

Ponc Press Child Safety 2023

Child Safeguarding Statement

The welfare of all children visiting the Ponc Press and our events is paramount. Our aim is to ensure that all visitors enjoy their experience and are safe from harm at all times.

We are committed to a child-centred approach in our contact with children and young people. We undertake to provide a safe environment and experience, where the welfare of the child/young person is paramount. We adhere to the recommendations of ***Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017)***, published by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, and our procedures to safeguard and protect children and young people reflect national policy and legislation. These principles apply to everyone in our organization.

In our daily business the Ponc Press comes rarely into contact with children; visitors to the press, in person at live events and this falls within the meaning of the term “relevant service” under the Children’s First Act 2015

Our Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017)*, and Tusla’s *Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice*. In addition to the procedures listed in our risk assessment (see below) the procedures that follow support our intention to safeguard children while they are availing of our service:

Implementation is an on-going process. Our organisation is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while attending our premises/activities whether in person or online.

Our Child Safeguarding Statement is available to view on our website and a hard copy is available in the Ponc Press or from our lead team member at all our events.

This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed on 1st April 2024 or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

Ponc Press Designated Child Safeguarding Relevant Persons:

Lead person/ Designated Liaison Officer/Relevant Person	Tor Cotton	0872220853	tor@poncpress.ie
Deputy Lead Person/ Deputy Designated Liaison Officer	Camilla Dinkel	0861531305	camilla@poncpress.ie
Lead Person for Irish language events	Camilla Dinkel	0861531305	camilla@poncpress.ie

Signed:

Tor Cotton

Camilla Dinkel

For queries, please contact Tor Cotton, Relevant Person under the Children First Act 2015 (contact details above)

Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment

In accordance with Section 11, Children’s First Act 2015, we have carried out an assessment of any potential for harm to a child while visiting Ponc Press or availing of Ponc Press events including the area of online safety when accessing the internet. Below is a list of the areas of risk identified and the list of procedures for managing these risks. In the risk assessment below all “Ponc Press Team Members” refers to all core volunteers and staff who work at the press or at Ponc Press events.

List of Activities and Events in 2023 that might bring Ponc Press into contact with Children:

Date	Activity/Event	Venue	Lead Person
All year	Adults visiting the press with their children	Ponc Press	Tor Cotton
May 2023	Book Launch	Dingle Bookshop	Tor Cotton
22 September 2023	Culture Night	Ponc Press	Tor Cotton

Procedures in place to manage risk:

Best Practice

- Ponc Press to register and to seek Garda Vetting for Ponc Press staff who are directly working with children through Kerry Volunteering Centre - in accordance to NATIONAL VETTING BUREAU (CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE PERSONS) ACT 2012.
- Ponc Press Designated Liaison Officer (relevant person) to request that any individual engaged by Ponc Press (be they a volunteer, staff or self-employed) needs to be vetted if they are doing relevant work.
- Ponc Press Designated Liaison Officer (Relevant Person) to request the Child Safeguarding statement of 3rd party organizations facilitating Ponc Press events and to ensure that such policy is up-to-date and developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017)*, and Tusla’s *Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice*.
- Staff/Volunteers directly involved with children’s events are committee members who have completed the e-learning Children First Certificate and are Garda Vetted in accordance with *National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act, 2012*
- Ponc Press Lead Volunteer for Irish language Children’s events is **Camilla Dinkel 0861531305**

Recruitment of volunteers for Children’s events and activities

- Application and Declaration Forms to be filled by staff/volunteers who will be in contact with children
- Staff/Volunteers will be made aware of Ponc Press’s code of conduct, child protection procedures and the identity and role of who has been designated to deal with issues of concern
- Staff/Volunteers who will have a supervisory role at any children’s event to complete the Tusla eLearning programme “Children First”. Certificate of completion to be returned to Designated Lead Person (Tor Cotton).

- It is our policy that volunteers do not have unsupervised access to children and vulnerable adults as per the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012-2016
- All Ponc Press members/volunteers have the responsibility for directing complaints/comments to the Designated Lead person (for Child Safeguarding), Tor Cotton 0872220853
- Verbal complaints will be logged and responded to by the designated lead person.

