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Child Protection Policy and Procedures

Child Protection Policy Statement

The Irish National Youth Ballet (INBYB) is an organisation which works with children and young people in order to produce high quality dance performances. INBYB is committed to providing a working environment which is safe, supportive and creative. We undertake to adopt a child centred approach in our work with children and young people and endeavour to ensure that their needs are fully respected at all times.

We will adhere to the recommendations of *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (2017) and Children First Act 2015. Our policy and procedures are reviewed annually by the Board of INBYB, with input from the Artistic Director.

This policy was reviewed during April 2025.

We have implemented guidelines and procedures covering:

- Code of behaviour for all staff
- Code of behaviour for participants
- Reporting of suspected or disclosed 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.

References:

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2017. This is a national policy document, based on legislation, to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm and abuse.

Children First Act 2015, this Act places a number of statutory obligations on specific groups of professionals and on particular organisations providing services to children. Some people have

specific legal responsibilities under the Children First Act 2015. These include people who are Mandated Persons and/or work in an organisation which is a 'Relevant Service'.

Mandated Person Children First Act 2015; SCHEDULE 2, Section 2

The following classes of persons are specified as mandated persons for the purposes of this Act: 15. (i) Person employed in any of the following capacities: Safeguarding officer, child protection officer or other person (howsoever described) who is employed for the purpose of performing the child welfare and protection function of religious, sporting, recreational, cultural, educational and other bodies and organisations offering services to children.

Relevant Services Children First Act 2015; SCHEDULE 1, Section 2

Any work or activity which consists the provision of: 5 (a) education, research, training, cultural, recreational, leisure, social or physical activities to children.

IN Y B: Reporting Procedure

The person with responsibility to inform Tusla the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) will be the Designated Liaison Person (Lindsay Ashe Browne) or their deputy (Jane Magan).

This will involve talking to the DLP and recording your concerns. The DLP will:

- Ensure that IN Y B's reporting procedure for child protection and welfare concerns is followed.
- Provide advice and support.
- Ensure a Tusla Child Protection and Welfare Form is submitted to Tusla, when appropriate.

If you and the DLP are unsure as to whether your concern is 'reasonable', you should speak to a Tusla Social Worker for advice.

Mandated Persons or staff operating on their own may need to contact or report directly to Tusla.

Here are some additional things you should know about reporting:

- Never delay.
- Keep a record of any actions taken.
- If you think a child is in immediate danger and you cannot contact Tusla, ring the Gardaí.

Procedure

- The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is there to provide support and advice should Irish National Youth Ballet (IN Y B) workers or volunteers have a concern about a child protection or welfare matter.
- IN Y B workers and volunteers are given as much time as they need to discuss any concerns they have about children.
- The DLP will go through the concern with the worker or volunteer, discussing what happened and deciding whether there are reasonable grounds to make a report to Tusla.
- The DLP may at this stage call the Tusla Duty Social Worker to clarify whether there are grounds for reporting the concern. The Duty Social Worker will help in working

out the details, providing advice and reaching a decision as to whether the concern being discussed does or does not need to be reported at this point in time.

- If it is established that there are grounds for concern, the DLP will fill in the Child and Family Agency Report Form and submit it.
- The DLP will also maintain a confidential record of the child protection and welfare concerns reported by INBYB to Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána.
- If a decision is made not to report, a log of this is also kept.
- If the DLP decides not to make a report to Tusla, they should advise you of that, under the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998. If you remain concerned, you are free to report the concern to Tusla or An Garda Síochána and that you will not be penalised should you do so.
- Children First: National Guidance recommends that the DLP gives you a clear, written explanation as to why they did not report to Tusla.
- The confidentiality of all information held is respected and stored in a secure way.
- As much as possible, we always try to keep parents informed of any actions we may need to take, where we become aware of a concern regarding their child.

When compiling a report, record all the details that you are aware of and what was said, using the child's own words, (or the informant's), as far as possible. All suspicions and concerns should be recorded, along with observations of injury or behavioural changes that might be consistent with abuse. Follow up action and any outcomes will also be recorded.

IMPORTANT

If, for any reason, the Designated Liaison Person or deputy Designated Liaison Person is not available, and you have concerns about a child's welfare, contact the local Duty Social Worker at Tusla directly. Local Tusla addresses and telephone numbers are included in this document.

Mandated Persons, Responsibilities

Certain people have legal responsibilities under the Children First Act 2015. One group of people are called '**Mandated Persons**'.

