

Child Protection & Welfare Policy

Child Protection & Welfare Policy Statement

Barnstorm Theatre Company CLG is committed to a child-centred approach to our work with children and young people. We undertake to provide a safe environment and experience, where respect for, and the welfare of, the child/young person are paramount. We will adhere to the “Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children” by having and implementing procedures covering:

- Safe recruitment, training, and management/supervision of staff
- Code of behaviour for staff
- Incidents and accidents
- Complaints
- Reporting of suspected or disclosed abuse
- Confidentiality
- Access, upon request, to information on these procedures to relevant parties
- Allegations of misconduct or abuse by staff

Where we work with children through a host organisation that has the primary contact and relationship with parents/carers, our Child Protection Policy and processes may be mediated through that host organisation.

We may on occasion take photographs and/or video for publicity of Barnstorm’s outreach programmes and/or for record keeping purposes. If any parent, carer, teacher, leader, or participant is uncomfortable with photos and/or video being taken during the workshop or requires more information about this or any aspect of our Child Protection Policy Statement, please speak with the Participation & Education Officer, Jo Hennessy 0567751266 or jo@barnstorm.ie).

The detailed policy is available for inspection at Barnstorm’s offices. This policy will be reviewed on 14/06/2024.



Designated Person _____

Anja Terpstra

(General Manager)

t | 056 7751266 m | 087 6645662

e | anja@barnstorm.ie

Additional Information for Parents, Carers, Teachers, and Leaders

As we are a child centred organisation, we are committed to respecting the child/young person and to putting their interests first.

To that end, we will:

- Operate child centred policies in accordance with best practice
- Listen to, respect, and treat all children and young people equally and as individuals
- Lead by example, providing a positive atmosphere of trust in which to have fun and learn through age-appropriate activities
- Encourage feedback from children/young people on any aspect of the activities or workshops, including the reporting of any bullying, concerns, or worries

It is our policy:

- That all workshops conducted by Barnstorm and involving children or young people will have at least one Garda-vetted adult facilitator present.
- To have at least one facilitator, leader, teacher, or volunteer present in our workshops be aware of and responsible for emergency procedures in respect of fire, accident, or illness, and to comply with all relevant health & safety practices
- To require that each organisation with whom we work have Public Liability Insurance for any space in which we deliver a workshop.

If we have concerns about the welfare of the child/young person, we will:

- Respond to the needs of the child or young person
- Follow internal reporting procedures, which include informing the parents/carers of such concerns, unless doing so puts the child or young person at further risk. Any serious concerns would be reported to a social worker or to the gardai in an emergency.
- In the event of a complaint against a member of staff, we will immediately ensure the safety of the child/young person and inform parents/carers where appropriate

Please be aware that the nature of the work that we do involves physical contact amongst participants such as might occur, for example, during a game of tag. Participants are welcome to sit out of any activity in which they may feel uncomfortable.

Code of behaviour for staff

1: Child centred approach

- Treat all children and young people equally;
- Listen to and respect children and young people;
- Involve children/young people in decision making as appropriate;
- Provide encouragement, support and praise (regardless of ability);
- Use appropriate language (physical and verbal);
- Have fun and encourage a positive atmosphere;
- Offer constructive criticism when needed;
- Treat all children and young people as individuals;
- Respect a child's/young person's personal space;
- Discuss boundaries on behaviour and related sanctions, as appropriate, with children/young people and their primary carers;
- Agree group contract before beginning session, where appropriate;
- Encourage feedback from group;
- Use age-appropriate teaching aids and materials;
- Lead by example;
- Be aware of a child/young person's other commitments when scheduling rehearsals or activities e.g. school or exams;
- Be cognisant of a child's or young person's limitations due to medical condition for example;
- Create an atmosphere of trust;
- Respect differences of ability, culture, religion, race and sexual orientation

2: Good Practice

- Register each child/young person (name, address, phone, special requirements, attendance, emergency contact);
- Make primary carers, children/young people, visitors and facilitators aware of Child Protection Policy and Procedures;
- Have emergency procedures in place and make all staff aware of these procedures;
- Be inclusive of children and young people with special needs;
- Plan and be sufficiently prepared both mentally and physically;
- Report any concerns to designated person and follow reporting procedures;
- Encourage children and young people to report any bullying, concerns and worries and be aware of anti-bullying policy;
- Observe appropriate dress and behaviour;

