



Child Protection and Welfare Policy

Dublin Circus Project

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Child Protection and Welfare Policy Statement

We at Dublin Circus Project are committed to a child-centred approach to our work with children* and young people. We undertake to provide a safe environment and experience, where the welfare of the child or 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.

Approved by the Dublin Circus Project Board on November 12th, 2019

This policy will be reviewed annually.

**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).*

Scope

Dublin Circus Project aims to be fully compliant with the standards outlined in Children First Act 2015: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children.

This policy applies to all persons undertaking activities, both paid and unpaid which involve persons under the age of 18 under the banner of Dublin Circus Project.

Glossary of Terms and Definitions

1. The organisation - This refers to the entity and structures of Dublin Circus Project Ltd.
2. Children First - This refers to the 2015 publication "Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children"
3. Abuse - Refers to the four grounds of abuse as outlined in the Children First Guidelines: Physical abuse, Sexual abuse, Emotional abuse, and Neglect (please see [appendix 1](#)).

Responsibilities

1. All individuals undertaking paid or unpaid activities with children under the age of 18 have a responsibility to read and be familiar with this policy, and will sign the form attached in appendix 2 to confirm they have.
2. A copy of "Children First" will be made available to all such individuals. This can also be downloaded [here](#).
3. It is the responsibility of the Child Protection Officer/ Youth Coordinator to ensure that all those undertaking work with children have read this policy and familiarize themselves with the principles of the Children First guidelines.
4. Staff are required to follow all procedures within this policy.

Code of behaviour for staff

Dublin Circus Project's code of behaviour will help create a supportive environment for the staff, freelance staff, volunteers and performers to provide a child-centred approach for children and young people.

Child-centred approach

Dublin Circus Project's staff, freelance staff, volunteers and performers will:

- Treat all children and young people equally;

- Facilitators shall be cognisant of their responsibility as role models to children and as such shall conduct themselves appropriately and in a professional manner.
- Listen to and respect children and young people; Dublin Circus Project facilitators shall treat children with respect and courtesy. The views and opinions of children shall be listened to and considered in the delivery of any workshops or group activities undertaken.
- 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 for example;
- Create an atmosphere of trust;
- Respect differences of ability, culture, religion, race and sexual orientation.

Good practice

We will, whenever appropriate:

- Register each child/young person (name, address, phone, special requirements, attendance, emergency contact);
- Make primary carers, children/young people, visitors and facilitators aware of the Child Protection Policy and procedures;
- Have emergency procedures in place and make all staff aware of these procedures;
- Be inclusive of children and young people with special needs;
- Plan and be sufficiently prepared, both mentally and physically;
- Report any concerns to the Designated Person and follow reporting procedures;
- Encourage children and young people to report any bullying, concerns or worries and to be aware of anti-bullying policy.
- Observe appropriate dress and behaviour;
- Evaluate work practices on a regular basis;
- Provide appropriate training for staff and volunteers;
- 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; observe appropriate gender balance for residential;
- Ensure clear communication between tutors and organisations; have guidelines and a prompt sheet for tutors;
- Have a working agreement with any external organisation that a tutor is working with;
- Don't be passive in relation to concerns, i.e., don't 'do nothing';
- Don't let a problem get out of control;
- Avoid taking a session on your own. If this is not possible then it should be in an open environment with the full knowledge and consent of primary carers;
- Avoid if at all possible giving a lift to a child/young person and if you do then make sure that primary carers are informed;

- Maintain awareness around language and comments made. If you think that something you said may have caused offence or upset, then try to address it in a sensitive manner.

Inappropriate behaviour

Inappropriate behaviour by Dublin Circus Project's staff, freelance staff, volunteers and performers will not be tolerated. We will:

- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with children/young people; At least two members of Dublin Circus Project shall conduct workshops. Where this is not possible, there must be another supervising adult present such as a teacher or parent. Dublin Circus Project tutors or facilitators shall endeavour not to work alone with a child or group of children whenever possible.
- Facilitators shall never use or allow offensive or sexually suggestive physical and/or verbal language.
- No child shall be singled out unfairly for criticism, ridiculed or given unwarranted attention or praise. Any criticism should be made in a constructive manner with the learning and social needs of the child being of primary consideration.
- Not allow/engage in inappropriate touching of any form;
- Not hit or physically chastise children/young people;
- Not socialise inappropriately with children/young people, e.g., outside of structured organisational activities. Under no circumstance shall a tutor/facilitator bring a child in their vehicle without their guardian's expressed approval. In the event of an emergency an ambulance must be called.

