



Child and Vulnerable Adults Protection 2021-2022– Éire

The Comhaltas Child and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy

The health, safety and well-being of all our children and vulnerable adults are of paramount importance to all staff, members and volunteers who are a part of Comhaltas. Our children have the right to protection, regardless of age, gender, race, culture or disability. They have a right to be safe as participants in all our activities.

In our activities we value our children, young people and vulnerable adults. A culture of mutual respect between children/young people/vulnerable adults and those who represent the organisation in all its activities will be encouraged with adults modelling good practice in this context.

Comhaltas recognises that good child protection policies and procedures are of benefit to everyone involved with our work, including staff, branch officers, members and volunteers, as these policies can help protect them from erroneous or malicious allegations.

This policy document applies to all Comhaltas activities in the Republic of Ireland. It has been designed to work within current guidelines to meet the legislative requirements. We will endeavour to ensure that our policy documents are updated appropriately to reflect future changes in the law.

A copy of the Child Protection Policy, prepared by Comhaltas for all units, is available to download from the Comhaltas web site. A printed copy may be ordered from Head Office, at a cost of €5.00 to cover print and postage.

Child Protection Responsibilities

The Children First Act 2015 (Republic of Ireland) sets out the responsibilities placed on Comhaltas and all organisations to keep children and vulnerable adults safe while availing of their services and activities.

Currently **all** branches are required to:

- Have a Child Protection Policy formally adopted at a branch meeting and noted in the branch minutes. ***Branches may adopt or adapt the Comhaltas Child Protection Policy, or write their own policy***
- Have appointed a Designated Liaison Person (DLP), who is responsible to liaise on child protection issues/concerns (if required) with both TUSLA & An Garda Síochána.
- Have all persons, including teachers, mentors, employees and volunteers, who have FREQUENT ACCESS to children/vulnerable adults, vetted with the National Vetting Bureau (NVB). This has been mandatory since April 2016.



Under the **Children First Act 2015** two further pieces of legislation now apply. The Act states:

*“The Act requires providers of relevant organisations to keep children safe from harm while availing of their services, **to undertake a risk assessment** to identify the potential for harm to a child who is availing of their service, and **to prepare a child safeguarding statement** which sets out the policies and procedures which are in place to mitigate the risks identified. The legislation makes provision for a Register of Non-compliance for those providers who fail, on request, to provide a copy of the Child Safeguarding Statement to the Child and Family Agency”.*

Comhaltas requires that all branches comply with this legislation and we suggest that the branch would appoint a small committee, including the branch DLP, to carry out a RISK ASSESSMENT and prepare a BRANCH CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT. Templates are included in this pack or they may be downloaded from the Comhaltas web site.

Please note that each Comhaltas branch must complete, sign and submit the following document following its AGM:

DLP Appointment & Branch Compliance Statement: *(forms included in the AGM pack)*

- 3 copies of both to be sent to your County Board
- 1 signed copy of the **DLP Appointment Form** to Head Office
- may also be printed from the Online System

The Branch Child Safeguarding Statement must also be completed and signed following the Branch AGM. This document should be retained by the Branch. A template has been included in the AGM pack and may also be downloaded.

Please contact Comhaltas Head Office if you require assistance or information relating to Comhaltas Child Protection issues.

Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

A Designated Liaison Person must be nominated by each Comhaltas Branch, each year. The **DLP** has responsibility for managing child protection issues within the branch. The role and responsibilities of the DLP are:

- To implement and promote the unit’s Child Protection Policy and Procedures
- To act as the main contact for child protection within the branch
- To provide information and advice on child protection for the branch membership
- To create awareness of the importance of child protection
- To communicate with members on child protection issues
- To keep abreast of developments and understand the most recent information on related issues – data protection, confidentiality, legal and other, that impact on child protection



- To encourage good practice and support of the procedures involved
- To maintain confidential records of reported cases and the action taken and to liaise with the statutory agencies and ensure they have access to all necessary information
- To regularly monitor and review the branch Policy and Procedures.

PROTOCOL for Branches in relation to COMHALTAS ZOOM or other ONLINE CLASSES

Branches wishing to use ONLINE CLASSES are responsible for making the initial contact with the parents/guardians of the students who will be the recipients of the lessons:

1. All music, song and dance tutors providing the ONLINE classes are required to have a current vetting with Comhaltas. If vetting is required, the branch rúnaí is requested to provide the NVB1 application form. Contact tomas@comhaltas.ie if this NVB1 form is required.
2. Arrange for permission to be granted by the parents/guardians of the student prior to start of ONLINE classes, either by text or email.
3. Be careful with login ID's and passwords, make sure they differ from class to class and that only the essential people know these details.
4. Parent/guardian should start the video link and they should also close it down at the end of the lesson.
5. Parents/guardians are responsible for monitoring ONLINE classes for all students under 18 years of age. SAFEGUARDING and PROTECTION of all students are paramount.

Comhaltas Garda Vetting

Garda vetting is mandatory for all branch members, teachers, mentors, employees and volunteers who have FREQUENT ACCESS to children and vulnerable adults. Persons who have only OCCASIONAL ACCESS (once/twice annually) to children are NOT required to apply for vetting.

Vetting Invitation NVB1 Form must be filled out and posted to Tomás Ó Maoldomhnaigh, Garda Vetting Liaison Person, An Cheapach Mhór, Co. Luimnigh. Minors between 16 years and 18 years will be required to complete Form NVB1 & Form NVB3.

Forms may be downloaded from the Online Membership System.

Personnel will require a RE-VETTING every three years as advised by the NVB (National Vetting Bureau). All persons vetted in 2018/2019 will individually receive a notice to apply for re-vetting in 2021/2022.