Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

1. Introductions, statements and abbreviations

1.1 Introduction

The introduction of this Child Protection policy should be seen as a clear signal by Brass Bands Northern Ireland that it is determined to ensure all necessary steps are taken to protect from harm, those children and young people who participate in music playing at all levels. This guidance has been produced alongside the legislation provided around Child Protection in Northern Ireland: The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, The Family Homes and Domestic Violence (N.I.) Order 1998 and the Family Homes and Domestic Violence (N.I.) Order 1998.

The policy establishes Brass Bands Northern Ireland position, role and responsibilities and, together with the procedures section, clarifies what is expected of the individuals involved in the organisation.

It very clearly highlights the importance placed by Brass Bands Northern Ireland on the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults. It also safeguards and protects all personnel from the risk of false allegations of abuse or poor practice.

Everyone who participates in music is entitled to do so in an enjoyable and safe environment. To ensure this, Brass Bands Northern Ireland has developed principles that all its personnel should follow.

These principles apply to all participants, but young people in particular are entitled to a higher duty of care and to be protected from poor practice or abuse. Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the teaching environment.

Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with children and young people in order to harm them. Brass Bands Northern Ireland is committed to devising and implementing policies so that everyone in the organisation accepts their responsibilities to safeguard children and young people from harm and abuse. This means following procedures to protect children and young people and to report any concerns about their welfare to appropriate authorities.

Everyone involved with Brass Bands Northern Ireland has a role to play in safeguarding the welfare of children and young people and preventing their abuse. Anyone who may have regular contact with children and young people will be a very important link in identifying cases where a child needs protection. All policies and procedures discussed below refer to vulnerable adults as well as to children and young people.

1.2 Policy statement

Brass Bands Northern Ireland is committed to the following:

- Making the welfare of young people paramount
- Ensuring opportunities for all young people, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity should be able to participate in brass music in an enjoyable and safe environment.

- Taking all reasonable steps to protect young people from harm, discrimination and degrading treatment and to respect their rights, wishes and feelings.

- Taking action swiftly and appropriately to all suspicions and allegations of poor practice or abuse.

1.3 Terms and abbreviations

The following terms and abbreviations are used in this document:

- Anyone under the age of 18 is considered to be a child/young person.

- 'Parent' is used as a generic term to include those with parental responsibility, carers and guardians.

- 'Personnel' includes all volunteers of the, whether tutors or others undertaking general administrative/organisational duties.

- 'Child Protection Officer' is the individual within a band whose responsibilities are explained in section 3.4 below.

- BBNI: Brass Bands Northern Ireland

- CPO: Child Protection Officer.

2. Good Practice, Poor Practice and Abuse

2.1 Introduction

To provide young people with the best possible experience and opportunities in music everyone must operate within an accepted ethical framework and demonstrate exemplary behaviour. Not only will this allow brass music to make a positive contribution to the development of young people and safeguards their welfare, but it also protects all personnel from the risk of false allegations of abuse or poor practice.

It is not always easy to distinguish poor practice from abuse, whether intentional or accidental. It is not therefore the responsibility of personnel within Brass Bands Northern Ireland to make judgements about whether or not abuse is taking place. It is, however, their responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse and to act if they have concerns about the welfare of a child, as explained in section 4. This section (2) will help you identify what is meant by good practice, poor practice and abuse.

2.2 Good practice

All personnel should adhere to the following principles and actions:

- Before undertaking any activities involving young people, conduct a risk assessment to identify possible sources of danger and take appropriate action to minimise these risks.

- Make the experience of brass playing fun and enjoyable; promote fairness, confront and deal with bullying and do not condone rule violations or the use of prohibited or illegal substances.

- Insist on adherence to Child Protection procedures.

- Treat all young people equally; this means giving both the more and less talented members of a group similar attention, time, respect and preserving their dignity.

- Respect the developmental stage of each young person and do not risk sacrificing their welfare in a desire for personal achievements. This means ensuring that the practice intensity is appropriate to the physical, social and emotional stage of the development of the student. Concerts, band competitions, solo competitions etc. must be suited primarily to the needs and the interests of the child, not those of the parents, teacher or band.

- Build relationships based on mutual trust and respect, in which young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their own development and decision-making. Avoid situations where the teacher, conductor or any other member of Brass Bands Northern Ireland uses their position and power to decide what the student should or should not do without consideration of the young person's needs and capabilities.

- Always be publicly open when working with children and young people. Avoid teaching sessions or meetings where a teacher and an individual student are completely unobserved.

- Where children and young people need to be supervised in changing rooms, teachers and helpers should work in pairs and involve parents if possible. An appropriate and open environment should be maintained, with no secrets.

- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with young people. Where any form of physical guidance is required in teaching technique, this should be provided openly and with the consent of the student. It is important to educate parents of what is and is not acceptable in the context of brass playing. Physical contact (touching) can be appropriate so long as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing and the student's permission has been given.

- Maintain a safe and appropriate relationship with students. It is inappropriate for teachers and others in positions of authority to have an intimate relationship with a young person, even if they are over 16, the normal age of legal consent.

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- Maintain appropriate standards of behaviour at social events that young people attend.

- Be an excellent role model, for example by not smoking or drinking alcohol while working with young people.

- Communicate regularly with parents and involve them in decision-making. Gain their consent in writing to act in loco parentis to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid or other medical treatment if the need arises.

- Be aware of any medical conditions, existing injuries and medicines being taken. Keep a written record of any injury or accident that occurs, together with details of any treatment given. Arrange that someone with knowledge of first aid is readily available.

- Gain written parental consent for any significant travel arrangements, especially if an overnight stay is involved.

2.3 Poor practice

The following are regarded as poor practice and should be avoided by all personnel:

- Unnecessarily spending excessive amounts of time alone with children and young people away from others.

- Taking children and young people alone in a car on journeys, however short.

- Taking children and young people to your home where they will be alone with you.

- Sharing a room with a child.

- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.

- Allowing or engaging in inappropriate touching of any form.
- Allowing children and young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Making sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Reducing a child to tears as a form of control.
- Letting allegations, a child makes go unchallenged, unrecorded, or not acted upon.
- Doing things of a personal nature that children and young people can do for themselves.
- Having children and young people stay at your home with you unsupervised.

Where cases arise where it is impractical to avoid any of the situations mentioned in this section, they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the organisation and the children and young people's parents.

If during your care of a child you accidentally hurt them, the child seems distressed in any manner, appears to be sexually aroused by your actions, or misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, report any such incidents as soon as possible to another colleague and make a brief written note of it. Parents should also be informed of the incident.

2.4 Abuse

Abuse in all its forms can affect a child at any age. The effects can be so damaging that if not treated, they may follow an individual into adulthood.

Children and young people with disabilities may be at increased risk of abuse through various factors such as stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, isolation, and a powerlessness to protect themselves, or adequately to communicate that abuse has occurred. Children and young people from ethnic minorities, who may also be experiencing racial discrimination, may be, or feel, doubly powerless in these respects.

Abuse may take a number of forms, and may be classified under the following headings:

- Neglect

  This is where adults fail to meet a child's basic needs like food, shelter, warm clothing or medical care, or to protect them from physical harm. Children and young people might also be constantly left alone or unsupervised.

  Neglect in a banding situation could include a conductor or band manager not keeping children and young people safe, or exposing them to unnecessary risk of injury.

- Physical Abuse

  This is where someone physically hurts or injures children and young people, for example by hitting, shaking, throwing, squeezing, burning, suffocating and biting or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Giving children and young people alcohol or inappropriate drugs would also constitute physical abuse.

- Sexual Abuse

  Girls and boys can be abused by adults or other children and young people, both male and female, who use children and young people to meet their own sexual needs. This could include full sexual intercourse, masturbation, or fondling. Showing children and young people pornographic material is also a form of sexual abuse.

In banding activities which might involve physical contact with children and young people could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. Also, the power of the teacher over young students if misused, may lead to abusive situations developing.

- Emotional Abuse

  Persistent lack of love and affection, where children and young people may be led to believe that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve the child being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted which may make the child very nervous and withdrawn. It may also feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children and young people. Emotional abuse also occurs when there is constant overprotection, which prevents children and young people from socialising.

  Emotional abuse in banding might include situations where children and young people are subjected by a parent or teacher to constant criticism, name-calling, sarcasm, bullying, racism or unrealistic pressure in order to perform to high expectations.

- Bullying

  This may be bullying of a child by an adult or another child. Bullying is defined as deliberate hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. It may be physical (e.g., hitting, kicking, theft), verbal (e.g., racist or homophobic remarks, threats, name-calling, graffiti, abusive text messages transmitted by phone or on the internet), emotional (e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, ignoring, isolating from the group), or sexual (e.g. unwanted physical contact or abusive comments).

  In banding, bullying may arise when a parent pushes a child too hard to succeed, a teacher adopts a win-at-all-costs philosophy, or an official at a contest/ festival uses bullying behaviour.

