CIVIC THEATRE, TALLAGHT

CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Updated: September 2019
Review date: September 2020

Child Safeguarding Policy

It is the policy of The Civic to make sure that Children and Young People are protected and kept safe from harm and abuse (definitions below) while they are with staff/volunteers and outside facilitators/groups in our theatre. In line with the Children First Act 2015 and our statutory obligation to providing a safe environment with regards the services we deliver to children.

We do this by:

- Being child centered.
- Showing respect and understanding for children's rights, safety and welfare.
- Giving parents, children and workers information about what we do.
- Making sure that our staff, facilitators and volunteers are carefully selected, trained and supervised.
- Letting parents and children know how to voice their concerns or complain if there is anything they are not happy about.

***"harm"* means, in relation to a child —**

(a) assault, ill-treatment or neglect of the child in a manner that seriously affects or is likely to seriously affect the child's health, development or welfare, or
(b) sexual abuse of the child, -- Children First Act (page 6)

Legal Definition of a Child in Ireland

Under the Child Care Act 1991 a child is defined as "a person under the age of 18 years, excluding a person who is or has been married".

Definitions of Abuse: Neglect, Emotional, Physical and Sexual

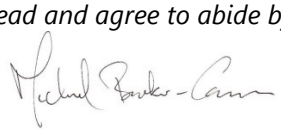
Neglect: An omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, medical care.
Emotional: When a child's need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a caregiver and a child.
Physical: A form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child.
Sexual: When a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others.

In accordance with this policy, the staff of The Civic have implemented and will continue to implement the guidelines contained therein, and will ensure that external persons contracted by us to work with children and young people in our theatre abide by the policy guidelines hereunder including:

- code of behaviour for staff and all adults working with children and young people;
- code of behaviour for children and young people;
- reporting procedures in cases of suspected or disclosed abuse;
- confidentiality policy;
- involvement of primary carers;
- recruitment procedures;
- managing and supervising successful applicants and staff;
- staff allegations procedure;
- complaints procedure;
- accidents procedure.

The Mandated and Designated person for child protection is the artistic director; the deputy designed person is the general manager. This policy will be reviewed in September 2019 and in that month annually.

I have read and agree to abide by The Civic Child safeguarding Statement.

Signed:  Dated: 03/09/2019

Artistic Director of The Civic

Code of Behaviour - Adults

For staff/volunteers, contracted facilitators and outside group leaders working with children and young people in The Civic

- All adults working with children and young people under the auspices of The Civic must have read, understood and signed a copy of The Civic Child Safeguarding Policy.
- Be child centered: create an environment in which children are listened to, valued, encouraged and affirmed, have their rights respected and are treated as individuals.
- Involve children in decision-making, as appropriate.
- Always seek the child's permission before engaging in work that requires touch. Be open and governed by the age and developmental stage of the child.
- Adopt the safest possible practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children and protect yourself from the risk of accusations of abuse or neglect.
- All accidents must be recorded in the Incident Book.
- All concerns, disclosures and complaints must be recorded in the Incident Book and a confidently report given to the designated person immediately.
- Be open with parents in consulting with them about everything that concerns their children.
- Don't spend excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others.
- Don't take children alone in a car journey, however short, or alone to your home.
- Never engage in sexually provocative games, allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form.
- Never make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child.
- Never tell jokes of a sexual nature in the presence of children.
- Never do things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves.
- Never let allegations made by a child go unchallenged or unrecorded.

Signed: _____ Dated: _____

Please tick: Staff ☐ Volunteer ☐ Outside group leader/facilitator ☐ Parent ☐

Witnessed by: _____ Dated: _____
(The Civic Management)

Code of Behaviour - Children and Young People

For children and young people attending workshops and events in The Civic

- Staff/volunteers, facilitators and visitors are treated with dignity and respect.
- The Civic property both inside and out is treated with respect. Any damage to property will be brought to the attention of a member of staff or adult.
- Children will value, encourage and respect the rights of other children taking part in activities.
- Everyone will respect the personal space, safety and privacy of individuals.
- Any threatening, violent or degrading behaviour towards other children or adults will be reported to the designated person and parents. Children will be put on a probation period. If behaviour continues and the child has been warned three times they will be asked to leave the activities and parents informed.
- All participants will be sensitive to the fact that some children are more vulnerable and have special needs.
- Report cases of bullying to either the designated person, facilitator or a staff member of their choice.
- Avoid prejudice and encourage respect for difference in relation to religion, race, class, gender or ability.
- Avoid using inappropriate language and swear words.
- Respect another child's body as their own property.
- Help other children to be safe, happy, learn and have as much fun as possible.

I have read and agree with the above, and have discussed this document with my child who is attending activities at The Civic with my permission.

Signed by parent/guarding: _____ Dated: _____

Signed by young person: _____ Dated: _____

Witnessed by: _____ Dated: _____
(The Civic Management)

REPORTING PROCEDURE

Any person **who suspects that a child is being abused, or is at risk of abuse, has a responsibility to report their concerns to Tusla – The Child and Family Agency.**

The Mandated and Designated Person for Child Protection at The Civic is **Michael Barker-Caven.**

The Deputy Designated Person is **Niamh Ferry.**

Contact at: 01 4627477 or 086 1700 734 Michael.

The Civic's Designated Person for Child Protection (DP), and the Deputy (DDP), are to be contacted should you have an issue or concern about any aspect of a child's or young person's safety and welfare while at The Civic or participating in any activities governed by The Civic.

It is the responsibility of the DP and DDP to support and advise all our staff and contracted facilitators about our policy in regard to child protection.

It is the DP and DDP's responsibility to ensure that procedures are followed as outlined in The Civic Child Safeguarding Policy document and Child Safeguarding Statement.

It is the DP and DDP's responsibility to liaise with Tusla – The Child and Family Agency and/or An Garda Siochana where appropriate.

Any reasonable grounds for concern should be immediately reported to the Mandated/Designated Person or Deputy Designated Person; it is their role to contact Tusla – The Child and Family Agency or An Garda Siochana.

