



# CHILD PROTECTION AND VULNERABLE ADULTS | POLICY & PROCEDURES

## CHILD PROTECTION & VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY STATEMENT

CoisCéim Dance Theatre is an organisation fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults from harm, regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or religion. We undertake to adopt a child-centred approach to our work with children, young people, and vulnerable adults to ensure that their well-being and safety is paramount and that their needs are fully respected at all times. Our Policy Guidelines apply to all staff and artists who work for CoisCéim Dance Theatre whether on permanent, temporary or freelance contracts, or working as volunteers. We aim to adhere to the recommendations of Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children <https://www.dcyh.gov.ie/documents/Publications/ChildrenFirst.pdf> published by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2011).

Based on the above principles CoisCéim Dance Theatre has implemented procedures covering:

- Code of behaviour for all staff
- 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.

This policy will be reviewed in:  
Designated Child Protection Officer  
Date:

August 2018  
PHILIPPA DONNELLAN  
31 August 2017



## CHILD PROTECTION & VULNERABLE ADULTS PROCEDURES

Good practice at the front line is based on clear policies and principles. The Government's policy underpinning this Children First: National Guidance includes:

- the welfare and safety of children, which is central to all Government policy;
- the promotion of and support for family life;
- the use of the minimum necessary intervention, in a timely way, to keep children safe;
- agencies working together to help children reach their full potential;
- agencies working together to provide safer and more effective services;
- the State and civil society working together to promote children's welfare.

This Child Protection Policy and Procedures applies to young children up to the age of 18, young people aged 18 - 21 and vulnerable adults. It is underpinned by a considerable body of legislation, government guidance and standards, designed to ensure children, young people and vulnerable adults are protected from harm including: Child Care Act, 1991; Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1999; UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, 1992.

Further child protection guidelines on which this policy draws from includes: Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Young People in the Arts Sector published by Arts Council, Ireland, (ISBN 1- 904291-21-X, 2006); Children First, National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2011); Code of Good Practice, Child Protection For The Youth Work Sector (Department of Education and Science, 2003). Our Duty to Care (Department of Health and Children, 2002).

### 1. CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR STAFF

It is CoisCéim's intention to employ the "safest possible practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accident to children and to protect workers from the necessity to take risks and leave themselves open to accusations of abuse or neglect." Our Duty to Care (Department of Health and Children, 2002, p.). The following guidelines are designed to protect children and young people and vulnerable adults from harm as well as protect CoisCéim Dance Theatre's artists, staff and volunteers from unfounded allegations of abuse.

Approach to working with children, young people and vulnerable adults

CoisCéim Dance Theatre expects all artists, staff and volunteers working with children, young people and vulnerable adults to work from a child-centred perspective. This means that they should be:



- Listened to and heard
- Valued and respected as individuals
- Respected for their identity
- Encouraged and praised
- Involved in decisions as appropriate

### Good Practice

CoisCéim Dance Theatre ensures that good practice is followed at all times by making primary carers, children, young people, vulnerable adults, visitors and facilitators aware of their Child Protection Policy and Procedures. As part of this CoisCéim seeks to:

- Provide appropriate training for staff and volunteers
- Register each child/young person (name, address, phone, special requirement, attendance, emergency contact)
- All members of CoisCéim observe appropriate dress and behaviour when working with children/young people/vulnerable adults
- Update and review policies and procedures at regular intervals.
- Have a written agreement with any external organisation that staff or artists working for CoisCéim are working with.
- Ensure proper supervision based on adequate ratios according to age, abilities and activities involved.
- Report and record any incidents and accidents.
- Have emergency procedures in place and make all staff aware of these procedures.

### Health and Safety and Manual Handling Procedures

As part of managing the health and safety of all aspects of our work, we aim to control the risks in the places where work takes place.