Health and safety at children's Events and Activities

- Children will never be left unattended or unsupervised.
- Carefully explain health and safety guidelines.
- Point out potential risks to staff/volunteers inside and outside buildings where events take place
- Make clear all emergency exits.
- Notify parents/carers of potential risks in general area outside of building.
- Provide a safe environment and be aware of accident procedures and follow accordingly.

Procedure to avoid contact with Unsuitable Artists or Volunteers

- All children are expected to be accompanied by their parents or caregivers. In the event of a child becoming separated from their carer, no child will be left in the presence of a single staff member or volunteer at any event. Two Ponc Press Staff/ Volunteers will stay with child while other staff/volunteers locate the parent.
- At all times at least two persons will be present. At no time will the child be in a room separate from the other members of the event. If bathroom assistance is needed, at least two volunteers will assist the child.
- No child will be transported in any vehicle. In an emergency, fire and rescue personnel will transport the child to hospital.

Images and Social Media

- Photographs and visual images are regarded as personal data under the Data Protection Acts 1998/2003.
- Ponc Press will prevent children from being photographed in any private setting and will seek permission from a parent and the child before photographing any child at an event.
- The child and the adult will be given information about how the image may or may not be used. This will be detailed on the consent form.
- No images or descriptions of children will be posted on social media by any staff or volunteer of Ponc Press without considering the privacy rights of the child and the expressed permission of the child and parent.
- Group photos will be preferred to individual ones
- Children will be appropriately dressed
- Children will not be embarrassed by the image
- Ponc Press Staff/Volunteer in charge of event will challenge any inappropriate behaviour by others.

Identification of possible child abuse

- Both Tor Cotton and Camilla Dinkel (Designated Officers) will complete the on-line Child First E-Learning training. This is a 1.5 hour time commitment. The training is available here <https://childrenfirstuniversal.hseland.ie/>.

Ponc Press fully understands Types of Abuse and How to Recognize them:

Neglect

Child neglect is the most frequently reported category of abuse, both in Ireland and internationally. Ongoing chronic neglect is recognised as being extremely harmful to the development and well-being of the child and may have serious long-term negative consequences.

Neglect occurs when a child does not receive adequate care or supervision to the extent that the child is harmed physically or developmentally. It is generally defined in terms of an omission of care, where a child's health, development or welfare is impaired by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, medical care, intellectual stimulation or supervision and safety. Emotional neglect may also lead to the child having attachment difficulties. The extent of the damage to the child's health, development or welfare is influenced by a range of factors. These factors include the extent, if any, of positive influence in the child's life as well as the age of the child and the frequency and consistency of neglect.

Neglect is associated with poverty but not necessarily caused by it. It is strongly linked to parental substance misuse, domestic violence, and parental mental illness and disability.

A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when neglect becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer. This may become apparent where you see the child over a period of time, or the effects of neglect may be obvious based on having seen the child once.

The following are features of child neglect:

- Children being left alone without adequate care and supervision
- Malnourishment, lacking food, unsuitable food or erratic feeding
- Non-organic failure to thrive, i.e. a child not gaining weight due not only to malnutrition but also emotional deprivation
- Failure to provide adequate care for the child's medical and developmental needs, including intellectual stimulation
- Inadequate living conditions – unhygienic conditions, environmental issues, including lack of adequate heating and furniture
- Lack of adequate clothing
- Inattention to basic hygiene
- Lack of protection and exposure to danger, including moral danger, or lack of supervision appropriate to the child's age
- Persistent failure to attend school
- Abandonment or desertion

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the systematic emotional or psychological ill-treatment of a child as part of the overall relationship between a caregiver and a child. Once-off and occasional difficulties between a parent/carer and child are not considered emotional abuse. Abuse occurs when a child's basic need for attention, affection, approval, consistency and security are not met, due to incapacity or indifference from their parent or caregiver. Emotional abuse can also occur when adults responsible for taking care of children are unaware of and unable (for a range of reasons) to meet their children's emotional and developmental needs. Emotional abuse is not easy to recognise because the effects are not easily seen.

A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when the behaviour becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer.