2.5 Indicators of abuse

Even for those experienced in working with child abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. Brass Bands Northern Ireland acknowledges that most people involved in the organisation are not experts in such recognition, but indications that a child is being abused may include one or more of the following:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries.
- An injury for which an explanation seems inconsistent.
- The child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her.
- Someone else – a child or adult, expresses concern about the welfare of a child.
- Unexplained changes in a child's behaviour – e.g., becoming very quiet, withdrawn, or displaying sudden outbursts of temper - or behaviour changing over time.
- Inappropriate sexual awareness.
- Engaging in sexually explicit behaviour in games.
- Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.
- Difficulty in making friends.
- Being prevented from socialising with other children and young people.

- Displaying variations in eating patterns including overeating or loss of appetite.
- Losing weight for no apparent reason.
- Becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt.

It must be recognised that the above list is not exhaustive, but also that the presence of one or more of the indicators is not proof that abuse is actually taking place. It is not the responsibility of those working in banding to decide that child abuse is occurring, but it is their responsibility to act on any concerns.

Signs of bullying may include:

- Behavioural changes such as reduced concentration or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down, reluctant to go to band rehearsals or to competitions.
- An unexplained drop-off in standard of performance.
- Physical signs such as stomach-aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed-wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes and bingeing on food, cigarettes or alcohol.
- A shortage of money or frequent loss of possessions.

3. Recruiting and selecting personnel to work with children and young people

3.1 Introduction

Anyone may have the potential to abuse children and young people in some way and it is important that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent unsuitable people from working with children and young people. The particular circumstances of individual cases need to be taken into account, but the fundamental principle is that those in charge of activities involving young people must take all reasonable steps to satisfy themselves as to the suitability of those who are given access to the children and young people in their care.

3.2 Controlling access to children and young people

Applicants for positions that involve significant access to young people (for example a Brass Bands Northern Ireland tutor) should first complete procedures designed to elicit information about their past career (including any gaps), and to disclose any criminal record or other matter that has a bearing on their suitability to work with children and young people e.g. previous investigations with police or social services or disciplinary investigations in relation to work with children and young people. It should be made clear that failure to disclose relevant information will result in disciplinary action and possible dismissal or exclusion.

Consent should be obtained from applicants for checks to be conducted to determine whether the Northern Ireland Criminal Records Office holds any relevant information on them.

3.3 Vetting

All personnel who will have significant access to young people must first be vetted to establish whether they have any criminal convictions or other past behaviour that suggests they are unsuitable to work with children and young people. This applies equally to paid staff and volunteers. This is done by obtaining a Disclosure about the individual from Access NI. If the applicant already has an Access NI clearance for their job outside band, then they must complete an existing member application to have themselves vetted appropriately for the organisation they are involved with.

It is important to emphasise that the absence of any relevant disclosure emerging from this vetting process does not guarantee that the individual is safe to work with children and young people, so it should not be relied on excessively. It is only one of a number of factors in the initial assessment of the person's suitability for such responsibilities.

3.4 The Designated Child Protection Officer

Brass Bands Northern Ireland will appoint a Designated Child Protection Officer to advise the organising committee on compliance with all the procedures described in this protection policy and to act as a focal point for reporting any concerns. This person will have the primary responsibility to check that everyone who has significant access to young people within the organisation is suitable for that role and has been vetted as described above. The person(s) appointed should be identifiable to the junior members of the band and their parents, but should have a degree of independence from their activities – for example he or she should not be the junior co-ordinator or actively teach or conduct in the organisation. The Child Protection Officer should be a member of the management committee. The Child Protection Officer should undergo the vetting procedure described in 3.3 above.

3.5 Training

The effectiveness of the policies described will depend on everyone who is involved with junior banding being aware of what is good practice. This applies particularly to those working directly with young people, such as tutors and Child Protection Officers, but an awareness of child protection issues is also needed by others who may be involved more indirectly, such as committee members or occasional parent helpers.

Training courses on Child Protection are available and are recommended for those groups identified above.

Formal training in child protection will help people to:

- Compare their own practice against what is regarded as good practice in music and check that their practice is likely to protect them from false allegations.
- Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice or abuse.
- Deal with the vetting procedures described in 3.3 above.
- Work safely and effectively with children and young people.

4. Responding to suspicions and allegations

4.1 Introduction

Many cases of child abuse in fact take place within the family setting. However, abuse can and does occur in other situations as well, which may include music or other social activities, and is rarely a one-off event when it occurs within such a setting. It is crucial that those involved in music tuition are aware of this possibility and that all allegations are taken seriously, and appropriate action taken.

