



**Child Protection and Welfare of Children  
and Young People  
in Project Arts Centre**

**April 16, 2021**

## **CONTENTS**

- Section 1 **Child Protection Policy Statement**
- Section 2 **Code of behaviour for staff**
- Section 3 **Reporting procedures**
- Section 4 **Confidentiality statement**
- Section 5 **Recruiting and selecting staff**
- Section 6 **Managing and supervising staff**
- Section 7 **Involvement of primary carers**
- Section 8 **Dealing with allegations against staff**
- Section 9 **Complaints and comments procedures**
- Section 10 **Handling accidents**

Appendix 1 Definitions of abuse

Appendix 2 Reporting a Concern by phone, through Tusla portal, or by hard copy form

Appendix 3 Declaration Form

Appendix 4 Anti-bullying policy

## **SECTION 1 CHILD PROTECTION POLICY STATEMENT**

We, Project Arts Centre (PAC), are committed to a child-centred approach to our work with children and young people.

PAC does not directly organize events for children we undertake to provide a safe environment and experience, and to ensure all clients and visiting groups have a Child and Young Person Protection Policy in place where the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.

We will adhere to the recommendations of Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, published by the Department of Health and Children.

We have implemented procedures covering:

- Code of behaviour for all staff
- Reporting of suspected or disclosed abuse (see Appendix 1 for categories of abuse)
- Confidentiality
- Recruitment and selecting staff
- Managing and supervising staff
- Involvement of primary carers
- Allegations of misconduct or abuse by staff
- Complaints and comments
- Incidents and accidents.

This policy will be reviewed on an on-going basis and any changes will be finalized annually.



Executive Director: Orla Moloney

Date: 16 April, 2021

The Child Care Act 1991 defines a child as a 'person under the age of 18 years other than a person who is or has been married' (S.2.1).

## **SECTION 2 CODE OF BEHAVIOUR**

The code of behaviour can be categorised under the following headings:

1. Child-centred approach
2. Good practice
3. Inappropriate behaviour
4. Physical contact
5. Health and safety.

A code of behaviour for children and young people will be requested from all visiting groups and companies.

Groups visiting the centre should be advised that 15 minutes should be factored into any workshop or talk time to allow for this.

Group leaders should be made aware of this in advance.

### **I. Child-centred approach**

- Treat all children and young people equally
- Listen to and respect children and young people;
- Involve children and young people in decision-making, as appropriate
- Provide encouragement, support and praise (regardless of ability)
- Use appropriate language (physical and verbal)
- Have fun and encourage a positive atmosphere
- Offer constructive criticism when needed
- Treat all children and young people as individuals
- Respect a child's or young person's personal space
- Discuss boundaries on behaviour and related sanctions, as appropriate, with children and young people and their primary carers
- Agree group 'contract' before beginning session
- Encourage feedback from group
- Use age-appropriate teaching aids and materials
- Lead by example
- Be aware of a child's or young person's other commitments when scheduling rehearsals or activities, e.g., school or exams
- Be cognisant of a child's or young person's limitations, due to a medical condition
- Create an atmosphere of trust
- Respect differences of ability, culture, religion, race and sexual orientation

- Be aware of the possible difficulties of working gallery and theatre spaces and the issues that may arise e.g. fear of dark, safe practice
- Be aware of the age appropriate nature of exhibits and books and manage accordingly

## 2. Good practice

### General

While PAC does not usually directly organize workshops, talks or other events for children we do, from time-to-time work with groups who attend exhibitions, talks and workshops. These events are organized by professional bodies however it is still the responsibility of Project Arts Centre and our staff to ensure the Groups and Organisations are aware and abide by our Child Protection Guidelines and Policies. We will therefore ensure the groups / organisations have;

- primary carers, children/young people, visitors and facilitators aware of the Child Protection Policy and procedures
- a register of each child/young person (name, address, phone, special requirements, attendance, emergency contact)
- emergency procedures in place and make all staff aware of these procedures;
- are inclusive of children and young people with special needs; in particular in relation to planned darkroom usage
- have planned and are sufficiently prepared, both mentally and physically
- agree to report any concerns to the Designated Person and follow reporting procedures;
- have an anti-bullying policy - encouraging children and young people to report any bullying, concerns or worries and to be aware of anti-bullying policy.
- observe appropriate behaviour in the assigned public spaces of Project (e.g. no under age children in the bar area)
- provide appropriate training for their staff

