



04 May 2022

**CHILD AND  
VULNERABLE ADULT  
PROTECTION | POLICY &  
PROCEDURES**

# Contents

CHILD & VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION POLICY STATEMENT .....	3
CHILD & VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION PROCEDURES .....	4
1. CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR STAFF .....	4
Good Practice .....	5
Health and Safety and Manual Handling Procedures .....	5
Inappropriate Behaviour .....	6
Physical Contact.....	6
Guidance on physical restraint .....	7
2. HEALTH & SAFETY .....	7
3. RECOGNISING ABUSE and RESPONDING .....	7
Recognising Abuse .....	7
Circumstances which may make children more vulnerable to harm .....	9
Responding to signs, suspicions or allegations of abuse .....	10
Guidance on responding to a child, young person or vulnerable adult disclosing abuse...	10
4. REPORTING CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS .....	10
COISCÉIM DANCE THEATRE'S DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON .....	10
MANDATED PERSONS .....	10
PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS .....	11
REASONABLE GROUNDS FOR CONCERN .....	12
DEALING WITH RETROSPECTIVE DISCLOSURES and ALLEGATIONS .....	12
CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT .....	12
CONTACTS in case of emergency.....	13
5. RECRUITING AND SELECTING STAFF .....	14
6. MANAGING AND SUPERVISING STAFF.....	15
7. INVOLVEMENT OF PRIMARY CARERS .....	15
8. DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF .....	16
9. COMPLAINTS AND COMMENTS PROCEDURES .....	17
10. ACCIDENTS PROCEDURE.....	17
11 PROTECTION PROCEDURES DURING COVID 19	
12. CONCLUSION .....	20

# CHILD & VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION 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.dcy.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:

CEO

Date:

May 2023

BRIDGET WEBSTER

04 May 2022

# CHILD & VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION PROCEDURES

Good practice at the front line is based on clear policies and principles. The Government's policy underpinning this Children First: National Guidance 2017 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; Protections for persons reporting Child Abuse act 1998; Criminal Justice Act 2006; Criminal Justice (withholding of information on offences against children and vulnerable persons) Act 2012; National Vetting Bureau (children and vulnerable persons) Acts 2012–2016; Children First Act 2015; Criminal Law (sexual offences) Act 2017; UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, 1992.

Further child protection guidelines on which this policy draws from includes: NYCI Child Protection during Covid 19/2020; TUSLA Covid 19 Additional Practice Guidance, Child Protection & Welfare, March 2020; Children First/National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare 2017 + Addendum to Supporting Youth Work Online 2020; Screenagers Guide to Digital Youth Work 2020; NYCI Web Safety in Youth Work 2020; Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Young People in the Arts Sector published by Arts Council, Ireland, (ISBN 904291-21-X, 2006); 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).

## COVID 19

We recognise that the current situation regarding Covid 19 can compound the challenges faced by young people and vulnerable adults. The relevant guidelines and structures have been adopted to ensure their safety and creative well-being and to support our staff and professional practitioners. For these reasons and to complement our existing Child Protection policy and our Covid 19 Response Plan, we have included an addendum in CHAPTER 11. CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES DURING COVID 19

## 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 in accordance with current Tusla and HSE government guidelines on Child Protection and Child Protection during Covid 19
- 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.

### **WORKING IN LIVE SETTINGS**

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 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 General Manager.

## **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: Project Leader, General Manager, 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. RECOGNISING ABUSE and RESPONDING**

### **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, i.e., 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 behaviour
- 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 parent's 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 signalled 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.

### **Circumstances which may make children more vulnerable to harm**

As stated in Children First Guidance 2017, "Children may be more vulnerable to abuse than others. Also, there may be particular times or circumstances when a child may be more vulnerable to abuse in their lives".

Whilst not absolute, different factors may play a contributory role in making children more vulnerable to abuse or susceptible to harm, such as:

- Parent/care factors - such as conflictual relationships, domestic violence
- Child factors - such as age, sexuality, mental health difficulties
- Community factors - such as Cultural, ethnic, religious or faith-based norms which may not meet the standards of child welfare or protection required in this jurisdiction
- Environmental factors - such as poverty, housing issues

- Social factors - such as lack of willingness of parent to engage with services, lack of understanding of how parental behaviour might affect their child

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

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 adults, 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.

## **4. REPORTING CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS**

**CoisCéim Dance Theatre does not have a full time Child Protection Officer. The Company's Designated Liaison Person** is: Sarah Latty, General Manager.