REASONABLE GROUNDS FOR CONCERN include:

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

REPORTING PROCEDURE: The initial response to a disclosure is crucial.
It is important to be aware of your own emotional reaction.
Hearing a disclosure is likely to be distressing.

TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE AND HOW THEY MAY BE RECOGNISED

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. Abuse and neglect can occur within the family, in the community or in an institutional setting. The abuser may be someone known to the child or a stranger, and can be an adult or another child. In a situation where abuse is alleged to have been carried out by another child, you should consider it a child welfare and protection issue for both children and you should follow child protection procedures for both the victim and the alleged abuser.

The important factor in deciding whether the behaviour is abuse or neglect is the impact of that behaviour on the child rather than the intention of the parent/carer.

The definitions of neglect and abuse presented in this section are not legal definitions. They are intended to describe ways in which a child might experience abuse and how this abuse may be recognised.

Neglect

Child neglect is the most frequently reported category of abuse, both in Ireland and internationally. Ongoing chronic neglect is recognised as being extremely harmful to the development and well-being of the child and may have serious long-term negative consequences.

Neglect occurs when a child does not receive adequate care or supervision to the extent that the child is harmed physically or developmentally. It is generally defined in terms of an omission of care, where a child's health, development or welfare is impaired by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, medical care, intellectual stimulation or supervision and safety. Emotional neglect may also lead to the child having attachment difficulties. The extent of the damage to the child's health, development or welfare is influenced by a range of factors. These factors include the extent, if any, of positive influence in the child's life as well as the age of the child and the frequency and consistency of neglect.

Neglect is associated with poverty but not necessarily caused by it. It is strongly linked to parental substance misuse, domestic violence, and parental mental illness and disability.

A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when neglect becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer. This may become apparent where you see the child over a period of time, or the effects of neglect may be obvious based on having seen the child once.

The following are features of child neglect:

- Children being left alone without adequate care and supervision
- Malnourishment, lacking food, unsuitable food or erratic feeding
- Non-organic failure to thrive, i.e. a child not gaining weight due not only to malnutrition but also emotional deprivation
- Failure to provide adequate care for the child's medical and developmental needs, including intellectual stimulation Inadequate living conditions – unhygienic conditions, environmental

- issues, including lack of adequate heating and furniture
- Lack of adequate clothing Inattention to basic hygiene
- Lack of protection and exposure to danger, including moral danger, or lack of supervision appropriate to the child's age
- Persistent failure to attend school
- Abandonment or desertion

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the systematic emotional or psychological ill-treatment of a child as part of the overall relationship between a caregiver and a child. Once-off and occasional difficulties between a parent/carer and child are not considered emotional abuse. Abuse occurs when a child's basic need for attention, affection, approval, consistency and security are not met, due to incapacity or indifference from their parent or caregiver. Emotional abuse can also occur when adults responsible for taking care of children are unaware of and unable (for a range of reasons) to meet their children's emotional and developmental needs. Emotional abuse is not easy to recognise because the effects are not easily seen.

A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when the behaviour becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer.

Emotional abuse may be seen in some of the following ways:

- Rejection Lack of comfort and love
- Lack of attachment Lack of proper stimulation (e.g. fun and play)
- Lack of continuity of care (e.g. frequent moves, particularly unplanned)
- Continuous lack of praise and encouragement
- Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming of the child
- Bullying
- Conditional parenting in which care or affection of a child depends on his or her behaviours or actions
- Extreme overprotectiveness
- Inappropriate non-physical punishment (e.g. locking child in bedroom)
- Ongoing family conflicts and family violence
- Seriously inappropriate expectations of a child relative to his/her age and stage of development

There may be no physical signs of emotional abuse unless it occurs with another type of abuse. A child may show signs of emotional abuse through their actions or emotions in several ways. These include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, risk taking and aggressive behaviour.

It should be noted that no one indicator is conclusive evidence of emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is more likely to impact negatively on a child where it is persistent over time and where there is a lack of other protective factors.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse is when someone deliberately hurts a child physically or puts them at risk of being physically hurt. It may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents. A reasonable concern exists where the child's health and/ or development is, may be, or has been damaged as a result of suspected physical abuse.

Physical abuse can include the following:

- Physical punishment
- Beating, slapping, hitting or kicking
- Pushing, shaking or throwing
- Pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling
- Use of excessive force in handling
- Deliberate poisoning
- Suffocation
- Fabricated/induced illness
- Female genital mutilation

The Children First Act 2015 includes a provision that abolishes the common law defence of reasonable chastisement in court proceedings. This defence could previously be invoked by a parent or other person in authority who physically disciplined a child. The change in the legislation now means that in prosecutions relating to assault or physical cruelty, a person who administers such punishment to a child cannot rely on the defence of reasonable chastisement in the legal proceedings. The result of this is that the protections in law relating to assault now apply to a child in the same way as they do to an adult.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or arousal, or for that of others. It includes the child being involved in sexual acts (masturbation, fondling, oral or penetrative sex) or exposing the child to sexual activity directly or through pornography.

Child sexual abuse may cover a wide spectrum of abusive activities. It rarely involves just a single incident and in some instances occurs over a number of years. Child sexual abuse most commonly happens within the family, including older siblings and extended family members.

Cases of sexual abuse mainly come to light through disclosure by the child or his or her siblings/friends, from the suspicions of an adult, and/or by physical symptoms.

Examples of child sexual abuse include the following:

- Any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child
- An invitation to sexual touching or intentional touching or molesting of a child's body whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification
- Masturbation in the presence of a child or the involvement of a child in an act of masturbation
- Sexual intercourse with a child, whether oral, vaginal or anal
- Sexual exploitation of a child, which includes:
    - Inviting, inducing or coercing a child to engage in prostitution or the production of child pornography [for example, exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, videotape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of an image by computer or other means]
    - Inviting, coercing or inducing a child to participate in, or to observe, any sexual, indecent or obscene act
    - Showing sexually explicit material to children, which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse

- Exposing a child to inappropriate or abusive material through information and communication technology
- Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person

It should be remembered that sexual activity involving a young person may be sexual abuse even if the young person concerned does not themselves recognise it as abusive.