It is not the responsibility of anyone in a musical organisation whether in a paid or a voluntary capacity, to decide whether or not child abuse is taking place. However, there is a responsibility to inform appropriate agencies of possible abuse so that they can then make inquiries and take any necessary action to protect the child. This applies both to suspicions of abuse occurring within the context of musical activities and to allegations that abuse is taking place elsewhere. This section explains how you should respond to such concerns.

4.2 Receiving evidence of possible abuse

We may become aware of possible abuse in various ways. We may see it happening ourselves; we may suspect that it is occurring because of signs such as those listed in 2.5 above; it may be reported to us by someone else, or directly by the child affected.

In the last of these cases, it is particularly important to respond appropriately. If a child says or indicates that he or she is being abused, or information is obtained which gives you concern that a child is being abused, you should:

- React calmly so as not to frighten the child.
- Tell the child they are not to blame and that it was right to tell.
- Take what the child says seriously, recognising the difficulties inherent in interpreting what is said by a child who has a speech disability and/or differences in language.
- Keep questions to the absolute minimum necessary so that there is a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said and be careful not to ask leading questions.
- Reassure the child, but do not promise to keep the matter secret – explain that to resolve the problem it will be necessary to inform other people as appropriate.

NB: *No organisation should undertake any investigation themselves. If a child discloses information to you, then please follow this advice, and that of section 4.3 to record accurately, but as soon as possible, this should be transferred to your local Child Protection committee, and /or Children's services under social work. It is each band's responsibility to know the details of their local committee etc.*

4.3 Recording information

As with other forms of information arising in relation to child protection, information of this kind is highly sensitive and confidential. Accordingly, it should be held under secure conditions and only made available to those who have a definite need for it.

You should make a note as soon as possible of whatever information you obtain, both for your own future reference and possibly for passing on to others, appropriate agencies such as the social services department or the police. In writing such a note, you should confine yourself to the facts, and distinguish between what is your own personal knowledge and what you have been told by other people. You should not include your own opinions on the matter, to avoid the possibility of libel. Information should include the following:

- The nature of the allegation, in as much detail as possible, including times, dates, locations and other relevant information.
- Details of the child involved, including name, age, address and other contact details, and identifying who has parental responsibility for the child.
- Details of the person against whom the allegation is made, including name, relationship with the child, age and contact details (if known).
- The identity and contact details of any informants or other witnesses.
- The child's account, if he or she can give one, of what has happened.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries.
- Details of who else has been informed of the alleged incident.
- Any other relevant information.

4.4 Reporting the concern

Brass Bands Northern Ireland expects its personnel to discuss any concern they may have about the welfare of a child immediately with the person in charge, and subsequently to check that appropriate action has been taken. The particular route you might follow in various circumstances is suggested below.

- Working within a group

  If you are working with any of Brass Bands Northern Ireland groups, you should inform the Designated Child Protection Officer or the person in charge of the band.

- Working with students away from home

  If you are working with students away from home (for example at a competition or workshop), then you should inform the person in charge of the group.

Circumstances in which other people might then need to be informed are discussed below:

- Parents or carers

  There is always a commitment to work in partnership with parents or carers where there are concerns about their children and young people. Therefore, in most situations, it would be important to talk to parents or carers to help clarify any initial concerns. For example, if a child seems withdrawn, they may have experienced bereavement in the family. However, there are circumstances in which a child might be placed at even greater risk were such concerns to be shared, e.g., where a parent or carer may be responsible for the abuse or not able to respond to

the situation appropriately. In these situations, or where concerns still exist, any suspicion, allegation, or incident of abuse must be reported to appropriate agencies as soon as possible.

- Social Work

  The social work department has a statutory duty under the Children (NI) Order 1995 for the welfare of a child. When a child protection referral is made its staff have a legal responsibility to investigate. This may involve talking to the child and family and gathering information from other people who know the child. The telephone number is in the local phone book. Wherever possible, referrals telephoned to the social work department should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours. A record should also be made of the name and designation of the social work member of staff to whom the concerns were passed, together with the time and date of the call, in case any follow-up is needed.

- Police

  Where the apparent abuse is of a criminal nature it will be appropriate to inform the police. A record should be made of the crime reference number provided by the police, together with the time and date of the call, in case any follow-up is needed. The police and social services department may also carry out a joint enquiry. The person in charge may be unsure about whether the allegation constitutes abuse or not, and unclear about what action to take. There may be circumstances where allegations are about poor practice (which need not be referred to the social services or police) rather than abuse, but those responsible should consult with the bands Child Protection Officer (CPO) who will obtain further advice where there is any doubt. Notifying the CPO is also important because this matter may be just one of a series of other instances which together cause concern.