Emotional abuse may be seen in some of the following ways:

- Rejection
- Lack of comfort and love
- Lack of attachment
- Lack of proper stimulation (e.g. fun and play)
- Lack of continuity of care (e.g. frequent moves, particularly unplanned)
- Continuous lack of praise and encouragement
- Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming of the child
- Bullying
- Conditional parenting in which care or affection of a child depends on his or her behaviours or actions
- Extreme overprotectiveness
- Inappropriate non-physical punishment (e.g. locking child in bedroom)
- Ongoing family conflicts and family violence
- Seriously inappropriate expectations of a child relative to his/her age and stage of development

There may be no physical signs of emotional abuse unless it occurs with another type of abuse. A child may show signs of emotional abuse through their actions or emotions in several ways. These include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, risk taking and aggressive behaviour.

It should be noted that no one indicator is conclusive evidence of emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is more likely to impact negatively on a child where it is persistent over time and where there is a lack of other protective factors.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse is when someone deliberately hurts a child physically or puts them at risk of being physically hurt. It may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents. A reasonable concern exists where the child's health and/ or development is, may be, or has been damaged as a result of suspected physical abuse.

Physical abuse can include the following:

- Physical punishment
- Beating, slapping, hitting or kicking
- Pushing, shaking or throwing
- Pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling
- Use of excessive force in handling
- Deliberate poisoning
- Suffocation
- Fabricated/induced illness
- Female genital mutilation
- The Children First Act 2015 includes a provision that abolishes the common law defence of reasonable chastisement in court proceedings. This defence could previously be invoked by a parent or other person in authority who physically disciplined a child. The change in the legislation now means that in prosecutions relating to assault or physical cruelty, a person who administers such punishment to a child cannot rely on the defence of reasonable chastisement in the legal proceedings. The result of this is that the protections in law relating to assault now apply to a child in the same way as they do to an adult.

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. It includes the child being involved in sexual acts (masturbation, fondling, oral or penetrative sex) or exposing the child to sexual activity directly or through pornography.

Child sexual abuse may cover a wide spectrum of abusive activities. It rarely involves just a single incident and in some instances occurs over a number of years. Child sexual abuse most commonly happens within the family, including older siblings and extended family members.

Cases of sexual abuse mainly come to light through disclosure by the child or his or her siblings/friends, from the suspicions of an adult, and/or by physical symptoms.

Examples of child sexual abuse include the following:

- Any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child
- An invitation to sexual touching or intentional touching or molesting of a child's body whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification
- Masturbation in the presence of a child or the involvement of a child in an act of masturbation
- Sexual intercourse with a child, whether oral, vaginal or anal
- Sexual exploitation of a child, which includes:
 - Inviting, inducing or coercing a child to engage in prostitution or the production of child pornography [for example, exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, videotape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of an image by computer or other means]
 - Inviting, coercing or inducing a child to participate in, or to observe, any sexual, indecent or obscene act
 - Showing sexually explicit material to children, which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse
- Exposing a child to inappropriate or abusive material through information and communication technology
- Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person

An Garda Síochána will deal with any criminal aspects of a sexual abuse case under the relevant criminal justice legislation. The prosecution of a sexual offence against a child will be considered within the wider objective of child welfare and protection. The safety of the child is paramount and at no stage should a child's safety be compromised because of concern for the integrity of a criminal investigation.

In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that in criminal law the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years for both boys and girls. Any sexual relationship where one or both parties are under the age of 17 is illegal. However, it may not necessarily be regarded as child sexual abuse. Details on exemptions for mandated reporting of certain cases of underage consensual sexual activity can be found in Chapter 3 of [Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children](#).

What to do if I suspect Child Abuse?

In the event that a member of Ponc Press staff or volunteers are made aware of child abuse during an activity or event, or if the child confides in a member of staff or volunteers of a retrospective event that member will contact the designated liaison officer and procedures to report the incident will be prepared by said officer and passed on to the Duty Social Worker for Kerry, and in an emergency to the Gardaí at Dingle. The procedure to be followed in such an event is as follows:

- Respond to the needs of the child or young person.

- Inform the primary carers on an on-going basis unless this action puts the child or young person at further risk.
- Where there are child protection and welfare concerns, we are obliged to pass these on to the Duty Social Worker and, in an emergency, the Gardaí.
- In the event of a complaint against a member of staff, we will immediately ensure the safety of the child/young person and inform primary carers as appropriate.

