Public profile rather than personal profiles. Any inappropriate contact between a child or adult known should be notified to the designated officer / child protection officer ASAP.

### Supervision

Levels of supervision must be adequate at all times. When deciding how many adults should be present, practical matters should be taken into consideration and a risk assessment carried out, before the leader in charge makes a professional judgement, taking into account policy guidelines.

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There should be no less than two adult leaders at all times, whether the group activity is outdoors or indoors. Based on the standard recommended ratios we have outlined our leader requirements below. Always begin with two leaders, even for an individual child.

### ***Recommended adult to child ratios***

There is no specific guidance about supervision ratios for organisations that are not in the education or early years sectors. We've put together some best practice guidance to help other organisations work out how many adults are needed to supervise children safely.

We recommend having at least two adults present when working with or supervising children and young people. We recommend the following adult to child ratios as the minimum numbers to help keep children safe:

0 - 2 years - one adult to three children

2 - 3 years - one adult to four children

4 - 8 years - one adult to six children

9 - 12 years - one adult to eight children

13 - 18 years - one adult to ten children

We recommend having at least two adults present, even with smaller groups.

If young people are helping to supervise younger children only people aged 18 or over should be included as adults when calculating adult to child ratios.

### **Role of the Designated Officer / Child Protection Officer**

- To provide information and advice on child protection within the context of Moira Players
- To provide information and advice on child protection within the context of Moira Players and to ensure that training happens annually.
- To inform Social Services of any concerns regarding individual children.
- To ensure that appropriate information is available at the time of referral, and that the referral is confirmed in writing.
- To ensure that confidentiality is maintained at all times regarding information stored and any referrals being made.
- To liaise with Social Services and other agencies as appropriate.
- To forward any individual applications to Access NI.
- To advise the church of any training needs in the area of child protection.
- To ensure that individual case records are maintained of any action taken by Moira Players in liaison with external agencies, and the outcome.

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*The nominated officers are responsible for serving as a source of advice on child protection issues, for co-ordination of action within the church, and for liaising with Health and Social Services and other agencies about suspected or actual cases of child abuse. Before Social Services are contacted, the child's parents will be informed unless the parent(s) is the subject of the allegation.*

# Appendices

## Moira Players: Safeguarding Policy

### **Form for recording allegation or suspicions of abuse.**

This form should be completed for any allegations or suspicions of abuse that are reported to the nominated officers.

Name of child: \_\_\_\_\_ Age/DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel. No: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person reporting Concern: \_\_\_\_\_

Is the person making the report expressing their own concerns or passing on those of someone else? \_\_\_\_\_

What has prompted the concerns? (Include dates, times etc. of any specific incidents).

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Were there any signs that have been noted relating to the concern, such as physical, behavioural or indirect signs?

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

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

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Has anyone 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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Has any other action been taken?

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Is there any other additional information that you think needs to be recorded in this report?

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Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Person reporting concern)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Nominated Officer)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Designated Officer)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Accident Report Form**

Name of child: \_\_\_\_\_ Age/DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel. No: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person reporting accident: \_\_\_\_\_

What was the child doing at the time of the accident? Include dates/times).

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Did the child sustain any injuries? If so, please record.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Did the child receive First Aid at the time of the accident? If so, please record.

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Did the child require professional medical treatment as result of this accident? If so, please record details.

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Was anyone else injured as result of this accident?

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Have the child's parents been informed? \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Person reporting concern)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Nominated Officer)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Designated Officer)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_