A thorough assessment to identify risks will be carried out prior to every rehearsal, performance and/or workshop that involve children, young people and vulnerable adults using the performance area, workshop rooms and back stage areas for said activities are safe and comfortable. The following things will be checked prior to a group of children, young people or vulnerable adults use of space:

Is the room temperature suitable? Is the room light enough? Are the exits clearly identified and free from obstruction Is the floor area free from obstruction? Are there any potential trip, slip or other hazards? Are the fire extinguishers clearly visible and unobstructed?

The member of staff leading the session/rehearsal, or another member of CoisCéim's staff present, must be made aware of fire evacuation procedure from the space they are using.



In addition we ask some workers who may have particular requirements, for example new employees or expectant mothers, people with disabilities, temporary workers, contractors to think what additional hazards there might be, as they may notice things that are not obvious to us and may have some good ideas on how to control the risks.

We also check manufacturers' instructions or data sheets for chemicals and equipment, as they can be helpful in spelling out the hazards.

Having identified the hazards, we decide how likely it is that harm will occur. To ensure safety in the workplace is paramount we undertake appropriate risk assessments and make a record of significant findings – the hazards, how people might be harmed by them and what controls should be put in place to reduce significant risks.

### Inappropriate Behaviour

It is recommended that artists/arts facilitators working for CoisCéim avoid being the sole carer/facilitator of a group of children except in cases of emergency. In situations where this is unavoidable, for example if another teacher/primary carer has to leave the room unexpectedly, then exit doors should be left open and other staff informed immediately. If privacy is required for a meeting with an individual young person or vulnerable adult, this should take place as openly as possible and other staff should be informed where and when the meeting is to take place.

- Do not single out children/young people/vulnerable adults for unnecessary criticism, or unwanted attention in relation to physique, style of dress, language, sexuality, gender, race or religion. Or, make sexually suggestive comments in front of, about, or to them even in fun.
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact. For example discourage children from sitting on your lap. There are occasions of course when physical contact is necessary or desirable, such as comforting a distressed child, or as part of a dance sequence.
- Do not take children/young people/vulnerable adults alone on a car journey, however short. Where this is unavoidable, it should be with the consent of parents or carers and someone in charge of the organisation (ie. CoisCéim's Broadreach Director) and the contact teacher/worker from the host school or youth club if relevant).
- Do not meet with children/young people/vulnerable adults outside organised activities, unless it is with the knowledge and consent of parents/carers and the person in charge from CoisCéim Dance Theatre and the host organisation (school or youth project etc).
- Ensure that personal relationships with other leaders do not affect your leadership role and any problematic behaviour between staff is dealt with outside of organised activities.



## Physical Contact

Physical contact should only take place with the consent of the child, young person or vulnerable adult - and most importantly the purpose of the contact should be made clear from the outset.

When working with children, young people or vulnerable adults Artists, staff and volunteers should never:

- Engage in sexually provocative or rough physical games, including horse-play.
- Do things of a personal nature that they (children, young people or vulnerable adults) can do themselves.
- Touch their (children, young people/vulnerable adults) bodies in a sexually provocative way.

## Guidance on physical restraint

It is very unlikely that CoisCéim's dance artists, staff or volunteers will be in a situation where they are involved in physical restraint, as they should not be in sole charge of children, young people or vulnerable adults for any length of time. However on rare occasions they may need to intervene, if unease or unwillingness to act appropriately could lead to the needs of a young person for example, being neglected, or their safety put at risk.

Definition: Physical restraint is where a child, young person or vulnerable adult is being held, moved or prevented from moving against their will, because not to do so would result in injury to themselves or others or would cause significant damage to property.

Restraint must always be used as a last resort, when all other methods of controlling a situation have been tried and failed. Restraint should never be used as a punishment or to bring about compliance (except where there is risk of injury).

Only staff and volunteers who are properly trained in restraint techniques should carry it out. A child or vulnerable adult should be restrained for the shortest period necessary to bring the situation under control.

Notes of all such incidents should be written down, detailing the facts of the behaviour, witnesses, who restrained the child, young person or vulnerable adult and how, what other methods had been tried and failed and what follow up action took place. These notes should be given to CoisCéim Dance Theatre's Child Protection Officer.