Mandated Persons have a legal responsibility to safeguard children. They are required by law to tell Tusla whenever they are worried about the safety of a child.

According to the Children First Act, a Mandated Person must report their concerns to Tusla if,

- They know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is being harmed, has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed,
- A child discloses that they are, have been harmed or are at risk of being harmed.
- If sending in a report to Tusla, a Mandated Person must use the appropriate form and indicate that it is a mandated report.
- It is good practice to inform parents if a report is being made to Tusla about their child. However, if in so doing, this places the child at further risk, or, where the sharing of this information with the parents could impair Tusla's ability to carry out a risk assessment, it is not necessary to inform the parents.
- A Mandated Person may also be asked to assist Tusla in their assessment of a concern.

Recognising Abuse

Neglect:

Threshold of harm for a Mandated Person

Under Section 2 of the Children First Act 2015, neglect is defined as “to deprive the child of adequate food, warmth, clothing, hygiene, supervision, safety or medical care”.

If you are a Mandated Person you must report to Tusla when you know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child’s needs have been neglected, are being neglected or are at risk of being neglected to the extent that **the child’s health, development and welfare have been, or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.**

Emotional Abuse:

Threshold of harm for a Mandated Person

Under the Children First Act 2015 emotional abuse is encompassed in the definitions of harm, ill-treatment and neglect.

If you are a Mandated Person you must report to Tusla when you know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been, is being or is at risk of being ill-treated to the point where **the child’s health, development and welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.**

Physical Abuse:

Threshold of harm for a Mandated Person

Physical abuse is encompassed by the definition of harm in the Section 2 of the Children First Act 2015.

If you are a Mandated Person you must report to Tusla when you know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been, is being or is at risk of being assaulted and that as a result **the child’s health, development and welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.**

Sexual Abuse:

Threshold of harm for a Mandated Person

Sexual abuse is encompassed in the definition of harm in Section 2 of the Children First Act 2015. The Act states that sexual abuse means an offense against a child as listed in Schedule 3 of the Children First Act 2015 [as amended by the section 55 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017].

If you are a Mandated Person you must report to Tusla when you know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been, is being or is at risk of being sexually abused and that as a result **the child’s health, development and welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.**

Mandated Persons

As part of assessing a mandated report of suspected child abuse, Tusla has the authority to share information with a Mandated Person who has been asked to provide assistance. This is in keeping with the principles of data protection, which recognise that in certain circumstances information can be shared in the interests of child protection, but that such sharing must be necessary and proportionate.

Section 17 of the Children First Act 2015 makes it **an offence for you to disclose information to a third party** which has been shared by Tusla during the course of an assessment, unless Tusla has given you written permission to do so.

If you fail to comply with this section, you may be liable to a fine or imprisonment for up to six months or both. This offence can also be applied to an organisation.

List and contact details of INYB Employees who are Mandated Persons

Lindsay Ashe-Browne, Artistic Director, **083 125 8260** (overall responsibility for child safety concerns)

Jane Magan, Ballet Mistress. **087 2547966**

Alison Finn, Wardrobe Supervisor. **085 1558962**

Megan Shepherd, Lighting Designer. **083 8314551 (During show weeks)**

Physical Contact

Dance, as a social activity and as a performance discipline frequently involves physical contact. During sessions of coaching and instruction, tutors often utilise physical contact as an economic route to furthering understanding of posture, position or movement. Children and young people have varying levels of comfort with touch, however, and tutors will need to deal with this issue sensitively.

Exercises involving physical contact will be appropriate for the age group involved. With very young children, an invitation to join hands in a circle, for example, is a good way to gear levels of comfort for individual participants. With older children, consent can be ascertained in a similar fashion, contact with hands on shoulders or waists for example. Undue emphasis should not be made concerning touch and contact.

Explanation will be made for older children and young adults if physical contact is used for means of adjustment or technical correction. Permission will be ascertained, again without undue emphasis, from each individual concerned. Physical contact should only be made if it is deemed the most expeditious route to promoting physical understanding of position or movement.

There are some basic **guidelines about touching** children that should always be followed:

- Consider whether the correction or observation could be clarified in another way, e.g. you, or another student could demonstrate.
- Children and young people must always be treated with respect and dignity. If touch is necessary, it is important that it is done in an atmosphere of understanding and agreement. This approach could be explained at the start of each session (for one-off workshops) or at the start of a particular project. It is important that parents/carers understand the reason for physical contact as well as the children involved.
- A touch can be misconstrued, so it is important that a child understands the intention behind the action. Ensure that you touch in a firm, unambiguous manner. It is important that you are neither too rough nor too delicate, both of which can be misunderstood.

