



It is the Policy of Festina Lente to provide all activities and programmes in such a way that the safety and welfare of children is respected and maintained at all times

Signed: _____

Jill Carey

Chief Executive Officer

March 2011

Signed : _____

John Green

Chairperson of the Board of Directors

March 2011

Festina Lente Child Protection Policy

Table of Contents

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Purpose of Policy
- 3) Guiding Principles
- 4) Festina Lente – Overview of Services
- 5) Child Protection Policy Statement
- 6) Child Protection Policy Procedures
- 7) Practise
- 8) Guidelines for staff and volunteers
- 9) Confidentiality Statement
- 10) Recruitment, selection, appointment, induction and supervision of staff
- 11) Guidelines specific to Equestrian Activities
- 12) Supervision and general guidelines
- 13) Allegations of abuse
- 14) Definitions of abuse
- 15) Indicators of abuse
- 16) Reporting Procedures
- 17) Dealing with allegations of abuse against staff and volunteers

Festina Lente Child Protection Policy

1) Introduction

Festina Lente is committed to safeguarding the rights of children, particularly those for whom we provide services. Festina Lente's duty of care is to provide a safe place for children and in ensuring they are safeguarded from sexual, physical and/or emotional harm. The welfare of the child is paramount in our decisions, activities and programmes that are provided to children at Festina Lente. We also apply the same level of care to children on work experience placements or other external outings or placements.

2) Purpose of the Child Protection Policy

The overall aim of the Festina Lente *Child Protection Policy* is to describe the steps that have been taken to safeguard the rights of children. The key elements of the Policy include:

1. Statement of Policy
2. A commitment to ensure the policy is communicated and implemented at all levels of the Organisation
3. Description of the management, staff & volunteers, in relation to the protection of children using the service
4. Procedures to be followed when an allegation of abuse is suspected or has been reported
5. This Policy will be reviewed every two years or when legislative changes are enacted

3) Guiding Principles

All the activities that are provided by Festina Lente are guided by the following principles:

- 1) Importance of Childhood
- 2) Needs of the Child
- 3) Integrity of Relationships
- 4) Fair Play
- 5) Quality Atmosphere
- 6) Fun and Encouraging Atmosphere
- 7) Equality
- 8) Legislative Basis

4) Festina Lente – Overview of Services

Festina Lente provides a wide range of programmes to children – many of whom have a disability.

These include:

- 1) Pobal supported Community Services Programmes (Riding School) for employment of adults with a disability and equine related programmes for children and adults. Equestrian activities include :
 - a. Term Riding
 - b. Private Lessons
 - c. Therapeutic riding
 - d. Equine Assisted Learning
 - e. Pony Camps
 - f. Individually designed equestrian programmes
 - g. Volunteering Programmes
 - h. Helpers Programmes
 - i. Helpers with Special Needs Programmes
 - j.
- 2) FAS funded Equestrian Vocational Training Programme for people with a disability
- 3) Pobal supported Community Services Programmes (Walled Garden Project) employment of adults with a disability and horticultural related programmes for the wider community. These include:
 - a. Volunteering Programme
 - b. Garden Shop
 - c. Allotment
 - d. Workshops
 - e. Events
- 4) HSE funded Day Service (Saol Anois and Rehabilitation Training Programme (Transition Training Programme) for people with a disability

Festina Lente Child Protection Policy

5) Festina Lente Child Protection Policy Statement

The Board of Directors and Staff of Festina Lente are committed to providing an environment for children which is safe, nurturing and one which fosters positive relationships. We are committed to safeguarding the rights of children and safeguarding them from sexual, physical and/or emotional harm and ensuring that the welfare of the child and is paramount in our decisions, activities and programmes.

6) Child Protection Procedures

Festina Lente has developed the following procedures to be followed in all matters relating to children.

- 1) Confidentiality Statement
- 2) Reporting Procedures
- 3) Safe Recruitment and Selection Procedure
- 4) Training, Supervision and Management of staff and volunteers
- 5) Code of behaviour for management, staff and volunteers
- 6) Complaints procedures
- 7) Accidents procedure
- 8) Staff allegations procedure
- 9) Family Liaison

The Child Protection Policy and practice will be reviewed on a regular basis by the Designated Person through the office of the Chief Executive Officer every two years or as changes in legislation occur. This policy applies to management, staff and volunteers within Festina Lente. This policy includes all people under the age of 18. The policy has been developed by Festina Lente in line with Children First 2004.