Sarah can be contacted at:

CoisCéim Dance Theatre, 42 Fairview Strand, Dublin 3. Tel: 01 878 0558  
Sarah can be contacted at CoisCéim's office above or on mobile: 0851735881.

It is the responsibility of the Designated Liaison Person or Deputy to support and advise staff and ensure all procedures are followed and to liaise with the relevant organisations and individuals where appropriate.

### **MANDATED PERSONS**

The Children First Act 2015 places a legal obligation on certain people, many of whom are professionals, to report child protection concerns at or above a defined threshold to TUSLA - Child and Family Agency. Such people are defined as MANDATED PERSONS, and are " people who have contact with children and/or families and who, because of their qualifications,

training and/or employment role, are in a key position to help protect children from harm” Child First National Guidance 2017. Mandated persons include professionals working with children in recreational, cultural, and educational activities.

According to the Children First Act 2015, MANDATED PERSONS have two main legal obligations. These are:

1. To report the harm of children above a defined threshold to TUSLA – Child & Family Agency
2. To assist TUSLA if requested, in assessing a concern which has been the subject of a mandated report.

### **REASONABLE GROUNDS FOR CONCERN**

Although this list is not definitive, reasonable grounds for concern include:

- Evidence, for example of an injury or behaviour, that is consistent with abuse and is unlikely to have been caused in any other way
- Any concern about possible sexual abuse
- Consistent signs that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect
- A child saying or indicating by other means that he or she has been abused
- Admission or indication by an adult or a child of an alleged abuse they committed
- An account from a person who saw the child being abused

### **PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS**

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 Designated Liaison Person or Deputy.

Tusla should always be informed, when there are reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected. If, what might be symptoms of abuse are ignored, it could result in ongoing harm to the child.

In an emergency – and in the unlikely event of member of staff being unable to contact the Designated Liaison Person or Deputy you must immediately report any urgent concerns directly to the Garda (See section 4 for contact details).

All incidents, disclosure or observations however minor, should be recorded by completing at the earliest opportunity the Child Protection Monitoring Report form, available on request from the Designated Liaison Person.

If you have a suspicion or concern about a child, young person or vulnerable adult behaviour of staff, volunteer or other **never ignore or delay taking action.**

You must inform either:

- Designated Liaison Person
- Project Leader

After full consideration of all factors and information you may:

- Have your concerns allayed
- Ensure a record is kept anyway (by completing an incident report form provided by CoisCéim)
- Take no further action

Or you may decide your concerns are ongoing and work with the Designated Liaison Person to:

- Undertake a mandated report to TUSLA – Child & Family Agency and/or Garda
- Make an assessment in consultation with TUSLA – Child & Family Agency and proceed with a child protection investigation.

In helping to determine the threshold to undertake a mandated report to TUSLA please see the following guidelines: <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/mandated-persons/how-do-i-report-a-concern-about-a-child/>

For further advice about making a report contact can be made with a local social worker in North Inner City Dublin where the company is based:

TUSLA Child and Family Agency  
Wellmount Health Centre,  
Wellmount Park,  
Finglas,  
Dublin 11  
01 8567704

Social workers working in other areas across Ireland can be contacted via:

<https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/mandated-persons/contact-a-social-worker-mandated-persons/>

Tusla has two forms for reporting child protection and welfare concerns – the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form (CPWRF) and the Retrospective Abuse Report Form (RARF). The Child Protection and Welfare Report Form is to be completed and submitted to Tusla for concerns about children under the age of 18. These can be submitted online at: <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/web-portal/>

## **DEALING WITH RETROSPECTIVE DISCLOSURES and ALLEGATIONS**

*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. Child First National Guidelines 2017.*

In the event you have reasonable concern about past abuse or an allegation has been made by a child or vulnerable young person concerning a past incident – and if there is possible continuing risk to a child/vulnerable young person, the same procedures apply as listed above, in line with Child First National Guidelines 2017.

