



# **Child Protection Policy, Guidelines and Procedures**

## **Child Protection Statement**

At Teac Damsa we are committed to providing a safe environment and positive experience for all children and young people with whom we interact, a place where the welfare of the young person is of paramount importance.

We have developed policies and procedures to ensure this commitment is enshrined in all aspects of our work with children and young people.

This Welfare and Child Protection Policy gathers all policies and procedures that relate to work with young people and adheres to *Children First Act 2015, and the Children First: National Guidance, and Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice*.

Our policy is relevant to all adults working with Teac Damsa's work with young people. Parents and Guardians will be informed of relevant policies and procedures. All staff who come into contact with children and young people will receive training in the principles of best practice in child protection, as set out in the *Children First, National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children*.

This policy will be reviewed annually, every December.

Teac Damsa:

- Recognises that all children and young people have the right to freedom from abuse.
- Ensures that all our staff are carefully selected and accept responsibility for helping to prevent the abuse of children and young people in their care.
- Responds swiftly and appropriately to all suspicions or allegations of abuse, and provides parents and children with the opportunity to voice any concerns they may have.
- Assigned a Child Safety Officer who takes specific responsibility for child safety and acts as the main point of contact for parents, children, young people and outside agencies.
- Ensures access to confidential information is restricted to the Child Protection Officer or appropriate external authorities.

We have implemented procedures covering:

1. Code behaviour for all staff
2. Duties of Child Protection Liaison Officer
3. Reporting of suspected or disclosed abuse
4. Dealing with disclosure
5. Confidentiality

6. Recruitment and selecting staff
7. Managing and supervising staff
8. Involvement of primary carers
9. Allegations of misconduct or abuse by staff
10. Incidents and accidents

This policy was formulated in November 2018 and found to be in accordance with best practice. It has been reviewed again February 2019.

We recognise that implementation is an ongoing process at Teac Dańsa. Our company is committed to the implementation of the Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while engaging with us.

Anne Connelly  
Chair  
Teac Dańsa

## 1, Code of Behaviour for Staff

The code of behavior can be categorised under the following headings;

- Child-centred approach
- Good practice
- Inappropriate behavior
- Physical contact
- Health and Safety

### Child-centred approach

- Treat all children and young people equally but respect differences of ability, race, culture, religion and sexual orientation
- Listen to and respect children and young people
- Where appropriate, involve children and young people in decision-making
- Provide encouragement, support and praise. Teac Damsa are committed to a positive approach to education and this should be reflected in facilitation.
- Use of appropriate language
- Ensure expectations meet the abilities of the group and do not compromise a positive approach
- Discuss boundaries and behaviours with the group before beginning session
- Encourage feedback
- Be cognisant of a child or young person's limitations and work appropriately
- Create an atmosphere of trust

### Good Practice

- Register each child or young person with contact details
- Make primary carers aware of the Child Protection Policy and procedures
- Have emergency procedures in place
- Report any concerns to the designated Child Safely Liasion or Deputy Child Safety Liasion Person and follow reporting procedures;
- When working with children/young people a teacher or second supervisor must be present.
- Encourage children/young people to report any bullying
- Observe appropriate dress/language/behaviour
- Provide appropriate training for all staff and volunteers
- Report and record any incidents and accidents
- Ensure proper supervision based on adequate ratios according to age, abilities and activities involved.
- Ensure clear communication between artist and organisations
- Have written agreements between artists and organisations
- Always act if concerned and inform the Child Safely Liasion or Deputy Child Safety Liasion Person
- Avoid if at all possible giving private lifts to a child/young person and if necessary make sure the primary carer is involved and informed.

### Inappropriate Behaviour

- Avoid spending prolonged time alone with children/young persons
- Don't use or allow offensive or sexually physical and /or verbal language
- Don't single out a particular child/young person for unfair criticism, ridicule or unwelcome focus or attention
- Do not hit or physically chastise children/young people
- Don't socialise inappropriately with children/young people eg. outside of structured activities

### Physical Contact

- Seek consent of children/young person
- Avoid inappropriate physical contact

### Health and Safety

- Do not leave children/young adults unsupervised
- Manage any dangerous materials
- Provide a safe environment
- Be aware of accident procedure and follow the protocol.

## **2. Duties of Child Protection Liaison Officers**

Teac Damsa has appointed a Child Protection Liaison and a Deputy Child Protection Liaison to act as a first point of communication with children, parents and outside agencies when dealing with any child protection issues.

### **CHILD PROTECTION LIAISON OFFICER**

Johnny O'Reilly  
Producer  
Teac Damsa  
087 095 1779  
johnny@teacdamsa.com

### **DEPUTY LIAISON OFFICER**

Marina Dunford  
Company Stage Manager  
Teac Damsa  
marina@teacdamsa.com

This role is a resource to any staff member who has child protection concerns and is responsible for reporting allegations or suspicions of child abuse to the Health Service Executive (HSE) or an Garda Síochána.

Duties of the Child Protection Officer include:

- To operate within the guidelines set by the appropriate authorities and those approved by Teac Damsa.