PAC will ensure that our staff will;

- Communicate maximum numbers who may attend workshops at any time
- Report and record any incidents and accidents
- Update and review policies and procedures regularly
- Keep primary carers informed of any issues that concern their children
- Ensure proper supervision based on adequate ratios according to age, abilities and activities involved
- Ensure clear communication between Project and the Organisation
- Have a written agreement with any external organisation
- Not be passive in relation to concerns
- Not let a problem get out of control
- Ask the teacher/leader about the profile of the groups/any special requirements/needs or concerns before booking a workshop for a group

- Avoid taking a session on our own i.e. insist that a teacher/youth group leader accompanies the group. If this is not possible then it should be in an open environment with the full knowledge and with consent of primary carers
- Avoid, if at all possible, giving a lift to a child/young person and if we do, then make sure that primary carers are informed
- Maintain awareness around language and comments made; if we think that something we said may have caused offence or upset, then we will try to address it in a sensitive manner.

### **Exhibitions and Performances**

- If exhibitions on show contains sensitive/explicit scenes of a violent or sexual nature, we will inform the group leader/teacher in advance.
- We will inform the general public at the entrance to the exhibit and on publicity material if necessary.
- In the case of individual family/carers visiting the exhibition, we will make them aware of any issues relating to potentially sensitive material.
- Inform groups of exhibits with flashing lights and of installations in darkened rooms.
- Have a policy depending of type of installation for appropriate numbers permitted at any one time.
- Make leaders/teachers aware of explicit nature of some performances.
- Ensure that all staff not directly in contact with group are aware of planned visit and are properly trained to deal with group when in general areas.
- Ensure that there are enough staff on hand to deal with group visits.
- Stagger visits to ensure that no more than one group is booked in at a time.
- Be aware of general health and safety and make leaders aware of issues which may affect travel to and from the building, particularly in the dark months of winter.

### **III. Inappropriate behaviour**

- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with children/young people. Insist teacher/leader is with groups at all times
- Don't use or allow offensive or sexually suggestive physical and/or verbal language
- Don't single out a particular child/young person for unfair favoritism, criticism, ridicule, or unwelcome focus or attention
- Don't allow/engage in inappropriate touching of any form. Stop visits, talks or workshop if necessary, to restate need for respectful behaviour.
- Don't hit or physically chastise children/young people
- Don't socialise inappropriately with children/young people, e.g., outside of structured organisational activities.
- Do not allow for images/portraits of children to be taken without permission of group leader. The taking and usage of images should be agreed in advance.

- Any use of images for promotional reasons should be clearly stated in advance and written clearance sought.

#### **IV. Physical contact**

- Seek consent of child/young person in relation to physical contact (except in an emergency or a dangerous situation)
- Avoid horseplay or inappropriate touch

#### **V. Health and safety**

- Don't leave children unattended or unsupervised.
- Carefully explain health and safety guidelines.
- Point out potential risks to leader in advance and to group on visit.
  - Make clear all emergency exits.
  - Notify group leaders of potential risks in general area outside of building
- Provide a safe environment and be aware of accident procedures and follow accordingly

## **SECTION 3 REPORTING PROCEDURES**

**Orla Moloney, Executive Director** will act as Designated Person to deal with issues related to child protection and welfare within the organisation and to respond to any concerns that may be identified.

**Carmel Mackey, Front of House Manager and Cian O'Brien, Artistic Director** will act as deputies to cover this role when the Designated Person is unavailable or if she is directly involved in an incident, suspicion or accusation.

The Designated Person and her deputies occupy senior positions within PAC. Appropriate training has been provided.

**Orla Moloney** has been designated as the person to contact if you have an issue or concern about any aspect of a child's or young person's safety and welfare. It is the responsibility of this person to support and advise staff about policy and procedures in relation to child protection and to ensure that procedures are followed.

It is also the responsibility of the Designated Person to liaise with the Health Service Executive or Gardaí where appropriate.

**Orla Moloney** can be contacted at PAC on (01) 881 9613/14

**Carmel Mackey and Cian O'Brien** have been designated as deputy to **Orla Moloney** and can be contacted at (01) 881 9613 or (01) 881 9614.