Duty Social Worker for Kerry

Child and Family Agency,

Unit 7/8, Block 1,

Reeks Gateway,

Cleeney Roundabout,

Killarney,

Co Kerry.V93 CTX9 Telephone: 064 6636030

Gardaí in Dingle Telephone: 066 9151522.

Lead person/ Designated Liaison Officer	Tor Cotton	0872220853	tor@poncpress.ie
Deputy Lead Person/ Deputy Designated Liaison Officer	Camilla Dinkel	0861531305	camilla@poncpress.ie
Lead Person for events	Camilla Dinkel (Irish language events)	0861531305	camilla@poncpress.ie

The following guidelines to support a child reporting child abuse to be followed by Ponc Press staff members

- React calmly
- Listen carefully and attentively
- Take the child seriously
- Reassure the child that they have taken the right action in talking to you
- Do not promise to keep anything secret
- Ask questions for clarification only. Do not ask leading questions
- Check back with the child that what you have heard is correct and understood
- Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser
- Ensure that the child understands that you must tell someone who understand this area and who can help
- Make a written record of what the child has told you as soon as possible, in as much detail as possible
- Treat the information confidentially
- Contact local Gardaí without delay and report the disclosure made to you.
- Continue to support the child

A record of incidents reported will be kept confidentially until follow up directions from Gardaí or relevant Family and Child Agency representatives are given.

- Record will include name and age of child at the time of reporting
- Date of report and details surrounding the disclosure
- The name of the staff member or volunteer that was told of the incident(s) and details of date/time to the designated liaison officer with contact details to be made available to relevant authorities.

- Details of measures/actions taken following the child disclosure of abuse
- Name and contact details of the relevant authority contacted following the incident
- The reporting committee member will be given a copy of the actions taken/or not taken by the designated liaison officer and may make a report to Tusla/Gardaí if they remain concerned.

Recruitment of Staff and Volunteers for Ponc Press Events

- All staff members have completed the E-learning Children First Certificate as per Tusla guidelines and will review certificates and update learning when required.
- It is the policy of Ponc Press that any staff or volunteers who may be in contact with children for a Ponc Press related event or activity will complete the Children First certificate and be garda vetted as per Tusla guidelines.
- The designated liaison officer will carry out risk assessment and outline procedures if children's events are added to the 2023 programme and ensure that good practice is adhered to.
- The designated liaison officer will ensure that staff and volunteers are aware of the contents of this policy and that it will be made available to parents/guardians of any child taking part in Ponc Press events in the future
- It is our policy that volunteers do not have unsupervised access to children and vulnerable adults as per the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012-2016
- It is the responsibility of the designated liaison officer that this policy and relevant documents are reviewed annually and kept up-to-date.

Reporting of Incidents and Accidents

- There are appropriate recording mechanisms in place to detail any accidents or incidents which may occur. Committee members, staff and/or volunteers to report to designated liaison officer to make full report.
- Designated liaison officer will make the incident/accident details known to Festival committee and take appropriate action.
- In differentiating between the two it is useful to note that an incident does not usually involve any casualty or the loss of life, while an accident will involve some form of injury.
- Incidents should be recorded separately from accidents as they may need to be referred to when considering suspected child abuse or neglect.
- All incident an accident reports must include time, date, place, names of those involved in the incident/accident with details of the incident/accident, procedure and action taken and details of reporting volunteer and his/her lead volunteer.

Complaints Procedure

- In the event of a parent or guardian makes a complaint, contact details for the designated liaison officer will be made available to them without delay.
- Verbal complaints must be followed up with written complaint by post or email within 7 days Designated officer will acknowledge complaint by return and follow appropriate procedures to ensure its resolution.
- The person who made the complaint will be informed at all times of the procedures been taken and timeline for responses.

Dealing with Complaints or Allegations Against Staff

- Ponc Press has a dual responsibility in respect of both the child/young person and staff/volunteer. The first priority is to ensure that no child or young person is exposed to unnecessary risk.