- Reports suspicions and allegations of child abuse to the statutory authorities, i.e. an Garda Síochána and HSE.
- Liaises between the young people, staff and the statutory authorities where necessary.
- Creates and maintains links with the statutory authorities and other relevant agencies and resource groups.
- Facilitates the provision of support to any victim or employee making a referral and provides support also to the person against whom the allegation has been made.
- Advises on good practice.
- Organises/facilitates training and workshops on guidelines in child protection.
- Maintains proper records on all cases referred to him/her in a secure and confidential manner.
- Keeps up to date on current developments regarding provision, practice, support services, legal obligations/requirements and policy.

### **3. Reporting of Suspected Abuse**

#### Who to contact about issues related to child protection and welfare.

Teac Damsa has designated a Child Safety Liaison and Deputy Child Safety Liaison Person as the person to contact if there is an issue or concern about any aspect of a child 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 the procedures are followed. It is also the responsibility of the Child Safety Liaison officer to make contact with the Health Service Executive or Gardai where appropriate.

The following excerpt from *Children First, Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children* 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 witnessed the child or young person being abused;
- (iii) Evidence, such as an injury or behavior, which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way;
- (iv) An injury or behavior which is consistent with both 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.

### Recording Procedures

Teač Dańsa will keep an incident book in place in order to record any concerns about the protection of children or young people. This book can only be accessed by those directly involved in lodging a concern regarding a child or young person.

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

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

## **4. Dealing with a disclosure**

The following procedure should be followed

- Stay calm and listen to the child/young person, allow him/her enough time to say what they need to say
- Don't use leading questions or prompt
- Reassure the child/young person but do not promise to keep anything secret
- Don't 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

In any matters relating to a child/young person's safety or welfare, employees should speak directly to one of the Liaison officers,

- The person who expresses the concern will be involved and kept informed.
- Actions and outcomes will be noted
- All details, including the date, time and people involved in the concern or disclosure and the facts will be recorded in the Incident Book. Information recorded should be factual. Any opinions should be supported by facts;
- The most appropriate person should discuss the concern or consult with the primary carers. Parents, carers or responsible adults should be made aware of a report to the HSE unless it is likely to put the child/young adult person at further risk'

- The designated person, may contact the HSE Duty Social Work Department for an informal consultation prior to making a report. (The HSE have a Social Worker charged with Child Safely on duty at all times).
- Information will be shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis. (see Section 3, Confidentiality Statement)

## **5. Confidentiality**

We in Teac Damsa are committed to ensuring peoples' rights to confidentiality. However in relation to child 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/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 HSE, 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/video devices will not be used in public performance);
- 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.

## **6. 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 following principles;

- Roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined for every job (paid and voluntary)
- Candidates will be required to submit CV
- All staff will be required, where applicable to consent to Garda clearance and referee confirmation
- Staff will undertake relevant training.
- Some grounds for exclusion would include; any child related convictions, refusal to submit references and declaration form, concealing information, insufficient documentary evidence of identification.

## **7. Staff Management Policy Statement**

To protect both Staff and children/young people we undertake that;

- Take part in a mandatory induction training course
- Be made aware of the organization'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 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 where necessary.

## **8. Involvement of Primary Carers**

We are committed to being open with all primary carers.

We undertake to:

- Notify primary carers of our Child Protection Policy
- Inform primary carers of all activities and potential activities
- Issue contact/consent forms where relevant
- Comply with health and safety practices;
- Operate child-centered 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/young person at further risk;
- Where there are child protection and welfare concerns we are obliged to pass these on to the HSE Duty Social Worker and, in emergency, the Gardai;
- 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 organization, we are committed to putting the interest of the child/young person first. To that end we will;

- Contact local HSE and Gardai where there is a Child protection welfare concern;
- Encourage primary carers to work in partnership with us under the guidelines set out by our organization 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/young person's welfare.

## 7. Dealing with Allegations Against Staff

Two separate procedures must be followed;

1. In respect of the child/young person one of the designated Liaison Officers will deal with issues related to the child/young person
2. In respect to the person against whom the allegation is made the Liaison Officer, company director or a designated board member will deal with the issues related to the staff member.

At the same time insuring

- 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, then the Deputy Designated person should be contacted;
- The reporting procedures outlines in Section 3 of these guidelines should be followed. Both the primary carers and the 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;
- The chairperson/head of the organisation should be informed as soon as possible;
- Any action following an allegation of abuse against an employee should be taken in consultation with HSE and Gardai;
- After consultation, the chairperson/head of organization should advise the person accused and agreed procedures will be followed.

## 8. Accidents Procedures

### Accident Procedure

- The organisation must maintain an up-to-date register of the contact details of all children/young people involved in the organization;
- Children/young people's details should be cross-referenced between the incident book and file;
- External organisations with whom your organization has dealings must provide proof they have public liability insurance;

- The location of the first-aid boxes must be made known to staff;
- The availability of first-aid should be in accordance with the organisations Health and Safety guidelines. The location of the book ,must be made known to staff;
- Record details of risky equipment used and take steps to minimize risk;
- Take cognisance of responsibility for first-aid on/off-site trips