- Evaluate work practices on a regular basis;
- Provide appropriate training for staff and volunteers;
- Report and record any incidents and accidents;
- Update and review policies and procedures regularly;
- Keep primary carers informed of any issues that concern their children;
- Ensure proper supervision including adequate ratios depending on age, abilities and activities involved and appropriate gender balance for residential;
- Ensure clear communication between artist and organisations. Have guidelines and a prompt sheet for artist;
- Have a written agreement with any external organisation that an artist is working with;
- Don't be passive in relation to concerns, i.e. don't 'do nothing';
- Don't let a problem get out of control;
- Avoid taking a session on your own. If this is not possible then it should be in an open environment with the full knowledge and consent of primary carers;
- Avoid if at all possible giving a lift to a child/young person and in the event that you do then make sure that the primary carers are informed;
- Maintain awareness around language and comments made. If you think that something you said may have caused offence or upset, then try to address it in a sensitive manner.

3: Inappropriate behaviour

- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with children/young people;
- Don't use or allow offensive or sexually suggestive physical and/or verbal language;¹
- Don't single out a particular child/young person for unfair favoritism, criticism, ridicule, or unwelcome focus of attention;
- Don't allow/engage in inappropriate touching of any form;
- Don't hit or physically chastise children/young people;
- Don't socialise inappropriately with children/young people, e.g. outside of structured organisational activities.

4: Physical Contact

- Seek consent of child/young person in relation to physical contact (except in an emergency or a dangerous situation);
- Avoid horseplay or inappropriate touch;

¹ however, work emanating from the artistic process and work of artistic content will not be censored in this way

- Check with children/young people about their level of comfort when doing touch exercises.

5: Health and Safety

- Don't leave children unattended or unsupervised;
- Manage any dangerous materials;
- Provide a safe environment;
- Be aware of accident procedure and follow accordingly.

Definition and Recognition of Child Abuse

Types of child abuse

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time.

In the Children First: National Guidance, 'a child' means a person under the age of 18 years, excluding a person who is or has been married.

Definition of 'neglect'

Neglect can be defined in terms of an omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, and/or medical care. Harm can be defined as the ill-treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child. Whether it is significant is determined by the child's health and development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a child of similar age.

Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point. For example, a child who suffers a series of minor injuries may not be having his or her needs met in terms of necessary supervision and safety. A child whose height or weight is significantly below average may be being deprived of adequate nutrition. A child who consistently misses school may be being deprived of intellectual stimulation.

The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that his or her well-being and/or development are severely affected.

Definition of 'emotional abuse'

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a parent/carer and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's developmental need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms. Examples may include:

- the imposition of negative attributes on a child, expressed by persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming;
- conditional parenting in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on his or her behaviours or actions;
- emotional unavailability of the child's parent/carer;
- unresponsiveness of the parent/carer and/or inconsistent or inappropriate expectations of the child;
- premature imposition of responsibility on the child;
- unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of the child's capacity to understand something or to behave and control himself or herself in a certain way;
- under- or over-protection of the child;
- failure to show interest in, or provide age-appropriate opportunities for, the child's cognitive and emotional development;
- use of unreasonable or over-harsh disciplinary measures;
- exposure to domestic violence;
- exposure to inappropriate or abusive material through new technology.

Emotional abuse can be manifested in terms of the child's behavioural, cognitive, affective or physical functioning. Examples of these include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, and oppositional behaviour. The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/carer.

Definition of 'physical abuse'

Physical abuse of a child is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction, or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents. Physical abuse can involve:

- severe physical punishment;
- beating, slapping, hitting or kicking;
- pushing, shaking or throwing;
- pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling;
- terrorising with threats;

- observing violence;
- use of excessive force in handling;
- deliberate poisoning;
- suffocation;
- fabricated/induced illness;
- allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child.