## 2. HEALTH & SAFETY



CoisCéim is committed to ensuring that the necessary health and safety precautions are in place at all times. As part of this any activity involving children, young people and vulnerable adults and potentially dangerous equipment is strictly controlled. The health & safety precautions are as follows:

- Fire precaution equipment is in place.
- Sufficient heating and ventilation systems are fully functioning.
- First Aid is clearly visible and easily accessible to the public.
- Access to a phone.
- Access to emergency telephone numbers of: Child Protection Officer, local Gardai and relevant Child Protection Agencies.
- Appropriate insurance cover for buildings being used.
- Risk assessment is made for each project involving children and young people.
- Toilets and changing areas are to a suitable standard.

### 3. REPORTING PROCEDURES

#### Recognising Abuse

In the event that a person working for CoisCéim is concerned that a child, young person or vulnerable adult is suffering from abuse it is their responsibility to act; they must not be “passive in relation to concerns, ie, don’t do nothing” (Guidelines for the Protection of Children, Arts Council, Ireland, 2006). Everyone has a responsibility to report suspected or alleged child abuse.

Abuse can be categorised in four different ways: physical, emotional, sexual and neglect.

Physical abuse can be broadly defined in this context as an instance where a child or young person, or vulnerable adult shows physical signs of injury, these may include:

- Unexplained bruising, marks or injuries on any part of the body
- Bruises which reflect hand marks or fingertips (from slapping or pinching)
- Cigarette burns
- Bite marks
- Broken bones
- Scalds

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate physical abuse:

- Fear of parents being approached for an explanation
- Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts
- Flinching when approached or touched



- Reluctance to get changed, for example wearing long sleeves in hot weather
- Depression
- Withdrawn behavior
- Running away from home

Emotional Abuse is often difficult to measure. For example - a child who appears well cared for may be abused by being taunted, put down or belittled. They may receive little or no affection, love or attention by parents or primary carers. Emotional abuse may be revealed physically in a number of ways such as:

- Failure to thrive or grow, particularly if the child puts on weight in other circumstances, e.g in hospital or away from their parents care.
- Sudden speech disorders
- Developmental delay, either in terms of physical or emotional progress
- Extreme lethargy or tiredness

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate emotional abuse include:

- Neurotic behaviour e.g hair twisting, rocking
- Being unable to play
- Fear of making mistakes
- Self harm
- Fear of parent being approached regarding their behaviour

Sexual abuse is often signaled by a child, young person or vulnerable adult's behaviour, although physical signs can also be present. In all cases those who talk about sexual abuse want it to stop. It is essential, therefore that they are listened to and taken seriously at all times.

Adults who use children or young people to meet their own sexual needs abuse both girls and boys of all ages, including infants and toddlers.

Physical signs of abuse may include:

- Pain or itching in the genital/anal areas
- Bruising or bleeding near genital/anal areas
- Sexually transmitted disease
- Vaginal discharge or infection
- Stomach pains
- Discomfort when walking or sitting down
- Pregnancy

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate sexual abuse include:

- Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour e.g becoming aggressive or withdrawn



- Fear of being left with a specific person
- Running away from home
- Sexual knowledge which is beyond their age and development level
- Sexual drawings or language
- Saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone
- Substance or drug abuse
- Suddenly having unexplained sources of money
- Acting in a sexually explicit way towards adults

Neglect can be a difficult form of abuse to recognise, yet have some of the most lasting and damaging effects on children. Physical signs of abuse may include:

- Constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from another child or young person
- Constantly dirty or 'smelly'
- Loss of weight, or being constantly underweight
- Inappropriate dress for the conditions

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate neglect may include:

- Complaining of being tired all the time
- Not requesting medical assistance and/or failing to attend appointments
- Having few friends
- Mentioning their being left alone or unsupervised

The above list is not conclusive but is a guide to signs of physical and behavioural abuse. Children, young people and vulnerable adults who are abused may exhibit any of these indicators; the presence of one or more should be taken as proof that abuse is occurring.