7) Practice

Management, staff and volunteers will strive to interact positively with children enhancing each child involvement and enjoyment of the service and promoting their welfare. The Child Protection Policy assists in the achievement of these aims and can also help to protect management, staff and volunteers in their various roles by providing a framework for the promotion of best practise.

Festina Lente Child Protection Policy

8) Guidelines for staff and volunteers

The first priority for all staff and volunteers is the child's safety and enjoyment of the equestrian activity.

Staff and volunteers are responsible for setting and maintaining the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with the child and promoting enjoyment, equality, fair play and the general wellbeing of the child.

In order to promote the safety of staff and volunteers and that of the child, staff and volunteers should:

- Be positive, praise and encourage effort as well as results
- Put the welfare of the child first, striking a balance between this and improving performance
- Encourage fair play and treat all children and equally.
- Have the relevant knowledge and experience to work with children

Where possible, staff and volunteers – for their own safety – should avoid:

- Spending excessive amounts of time with children away from others
- Taking sessions alone
- Taking children alone in their car

Staff or volunteers should not:

- Use any form of corporal punishment or physical force on a child
- Take children to their home
- Exert undue influence over a child in order to obtain personal benefit or reward
- Engage in rough physical games, sexually provocative games or allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any kid and/or make sexually suggestive comments about, or to, a child

9) Confidentiality Statement

- In line with Festina Lente's commitment to safeguarding the rights of children, information will be forwarded on a 'need to know' basis.
- Giving information is not considered a breach of confidentiality if such information is for the protection of a Child. Festina Lente cannot guarantee complete confidentiality if the best interest of the child is at risk

10) Parental Rights & Family Liaison

- The welfare of children is of paramount importance. A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents/carers and families. Where there is conflict, the child's welfare must come first.
- Parents/carers have a right to respect and should be consulted and involved in matters that concern their family.
- Parents and/or guardians are entitled to be made aware of information being forwarded to the HSE unless in so doing, a child is put at risk.
- Every possible effort should be made to keep the child's parents/carers informed of developments except where this might place the child at further risk.
- All actions in response to concerns about child abuse should be taken in a manner that supports the possibility of families providing safe and nurturing care for their children, now or in the future. For parents/carers, being asked to participate in, or cooperate with, an investigation into suspected child abuse can provoke powerful emotions, such as anger, fear, shame, guilt or powerlessness. Moreover, parents/carers are usually unaware of the complexity of what is likely to be involved and are unsure of the appropriate rules of behaviour.

11) Recruitment and selection of staff

Festina Lente has a comprehensive Human Resource Policy Document which outlines the recruitment, selection, appointment, induction and supervision of staff.

Reference should be made to this for further information

All staff will be required to consent to Garda Clearance and where available, this will be sought.

All staff and volunteers will be made aware of the Child Protection Policy and are expected to read and sign off that they have read, understood and agree to abide by the Policy. All frontline staff involved with children will receive child protection training.

11) Guidelines specific to the Equestrian Activities

Physical Contact

- Physical contact during horse riding or other equine related activity should always be intended to meet the child's needs and not the staff member or volunteer. The staff or volunteer will probably use appropriate contact when the aim is to assist in the development of the skill or session, e.g. repositioning of the rider, demonstrating rein contact, grooming, or other occasions as necessary. In general, the staff member and/or volunteer should explain what s/he is going to do and seek an indication of consent.
- Contact should be determined by the age and developmental stage of the participant – staff or volunteers should not do something that a child can do for themselves. Examples of this can include –adjusting stirrups, mounting, dismounting, and tightening girths.