Physical contact

Dublin Circus Project's staff, freelance staff, volunteers and performers will:

- Seek consent of child/young person in relation to physical contact (except in an emergency or a dangerous situation);
- Avoid horseplay or inappropriate touch;
- Check with children/young people about their level of comfort when doing touch exercises.

Health and safety

Dublin Circus Project's staff, freelance staff, volunteers and performers will:

- Not leave children unattended or unsupervised; In order to ensure children's safety, no child shall ever be left alone during a workshop being facilitated by the Dublin Circus Project with the exception of going on toilet breaks. Where a child has gone on a toilet break this should be noted by the facilitators and actions should be taken if the child does not return within a reasonable amount of time.
- Manage any dangerous materials;
- Provide a safe environment;
- Be aware of accident procedure and follow accordingly.

Reporting Procedures

Child Protection Officer ("Designated Person")

Dublin Circus Project has a designated staff member, "Child Protection Officer," whose role is to ensure that procedures and arrangements are in place within the organisation to protect children in line with National guidelines.

Aoife Raleigh, Dublin Circus Project's Youth Coordinator, has been designated as the Child Protection Officer, 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. The Child Protection Officer shall hold this position until another person is appointed.

It is the responsibility of the Child Protection Officer to support and advise staff and all those undertaking work with children about policy and procedures in relation to child protection and to ensure that procedures are followed. This will also be evidenced by signing their name in the related List of People working with Children that will be kept in DCP folders.

Another responsibility of this role is to liaise with the Health Service Executive (HSE) or Garda where appropriate.

Aoife Raleigh can be contacted at Hampstead House, Hampstead Ave, Glasnevin, Dublin 9 and on 083 163 9599. Nathalie Clement has been designated as deputy to Aoife Raleigh and can be contacted at 79, Westgate, Saint Augustine Street, Dublin 8 and on 086 603 2367.

Recording procedures

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

- Suspicions;
- Concerns;
- Worrying observations;
- Behavioural changes;
- Actions and outcomes.

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:

- (i) specific indication from the child or young person that s/he has been abused;
- (ii) an account by a person who saw the child/young person 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.

These recordings will be kept in a designated password-protected folder online. This folder will only be accessible to Aoife Raleigh and Nathalie Clement.

Reporting procedures

Dublin Circus Project is committed to ensure that the reporting procedure should be known and accessible to all staff, volunteers, freelance staff and performers. We will make sure that the person who expresses the concern should be involved and kept informed.

Responsibility to Report

1. Every person undertaking activities on behalf of Dublin Circus Project, who, during the course of such activities are likely to come into contact with children under the age of 18 have a responsibility to report any child protection concerns. Within Dublin Circus Project the procedure is for all concerns to be reported to the designated Child Protection Officer. It is the responsibility of this officer to then determine whether there are reasonable grounds for concern and where there are reasonable grounds for concern to report this to the appropriate agency; either the HSE or An Garda Síochána.
2. The Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse in “reasonable and in good faith” to designated officers, HSEs or any member of the garda.

Reasonable Grounds for Concern

1. In accordance with Children First, reasonable grounds for concern are defined as:
2. Specific indication from a child that he/she was abused;
3. An account by a person who saw the child being abused;
4. Evidence, such as an injury, which is consistent with abuse and is unlikely to have been caused in any other way;
5. An injury that is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it is a case of abuse;
6. Consistent indication over time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.
7. Where serious abuse is suspected immediate action will be required. Staff are to inform the Child Protection Officer at the earliest possible opportunity and as a matter of urgency. If the Child Protection Officer is not available the issue should be raised with the Chairperson of Dublin Circus Project. Where this is not possible and serious abuse is suspected, the Garda should be contacted. In no case should serious concerns be left unaddressed or unreported
8. It is important to be aware that the person who first encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred. That is a task for the Gardaí or the HSE. Under no circumstances should any individual member or the organisation itself attempt to deal with the problem of abuse alone.