## **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.

**CONTACTS in case of emergency include:**

**TUSLA – CHILD AND FAMILY AGENCY**

The Brunel Building,  
Heuston South Quarter,  
Saint John's Road West,  
Dublin 8.  
D08 X01F  
Phone: 01 7718500  
Email: [info@tusla.ie](mailto:info@tusla.ie)

**AN GARDA SIOCHÁNA LOCAL STATION**

Clontarf Garda Station,  
43, Clontarf Road,  
Clontarf,  
Dublin 3,  
D03 FA46  
01 666 4800

**CHILDREN AT RISK IN IRELAND**

National Helpline: Lo-call 1890 924 567  
Lines are open from Monday to Friday 9:30am to 5:30pm.  
Email: [helpline@cari.ie](mailto:helpline@cari.ie)

**CHILDLINE**

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

**THE SAMARITANS**

Call Freephone: 116 123 (24 hours a day)  
Text: 087 2 60 90 90 (standard text rates apply)  
Email: [jo@samaritans.ie](mailto:jo@samaritans.ie) (RoI)

**STOP IT NOW! (Lucy Faithful Foundation - UK & Ireland)**

Tel: 0808 100 00 900.  
Email: [office@stopitnow.org.uk](mailto:office@stopitnow.org.uk), and for confidential emails: [help@stopitnow.org.uk](mailto:help@stopitnow.org.uk)  
Awareness & prevention of child sexual abuse

**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)

## 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/TUSLA 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.

### EXCLUDING A PERSON FROM WORKING OR VOLUNTEERING WITH COISCÉIM

In line with current Garda Vetting guidance according to we may occasionally exclude a person from working or volunteering with CoisCéim Dance Theatre.

Following clear recruitment procedures as outlined above including Garda Vetting of the applicant, the Designated Liaison Person and key members of staff will assess the Garda Vetting information and decide if the applicant is suitable. As stated in Guidance Garda Vetting - For the Youth Work Sector; NYCI 2016, specific factors for exclusion of employment or volunteering may include – *the nature and seriousness of an offence, nature of a court result and severity of penalty, self-disclosure by the applicant, age of the individual at the time of offence, length of time elapsed since the offence and the recidivism rate. If the vetting applicant disputes the details in the vetting disclosures, the applicant should outline in writing to the Liaison Person in the relevant organisation the exact basis of their dispute. The Liaison Person should submit the Applicant's report to the NVB. Further checks will be carried out by the NVB who will correspond with the Designated Liaison Person.*

For further information on Garda Vetting procedures see:

<http://www.youth.ie/sites/youth.ie/files/NYCI-Garda-Vetting>

## 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, and undertake Children First Tusla e-learning programme. [www.tusla.ie/children-first/children-first-e-learning-programme/](http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/children-first-e-learning-programme/)

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 CoisCéim's Internal Accident/Incident Investigation form)
- Consent forms when applicable (i.e. 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 children, their family and extended family to participate in relevant decision making and feedback processes as well social activities as and 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's 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 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:

- the child, young person, vulnerable adult as the alleged victim
- 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 Liaison Person the CEO should oversee all procedures.

The reporting procedures outlined in Section 3. 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 3.
- guided by CoisCéim's Grievance and Disciplinary Policy and Procedures (available at coisceim.com or from the General Manager) and applicable employment contract through consultation with other professional bodies such as the local Regional Health Authority and An Gardaí Siochana in communication with relevant primary carers (parents, carers or responsible adults).
- follow clarification of the allegation and in close consultation with all parties concerned

## **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 General Manager, Sarah Latty

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

Sarah Latty, General Manager  
CoisCéim Dance Theatre  
42 Fairview Strand, Dublin 3  
Tel: 01 878 0558  
Email: info@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 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 minimize 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 Project Leader or the Designated Liaison Person.

## **11. CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES DURING COVID 19**

With respect to our work with young people/vulnerable adults during the current Covid 19 situation, CoisCéim acknowledges the change that has taken place in the delivery of our activities— with the move from mainly live settings to online/digital environments, and the impact this may have on the care, safety and well-being of young people/vulnerable adults. In

both settings, activities include kinaesthetic and cognitive practice and the creation of digital work. In leveraging new technologies to support new types of learning experiences, this work can be broadly defined according to SCREENAGERS / GUIDANCE FOR DIGITAL YOUTH WORK <https://www.youth.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Screenagers-Guidance.pdf> as follows:

*The term DIGITAL YOUTH WORK is used to describe work that can happen in face-to-face situations, social and group settings as well as in online environments - or in a mixture of these. It is relevant to all youth work pedagogies and can enhance all types of practice. Digital youth work can be used as a tool for youth development, facilitated by a physical space or an online environment. Digital youth work can also be delivered as an activity and serve as the subject matter or content in a youth work setting.*

### **CREATING SAFE WORKING ENVIRONMENTS FOR ALL**

To maintain consistency between our approaches to working in the physical world and the online environment during Covid 19, the following key areas are considered essential.

