



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

## **Teac Dańsa Introduction**

Teac Dańsa was established in 2016 when the Fabulous Beast Dance Theatre moved from the Irish midlands to the West Kerry Gaeltacht on the Southwest coast of Ireland. Teac Dańsa makes dance and theatre work informed by a sense of place and nurtures a deeper more meaningful connection with the traditions, language and music of Ireland. Teac Dańsa creates a place where artists can work together to make dance and theatre work that transforms both artist and audience.

### **1. Code of Behaviour for Staff**

The code of behaviour 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 Dańsa 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 Safety 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 Safety Liaison or Deputy Child Safety Liaison 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 Dańsa 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**

Marina Dunford  
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Teac Dańsa  
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### **DEPUTY LIAISON OFFICER**

Dawn Prentice  
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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 Dańsa.
- 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. Types of Abuse and How They May be Recognised.**

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse.

#### **Recognising Neglect**

The following are features of child neglect:

Children being left alone without adequate care and supervision

Malnourishment, lacking food, unsuitable food or erratic feeding

Non-organic failure to thrive, i.e. a child not gaining weight due not only to malnutrition but also emotional deprivation

Failure to provide adequate care for the child's medical and developmental needs, including intellectual stimulation  
Inadequate living conditions – unhygienic conditions, environmental issues, including lack of adequate heating and furniture

Lack of adequate clothing  
Inattention to basic hygiene

Lack of protection and exposure to danger, including moral danger, or lack of supervision appropriate to the child's age

Persistent failure to attend school

Abandonment or desertion

#### **Recognising Emotional Abuse**

Rejection

Lack of comfort and love

Lack of attachment

Lack of proper stimulation (e.g. fun and play)

Lack of continuity of care (e.g. frequent moves, particularly unplanned)

Continuous lack of praise and encouragement

Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming of the child

Bullying

Conditional parenting in which care or affection of a child depends on his or her behaviours or actions

Extreme overprotectiveness

Inappropriate non-physical punishment (e.g. locking child in bedroom)

Ongoing family conflicts and family violence

Seriously inappropriate expectations of a child relative to his/her age and stage of development

### **Recognising Physical Abuse**

Physical punishment

Beating, slapping, hitting or kicking

Pushing, shaking or throwing

Pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling

Use of excessive force in handling

Deliberate poisoning

Suffocation

Fabricated/induced illness

Female genital mutilation

### **Recognising Sexual Abuse**

Any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child

An invitation to sexual touching or intentional touching or molesting of a child's body whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification

Masturbation in the presence of a child or the involvement of a child in an act of masturbation

Sexual intercourse with a child, whether oral, vaginal or anal

Sexual exploitation of a child

Exposing a child to inappropriate or abusive material through information and communication technology

Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person

### **Reporting of Suspected Abuse**

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

Teač Dařsa has designated a Child Safety Liaison and Deputy Child Safety Liaison Person as the person to contact if there is an issues or concern about any aspect of a child or young persons 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 Dařsa 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. Circumstances That May Make Children More Vulnerable to Harm**

If you are dealing with children, you need to be alert to the possibility that a welfare or protection concern may arise in relation to children you come in contact with.

##### **Parent or carer factors:**

Drug and alcohol misuse

Addiction, including gambling

Mental health issues

Parental disability issues, including learning or intellectual disability

##### **Child factors:**

Age

Gender

Sexuality

Disability

Mental health issues, including self-harm and suicide

##### **Community factors:**

Cultural, ethnic, religious or faith-based norms in the family or community which may not meet the standards of child welfare or protection required in this jurisdiction Culture-specific practices, including: – Female genital mutilation – Forced marriage – Honour-based violence – Radicalisation

##### **Environmental factors:**

Housing issues

Children who are out of home and not living with their parents, whether temporarily or permanently

Poverty/Begging

## Bullying

Internet and social media-related concerns

### **Poor motivation or willingness of parents/guardians to engage:**

- Non-attendance at appointments
- Lack of insight or understanding of how the child is being affected
- Lack of understanding about what needs to happen to bring about change
- Avoidance of contact and reluctance to work with services
- Inability or unwillingness to comply with agreed plans

### **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).

### Retrospective Disclosures

Some adults may disclose abuse that took place during their childhood. Such disclosures may come to light when an adult attends counselling, or is being treated for a psychiatric or health problem. The reporting requirements under the Children First Act 2015 apply only to information that you, as a mandated person, received or became aware of since the Act came into force, whether the harm occurred before or after that point. However, if you have a reasonable concern about past abuse, where information came to your attention before the Act and there is a possible continuing risk to children, you should report it to Tusla under this Guidance.

Retrospective or disclosures will be treated in the same manner as current ones.

### 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 Safety 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 Dańsa 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 Vetting clearance and referee confirmation
- Staff will undertake relevant.
- 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-centred 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.

## **9. 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 Gardaí;
- After consultation, the chairperson/head of organization should advise the person accused and agreed procedures will be followed.

## **10. 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





## Appendix i

### Child Protection Statement

At Teač Dańsa 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 Teač Dańsa'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 is reviewed regularly.

Teač Dańsa's Guiding Principles:

- 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 of 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 was last reviewed in April 2022.

We recognise that implementation is an ongoing process at Teac Damsa. 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.

Any questions relating to this policy can be sent to the relevant person Áine Ní Éalaí [aine@teacdamsa.com](mailto:aine@teacdamsa.com)

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