How to report?

- Actions and outcomes should be noted;
- Record all details, including the date, time and people involved in the concern or disclosure and the facts (for example in an incident book). Information recorded should be factual. Any opinions should be supported by facts;
- Inform the Child Protection Officer or his or her deputy, 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 Child Protection Officer 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 Child Protection Officer will contact the Duty Social Worker in the Health Service Executive area using the standard reporting form available from the Health Service Executive. (<http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/publications-and-forms>)
- 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 Child Protection Officer or Deputy Child Protection Officer 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.

Reporting a concern

1. As members of Dublin Circus Project may be working with children in an informal enjoyable manner, children may conceivably speak about their lives and experiences. If during the course of this a child makes a disclosure of abuse there is a responsibility placed upon the Dublin Circus Project member to report this disclosure

for the wellbeing of the child. For this reason Dublin Circus Project has a designated Child Protection Officer, currently Aoife Raleigh. The child protection officer shall hold this position until another child protection officer is appointed.

2. Dublin Circus Project has a designated staff member whose role is to ensure that procedures and arrangements are in place within the organisation to protect children in line with national guidelines. This role will be referred to as the Child Protection Officer.

Standard Reporting Procedure for the Child Protection Officer

1. The Child Protection Officer may contact a member of DCP's Board for advice around reporting the matter to the HSE. They may also contact the Public Health Nurse or Social Work Department who can assist them in deciding whether or not to report the issue formally to the HSE.
2. A report should be made to the HSE (to the Duty Social Worker) in person, by telephone or in writing; see page 39 of "Children First" for an outline of the information required when a report of child abuse is being made. Also see page 136 (Appendix 3) in "Children First" for a list of HSE phone numbers and addresses.
3. In the event of an emergency, or the non-availability of the HSE, the report should be made to the Garda. This may be done at any Garda Station (page 38, Children First Guidelines).
4. The reporting form at the back of the Children First Guidelines must be completed at this stage to facilitate Social Worker/Gardaí decision making. This may entail:
5. Clarifying or getting more information about the matter:
6. Where there is doubt or uncertainty, consulting initially with statutory child protection agency to receive their guidance on the matter:
7. making a formal referral to a statutory child protection agency or the Gardaí.
8. A social worker may wish to speak to the person who first witnessed the incident, received the disclosure, or experienced the concern; if the report is made by the Child Protection Officer, staff should be informed of this possibility.
9. It is essential to keep accurate notes with dates, times and factual objective information when assessing or reporting abuse.

Dealing with a disclosure

Dublin Circus Project's staff, freelance staff, volunteers and performers should endeavour to:

- 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).

Confidentiality Statement

We in Dublin Circus Project are committed to ensuring peoples' rights to confidentiality. However, 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 consent of the parent/carer (however, we cannot guarantee that cameras/videos will not be used at public performances);
- Procedures will be put in place in relation to the use of images of children/ young people;

- Procedures will also be put in place for the recording and storing of information in line with our confidentiality policy.

Recruitment and Selection Policy Statement

Dublin Circus Project celebrates differences and welcomes diversity. We believe that Circus should be made by all and accessible to all. 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 endeavour to select the most suitably qualified personnel;
- Candidates will be asked to sign a declaration form;
- No person who would be deemed to constitute a 'risk' will be employed;
- Some of the exclusions would include:
 - any child-related convictions;
 - refusal to sign the application form and declaration form;
 - insufficient documentary evidence of identification;
 - concealing information on one's suitability to working with children;
- There will be a relevant probationary period;

Garda Vetting

The Child Protection & Welfare Policy operates in conjunction with our [Garda Vetting Policy](#).

1. All staff will be required to consent to Garda clearance, and where available, this will be sought.
2. All staff working directly with under 18s or vulnerable adults will be required to furnish details of past addresses to facilitate garda vetting and any individuals with past offences in relation to child abuse will not be facilitated access to children or vulnerable adults by Dublin Circus Project.