An Garda Síochána will deal with any criminal aspects of a sexual abuse case under the relevant criminal justice legislation. The prosecution of a sexual offence against a child will be considered within the wider objective of child welfare and protection. The safety of the child is paramount and at no stage should a child's safety be compromised because of concern for the integrity of a criminal investigation.

In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that in criminal law the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years for both boys and girls. Any sexual relationship where one or both parties are under the age of 17 is illegal. However, it may not necessarily be regarded as child sexual abuse.

Circumstances which may make children more vulnerable to harm

If you are dealing with children, you need to be alert to the possibility that a welfare or protection concern may arise in relation to children you come in contact with. A child needs to have someone they can trust in order to feel able to disclose abuse they may be experiencing. They need to know that they will be believed and will get the help they need. Without these things, they may be vulnerable to continuing abuse.

Some 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. In particular, children with disabilities, children with communication difficulties, children in care or living away from home, or children with a parent or parents with problems in their own lives may be more susceptible to harm.

The following list is intended to help you identify the range of issues in a child's life that may place them at greater risk of abuse or neglect. It is important for you to remember that the presence of any of these factors does not necessarily mean that a child in those circumstances or settings is being abused.

Parent or carer factors:

- Drug and alcohol misuse
- Addiction, including gambling
- Mental health issues
- Parental disability issues, including learning or intellectual disability
- Conflictual relationships
- Domestic violence
- Adolescent parents

Child factors:

- Age
- Gender
- Sexuality
- Disability

- Mental health issues, including self-harm and suicide
- Communication difficulties
- Trafficked/Exploited
- Previous abuse
- Young carer

Community factors:

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

Environmental factors:

- Housing issues
- Children who are out of home and not living with their parents, whether temporarily or permanently
- Poverty/Begging
- Bullying
- Internet and social media-related concerns

Poor motivation or willingness of parents/guardians to engage:

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

You should consider these factors as part of being alert to the possibility that a child may be at risk of suffering abuse and in bringing reasonable concerns to the attention of Tusla.

BULLYING

It is recognised that bullying affects the lives of an increasing number of children and can be the cause of genuine concerns about a child's welfare.

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression – whether it is verbal, psychological or physical – that is conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating, and occurs mainly among children in social environments such as schools. It includes behaviours such as physical aggression, cyberbullying, damage to property, intimidation, isolation/exclusion, name calling, malicious gossip and extortion. Bullying can also take the form of abuse based on gender identity, sexual preference, race, ethnicity and religious factors. With developments in modern technology, children can also be the victims of non-contact bullying, via mobile phones, the internet and other personal devices.

While bullying can happen to any child, some may be more vulnerable. These include: children with disabilities or special educational needs; those from ethnic minority and migrant groups; from the

Traveller community; lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) children and those perceived to be LGBT; and children of minority religious faiths.

There can be an increased vulnerability to bullying among children with special educational needs. This is particularly so among those who do not understand social cues and/or have difficulty communicating. Some children with complex needs may lack understanding of social situations and therefore trust everyone implicitly. Such children may be more vulnerable because they do not have the same social skills or capacity as others to recognise and defend themselves against bullying behaviour.

Bullying in schools is a particular problem due to the fact that children spend a significant portion of their time there and are in large social groups. In the first instance, the school authorities are responsible for dealing with such bullying. School management boards must have a code of behaviour and an ant bullying policy in place. If you are a staff member of a school, you should also be aware of your school's anti-bullying policy and of the relevant guidelines on how it is handled.

In cases of serious instances of bullying where the behaviour is regarded as possibly abusive, you may need to make a referral to Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána.

Definition of Mandated Persons

Mandated persons 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. Mandated persons include professionals working with children in the education, health, justice, youth and childcare sectors.

The Legal Obligations of Mandated Persons

Mandated persons have two main legal obligations under the Children First Act 2015. These are:
1. To report the harm of children above a defined threshold to Tusla;
2. To assist Tusla, if requested, in assessing a concern which has been the subject of a mandated report.

Section 14(1) of the Children First Act 2015 states:

'…where a mandated person knows, believes or has reasonable grounds to suspect, on the basis of information that he or she has received, acquired or becomes aware of in the course of his or her employment or profession as such a mandated person, that a child–
(a) has been harmed,
(b) is being harmed, or
(c) is at risk of being harmed, he or she shall, as soon as practicable, report that knowledge, belief or suspicion, as the case may be, to the Agency.'

Section 14(2) of the Children First Act 2015 also places obligations on mandated persons to report any disclosures made by a child:

'Where a child believes that he or she–
(a) has been harmed,
(b) is being harmed, or
(c) is at risk of being harmed, and discloses this belief to a mandated person in the course of a mandated person's employment or profession as such a person, the mandated person shall, … as soon as practicable, report that disclosure to the Agency.'

Section 2 of the Children First Act 2015 defines harm as follows:

'harm means in relation to a child–
(a) assault, ill-treatment or neglect of the child in a manner that seriously affects, or is likely to seriously affect the child's health, development or welfare, or,
(b) sexual abuse of the child.'

The Mandated and Designated Person for Child Protection at The Civic is **Michael Barker-Caven.**

The Deputy Designated Person is **Niamh Ferry.**

Contact at: 01 4627477 or 086 1700 734 Michael.

Dealing with Disclosure:

THE ONE THING YOU MUST NOT DO IS NOTHING.