Anyone working for CoisCéim Dance Theatre may become aware of abuse occurring within different situations such as the home, at school or within a particular organisation which the child, young person or vulnerable adult attends. As well as the more obvious signs, abuse may be disclosed by for example:

- A child talking to a friend in the particular group
- someone else might report that they strongly believe a child or young person has been, or is being abused
- something in the behaviour of one of the workers, children or vulnerable adult, or in the way a worker relates to them observing one child/young person/vulnerable adult abusing another.

Guidance on responding to a child, young person or vulnerable adult disclosing abuse

- Stay calm
- Listen carefully to what is said
- Do not promise to keep secrets – find an appropriate moment to explain that it is likely that the



information will need to be shared with others

- Allow the person to continue at his/her own pace
- Do not try to explain for them, allow them to use their own words, gestures etc
- Only ask questions for clarification purposes – at all times avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer
- Reassure the person that they have done the right thing in telling you.
- Tell them what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared
- Record in writing what was said – include date, time and place of meeting as well as any names mentioned and to whom the information was given and ensure that the record is signed and dated.

#### Responding to signs, suspicions or allegations of abuse

Any member of staff who is made aware of actual or possible abuse of a child, young person or vulnerable adult should report and discuss their concerns as soon as possible to CoisCéim's Child Protection Officer. All incidents, disclosure or observations should be recorded in the incident book provided by the company and by filling in the Child Protection Monitoring /Report form, available on request from the Child Protection Officer. In the unlikely event of member of staff being unable to contact either the Child Protection Officer (Philippa Donnellan) they must immediately report any urgent concerns directly to the Garda (See page.2 for contact details).

## 4. REPORTING CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS

CoisCéim Dance Theatre's Child Protection Officer is: Philippa Donnellan, Broadreach Director.

Philippa Donnellan can be contacted at:

CoisCéim Dance Theatre, 14 Sackville Place, Dublin,1. Tel: 01 878 0558

In emergencies Philippa can be contacted via mobile: 087 2440259

It is the responsibility of Philippa Donnellan to support and advise staff and ensure all procedures are followed and to liaise with the relevant organisations and individuals where appropriate.

In her absence, the Deputy Child Protection Officer is Sarah Latty - Company Manager.

Sarah can be contacted at CoisCéim's office above or on mobile: 0851735881.



Local contacts in case of emergency include:

An Garda Síochána Local station  
Store St Dublin  
Tel: 01 666 8000

Eastern Regional Health Authority Area 6  
Rathdown Rd Dublin 6.  
Tel: 01 838 5034 (Office hours: 9am – 5pm) Other useful contact details in case of emergency:  
ISPCC (Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) Head Office  
20 Molesworth St  
Dublin 2  
Tel: 01 679 4944 (office hours: 9am – 5pm)

HSE Children and Family Services  
DUBLIN NORTH CENTRAL  
Social Work Office, 22 Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1 | Social Work Office, Ballymun Health Centre, Dublin 11  
(01) 877 2300 (01) 846 7236

Childhood Support Worker  
Tel: 01 644 7710 (office hours: 9am - 5pm)

Childline  
A national freephone listening service for children. Tel: 1800 666 666 (24 hour service)

The following procedure must be followed if you have a suspicion or concern about:

a child, young person or vulnerable adult  
behaviour of staff, volunteer or other

You must immediately inform either:  
Designated Child Protection Officer  
Deputy Child Protection Officer

After full consideration of all factors and information you may:  
Have your concerns allayed  
Keep a record anyway  
Take no further action  
Or you may:



Decide your concerns are ongoing  
Contact Social Services and/or Garda  
Make an assessment in consultation with external agencies  
Proceed with a child protection investigation

#### Confidentiality statement

The legal principle that the 'welfare of the child, young person or vulnerable adult' is paramount means that the considerations of confidentiality, which might apply to other situations at CoisCéim Dance Theatre, should not be allowed to override the right of the child, young person or vulnerable adult to be protected from harm. Every effort however, will be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned when an allegation has been made and is being investigated.