General Supervision

- Children will be supervised by their coach for the duration of the session with Festina Lente Riding School
- Children will be told to go straight from their Stable Management session to the Coaching Session.
- Children will be supervised during lunch breaks during pony camps

Ratio of staff to child

- The ratio of coach to child will be informed by the needs of the person. However, as a rule the following will apply:
 - Children who ride independently in a group lesson 1:8
 - Beginner riders needing a leader 1:6
 - Therapeutic Riding, whilst this can vary, at a minimum will be 2:1 but can be 3 or 4: 1
 - Equine Assisted Learning
 - Individual session is 1:1
 - Group session will be 2:3 or 4 (depending on number in group)
 - Special Needs Helpers programme 1:2
 - Helpers Programme 1:8
 - Pony Camps 1:8 (with leaders as necessary)

12. Supervision and General Guidelines

Ratio of supervision

- The ratio of supervision to children accessing services at Festina Lente who are not Riding School customers will be informed by the needs of the person and the particular services being accessed. However, as a rule the following will apply:
 - Walled Garden : The Walled Garden is a 2.5 acre area and consequently support and supervision for children will be in this context rather than staff ratio to child
 - Equestrian Yard: 1 : 8 Maximum
 - Training and Day Services : 1 : 8 Maximum

General Supervision

Children will be supervised by their coach for the duration of the session with Festina Lente Riding School

Children will be supervised during lunch breaks during pony camps. For other services, all breaks are supervised in the canteen.

Children will not be brought to the bathroom by staff. If a child has additional toileting needs that s/he cannot manage independently, arrangements should be made with the parent or guardian to bring the child to the bathroom.

Festina Lente Child Protection Policy

13) Allegations of Abuse

Designated Person

The designated person for dealing with concerns about the protection of children is Siun Carley, Manager of Training and Day Services. The designated person will be responsible for reporting allegations or suspicions of child abuse to the Health Services Executive and /or An Garda Siochana. Allegations of abuse will be dealt in line with Festina Lente Child Protection Policy

14) Definitions of Abuse:

There are many different types of abuse. For the purpose of this policy three main categories are described; physical abuse, emotional abuse & sexual abuse. Festina Lente has a separate policy which addresses bullying & harassment. (SEE HUMAN RESOURCE POLICY DOCUMENT)

A child can be subject to several forms of abuse at one time.

Physical Abuse can be considered any form of non-accidental injury that physically hurts, injures or causes significant harm to a child or, including: shaking; use of excessive force in handling; deliberate poisoning; suffocation.

Physical abuse of a child is also that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power, or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents (WHO, 1999).

Emotional Abuse is any behaviour carried out against a child which has severe adverse effects on their emotional wellbeing. Examples of emotional abuse include; threatening, verbal attacks, taunting, shouting, persistent criticism, humiliation, intimidation.

Sexual Abuse occurs when a child is exploited by another person for his or her gratification. Examples of sexual abuse include; inappropriate touching, fondling, molesting or sexual intercourse with a child or using the service. Exposure to pornography or exposing of sexual organs to a child or using the service also constitutes sexual abuse.

15) Indicators of Abuse:

The purpose of this section is to provide indicators of the various types of abuse in order that staff can recognise when abuse may be occurring. A child may be subject to more than one type of abuse at one time and may display many different indicators of abuse.

It is important to note that the list of indicators below are only a guidelines and the signs described may be indicative of many other conditions.

Physical Abuse:

- unexplained bruises
- fractures
- cuts
- bleeding
- burns
- scratches
- hair loss
- missing teeth
- fear of a particular individual or individuals
- changes in behaviour

Emotional Abuse:

- depression
- anorexia
- insomnia
- suicide attempts
- self injurious behaviour
- challenging behaviour

Sexual Abuse:

- bleeding from the vagina/anus
- pain in passing urine/faeces
- persistent vaginal discharge or warts/rash in genital area
- noticeable and uncharacteristic change of behaviour
- hints about sexual activity
- inappropriate understanding of sexual behaviour
- inappropriate seductive behaviour
- sexually aggressive behaviour with others
- uncharacteristic sexual play with peers/toys
- Unusual reluctance to join in normal activities which involve undressing, e.g. games/swimming.