- React calmly
- Listen carefully and attentively
- Take the child seriously
- Reassure the child that they have taken the right action in talking to you
- Do not promise to keep anything secret

- Explain the difference between keeping something a secret and keeping something confidential. Giving information to others for the protection of a child does not constitute a breach of confidentiality. The requirement to report to the designated person, and through them to the authorities, must be explained in a supportive manner to the child.
- Ask questions for clarification only. Do not ask leading questions
- Check back with the child that what you have heard is correct and understood
- Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser
- Ensure that the child understands the procedures that will follow
- Make a written record of the conversation as soon as possible, in as much detail as possible
- Treat the information confidentially, subject to the requirements of this policy and legislation.
- Don't start to investigate - that is only the role of Tusla and An Garth Siochana. You have a supportive not investigative role. Judgment about abuse must be left to the professionals.
- Need to know basis - any information provided to Tusla and An Garda Siochana will remain confidential. The official policy is that those receiving such information will only disclose it where the welfare of the child requires it and then only to those with a legitimate "need to know basis".

Mandated persons who work with adults

If you are a professional who works with or treats persons with mental health difficulties, intellectual disability, addiction or domestic violence issues, or if you work in the probation services, you must consider the welfare and safety of any children in that person's family and/or children in regular contact with the person. You may find yourself working with people whose health and behaviour has harmed or may harm a child. If there are concerns which meet or exceed the thresholds outlined above, then you must report them to Tusla under the Children First Act 2015. You should also refer reasonable concerns below that threshold to Tusla under this Guidance.

Dealing with a retrospective allegation

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

The National Counselling Service is in place to listen to, value and understand those who have been abused in childhood. The service is a professional, confidential counselling and psychotherapy service and is available free of charge in all regions of the country (see http://www.hse.ie/eng/

services/list/4/Mental_Health_Services/National_Counselling_Service/). The service can be accessed either through healthcare professionals or by way of self-referral.

How to Report Your Concerns or a Disclosure:

To help Tusla staff assess your reasonable concern they need as much information as possible about the child and his/her home circumstances and the grounds for concern. A confidential report should be given to the DP/DDP and could include:

- The child's name, address and age
- Names and addresses of parents or guardians
- Names, if known, of who is allegedly harming the child or not caring for them appropriately
- A detailed account of your grounds for concern (e.g. details of the allegation, dates of incidents, and descriptions of injuries)
- Names of other children in the household
- Name of school the child attends
- Your name, contact details and relationship to the child

While it is possible to report a concern without giving your name, it may make it difficult for Tusla to access your concern. If you are a mandated person you cannot submit a report anonymously.

The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998, provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report abuse 'reasonably and in good faith to Tusla or An Garda Siochana'. This means that, even if the reported suspicion of child abuse proves unfounded, a plaintiff who took an action would have to prove that the reporter had not acted reasonably and in good faith in making the report.

Who to report to at The Civic

- Inform the Mandated/designated person (DP – Michael Barker-Caven) of all details including the date, time and people involved and the facts. Ensure that details recorded are as you have outlined them to the DP. Any opinions should be supported by facts.
- The Mandated/DP will discuss the concerns with primary careers of the child or young person involved. Parents, careers or responsible adults should be made aware of a report to Tusla unless it is likely to put the child or young person at further risk.
- The Mandated/DP may contact Tusla's social worker for an informal consultation prior to making a report.
- Information shared will be strictly on a "need to know" basis (see our confidentiality policy).
- If there are reasonable grounds for concern, the Mandated/DP will contact the duty social worker for our area using the standard reporting Tusla form without delay.
- If the DP or DDP is not available, contact the local duty social worker of Tusla directly. Contact information is included with this policy.
- In case of emergencies outside of Tulsa's social work department hours, contact the Gardaí. In situations where the immediate safety of a child or young person is threatened, it may be necessary for the DP, DDP or the person reporting concerns to immediately contact the Gardaí.

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (Dept. of Children and Youth Affairs, 2017) recommend that the following procedure is followed where reasonable grounds exist for the reporting of suspected or actual child abuse.

This forms the basis of The Civic's policy for reporting:

- A report can be made to Tusla in person, by telephone or in writing. Reports must be made ***using the Tusla reporting form***. Each region has a social worker on duty for a certain number of hours each day. The duty social worker is available to meet with, or talk on the telephone, to persons wishing to report child protection concerns. Contact information for the nearest officers is retained at The Civic and available within this Policy Document.
- The mandated/DP/DDP who has been approached with concerns or allegations of child abuse, or who has concerns regarding a child at The Civic, will make personal contact with the duty social worker. They will facilitate the social worker in gathering as much information as possible about the child and his or her situation. It is likely that the social worker will wish to speak to the person who first witnessed the incident, received the disclosure, or felt the concern. The mandated/DP/DDP will assist with making contact as required.
- In the event of an emergency, or the non-availability of Tusla staff; the report will be made to An Garda Siochana.
- Under no circumstances will a young person be left in a dangerous situation pending the intervention of the authorities.
- According to guidelines any professional who suspects child abuse should inform the family if a report is likely to be submitted to Tusla or An Garda Siochana, unless doing so is likely to endanger the child. Co-operation with the family is essential in order to ensure the safety of the child. Mandated/DP/DDP will strike a balance between showing respect for families and using authority appropriately.

CONTACT INFORMATION

The Civic: 01 4627477
Designated Person for Child Protection (DP): Michael Barker-Caven 087 1700 734

The Civic is located in the Tusla area of Dublin South West. Dublin South West comprises of Dublin South West, Kildare and West Wicklow. The duty social work office covering Dublin South West is located in Kildare.

Child and Family Agency, St. Mary's, Craddockstown Road, Naas, Co. Kildare. Tel: (045) 920000

An Garda Siochana:
Tallaght Station: 01 666 6000

Confidentiality Statement

We at The Civic recognize the need for confidentiality in all matters regarding child safeguarding and will at all times adhere to the guidelines laid out in both our own Child Safeguarding Policy and that of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

Confidentiality Policy for Staff, Volunteers, Youth Facilitators and Group Leaders:

- "Need to know" basis - any information provided to Tusla and An Garda Siochana will remain confidential. The official policy is that those receiving such information will only disclose it where the welfare of the child requires it and then only to those with a legitimate "need to know" basis.
- Primary careers, children and young people have a right to know if personal information is being shared with Tusla, unless doing so could put the child at further risk.
- Images of any child or young person participating in activities organised by The Civic will not be used for any reason without the consent of the parent/caregiver (however we cannot guarantee that cameras/videos will not be used at public performances and events).
- Records and information are kept in a safe and confidential manner. Access to The Civic Incident Book is through The Civic staff only, under the authorisation of the DP and DDP, and is not accessible to the general public. Information about health issues and special needs of children participating in any youth programme at the Civic are also confidential. Staff and facilitators have access to these records under the authorisation of the Artistic Director (DP) only, however staff on duty during classes, and facilitator(s), can and must access this information as appropriate. All staff and facilitators abide by the Child Safeguarding Policy guidelines of The Civic including this confidentiality policy.