### 5 RECRUITING AND SELECTING STAFF

In recruiting and selecting staff in line with *Children First: National Guidance 1.3.1* we ensure:

- (i) best practice in the recruitment of staff or volunteers, which includes Garda vetting, taking up of references, good HR practices in interviewing, induction training, probation and ongoing supervision and management;
- (ii) staff members or volunteers are aware of how to recognise signs of child abuse or neglect;
- (iii) there is guidance and procedures for staff and/or volunteers who may have reasonable grounds for concern about the safety and welfare of children involved with the organisation.
- (iv) identification of a designated person to act as a liaison with outside agencies and a resource person to any staff member or volunteer who has child protection concerns. The designated person is responsible for reporting allegations or suspicions of child abuse to the HSE Children and Family Services or to An Garda Síochána.

In addition

To ensure the most suitably qualified staff are recruited, CoisCéim Dance Theatre undertakes to define clearly the roles and responsibilities for every contract (paid or voluntary).

To ensure suitability of artists and staff working on projects involving direct contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults, and that they work in a way as to protect them from harm, CoisCéim Dance Theatre asks candidates to:

- Supply written references from at least two people, who are not family members, who have first-hand



and recent knowledge of their experience of work or contact with children. Referees are asked specifically to comment on the artists suitability to work with children. References are checked by a follow-up telephone call before any offer of employment is confirmed.

- Sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be considered unsuitable to work with these groups of people and to declare all previous convictions.
- Apply for a Garda check that details an individual's criminal record and where appropriate, details of those banned from working with children.

On recruitment, staff are required to complete a probationary period of six months.

## 6. MANAGING AND SUPERVISING STAFF

CoisCéim Dance Theatre always employs artists who have appropriate experience, skills and qualifications to lead dance activities with children, young people and vulnerable adults (as appropriate).

Staff

As part of our policy to protect staff (paid & voluntary) and children, young people and vulnerable adults, we undertake that new staff are:

- Given induction training.
- Provided with a copy of the Health & Safety procedures and Code of Conduct when working with Children & Young People.
- Undergo a probationary period of three months.

And will:

- Receive an adequate level of supervision and review of their work practice.
- Be provided with child protection training.

Freelance staff are:

- Provided with a copy of the company's Child Protection Policy
- Receive appropriate supervision and support.

In all areas of our work with young people and vulnerable adults, CoisCéim has clear guidelines for staff, in particular in knowing how to use authority appropriately and to dealing with discipline and challenging behaviour.

As part of these guidelines and to ensure the maximum safety and security of those we work with we undertake to have:

- Defined criteria for membership of any group or club run by the company



- A registration system in place which holds the name and address of each participating individual, plus emergency contact numbers, and details of medical or special needs.

In addition that we keep records of:

- Attendance
- Accidents (written in incident book)
- Consent forms when applicable (ie. Overnight stay)
- Any complaints and grievances

## 7. INVOLVEMENT OF PRIMARY CARERS

CoisCéim is committed to developing open relationships based on trust and understanding between family members and primary carers (parents, carers, and responsible adults) and CoisCéim staff and freelance artists. As recommended in Children First (Department of Health & Children, 1999; p.34) CoisCéim seeks to build effective co-operation by encouraging and facilitating family and extended family to participate in relevant decision making and feedback processes as well social activities in connection with their children when appropriate. We acknowledge that families are often best positioned in their unique knowledge of their children's needs and lifestyles and that involvement can be beneficial and contribute to building greater self-esteem and sense of empowerment. We also recognise that primary carers/family have the right to be party to any discussion concerning their child(ren) and are to be respected in their right to confidentiality at all times.

As a youth-centred organisation CoisCéim also requires that:

- Parent/carer permission is given for children under the age of 18 to join specific activities or projects.
- Parents/carers are aware of the company Child Protection Policy Document.
- Any complaints made by parents/carers are dealt with through the proper complaints procedure.