- Be sensitive to the individual. If a child states they are uncomfortable with touch, or if you sense that this is the case, respect that. There could be many reasons; bullying, abuse or adolescence.

Bullying

Bullying is unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.

The following types of bullying behaviour are included in the definition of bullying:

- Deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying.
- Cyber-bullying.
- Identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.
- Comments made about religious or non-religious beliefs.

Bullying behaviour can include:

- Physically pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching etc.
- Name calling, spreading rumours, persistent teasing and humiliation or the continual ignoring of others.
- Posting of derogatory or abusive comments, videos or images on social media.
- Racial, homophobic, transphobic or sexist comments, taunts or gestures.
- Sexual comments, suggestions or behaviour.
- Unwanted physical contact.

Bullying affects the lives of an increasing number of children and can be the cause of genuine concern about a child's welfare.

In cases of serious instances of bullying where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, a referral may need to be made to Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána.

Abuse

In order to be able to safeguard the children and young people in our care, it is very important for all Irish National Youth Ballet staff working with children and young people to be able to recognise abuse.

If you have any concerns that a child may have been, is being or is at risk of being abused or neglected, you must report it to a Designated Liaison Person (DLP).

Children First: National Guidance identifies four main types of abuse; Neglect, Emotional Abuse, Physical Abuse and Sexual Abuse.

Neglect

Children First: National Guidance states that:

“Neglect occurs when a child does not receive adequate care or supervision to the extent that the child is harmed physically or developmentally. It is generally defined in terms of an omission of care, where a child’s health, development or welfare is impaired by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, medical care, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety.”

Child neglect is the most frequently reported type of abuse to Tusla. It may become apparent over time or from a single event;

Some features of neglect may include:

- Poor school attendance.
- Poor hygiene.
- A lack of suitable clothing.
- A child being left alone without adequate care or supervision.
- Malnourishment, lacking food, inappropriate food or erratic feeding.
- Lack of protection and exposure to danger.
- Abandonment or desertion
- Inadequate care for the child’s medical and developmental needs.

The impact on the child is the same whether the child’s needs are being neglected as a result of:

- An intentional act (wilful neglect), or
- Circumstances that a family finds itself in (circumstantial neglect).

Ongoing chronic neglect can be very damaging to the child’s health, development and welfare and can have serious long-term negative consequences.

Emotional Abuse

Children First: National Guidance states that:

“Emotional Abuse occurs when a child’s basic need for attention, affection, approval, consistency and security are not met due to incapacity or indifference from their parent/caregiver. Once-off and occasional difficulties between a parent/carer and a child are not considered emotional abuse. A reasonable concern for the child’s welfare would exist when the behaviour becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer.”

Emotional abuse is not easy to recognise because the effects are often not obvious. There may be no physical signs of emotional abuse unless it occurs with another type of abuse.

A child may show signs that they have experienced emotional abuse through their **behaviours**, such as:

- Persistent, extreme unhappiness.
- Low self-esteem.
- Educational and developmental underachievement.
- Risk taking.
- Aggressive behaviour.

There may also be concerns in relation to the **interactions between a child and an adult**, such as:

- A lack of attachment.
- Extreme over-protectiveness.
- Consistently rejecting or blaming the child.

- Exposure to domestic violence.

Some additional ways to recognise emotional abuse are:

- Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming of the child.
- Persistent lack of comfort, love, praise and encouragement.
- Seriously inappropriate expectations of a child relative to his/her age and stage of development.

Emotional abuse is more likely to impact negatively on a child where it is persistent over time.

Physical Abuse

Children First: National Guidance states that:

“Physical abuse is when someone deliberately physically hurts a child or puts them at risk of being physically hurt. It may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents. A reasonable concern exists where the child’s health and/or development is, may be or has been damaged as a result of suspected physical abuse.”

Physical abuse happens when a child is physically harmed or is put at risk of being physically harmed. A child can also be physically harmed from a lack of interaction. There may be single or repeated incidents.

Evidence of physical abuse may be when the child has bruises, fractured bones, burns, bite marks or is shaken. A lack of interaction or poor supervision may result in a child being physically hurt.

Physical abuse can be recognised in some of these ways:

- Use of excessive force in handling.
- Pushing, shaking or throwing.
- Beating, slapping, hitting or kicking.