Recruitment Procedures

Safe practice starts with safe recruitment procedures and involves:

- Always applying thorough selection procedures, no matter who the applicant happens to be;
- Judging the suitability of applicants in relation to a broad range of matters;
- Taking all reasonable steps to eliminate people who are not suitable for working with children; and
- Providing training.

Process to follow when recruiting workers:

- Clear definition of the role of the employee: clarify and agree expectations regarding the role, identify the minimum level of personal qualities and skills required to fill the post.
- Application form: will have a clear job description and information about the organisation. The form will collect all relevant information about the applicant, including past experience of working with children.
- Declaration: all applicants will be required to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be unsuitable to work with children and young people, and declaring any past criminal convictions or cases pending against them. It is The Civic policy to exclude applicants who would be deemed "a risk" to children.

Some reasons for exclusion could include:

- any child-related convictions
- a refusal to comply with recruitment procedures and paperwork requirements
- insufficient documentation or references
- or concealing any information regarding the applicant's suitability to working with children

- Interview: all applicants will be interviewed by the Artistic Director and if possible one other representative of The Civic. Interviewers will explore the information stated on the application form and assess the applicant's suitability for the post. The information supplied by the applicant and any other information supplied on their behalf will only be seen by persons directly involved in the recruitment procedure.
- References: an applicant will be expected to supply the names of two referees (not family members) who will testify as to their character, suitability to the role of employee, or any other issues which may affect their ability to perform the tasks required of them. At least one referee should have first-hand knowledge of the applicant's previous work or contact with children. All references will be received in writing and later confirmed by telephone, letter or personal visit.
- Identification: the identity of the applicant must be confirmed against some documentation (ID card, driving license, passport or long birth certificate) which gives his/her full name and address together with a signature and photograph. This will be compared with the written application.
- Garda Vetting: candidates must consent to Garda vetting, and Garda Clearance will be verified by The Civic DP/DDP before employment is confirmed.

  Persons who are subject to Garda Vetting will receive a Vetting Application Form (including electronic form) from The Civic. The applicant completes the application form and returns it to The Civic. He or she must sign the form, thereby providing authorisation for the Garda Vetting process. The Civic forwards the form to CREATE who send the form on to the National Vetting Bureau. Where a person applying for vetting is under 18 years of age, a declaration of consent must be made on his/her behalf by a parent or guardian of the person.

  On receipt of an application for vetting disclosure in respect of a person concerning relevant work or activities, the National Vetting Bureau will make such enquiries with An Garda Síochána or a Scheduled Organisation as it deems necessary to establish whether there is any criminal record or specified information relating to the person. A Garda Vetting disclosure is issued directly to CREATE who send this back to The Civic. Garda vetting will only be conducted on the written consent of an individual vetting subject.

  An individual vetting subject may obtain a copy of their Garda Vetting disclosure from The Civic.

  The Civic will retain a copy of vetting disclosures for all staff / volunteers in our organisation who work with children. In line with best practice, The Civic will re-vet employees every 5 years.

Successful Applicants/ Managing and Supervising Staff

When a successful candidate takes up a post at The Civic working with children or young people, or when a new staff member is recruited, the following procedures shall be followed:

Induction: When an applicant is accepted they will be required to undertake an induction course. Induction will be a planned programme that enables workers to get to know The Civic, their colleagues and their job. It will also cover expectations, conditions and procedures for dealing with discipline, grievances and allegations, and will include a detailed discussion of The Civic Child Safeguarding Policy including the role of the Designated Person and Deputy for Child Protection, reporting procedures, and codes of behaviour.

Child Safeguarding Policy: The Artistic Director (DP) will discuss with new staff their role(s) in terms of children and young people's programming and activities at The Civic, and any aspects of the policy that are unclear to new staff will be explained during induction sessions. All staff and contracted facilitators will be provided with a copy of The Civic Child Safeguarding Policy during induction, and will be expected to confirm in writing that they have read and understood, and agree to abide by, this policy in all areas.

Child Safeguarding Training: DP will undertake to participate in training in Child Safeguarding provided by the Arts Council, Tusla or others, as required to ensure best practice and procedures are maintained and updated on an ongoing basis. All staff and contracted facilitators will be updated on any changes to the child safeguarding policies and procedures, and kept informed of important information and reporting procedures.

Trial Period: Appointment will be conditional on the successful completion of a trial period, the length of which will be decided at the outset. This gives an opportunity to assess the suitability of a new worker to work with children and his/her commitment to The Civic policies on safe practices.

Records: Details of selection and induction will be recorded, along with notes on any matters arising during any part of the process.

Additional Training: To maintain quality standards and good practice, training will be encouraged on an ongoing basis for all workers.

Staff Meetings: Will be held on an ongoing basis to ensure clear communication between all staff and facilitators working with children and young people at The Civic, to allow for any grievances or concerns, or lack of clarity on policy or procedures, to be aired and worked out, and to ensure the environment for children and young people remains safe and monitored at all times.

Annual Review: To assess general performance and review any changes that have happened or that needs to be made, staff and facilitators will be supervised and receive annual reviews of their work practices.

Involvement of Primary Carers

It is the policy of The Civic to be open with and respectful of all parents and other primary carers of young people and children participating in activities at our theatre.