The following excerpt from Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (4.3.2 - p.38) shows what would constitute reasonable **grounds for concern**:

- specific indication from the child or young person that s/he has been abused
- an account by a person who saw the child/young person being abused
- evidence, such as an injury or behaviour, which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way
- 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]
- consistent indication, over a period of time, that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

### **Recording Procedures**

PAC records concerns about the protection of children and young people in our incident book.

Our incident book is stored in a secure file in PAC office. The incident report book is accessed by Orla Moloney and/or Cian O'Brien.

**Staff should record the following information in relation to children and young people:**

- Suspicions
- Concerns
- Worrying observations
- Behavioral changes
- Actions and outcomes



## **Dealing with a disclosure:**

PAC staff will:

- Stay calm and listen to the child/young person, allow him or her enough time to say what s/he needs to say
- Not use leading questions or prompt details
- Reassure the child/young person but do not promise to keep anything secret
- Not make the child/young person repeat the details unnecessarily
- Explain to the child/young person what will happen next (explanation should be age-appropriate).

## **Reporting procedures**

PAC has clear reporting procedures for matters relating to a child/young person's safety and welfare.

- The reporting procedure is known and accessible to all staff in our staff handbook
- The person who expresses the concern should be involved and kept informed
- Actions and outcomes should be noted
- Record all details, including the date, time and people involved in the concern or disclosure and the facts in the incident book. Information recorded should be factual. Any opinions should be supported by facts
- Inform Orla Moloney, Designated Person or Carmel Mackey or Cian O'Brien Deputy Designated Person, if unavailable
- The most appropriate person should discuss the concern or consult with primary carers. Parents, carers or responsible adults should be made aware of a report to the Health Service Executive unless it is likely to put the child/young person at further risk
- The Designated Person may contact the Health Service Executive Duty Social Work Department for an informal consultation prior to making a report
- Information will be shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis (see Section 4: Confidentiality statement);
- If there are reasonable grounds for concern as outlined above, the designated person will contact the Duty Social Worker in the Health Service Executive area using the standard reporting form available from the Health Service Executive. (See Appendix 4 for form.) Reports to the Duty Social Worker can be made verbally initially and then followed by the standard reporting form. Reports should be made to the Health Service Executive without delay
- If the Designated Person or Deputy Designated Person is not available, contact the local Duty Social Worker of the Health Service Executive directly
- In case of emergencies outside of Health Service Executive Social Work Department hours, contact the Gardaí. In situations that threaten the immediate safety of a child/young person, it may be necessary to contact the Gardaí.

## **SECTION 4 CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT**

We in PAC are committed to ensuring peoples' rights to confidentiality. In relation to child protection and welfare we undertake that:

- Information will only be forwarded on a 'need to know' basis in order to safeguard the child/young person
- Giving such information to others for the protection of a child or young person is not a breach of confidentiality;
- We cannot guarantee total confidentiality where the best interests of the child or young person are at risk
- Primary carers, children and young people have a right to know if personal information is being shared and/or a report is being made to the Health Service Executive, unless doing so could put the child/young person at further risk
- Images of a child/young person will not be used for any reason without the written consent of the parent/carer (however, we cannot guarantee that cameras/videos will not be used at public talks and seminars)
- Procedures are in place for the recording and storing of information in line with our confidentiality policy.

## **SECTION 5 RECRUITING AND SELECTING STAFF**

PAC's recruitment and selection policy operates in tandem with our Human Resources policy.

All staff who will have or are likely to have contact with children and young people should undergo a recruitment process in line with these procedures and appropriate to their level of contact with children and young people.

### **Recruitment and selection policy statement**

We will ensure that staff are carefully selected, trained and supervised to provide a safe environment for all children and young people, by observing the following principles:

- Roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined for every job (paid or voluntary);
- Posts will be advertised widely
- We will endeavor to select the most suitably qualified personnel
- Candidates will be required to complete an application and declaration form
- At least two written references that are recent, relevant, independent and verbally confirmed will be necessary
- Staff will be selected by a panel of at least two (or more) staff and possibly external representatives through an interview process
- No person who would be deemed to constitute a 'risk' will be employed
- Some of the exclusions would include anyone:
  - who has any child-related convictions;
  - refuses to sign application form and declaration form;
  - has insufficient documentary evidence of identification;
  - conceals information on their suitability to working with children;
- There will be a relevant probationary period
- All staff will be required to consent to Gardai clearance, and where available, this will be sought.