Festina Lente Child Protection Policy

16) Reporting Procedures:

The purpose of this section is to clarify the procedures to be followed if an incident of abuse is suspected or has been alleged. It can be difficult to recognise abuse and Festina Lente staff, management or volunteers should share any concerns they have with colleagues & senior management. Any reasonable suspicion/s of abuse should elicit a response from staff, as lack of intervention can result in further harm to the alleged victim.

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

- i) specific indication from the child that (s)he was or is being abused;
- ii) an account by a person who saw the child being abused;
- iii) evidence, such as *an injury or behaviour* which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way;
- iv) An injury or behaviour which is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse. An example of this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indications of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour;
- v) Consistent indication, over a period of time, that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect. (Children First).

The following procedures should be followed if there is a suspicion or allegation of abuse:

- If a staff member becomes concerned that a child using the services of Festina Lente is being abused a report should be made immediately to the Designated Person or Chief Executive Officer (CEO). In the absence of either person a report should be made immediately to the available Manager.
- The *Child & Protection Policy Reporting Form* should be completed by the reporting person and forwarded to the Designated Person or Chief Executive Officer (CEO)..
- The Designated Person or Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will seek written accounts from relevant personnel and/or witnesses & full investigation will be carried out. As much details as possible should be sought- including dates, times, names, locations, context and any other relevant information.
- Initial contact can be made with the Duty Social Worker

Festina Lente Child Protection Policy

- A report should be made to the health board in person, by phone or in writing. Each health board area has a social worker on duty for a certain number of hours each day. The duty social worker is available to meet with, or talk on the telephone, to persons wishing to report child protection concerns. The contact details for the duty social worker relevant to Festina Lente are as follows:
 - 102 Patrick Street, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin
 - Tel: (01) 663 7300
 - **Office Hours:** 9.00am - 1.00pm 2.15pm - 5.00pm
- The relevant external bodies will be notified of the allegation (i.e. funding bodies such as HSE or FAS).
- In the case that the duty social worker, are unavailable, An Garda Síochána can be contacted. This is at the discretion of the CEO, with consideration to the nature of the allegation.
- In the event that the alleged victim has sustained an injury or has been harmed physically, medical attention should be sought as soon as possible.
- The family or guardians of alleged victim should be advised of the allegation and the investigation.
- A written record should be maintained of the details of the investigation.
- In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk, An Garda Síochána should be contacted. **Under no circumstances should a person be left in a dangerous situation pending an investigation.**
- The Chairperson of the Board of Directors will be kept apprised at all stages

Festina Lente Child Protection Policy

17) Allegations of Abuse against Staff & Volunteers

Festina Lente has a dual responsibility to the children who attend here, and to those employed by Festina Lente. Festina Lente will treat any allegation against a staff member or volunteer with sensitivity & support will be provided for those affected. It is the goal of Festina Lente to treat any staff or volunteer involved in an allegation of abuse with fairness while protecting the child involved.

The following reporting procedures should be followed in the situation that there is an allegation of abuse made against a staff member.

- A report should be made immediately to the Designated Person or Chief Executive Officer (CEO). In the absence of the CEO a report should be made immediately to the available manager.
- The *Child & Protection Policy Reporting Form* should be completed by the reporting person and forwarded to the Designated Person or Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
- The CEO will seek written accounts from relevant personnel and/or witnesses & full investigation will be carried out. As much details as possible should be sought- including dates, times, names, locations, context and any other relevant information.
- The Designated Person or Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will formally assess the allegation and should decide if it is necessary to send a formal report to the health board or relevant external bodies (E.g. HSE).
- The CEO should privately inform the staff member that an allegation has been made against him/her & the nature of the allegation that has been made.
- The employee should be allowed an opportunity to respond and this response should be noted by the CEO.
- The CEO must immediately ensure that there is no risk to any child using the services. It may be appropriate for that individual to be suspended with pay, pending an investigation of the allegation. This is at the discretion of the CEO.
- The family or guardians of the alleged victim should be advised of the allegation and the investigation.

Festina Lente Child Protection Policy

- A written record should be maintained of the details of the investigation.
- The CEO should arrange a meeting in consultation with the relevant external bodies and An Garda Síochána to follow up on the allegation of abuse & determine the appropriate course of action.
- The Chairperson of the Board of Directors will be kept apprised at all stages