We do this by:

- Ensuring that all primary carers are aware of our Child Safeguarding Policy (a copy is available at the box office of The Civic and on our website)
- Making sure primary carers are informed of our current and potential activities for children and young people including content, schedules, adult supervision and age-appropriateness of the activities
- Providing appropriate consent forms, collecting signatures, and gathering necessary information from caregivers prior to engaging children in any activities
- Complying with health and safety practices (a copy of The Civic Health and Safety Statement is available to all caregivers on our website or at box office)
- Reviewing and if necessary updating our Child Safeguarding Policy on a regular basis
- Adhering to stringent recruitment guidelines on staff hiring and contracting youth-work facilitators, and ensuring staff and people working with young people and children are properly vetted, trained and supervised
- Encouraging the involvement of parents and caregivers in activities for children and young people, when possible

If any caregiver has concerns about the welfare of children and young people in the context of activities organised by The Civic, we undertake to:

- Listen to any concerns brought to the attention of the Artistic Director (DP) and act according to our Child Safeguarding Policy
- Respond to the needs of children and young people, and act according to Child Safeguarding Policy
- When obliged to, we will pass on any child safety concerns to the authorities (An Garda Siochana and/or Tusla) in cases where concerns have been expressed regarding the welfare or safety of any child participating in activities under the auspices of The Civic
- In the event of a complaint against any member of staff or an external facilitator contracted by The Civic, we will immediately follow Child Safeguarding Policy procedures to ensure the safety of the child/young person, and inform primary carers as appropriate

It is the policy of The Civic to make sure that Children and Young People are protected and kept safe from harm and abuse while they are with staff/volunteers and outside facilitators/groups in our theatre.
To that end we will:

- Act on any child protection/welfare concern by contacting Tusla or Gardaí when necessary and in accordance with our policy guidelines
- Encourage primary caregivers to be familiar with our policy guidelines, and work with us to ensure the safety of every child participating in our programmes
- Make sure caregivers are provided with the appropriate forms to ensure the children/young people in their care are properly covered for participation in activities at The Civic
- Make known the contact person(s) for Child Safeguarding at The Civic (this information is on display in the lobby) and ensure their availability to caregivers

Staff Allegations Procedure

If allegations of abuse are made against employees it is important to note that there are two procedures to be followed:

- The reporting procedure in respect of the child
- The procedure for dealing with the employee

In general it is recommended that the same person should not have responsibility for dealing with both the reporting issues and the employment issues, therefore:

The Designated Person (DP) for Child Protection is Artistic Director Michael Barker-Caven

The DP has responsibility for dealing with any issues relating to the welfare of a child or young person at The Civic.

The Board of Directors of The Civic are: Cllr. Breeda Bonner, Fintan Warfield, Bernadette Fennell, Rob Russell, Jack Martin, Liam Morrissey, and Eddie Conroy.

The Chairman of the Board has responsibility for any issues relating to allegations of child abuse made against members of staff. In the event of their unavailability or where appropriate, the other board members will be deemed to have responsibility in dealing with any such issues involving The Civic staff members. Contact information for all board members is available at The Civic.

Staff/volunteers may be subjected to erroneous or malicious allegations. Therefore any allegations of abuse should be dealt with sensitively and support provided for staff including counselling where necessary. However, the primary goal is to protect the child while taking care to treat the employee fairly.

Agreed procedures to address situations where allegations of child abuse are made against an employee:

- Senior management will inform the employee that an allegation has been made against him/her.
- Senior management will inform the employee of the nature of the allegation.
- The employee should be afforded the opportunity to respond. The employer should note the response and pass on this information when making the formal report to Tusla.
- Senior management will follow the standard procedure for reporting allegations to Tusla without delay.
- The chairperson will be informed as soon as possible.
- Action should be guided by the agreed procedures stated in the Child Safeguarding Policy document, by referral to Tusla guidance, and the applicable employment contract.
- The first priority will be to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk. Senior management will as a matter of urgency take any necessary protective measures. These measures will be proportionate to the level of risk and will not unreasonably penalise the employee, financially or otherwise, unless necessary to protect children. Where protective measures do penalize the employee early consideration will be given to the case.

- Any action following an allegation of abuse against an employee will be taken in consultation with Tusla and An Garda Siochana. Senior management will maintain a close liaison with these authorities to achieve this.
- After these consultations referred to above and when pursuing the question of the future position of the employee, senior management will advise the person accused of the allegation and the agreed procedures will be followed.
- Children and/or their primary caregivers will be informed by management or the board of any allegations made against The Civic staff concerning them, so long as it is in accordance with our Child Safeguarding Policy guidelines for reporting and confidentiality, and taking into consideration the age of the child and any specifics of the alleged incident(s), always taking the welfare of the child as the primary concern.

Complaints Procedure

When a complaint is made against The Civic, a member of staff or an outside group working in the theatre:

Always:

- Record the complaint in the incident book and make a confidential report of the complaint immediately to senior staff.

Procedure for senior staff:

- Where possible meet and talk to the person making the complaint face to face.
- Confirm all the details recorded in the incident book are accurate, record further details if necessary
- If the situation involves a complaint against the property, it should be addressed immediately; if this is not possible then the Board of Directors should be informed and the problem rectified.
- If the situation involves a complaint against a person, that person should be informed immediately.
- If the situation involves more than the person making the complaint, where possible, organise a meeting with all parties so everyone can discuss what happened and an outcome agreeable to all can be reached.
- If disciplinary action has to be taken against a member of staff or person from an outside group, allow them the opportunity to be present at the meeting, and action should be guided by the agreed procedures as outlined in The Civic Child Protection Policy and the applicable employment contract.

Accidents Procedure

Good practices in The Civic to keep children and staff safe.

If an accident occurs always:

- Stay calm, listen and act quickly
- Seek medical attention immediately if required.
- Record the accident in the Incident Book.
- Inform the parents and Designated Person.

Know the location of our First Aid box (kitchen)

Good Practices to avoid or monitor accidents

Know the children:

- We have defined codes of behaviour for adults and young people.
- We have a registration system for each child.
- We keep a record on each child, including medical details, any special needs and emergency contact telephone numbers.