4.5 Disciplinary procedures

The discovery that someone may be abusing a child will raise feelings and concerns among other personnel, and it can be inherently difficult to report such matters. However, it is important that any concerns for the welfare of the child arising from abuse or harassment by someone should be reported immediately. As indicated above an allegation of abuse may give rise to a child protection investigation by the social services department and/or a criminal investigation involving the police.

If the matter is being investigated by the police and/or social services, the organisation may decide to await the outcome of these investigations, which may well influence a disciplinary investigation, although not necessarily so. In appropriate cases, the organisation will suspend the individual concerned while an investigation is taking place. This is not intended to prejudge the outcome of the investigation, but simply to remove the individual from contact with children and young people until the investigation is concluded.

Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality for all concerned, and consideration will be given to what support may be appropriate to children and young people, parents, members of staff and volunteers.

4.6 Allegations of previous abuse

Allegations of abuse are sometimes made some time after the event, for example, by an adult who was abused as a child by a member of staff who is still working with children and young people. Where such an allegation is made, you should follow the procedures given above and have the matter reported to the police and/or social services department. This is because other children and young people, either within banding or outside it, may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children and young people.

5. Conclusion

Brass Bands Northern Ireland by accepting this policy document, has indicated its determination to ensure that children and young people can participate in all forms of brass music, and do so, with their safety being of paramount importance.

It is essential that this document is representative of a process of continual improvement in the area of child protection within brass music. It is for all adults engaged in brass banding activities to promote good practice and procedures, whilst being ever vigilant and aware of their responsibilities towards the children and young people and young people in their care.

Appendix A: Useful Websites

Department of Health: www.health-ni.gov.uk
Safeguarding Board Northern Ireland: www.safeguardingni.org
NI Commissioner for Children and Young People: www.niccy.org
ThinkUKnow: www.thinkuknow.co.uk
Childnet International: www.childnet-int.org
Child Exploitation Online Protection: www.ceop.police.uk
NSPCC: www.nspcc.org.uk/
Barnardos: www.barnardos.org.uk/
The Equality Commission NI: www.equalityni.org
Disability Action: www.disabilityaction.org
UK Safer Internet Centre: www.saferinternet.org.uk
Safe Network: www.safenetwork.org.uk
Education Youth Service: www.eani.org.uk/about-us/youth-service/
NI Child Protection Register Reports: www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/childprotection-register
Safeguarding Children e-Academy newsletter: www.safeguardingchildrenea.co.uk
Guardian child protection section: www.theguardian.com/society/childprotection
Childlink: www.childlink.co.uk
Mencap: www.mencap.org.uk
AccessNI: www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/accessni-criminal-record-checks
Volunteer Now safeguarding publications: www.volunteernow.co.uk

Appendix B: Gateway Teams Contact Information

Belfast HSC Trust	
Areas	Greater Belfast
Telephone (for referral)	028 90507000
Out of Hours Emergency Service (after 5pm each evening at weekends, and public/bank holidays)	028 95049999
South Eastern HSC Trust	
Areas	Lisburn, Dunmurry, Moira, Hillsborough, Bangor, Newtownards, Ards Peninsula, Comber, Downpatrick, Newcastle and Ballynahinch
Telephone (for referral)	03001000300
Out of Hours Emergency Service (after 5pm each evening at weekends, and public/bank holidays)	028 95049999
Northern HSC Trust	
Areas	Antrim, Carrickfergus, Newtownabbey, Larne, Ballymena, Cookstown, Magherafelt, Ballycastle, Ballymoney, Portrush and Coleraine
Telephone (for referral)	03001234333
Out of Hours Emergency Service (after 5pm each evening at weekends, and public/bank holidays)	028 94468833
Southern HSC Trust	
Areas	Craigavon, Banbridge, Dromore, Lurgan, Portadown, Gilford, Armagh, Coalisland, Dungannon, Fivemiletown, Markethill, Moy, Tandragee, Ballygawley, Newry City, Bessbrook, Annalong, Rathfriland, Warrenpoint, Crossmaglen, Kilkeel, Newtownhamilton
Telephone (for referral)	08007837745 (Free phone number from landlines only)/02837415285(Central number)
Out of Hours Emergency Service (after 5pm each evening at weekends, and public/bank holidays)	028 95049999
Western HSC Trust	
Areas	Derry, Limavady, Strabane, Omagh and Enniskillen
Telephone (for referral)	028 71314090
Out of Hours Emergency Service (after 5pm each evening at weekends, and public/bank holidays)	028 95049999

Appendix C: Flowchart of reporting concerns procedure