Definition of 'sexual abuse'

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others. Examples of child sexual abuse include:

- exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of the child;
- intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification;
- masturbation in the presence of the child or the involvement of the child in an act of masturbation;
- sexual intercourse with the child, whether oral, vaginal or anal;
- sexual exploitation of a child, which includes inciting, encouraging, propositioning, requiring or permitting a child to solicit for, or to engage in, prostitution or other sexual acts. Sexual exploitation also occurs when a child is involved in the exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, video tape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of the image by computer or other means. It may also include showing sexually explicit material to children, which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse;
- consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person. In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that, for the purposes of the criminal law, the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years for both boys and girls. An Garda Síochána will deal with the criminal aspects of the case under the relevant legislation.

It should be noted that the definition of child sexual abuse presented in this section is not a legal definition and is not intended to be a description of the criminal offence of sexual assault.

Recognising child neglect or abuse

Child neglect or abuse can often be difficult to identify and may present in many forms. No one indicator should be seen as conclusive in itself of abuse. It may indicate conditions other than child abuse. All signs and symptoms must be examined in the context of the child's situation and family circumstances.

Guidelines for recognition

The ability to recognise child abuse can depend as much on a person's willingness to accept the possibility of its existence as it does on their knowledge and information. There are commonly three stages in the identification of child neglect or abuse:

- considering the possibility;
- looking out for signs of neglect or abuse;
- recording of information.

Stage 1: Considering the possibility

The possibility of child abuse should be considered if a child appears to have suffered a suspicious injury for which no reasonable explanation can be offered. It should also be considered if the child seems distressed without obvious reason or displays persistent or new behavioural problems. The possibility of child abuse should also be considered if the child displays unusual or fearful responses to parents/carers or older children. A pattern of ongoing neglect should also be considered even when there are short periods of improvement.

Stage 2: Looking out for signs of neglect or abuse

Signs of neglect or abuse can be physical, behavioural or developmental. They can exist in the relationships between children and parents/carers or between children and other family members/other persons. A cluster or pattern of signs is more likely to be indicative of neglect or abuse. Children who are being abused may hint that they are being harmed and sometimes make direct disclosures. Disclosures should always be taken very seriously and should be acted upon, for example, by informing the Child and Family Agency (Tusla). The child should not be interviewed in detail about the alleged abuse without first consulting with the Child and Family Agency. This may be more appropriately carried out by a social worker or An Garda Síochána. Less obvious signs could be gently explored with the child, without direct questioning. Play situations, such as drawing or story-telling, may reveal information.

Some signs are more indicative of abuse than others. These include:

- disclosure of abuse by a child or young person;
- age-inappropriate or abnormal sexual play or knowledge;
- specific injuries or patterns of injuries;
- absconding from home or a care situation;
- attempted suicide;
- underage pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease;
- signs in one or more categories at the same time. For example, signs of developmental delay, physical injury and behavioural signs may together indicate a pattern of abuse.

Many signs of abuse are non-specific and must be considered in the child's social and family context. It is important to be open to alternative explanations for physical or behavioural signs of abuse.

Stage 3: Recording of information

If neglect or abuse is suspected and acted upon, for example, by informing the Child and Family Agency, it is important to establish the grounds for concern by obtaining as much information as possible. Observations should be accurately recorded and should include dates, times, names, locations, context and any other information that may be relevant. Care should be taken as to how such information is stored and to whom it is made available.

Reporting Procedures

Anja Terpstra has been designated as the relevant person to contact if you have an issue or concern about any aspect of a child's or young person's safety or welfare. It is her responsibility to support and advise staff about policy and procedures in relation to child protection and to ensure that procedures are followed. It is also the responsibility of the designated person to liaise with the Child and Family Agency or Gardaí where appropriate.

Anja Terpstra can be contacted at: Barnstorm Theatre Company
3, John's Quay, Kilkenny 056-7751266 0876645662 anja@barnstorm.ie

Jo Hennessy has been designated as deputy to Anja Terpstra and can be contacted at:
3, John's Quay, Kilkenny 056-7751266 jo@barnstorm.ie

Reasonable grounds for concern

- specific indication from the child or young person that s/he has been abused
- an account by a person who saw the child/young person being abused
- evidence, such as an injury or behaviour, which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way
- an injury or behaviour which is consistent both with 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
- consistent indication, over a period of time, that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect

Dealing with a disclosure

- Stay calm and listen to the child/young person, allow them enough time to say what he/she needs to say
- Don't use leading questions or prompt details
- 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)