Keep records of:

- Attendance
- Accidents - accident records should be reviewed regularly and any unusual patterns reported to senior management
- Consents given for various activities
- Any complaints or grievances

Pay attention to health and safety matters making sure that:

- Any buildings being used are safe and meet required standards
- There is sufficient heating and ventilation
- Toilets, showers areas and washing facilities are up to standard
- Fire precautions are in place
- First aid facilities and equipment are adequate
- There is access to a phone - emergency numbers are displayed in the lobby
- Equipment is checked regularly
- Insurance cover is adequate

It is important to ensure that:

- Children are not left unattended
- Adequate numbers of workers of both sexes are available to supervise the activities
- Workers know at all times where children are and what they are doing
- Any activity using potentially dangerous equipment has constant adult supervision
- Dangerous behaviour is not allowed

If the activities involve staying away from home overnight, attention should be paid to the following:

- Safe methods of transport
- Adequate insurance, to cover all aspects of the trip
- Parental consent is recorded

It is important to ensure that:

- Any information about children which may be relevant to staying away overnight, like allergies, medical problems, or special needs, is furnished to supervising adults
- Appropriate and well-supervised sleeping arrangements are made
- Respect for the privacy of children and young people in dormitories, changing rooms, showers and toilets is maintained by all.

Discipline and challenging behaviour:

- More than one person should be present when challenging behaviour is being dealt with
- A record is kept in the Incident Book describing what happened, the circumstances, who was involved, any injury to a person or to property and how the situation was resolved

Provide training, including:

- Induction training for all staff
- Particular skills training to fit in with the nature of the organization
- Child safeguarding training to raise awareness and provide information about how to respond to suspicions or incidents of child abuse

Supervising workers:

- Focus on the work to be done, always acknowledging the positive tasks that have already been carried out
- Provide opportunities for discussing concerns and training needs
- Hold a review at the end of the trial period to confirm the workers in post, to extend his/her probation period or to determine his/her services
- Have an annual review or staff appraisal to assess general performance and review any changes that have happened or that you need to make.

Child Protection Records

The purpose of this section is to provide guidance to staff on record keeping, to enable the designated member of staff with a responsibility for child protection to ensure that all child protection information and concerns are kept in an appropriate and useful manner.

Good record keeping is essential in safeguarding the welfare of children and young people. For this reason, it is advisable to carry out a regular audit of all child protection information kept in the theatre, to ensure that procedures are being followed correctly.

What kind of information should be recorded?

Any member of staff who has a concern about a child should make a written note. This must be passed on to the designated person, (although a personal copy may be kept in a secure place). The note should be timed, dated and signed, with your name printed alongside the signature.

Notes must be made as soon as possible and certainly within 24 hours of the incident giving rise to the concern. The important thing is that they are:

- Factual
- Using a child's own words where possible
- A record of what you **saw** and **heard**

Professional opinions are acceptable but only if you state the facts or observations upon which your opinion is based.

If a referral is made to designated officers of Tusla, the Health Service Executive (HSE) or to members of the Gardaí a written record of all concerns held should be sent and a copy of the referral should be kept by the theatre.

Nagging Doubts about a Child's Safety and Welfare

Sometimes, things which seem to be insignificant or trivial at the time turn out to be vital pieces of information later.

A record should be made of any information, including hearsay and 'nagging doubts', which give you cause for concern about a child. Much of this information may not appear to be very significant on its own, but it could contribute to a 'jigsaw' picture of abuse that should not be ignored. Remember no concern is too small

If there has been no specific incident or information, make a written note. Try to identify what is really making you feel worried. Record these concerns on the same record of concern form for your records.

It is crucial that actions and outcomes are recorded on these forms, including any consultation that has been carried out with any other professionals.

2. How should notes and reports be made?

It is impossible to say, at the time of making a child protection note, who will eventually have access to it, or when. It may be consulted months or even years after it was written. Always bear in mind that someone who is a complete stranger to you and the theatre may need to read your record at some stage in the

future.

Ideally, logs of incidents should be typed. If hand written, notes should be clearly legible and written in ink. All notes and reports must contain the following:

- Date of the incident
- Date and time of the record being made
- Name and date of birth of the child(ren) concerned
- A factual account of what happened, and the location where the incident took place (keeping it in the child's words)
- A note of any other people involved e.g. as witnesses
- Questions that the adult asked (remember do not ask leading questions)
- Action taken, and any future plans e.g. monitor and review
- Any other agencies informed:
    - Names,
    - Dates,
    - Times of anyone spoken to.
- Printed name of the person making the record
- Job title of the person making the record
- Signature (print name alongside)

The source of the information should be identified e.g. 'Mrs Bell, a facilitator, informed me that…' Or 'I saw John in the gallery at break time….'

Information should be factual or based on fact. Record what you saw, heard etc. and try not to be vague or woolly (e.g. 'Jenny was crying and rocking' rather than 'Jenny was upset')

Opinion is acceptable provided that you can give some justification for holding it (e.g. 'Sam ran and hid under the table when his mother arrived to take him home and clung to me when I tried to get him out. He appeared to be frightened.')

Make a note of what you have done with the information (e.g. 'I consulted the Programme Director, Mr Wilson, and he said he would…')

Try to avoid specialist jargon which someone external to the organisation would not necessarily understand, right the information in full.

3. Where should child protection information be kept?

The child protection file should contain all reports, notes and correspondence referring to a child. This should be kept in one secure place e.g. a locked filing cabinet in the Designated Person's office.

4. Who should have access to child protection information?

Access to the information on file should be on a need-to-know basis among the staff. This can only be decided on a case-by-case basis. The confidentiality of the child and family should be respected as far as possible, but the welfare of the child is paramount. It would be unlikely that every member of staff would need to know the details of a case. Generally speaking, the closer the contact with the child, the more likely the need to know an outline of the case. All information must be shared with Tusla, the Health Service Executive (HSE) or to members of the Gardaí, as appropriate, where there is concern that a child is at risk of

significant harm.