Managing and Supervising Staff

To protect both staff (paid and voluntary) and children/young people, Dublin Circus Project undertakes that:

New staff will:

- Take part in a mandatory induction training session when appropriate;
- Be made aware of the organisation's code of conduct, child protection procedures, and the identity and role of who has been designated to deal with issues of concern;
- 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 provided with child protection training when appropriate;

Involvement of primary carers

Dublin Circus Project is 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;
- 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 ongoing 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.

Dealing with allegations against staff

Two separate procedures must be followed:

1. In respect of the child/young person, Aoife Raleigh will deal with issues related to the child/young person.
2. In respect of the person against whom the allegation is made, Nathalie Clement will deal with issues related to the staff member.

Steps:

1. If a member of Dublin Circus Project during the course of activities undertaken on behalf of the organisation is accused of abuse, the matter will be investigated immediately in collaboration with external authorities.
2. If an allegation is made against a member of Dublin Circus Project while he/she is undertaking activities on behalf of the organisation the following procedures must be followed:
 - a. An Garda Síochána shall be contacted immediately and the allegation reported.

- b. Inform the Chairperson of DCP's Board.
- c. Ensure no child is exposed to unnecessary risk.
- d. Confidentiality is of the utmost importance and only those who need to be informed should be notified or made aware of the situation.
- e. A member may be suspended to protect the child and other children attending the activities carried out by the organisation, at all times considering the legal rights of the accused.
- f. Those conducting activities on behalf of the organisation may be subject to erroneous or malicious allegations. Therefore all allegations should be dealt with sensitivity and support.
- g. An action following an allegation of abuse against an employee should be managed in consultation with the HSE and the Gardaí. An immediate meeting should be arranged with these bodies for this purpose.
- h. After these consultations and when pursuing the future position of a member, the Chairperson should advise the person accused of the allegation and the procedure that is to be followed.
- i. The committee should take care that the actions taken by them do not undermine or frustrate any investigations being conducted by the HSE or Gardaí.

Complaints and comments procedures

Please note that:

- Complaints or comments will be acknowledged within 1 week and responded to within 2 weeks at the latest;
- has responsibility for directing complaints/comments to the appropriate person;
- Verbal complaints will be logged and responded to.

Accidents procedure

DCP maintains an up-to-date register of the contact details of all children/young people involved in the organisation;

- Children/young people's details should be cross-referenced between the incident book and file;
- External organisations with whom DCP has dealings must provide proof that they have public liability insurance;
- First-aid boxes will be available and regularly re-stocked;
- The location of the first-aid box(es) must be made known to staff;
- Availability of first-aid should be in accordance with the organisation's Health and Safety guidelines. The location of accident/incident books must be made known to staff;
- Children and young people must be advised of the risks of dangerous material;
- Record details of risky equipment used and take steps to minimise risk;
- Take cognisance of responsibility for first-aid on off-site trips.
- All accidents and incidents should be reported using [this form](#). All incidents will be reviewed and followed upon by the Child Protection Officer.

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, or 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 an inadequate 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 wilful 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: Resources:

TULSA templates for reporting CP/W Concerns can be found [here](#).

Link to the [Children First Act 2015](#)

Relevant Contacts:

http://www.arts council.ie/uploadedFiles/wwwartscouncilie/Content/Arts_in_Ireland/Young_people_children_and_education/Child_protection_and_welfare/ChildGuidelinesEnglish.pdf

Child Protection and Welfare Policy

All individuals undertaking paid or unpaid activities with children under the age of 18 have a responsibility to read and be familiar with Dublin Circus Project's Child Protection and Welfare policy.

I confirm that:

1. I have received a copy or a link to Dublin Circus Project's Child Protection and Welfare Policy, as well as Dublin Circus Project's Garda Vetting Policy;
2. I have read and understand the content, requirements, and expectations of the above policies;
3. I understand that if I have questions, at any time, regarding the above policies, I can ask DCP's youth coordinator by emailing youth@dublincircusproject.com.

Please read this policy carefully to ensure that you understand it's contents before signing this document.

Name (block capitals)	
Signature	
Date	