The following should significantly increase concern for the welfare of a child:

- Unsatisfactory or different explanations for injuries by the child or parents/carers.
- A frequency or clustering of worrying marks.

Sexual Abuse

Children First: National Guidance states that:

“Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or arousal or for that of others. It involves the child being involved in sexual acts or exposing the child to sexual activity directly or through pornography.”

Child sexual abuse may cover many different abusive activities.

Some examples of abusive activities are:

- Sexual touching.
- Engaging a child in sexual acts.
- Encouraging/forcing a child to observe sexual or indecent acts.

Sexual abuse can be recognised in some of these ways:

- Intentional performing of a sexual act in the presence of a child.
- Exposure to inappropriate or abusive material through technology.
- Sexual intercourse with a child.

Sexual activity involving a young person may be sexual abuse even if the young person does not recognise it as abuse.

Some children **may** be **more vulnerable to abuse** than others.

There may be particular **times** or particular **circumstances** when a child may be more vulnerable to abuse.

The circumstances when a child may be more vulnerable to abuse include:

Parent and Carer factors:

The child living with one or more parent/carers with an addiction or mental health issue.

The child experiencing domestic violence at home.

Child factors, such as:

The child having a disability or a mental health issue.

Being 'in care' or living away from home.

Community and environmental factors:

The child living in poor housing.

Experiencing poverty and begging.

The child being bullied.

Besides recognising features of abuse, you might also be **told** of concerns about abuse.

For example:

- A parent/carer tells you that they cannot cope, that their child is always hungry, and they do not have enough money to feed and clothe them.
- A child speaks to you about a person who is locking them in their room for hours at a time as punishment.
- An adult tells you they are concerned about a child who has unusual bruising on their body.
- An adult tells you about someone who abused them when they were a child and they are worried that this person could still be hurting children.

Children First

KEY POINTS

- You may need to take **immediate** action to protect a child.
- You have **responsibilities to report** child protection or welfare concerns about children if you see features of abuse, or hear or are told about them.
- All **workers and volunteers** are responsible for reporting concerns about abuse.
- You **cannot assume** that someone else will make a report.
- Some people are mandated under the Children First Act 2015 and **legally must report concerns** which reach the thresholds specified in the Act.
- Always follow **IN YB's Reporting Procedure** referred to in the child safeguarding statement when you are concerned about the protection or welfare of a child.

If you are concerned about the immediate safety of a child and cannot contact the Tusla Social Worker, you should contact your local Garda station.

- The best interests of the child should always come first.
- Keep alert to possible concerns relating to the protection and welfare of children.
- You have a supportive not an investigative role.
- The safety and welfare of children is everyone's responsibility.

If you have a concern about a child or you have any queries about your responsibilities discuss these with the Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

Theatre Safety

IN YB's outreach projects often take place onstage in a studio / stage environment.

- Before each session, tutors will ensure that any dangerous materials are beyond risk of accident.
- A special floor covering, designed for dance, will always be laid, stretched and secured.
- If the workshop is held onstage tutors will ensure safe access to and from the stage.
- All areas posing a threat to safety will be identified and indicated to participants.
- Where possible, students will use toilet/changing facilities made available to them. Children will always be supervised when in areas frequented by the general public.

During Performance

- Participants will be allocated dressing room space, where possible, appropriate to age and gender. When separate dressing room space is not available, areas are cordoned off with screens.
- Young performers will be accompanied to and from the stage area.
- A 'holding area' will be identified, in which young performers will await their entrance. Children waiting in the wings will be kept to a minimum of number and time.
- LED 'Boom' lighting is used, but it is weighted down. No lighting cable will hang within a three-metre reach of the stage.
- 'Rules' and boundaries will be established to ensure safety. The first rule backstage- "do not touch" will be instilled.

- All local theatre staff will be made aware of the INYB child protection policies and procedures.
- The stage manager goes through safety procedures on day one in the theatre to ensure everyone is aware of the necessary precautions.

TUSLA Child and Family Agency

Contact Details

DUBLIN CITY, Samuel Beckett Theatre, Trinity College, O'Reilly Theatre, Belvedere College, and Dance House, Foley Street

Child and Family Agency, Dublin South Central

Bridge House

Cherry Orchard Hospital

Dublin 10

Tel: 076 695 5749

An Garda Síochána Telephone Numbers

Dublin City: (01) 666 9000

Store Street Garda Station, Dublin 1 (Local to DanceHouse): (01) 666 8000

Childline, A National freephone listening service for children: 1800 666 666 (24 hours)

Recruiting and selecting staff/dancers

Dancers are selected for INYB by audition. A contract is sent out to each child/young person and is signed by each party as required. A meeting of all dancers/parents takes place on the first day of term.