## **SECTION 6 MANAGING AND SUPERVISING STAFF**

New staff receive induction training and are made aware of policies and procedures; this is supported by our staff handbook.

Freelance staff will agree to abide by PAC's Child Protection Policy Statement.

In the event that a freelancer has his or her own policy, it must be consistent with PAC policy.

### **Staff management policy statement**

To protect both staff (paid and voluntary) and children/young people, we undertake that:

New staff will:

- Be made aware of the organisation's code of conduct, child protection procedures and health and safety guidelines
- Undergo a probationary or trial period

**All staff will:**

- Receive an adequate level of supervision and review of their work practices
- Be expected to have read and signed the Child Protection Policy Statement
- Be aware of issues which may affect groups visiting the exhibition space and performances.

## **SECTION 7 INVOLVEMENT OF PRIMARY CARERS**

**Policy statement:** We are committed to being open with all primary carers. We undertake to:

- Advise primary carers of our child protection policy
- Inform primary carers and schools of all activities and potential activities
- Issue contact/consent forms where relevant
- Comply with health and safety practices in particular good practice in darkened theatre/ gallery spaces
- Operate child-centred policies in accordance with best practice
- Adhere to our recruitment guidelines
- Ensure as far as possible that the activities are age-appropriate
- Encourage and facilitate the involvement of parent(s), carer(s) or responsible adult(s), where appropriate

If we have concerns about the welfare of the child/young person, we will:

- 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

As a child-centred organisation, we are committed to putting the interest of the child/young person first. To that end we will:

- Contact local Health Service Executive and Gardaí where there is a child protection welfare concern
- Encourage primary carers to work in partnership with us under the guidelines set out by our organisation to ensure the safety of their children
- Have a designated contact person available for consultation with primary carers in the case of any concern over a child or young person's welfare

## **SECTION 8 DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF**

In the event of allegations being made against an employee (staff or voluntary), the protection of the child/young person is the first and paramount consideration.

- PAC has a dual responsibility in respect of both the child/young person and employee.
- The same person will not have responsibility for dealing with the child/young person welfare issues and the staff employment issues.
- An allegation against an employee 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 in Section 3 of these guidelines should be followed. PAC will maintain a close liaison with the Health Service Executive and the Gardaí.
- As employers, we will ensure that our actions do not undermine or frustrate any assessment or investigation by Health Service Executive and the Gardaí.
- Agreed procedures should be followed in the context of the applicable employment contract and the rules of natural justice.
- PAC will take protective measures appropriate to the level of risk while not unreasonably penalising the worker – unless necessary to protect the child/young person. Protective measures might mean increased supervision, assignment to different duties, or suspension.
- PAC will seek legal advice on procedures or protocol to deal with allegations against staff.

### **Dealing with an allegation against staff**

Two separate procedures must be followed:

1. **Orla Moloney** (DP) will deal with issues related to the child/young person.
2. **Cian O'Brien** (DDP) or **Carmel Mackey** (DDP) will deal with issues related to the staff member against whom the allegation has been made.
  - The first priority is to ensure that no child or young person is exposed to unnecessary risk
  - If allegations are made against the Designated Person, the Deputy Designated Person is contacted
  - The reporting procedures outlined in Section 3 of these guidelines should be followed. Both the primary carers and child/young person should be informed of actions planned and taken. The child/young person should be dealt with in an age-appropriate manner
  - The staff member will be informed as soon as possible of the nature of the allegation and will be given the opportunity to respond
  - The chairperson of PAC should be informed as soon as possible
  - Any action following an allegation of abuse against an employee should be taken in consultation with Health Service Executive and Gardaí
  - After consultation, the chairperson of PAC should advise the person accused and agreed procedures will be followed

## **SECTION 9 COMPLAINTS AND COMMENTS PROCEDURES**

Primary carers, children/ young people and staff should all be made aware of these procedures. Consideration should be given to an appeals procedure.