CoisCéim is committed to ensuring a safe working environment for young people/vulnerable adults and staff, and that all procedures are in place, as identified in this current Child Protection policy and in our Health & Safety policies . In addition, and relevant to our policies surrounding Covid 19 that:

- Covid 19 Response Plan procedures are followed by staff and freelance practitioners at all times
- Covid 19 Response Plan will be regularly updated according to HSE/government guidelines
- Contact details of all young participants are fully updated, and that these are stored appropriately
- Regular checks take place by staff with other national youth, arts, health and community work platforms for guidance, support and information-sharing concerning Covid 19
- HSE Covid-19 information is freely available and displayed clearly in both our digital and live spaces
- CoisCéim staff use technology appropriately to connect young people into wider community needs and programmes during this difficult time

### **DIGITAL YOUTH WORK AND RISK ASSESSMENT**

Stigma and discrimination related to COVID-19 may make children more vulnerable to violence and/or stress. Control measures that do not consider the specific needs and vulnerabilities of young people/vulnerable adults according to gender may increase the level of risk, or children who are already vulnerable due to socioeconomic exclusion are particularly at risk. The online environment also poses risks for young people at this time in a number of ways including lack of appropriate supervision and, as noted by NYCI WEB SAFETY IN YOUTH WORK RESOURCE may include amongst others:

- Offensive comments on videos or message posts
- Publishing images that are designed to hurt or offend a person
- Heightened risk of neglect, threats of harm or abuse

For further information about risks and web safety for young people please refer to: <https://www.youth.ie/programmes/projects-initiatives/web-safety-in-youth-work/supporting-online-youth-work/>

- Allegations of inappropriate online behaviour
- Misunderstandings to arise between practitioner/young people and parents leading to threats or abuse

- Personal physical injury and lack of appropriate assistance

For all settings, a risk assessment is undertaken of each new working situation prior to each activity or event. This is designed to:

- Identify and assess potential problems / risks / hazards
- Outline and adopt appropriate safety strategies
- Put in place a coherent support plan

Example RISK ASSESSMENT includes:

- RISK | Identify any risks i.e. young person accessing inappropriate websites during sessions
- CONTROL MEASURES | Identify control measures in place to combat risks such as agreeing a Code of behaviour with young people or put in place a firewall.
- LIKELYHOOD SCORE | Indicates any potential risks of harm by rating them low / medium / high
- IMPACT SCORE | Indicates the impact of any potential risks of harm by rating them low / medium / high
- RISK OWNER | Name of lead Artist
- FUTURE ACTION REQUIRED | Assess the level of action to be taken i.e. review the Code of behaviour and/or seek advice from other Child Support agencies such as TUSLA.

### **STAFF & WORKING ONLINE / REMOTELY**

In the event that staff or freelance practitioners are working remotely online, either at home or in another other space, the following protocols will be put in place:

- Appropriate guidance will be provided prior to all activities as outlined in Chapter 1. Child Protection Policy and our Health & Safety / Covid 19 policies.
- Sufficient support provided by a member of staff via email and/or mobile during the delivery of creative dance online activities

In addition, TUSLA's *Signs of Safety* procedures can be adopted by the staff and lead practitioners to help identify any potential risks to young people and/or staff in online settings. <https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Covid-19-Additional-Guidance-CPW-no-contacts.pdf>

### **REPORTING PROCEDURES**

For staff and freelance practitioners reporting child protection concerns procedures will follow the same guidelines as outlined in Chapter 4. REPORTING CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS & PROCEDURES. This will include ensuring the relevant phone-based and online support services are easily accessible, and are displayed in the correct digital spaces where appropriate.

### **DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON**

The Designated Liaison Person role & responsibilities are as outlined in Chapter 4. In addition, and relevant to Covid 19, the DLP will be responsible for sharing information from official sources and that this is consistent and appropriate, and will include:

- Coordination of communication to staff concerning Covid-19 guidelines relevant to young people /vulnerable adults involved in CoisCéim activities
- Ensure A) young people/vulnerable adults B) parents/guardians are aware of current Covid 19 HSE/government guidelines specific to CoisCéim youth activities and events and in line with this Child Protection Policy

- Ensure contact details of all young participants are fully updated, and that these are stored appropriately

## **12. CONCLUSION**

CoisCéim endeavours 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.