In instances where there may be real cause for concern regarding a child CoisCéim will:

- Notify the parents/carers at the earliest opportunity.
- Have CoisCéim's Child Protection Officer available for consultation with the parents/carer.
- Communicate with parents/carers at every stage of the procedure where an allegation of abuse has occurred, unless this action puts the child, young person or vulnerable adult at risk.
- Encourage parents/carers to work in partnership with us wherever possible and/or appropriate.
- Contact the local Health Authority and, in an emergency, the Gardaí as part of our obligation to protect the child, young person or vulnerable adult.



## 8. DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF

It is recognised by CoisCéim Dance Theatre that it can be extremely complex to deal with this type of allegation not only in terms of the victim, alleged abuser, and primary carers involved but also for other members of staff, therefore it is important that all aspects should be dealt with as sensitively as possible at all times.

In the event of allegations of abuse made against a member of staff there are two separate reporting procedures which CoisCéim Dance Theatre is committed to undertaking with respect to any issues raised in connection to:

- A. the child, young person, vulnerable adult as the alleged victim
- B. the person against whom the allegation is made

\*In all incidents the priority is to ensure that no child, young person or vulnerable adult is exposed to unnecessary risk, and that “the employer should as a matter of urgency take any necessary protective measures.” (Our Duty to Care Department of Health and Children, 2002; p. 82).

- If allegations are made against the Designated Child Protection Officer the Deputy Child Protection Officer should oversee all procedures.
- The reporting procedures outlined in Section 2. should be followed immediately by any member of staff or primary carer who becomes aware that abuse is taking place.

It is the responsibility of the designated person to privately inform the member of staff that an allegation of abuse has been made of the following:

- that an allegation has been against them
- the nature of the allegation

As part of the procedure CoisCéim recognises that it is the right of the member of staff to be given the opportunity to respond to the allegation made, and that the response is included in any assessment and communicated to other parties involved.

Any further action considered should be:

- based on reasonable grounds for concern by the employer that abuse has taken place as defined in Section 2.
- guided by agreed procedures and applicable employment contract.



- through consultation with other professional bodies such as the local Regional Health Authority and An Gardaí Síochána.
- in communication with relevant primary carers (parents, carers or responsible adults).

Following clarification of the allegation and in close consultation with the all parties concerned CoisCéim

will advise the member of staff accused of the allegation as to the agreed procedures which should be taken.

## 9. COMPLAINTS AND COMMENTS PROCEDURES

In the event that a child, young person, vulnerable adult, primary carer or member of staff has a complaint or comment CoisCéim advises that he/she:

Speaks in person to the designated Child Protection Officer: Philippa Donnellan

Or in writing and sending it by email or post to:

Philippa Donnellan  
CoisCéim Dance Theatre  
14 Sackville Place  
Dublin 1

Tel: 01 878 0558  
Fax: 01 878 0813  
Email: philippa@coisceim.com

All complaints or comments made to the company:

- Will be recorded and logged.
- Responded to within 2 weeks.
- Dealt with according to the appropriate guidelines and procedures as stated in the Child Protection Policy Document.

## 10. ACCIDENTS PROCEDURE

CoisCéim's designated Child Protection Officer undertakes a risk assessment prior to the operation of each project. Where necessary, details of risky equipment are noted and appropriate steps are taken to minimise this risk.

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



If the accident is minor, ensure all reasonable and appropriate action is taken to minimise the effect.

If the accident is of a more serious nature then an ambulance may need to be called. CoisCéim's register of contact details for children/young people should be consulted and the relevant person made aware of the accident and of the actions being taken.

All accidents should be reported to the Designated Child Protection Officer or the Deputy Child Protection Officer.

## 11. CONCLUSION

CoisCéim endeavors to safeguard children, young people, and vulnerable adults at all times by: adopting child protection guidelines through set procedures and a Code of Conduct for staff and volunteers

- Following carefully the procedures for recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteer through supervision, support and training.
- Sharing information about concerns with relevant professional agencies.
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, vulnerable adults, teachers, group leaders, carers, parents, staff and volunteers.
- Reviewing its policies and practice at regular intervals.