Direction to staff on reporting procedures

- Record the concern, including the date, time of and people involved in the concern/disclosure and the facts in the incident book. Information recorded should be factual. Any opinions recorded should be supported by facts.
- Inform the designated person or if unavailable their deputy
- The most appropriate person should discuss the concern/consult with parents/carers where necessary. Parents/carers should be told of a report to the Child and Family Agency unless it is likely to put the child/young person at further risk
- The Designated Person may contact the Child and Family Agency for an informal consultation prior to making a report
- Information will be shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis.
- If there are reasonable grounds for concern as outlined above, the designated person will contact the duty social worker at the Child and Family Agency using the standard reporting form (See Appendix 1). Reports to the duty social worker can be made verbally initially and then followed by the standard reporting form. Reports will be made to the Child and Family Agency without delay.
- If the designated person/deputy is not available then contact the local Social Worker at the Child and Family Agency directly.
- In emergencies which are out of the Child and Family Agency hours then contact the Gardaí. There may be extreme situations which threaten the immediate safety of a child/young person where it may be necessary to contact the Gardaí.
- Similar reporting procedures should be employed in the case of retrospective disclosures.

See Tusla – Child & Family Agency Standard Reporting Form Appendix 1

Where Appropriate Contact:

Report _____ Child & Family Agency, Western Road, Clonmel, 052-6177302
Duty Social Worker 052-6177302

Advice _____ Duty Social Worker (see above)

Emergency _____ Sergeant Kilkeny Gardai, Dominic Street, Kilkenny, 056-7775000

Key Legislation.

Resource links:

- [Children First Act 2015](#)
- [Children First National Guidance for Child Protection and Welfare 2017](#)
- [National Vetting Bureau \(Children and Vulnerable Persons\) Acts 2012 to 2016.](#)

Confidentially

An incident book will be maintained and held at the office of the General Manager under the control and supervision of the designated person. Staff working with children or young people should record suspicions, concerns, worrying observations, behavioural changes, actions and outcomes. The information contained in such records will be treated subject to the terms of the following confidentiality policy.

Confidentially Statement

We in Barnstorm Theatre Company are committed to ensuring peoples' rights to confidentiality. However, in relation to child protection and welfare we undertake that:

- Information will only be passed on, 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 or 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;
- Parents/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 Child and Family Agency, 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/videos will not be used at public performances);

- Procedures will be put in place around the use of images of children/young people;
- Procedures will be put in place for the recording and storing of information in line with our confidentiality policy.

Recruiting and Selecting Staff.

Recruitment Policy Statement.

We will ensure that our staff and volunteers are carefully selected, trained and supervised to provide a safe artistic environment for all children and young people, by observing the following principles:

- Roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined for every job (paid or voluntary);
- Posts will be advertised widely;
- We will endeavour to select the most suitably qualified personnel;
- Candidates will be required to complete an application form;
- Candidates will be asked to sign a declaration form;
- At least two written references which are recent, relevant, independent and verbally confirmed will be necessary;
- Staff and volunteers will be selected by a panel of at least two (or more) representatives;
- No person who would be deemed to constitute a 'risk' will be employed;
- Some of the exclusions would include:
 - any child related convictions;
 - refusal to sign application form and declaration form;
 - insufficient documentary evidence of identification;
 - concealing information on one's suitability to working with children;
- There will be a three-month probationary period;
- All staff and volunteers will be required to consent to Garda clearance/vetting, where available, this will be sought.

Managing and Supervising Staff

Staff management policy statement

To protect both staff/volunteers and children/young people we undertake that:

New staff will:

- Take part in an induction training session where appropriate;
- Be made aware of the organisation'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 probation or trial 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 appropriate.

Involvement of Primary Carers

We are committed to being open with all primary carers.

We undertake to:

- Make primary carers aware of our child protection policy;
- Inform parents/carers and schools of all activities and potential activities;
- Issue contact/consent forms where relevant;
- Comply with health and safety practices;
- Operate child-centred policies in accordance with best practice;
- Adhere to our recruitment guidelines;
- Ensure as far as possible, that the activities are age appropriate;
- Encourage and facilitate the involvement of parent(s), carer(s) or responsible adult(s), where appropriate;

If we have concerns about the welfare of the child/young person we will:

- Respond to the needs of the child or young person;
- Inform the primary carers on an ongoing basis unless this action puts the child or young person at further risk;

- Where there are child protection and welfare concerns we are obliged to pass these on to the Duty Social Worker and, in an emergency, the Gardaí;
- In the event of a complaint against a member of staff we will immediately ensure the safety of the child/young person and inform primary carers as appropriate.