In the event of complaints or comments:

- Complaints or comments will be responded to within 2 weeks;
- Orla Moloney has responsibility for directing complaints/comments to the appropriate person
- Verbal complaints will be logged and responded to

## **SECTION 10 ACCIDENTS PROCEDURE**

PAC has a Health and Safety Statement that includes a risk assessment of each area of operation. Procedures to follow in the event of an accident should be formulated. This includes the following information:

- PAC will maintain an up-to-date register of the contact details of all organisations, groups and Schools involved with the Building
- Children/young people's details should be cross-referenced between the incident book and file;
- External organisations with whom PAC has dealings must provide proof that they have public liability insurance;
- First-aid boxes, gloves and aprons are available and regularly re-stocked;
- The first-aid boxes are located in the reception and on each floor clearly visible.
- Availability of first-aid should be in accordance with PAC's Health and Safety guidelines. The location of accident/incident books are known to staff.



## **APPENDIX 1: Definitions of Abuse**

There are four main categories of abuse as outlined in Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children. The following is a synopsis of the information contained in that document.

For the full definitions please refer to Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children 1993 (pp.32-34).

### **1. Neglect**

“Neglect can be defined as being where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, medical care. The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child’s needs are neglected to the extent that his or her well-being and/or development are severely affected.” (Children First p.31)

### **2. Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse usually happens where there is a relationship between a carer and a child rather than as a specific incident or incidents.

“Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms.” (Children First p.31)

Rather, it can manifest in the child’s behaviour or physical functioning. Examples of these include ‘anxious’ attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement and uncooperative or hostile behaviour.

“The threshold of significant harm is reached when interaction is predominantly abusive and become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/ carer.” (Children First p.32)

Examples of emotional abuse in children include:

- Imposition of negative attributes on children, expressed by persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming;
- Emotional unavailability by the child’s parent/carer;
- Unresponsiveness, inconsistent or inappropriate expectations of the child;
- Premature imposition of responsibility on the child;
- Unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of the child’s capacity to understand something or to behave and control him/herself in a certain way;
- Under or over-protection of the child;
- Use of unreasonably harsh discipline;
- Exposure to domestic violence.

### **3. Physical abuse**

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from willful or neglectful failure to protect a child. Examples of physical injury include the following;

- Shaking
- Use of excessive force in handling
- Deliberate poisoning
- Suffocation
- Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant physical harm to a child

### **4. Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse involves the use of a child for gratification or sexual arousal by a person for themselves or others.

Examples of sexual abuse include:

- Exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed

- in the presence of a child
- Intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification
  - Masturbation in the presence of the child or involvement of the child in an act of masturbation
  - Sexual intercourse with a child whether oral, vaginal or anal
  - Sexual exploitation of a child... may also include showing sexually explicit material to children which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse
  - Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an under-age person.

## **APPENDIX 2: Report a Concern**

**Project Arts Centre is in Dublin South Central.**

**To report a concern to a Social Worker responsible for this area, contact:**

Child and Family Agency  
Bridge House  
Cherry Orchard Hospital  
Dublin 10

Tel: 01 7955749

Or for a social worker responsible for another area of Dublin or beyond, please check:

[Dublin Dedicated Contact PointsTusla - Child and Family Agency](#)

### **Submitting a concern using a form:**

The Child Protection and Welfare Report Form must be completed and submitted to Tusla for concerns about children under the age of 18. Please note these forms can be completed online using the [Tusla Portal](#), please consider using this Portal rather than the paper forms below for increased efficiency and ease, you will also be able to print and track your report if submitted online.

If you do want to complete the paper form, you can download it from:

[Publications and FormsTusla - Child and Family Agency](#)

**APPENDIX 3**

Declaration Form

Confidential

**Declaration form for all those working with children and young people**

Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Address:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Tel. No: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile No: \_\_\_\_\_

Any other name(s) previously known as: \_\_\_\_\_

Is there any reason that you would be considered unsuitable to work with children and young people? Yes No

If yes, please outline the reason below.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence? Yes No

If yes, please state below the nature and date(s) of the offence (s):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

### **APPENDIX 3: Anti-bullying Code**

- We provide a place where everyone can feel secure.
- We provide a place where it is known that bullying is not acceptable behaviour.
- We provide a place where name calling is not tolerated.
- We provide a place where no one suffers abuse of any nature.
- We provide a place where no one is victimised
- We provide a place where everyone is supported and listened to
- We provide a place where it is everyone's responsibility to ensure that all are treated equally.
- We provide a place where solutions to problems are the concern of all