We ensure that teachers/choreographers are carefully selected, so as to provide a safe working environment for all children and young people, by observing the following principles:

- Roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined for every job.
- We will endeavour to select the most suitably qualified personnel. People working for INYB will be selected by Lindsay Ashe-Browne (Artistic Director)
- Two written references are required of any staff member solely employed to work with dancers/young people.
- INYB has Zero tolerance for anyone wishing to work with the company who may pose a 'risk' near children. Some of these exclusions are,
 - Any child-related convictions;
 - Refusal to sign application / declaration form;
 - Insufficient documentary evidence of identification;

- o Concealing information on one's suitability to working with children;
- All staff will be required to consent to Garda clearance, and where available, this will be sought. This is updated every 3 years.

Procedures taken for abuse against Staff or volunteers.

All members of staff and volunteers who have a complaint can contact Lindsay Ashe-Browne. If the issue is of a serious nature and cannot be dealt with by Lindsay she will report the issue to the Board of Trustees. All issues will be dealt with sensitively.

Staff management policy statement

In order to protect both employees and children/young people, we undertake to;

- Take part in a mandatory induction training session,
- Be made aware of the organisations code of conduct, child protection procedures,
- Be made aware of the identity and role of who has been designated to deal with issues of concern.

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.

Policy statement on the involvement of primary carers

INYB is committed to being open with all parents/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 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 Tusla 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-centered organisation, we are committed to putting the interest of the child/young person first. To that end we will:

- Contact local Tusla and Gardaí where there is a child with 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.

INYB's designated person to contact if you have concerns over a child's safety and welfare is Lindsay Ashe-Browne, Mobile; 083 125 8260.

General Guidelines for Behaviour

At the Irish National Youth Ballet Company

- We are a well behaved and co-operative team.
- We show respect and courtesy to other dancers, teachers, parents and visitors to the Company at all times.
- We show respect for our own belongings, other dancers' belongings, the teachers' belongings and all premises and locations used by INYB. All personal belongings should be clearly marked.
- We accept responsibility, as part of a team, to attend classes and rehearsals on a regular basis and to be punctual.
- We wear the correct INYB uniform and dance shoes.

Safety Rules

In order to achieve a positive environment, the following safety rules are necessary:

- No boisterous or rough behaviour is acceptable at any time.
- Bullying is always unacceptable behaviour.
- Foul or obscene language is unacceptable.
- Harassment of a racial, sexual or gender nature is unacceptable behaviour. INYB values the diversity of all people.
- Lying or misrepresenting a fellow dancer or an adult to another or to a parent or teacher is unacceptable behaviour.
- Any form of behaviour that interferes with the right of others to dance and to feel safe is unacceptable.
- At the end of classes/rehearsals at the Dancehouse all members of Junior Company must be picked up from the Dancehouse foyer by a parent/guardian.
- At the end of any INYB performance all members of Junior Company will be escorted into the theatre and supervised by a member of the Parents Committee. Dancers must be collected at this location by a parent/guardian who should advise the parent on duty that they are collecting said dancer.

Sanctions

- Verbal reprimand including advice on how to improve.
- Note sent home to be signed by parent/guardian.
- The Artistic Director's decision is final.

Accidents procedure

Lindsay Ashe-Browne the designated Child Protection Officer undertakes a risk assessment prior to any project/performance.

In the event of an accident/incident, the following steps should be carried out;

- If the accident is minor, ensure all reasonable and appropriate action is taken to minimize the effect.
- If the accident is more serious, an ambulance may need to be called. INYB's register of contact details for children/young people should be consulted and the relevant person made aware of the accident and of the action being taken.
- In the event of an accident and a dancer needs to travel to hospital in an ambulance, an INYB nominated person will travel with the patient in the ambulance, in the absence of a parent being present.
- All accidents should be reported to the Designated Child Protection Officer or the Deputy Child Protection Officer (Jane Magan).

Health and Safety

Currently all INYB's work and activities with children and young people generally take place at the Dance House, Foley St. INYB closely liaises with other venues the children/young people work at. We consider carefully all local procedures concerning health and safety and take cognisance of all areas of risk.