As a child centred organisation, we are committed to putting the interest of the child/young person first. To that end we will:

- Contact local Tusla/Gardaí where there is a child protection welfare concern;
- Encourage primary carers to work in partnership with us under the guidelines set out by our organisation to ensure the safety of their children;
- Have a designated contact person who is available for consultation with primary carers in the case of any concern over a child's or young person's welfare.
- Staff members should take cognisance of responsibility for first aid on away trips.

Dealing with allegation against staff.

Two separate procedures will be followed:

- A) Anja Terpstra (designated person) will deal with issues relating to the child/young person;
- B) Philip Hardy (Artistic Director) will deal with issues relating to the staff member against whom the allegation has been made.

- 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, as outlined above, should be followed. Both the primary carers and 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
 1. Of the nature of the allegation;
 2. The staff member should be given the opportunity to respond.
- 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 the Child and Family Agency and Gardaí;
- After consultation, chairperson/head of organisation will advise person accused and agreed procedures will be followed.

Agreed Procedures

It is the practice of Barnstorm that leaders/facilitators do not generally take workshops with children or young people on their own. In the event of an allegation made against a leader/ facilitator/ staff member, the person accused will not be allowed to work unsupervised with children/young people in any context while the allegation is being investigated. If an allegation of abuse is substantiated against the accused person this will be considered grounds for dismissal as per contract of employment. If a serious allegation can not be substantiated but cannot either be refuted the person accused will remain working but always under supervision.

Complaints and comments procedure

In the event of complaints or comments:

- Complaints/comments will be responded to within three weeks;
- Anja Terpstra has responsibility for directing complaints/comments to the appropriate person;
- Verbal complaints will be logged and responded to.

Accident Procedures

- Barnstorm staff must maintain an up-to-date register of the contact details of all children/young people involved in the organisation, and should obtain such details in relation to any residential or extended series of events;
- Children/young people's details should be cross-referenced between the incident book and file;
- External organisations with whom we are dealing must provide proof that they have public liability insurance;
- First aid boxes are available, and regularly restocked;
- First aid boxes are located in the administration office and, when appropriate, in the workshop space;
- Accident/incident books are stored in the office of the General Manager;
- Details of risk assessment in relation to equipment and fittings are available in the Barnstorm Safety Statement, which should be brought to the attention of all.

Appendix 1

Tusla Standard Reporting Form

STANDARD REPORT FORM

(For reporting CP&W Concerns)

A. To Principal Social Worker/Designate: _____

1. Date of Report

2. Details of Child

Name:		Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Address:		DOB			Age	
		School				
Alias		Correspondence address (if different)				
Telephone		Telephone				

3. Details of Persons Reporting Concern(s)

Name:		Telephone No.	
Address:		Occupation	
		Relationship to client	
Reporter wishes to remain anonymous		<input type="checkbox"/>	Reporter discussed with parents/guardians
			<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Parents Aware of Report

No

Yes

Are the child's parents/carers aware that this concern is being reported	- Mother	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	- Father	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comment	<input type="text"/>		

5. Details of Report

(Details of concern(s), allegation(s) or incident(s) dates, times, who was present, description of any observed injuries, parent's view(s), child's view(s) if known.)

STANDARD REPORT FORM

(For reporting CP&W Concerns)

6. Relationships

Details of Mother		Details of Father	
Name:		Name:	
Address: (if different to child)		Address: (if different to child)	
Telephone No's:		Telephone No's:	

7. Household composition

Name	Relationship	DOB	Additional Information e.g. School/ Occupation/Other:

8. Name and Address of other personnel or agencies involved with this child

	Name	Address
Social Worker		
PHN		
GP		
Hospital		
School		
Gardaí		
Pre-School/Crèche/YG		
Other (specify):		

9. Details of person(s) allegedly causing concern in relation to the child

Relationship to child:		Age		Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name:			Occupation				
Address:							

10. Details of person completing form

Name:		Occupation:	
Address:		Telephone No's:	
Signed		Date:	