- The same person will not have responsibility for dealing with the child/young person welfare issues and the staff employment issues.
- If allegations are made against the Designated Person, then one of the Deputy Designated Person should be contacted.
- An allegation against a member of staff/volunteer should be assessed promptly and carefully. If reasonable grounds for concern exist, a formal report to the Health Service Executive should be made.
- The reporting procedures outlined above “reporting incidents and accidents” to include all details of persons involved in the allegation or complaint. Parent/Carer contact details to be included in reporting.
- The staff member will be informed as soon as possible of the nature of the allegation.
- The staff member should be given the opportunity to respond.
- The Ponc Press Partners should be informed as soon as possible.
- Any action following an allegation of abuse against an member of staff/volunteer should be taken in consultation with Health Service Executive and Gardaí.
- Ponc Press will maintain a close liaison with the Health Service Executive and the Gardaí.
- As organizers/employers, Ponc Press will ensure that our actions do not undermine or frustrate any assessment or investigation by Health Service Executive and the Gardaí.
- Ponc Press will seek legal advice on procedures or protocol to deal with allegations against staff.

Relevant Legislation for Child Safeguarding

Ponc Press is aware of **Section 176 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006** which has introduced the criminal charge of ‘reckless endangerment of children’. It states: ‘A person, having authority or control over a child or abuser, who intentionally or recklessly endangers a child by –

(a) causing or permitting any child to be placed or left in a situation which creates a substantial risk to the child of being a victim of serious harm or sexual abuse, or

(b) failing to take reasonable steps to protect a child from such a risk while knowing that the child is in such a situation, is guilty of an offence.’

The penalty for a person found guilty of this offence is a fine (no upper limit) and/or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years.

National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act, 2012

The Act will make the vetting of persons who seek positions of employment relating to children or vulnerable persons mandatory for the first time. The Act seeks to "make provision for the protection of children and vulnerable adults" by putting in place a national vetting process which must have access to what is called 'soft' information. In the Act 'soft information is referred to as 'specified information' and is defined as information that 'reasonably gives rise to a bona fide concern that a person may harm a child or vulnerable person'. An example of 'soft' information includes information which has come to the attention of a State authority but falls short of conviction of a relevant offence, such as an allegation of abuse.

The Act imposes obligations on 'relevant organisations'. 'Relevant organisations' are organisations with employees who work with children or vulnerable persons. The relevant organisation must:

1. Apply to register with the National Vetting Bureau (*note: if the organisation is already registered with the pre-existing Garda Vetting Scheme then it is deemed to be registered*).

2. Nominate a liaison person who themselves must be vetted in advance of their appointment.
3. Seek vetting disclosures before employing someone to do relevant work.
4. Use any disclosed information appropriately.

NOTE: Ponc Press is committed to fulfilling its obligations as set out by the above act and have implemented actions to comply. On application to the National Vetting Bureau, Ponc Press is deemed NOT a relevant organization and therefore will not be required to register as one. Garda vetting, when necessary, will be applied through Kerry Volunteering Centre. Garda Vetting is a requirement for any individual or 3rd party organization who are in direct contact with children, as part of or on behalf of Ponc Press.

Tor will oversee this process after consultation with deputy lead person (Camilla Dinkel) to determine the need for Garda Vetting for events.

Safeguarding Protocol for Events 2023. Ponc Press will carry out a risk assessment for its events involving children and will implement the following:

Lead Person for children’s events (as gaeilge)	Camilla Dinkel	0861531305	camilla@poncpress.ie
Deputy Lead Person	Camilla Dinkel	0861531305	camilla@poncpress.ie
Reporting to	Tor Cotton	0872220853	tor@poncpress.ie

Governance

- Lead person and Deputy Lead person to read and fully understand Ponc Press Safeguarding statement
- Lead Person and Deputy Lead person to have completed Children’s First training as per Tusla guidelines
- Lead Person and Deputy Lead person to ensure that all safeguarding guidelines are being adhered to at the Press and during Ponc Press events.
- Lead person and/or Deputy Lead person to ensure that 3rd party services are compliant with Best practice safeguarding guidelines (for Authors, workshop facilitators and venue staff)
- Parental/Guardian Consent sought for volunteers under 18 and over 16 yrs (written form)
- Tor Cotton is the Designated Lead Person for Ponc Press for Safeguarding and any incidents must be reported to Tor as soon as is possible following the incident. Include as many details as possible including – Child’s name, Parent/Guardian contact details, details of the incidents, actions taken and any follow-up actions required. Please include date, time and venue.