Child protection information should not ordinarily be shared with agencies other than these statutory agencies e.g. information should not be released to solicitors etc.

5. How long should information be kept?

The file should be retained at the theatre until the child's date of birth + 25 years.

Information of a child protection nature relating to an allegation against a member of staff, including where the allegation is unfounded, should be kept until the persons normal retirement age or 10 years from the date of the allegation if that's longer.

Record of Concern form

Setting:	Date
Staff member's name:	
Child's name:	
Concern What prompted this record? (Please include dates, times, incidents, behaviours, what the child said) Remember to record any questions that you asked (do not ask leading questions, if you need more fact or detail think of **T.E.D** "Tell me……" "Explain to me….." "Describe to me……")	
Background Additional relevant information that relates to the child or family	

Does the concern fall into one of the following categories?

Neglect	☐	Sexual Abuse	☐	Physical Abuse	☐
Emotional Abuse	☐	CSE	☐	Honour based violence	☐
FGM	☐	Forced marriage	☐	Online/sexting	☐
Peer on peer	☐	Radicalisation	☐	Domestic abuse	☐

PRINT_____ (Member of staff)

PRINT_____ (Designated member of staff for children protection)

SIGNED _____ (Member of staff)

SIGNED_____ (Designated member of staff for children protection)

Has this information been discussed/ passed to any other agencies? (Please give details) If not, please record reasons why

Actions by designated lead:

Outcome:

Front page chronology for CP/safeguarding files

Organisation Name:	
Childs name:	
Childs DofB:	
Date	**Details**

Declaration Form

Declaration from all staff, volunteers and outside workers working with children and young people in The Civic.

Surname: _____ First Name: _____

Any other name/previously known as: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Place of Birth: _____

1. Have you been convicted of a criminal offence or been the subject of a Caution or of a Bound Over Order?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If yes, please state below the nature and date(s) of the offence(s):

Nature of Offence: Date of Offence:

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

2. Are there reasons you might be considered unsuitable to work with children and young people?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If yes, please state why:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Signed: _____ Dated: _____

(Staff members/volunteer/contracted facilitator)

Signed: _____ Dated: _____

(Senior Manager at The Civic)

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

There are a number of key pieces of legislation that relate to child welfare and protection. The information here gives a brief overview of relevant legislation. It is not intended as legal opinion or advice and, if in doubt, you should consult the original legislation.

CHILD CARE ACT 1991

This is the key piece of legislation which regulates child care policy in Ireland. Under this Act, Tulsa has a statutory responsibility to promote the welfare of children who are not receiving adequate care and protection. If it is found that a child is not receiving adequate care and protection, Tusla has a duty to take appropriate action to promote the welfare of the child. This may include supporting families in need of assistance in providing care and protection to their children. The Child Care Act also sets out the statutory framework for taking children into care, if necessary.

PROTECTIONS FOR PERSONS REPORTING CHILD ABUSE ACT 1998

This Act protects you if you make a report of suspected child abuse to designated officers of Tusla, the Health Service Executive (HSE) or to members of the Gardaí as long as the report is made in good faith and is not malicious. Designated officers also include persons authorised by the Chief Executive Officer of Tusla to receive and acknowledge reports of mandated concerns about a child from mandated persons under the Children First Act 2015.

This legal protection means that even if you report a case of suspected child abuse and it proves unfounded, a plaintiff who took an action would have to prove that you had not acted reasonably and in good faith in making the report. If you make a report in good faith and in the child's best interests, you may also be protected under common law by the defence of qualified privilege.

You can find the full list of persons in Tusla and the HSE who are designated officers under the 1998 Act, on the website of each agency (www.tusla.ie and www.hse.ie).

CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT 2006

Section 176 of this Act created an offence of reckless endangerment of children. This offence may be committed by a person who has authority or control over a child or abuser who intentionally or recklessly endangers a child by:

1. Causing or permitting the child to be placed or left in a situation that creates a substantial risk to the child of being a victim of serious harm or sexual abuse; or
2. Failing to take reasonable steps to protect a child from such a risk while knowing that the child is in such a situation.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE (WITHHOLDING OF INFORMATION ON OFFENCES AGAINST CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE PERSONS) ACT 2012

Under this Act, it is a criminal offence to withhold information about a serious offence, including a sexual offence, against a person under 18 years or a vulnerable person. The offence arises where a person knows or believes that a specified offence has been committed against a child or vulnerable person and he or she has information which would help arrest, prosecute or convict another person for that offence, but fails without reasonable excuse to disclose that information, as soon as it is practicable to do so, to a member of An Garda Síochána. The provisions of the Withholding legislation are in addition to any reporting requirements under the Children First Act 2015.

NATIONAL VETTING BUREAU (CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE PERSONS) ACTS 2012–2016

Under these Acts, it is compulsory for employers to obtain vetting disclosures in relation to anyone who is carrying out relevant work with children or vulnerable adults. The Acts create offences and penalties for persons who fail to comply with their provisions. Statutory obligations on employers in relation to Garda vetting requirements for persons working with children and vulnerable adults are set out in the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012–2016.

CHILDREN FIRST ACT 2015

The Children First Act 2015 is an important addition to the child welfare and protection system as it will help to ensure that child protection concerns are brought to the attention of Tusla without delay. The Act provides for mandatory reporting of child welfare and protection concerns by key professionals; comprehensive risk assessment and planning for a strong organisational culture of safeguarding in all services provided to children; a provision for a register of non-compliance; and the statutory underpinning of the existing Children First Interdepartmental Implementation Group which promotes and oversees cross-sectoral implementation and compliance with Children First.

CRIMINAL LAW (SEXUAL OFFENCES) ACT 2017

This Act addresses the sexual exploitation of children and targets those who engage in this criminal activity. It creates offences relating to the obtaining or providing of children for the purposes of sexual exploitation. It also creates offences of the types of activity which may occur during the early stages of the predatory process prior to the actual exploitation of a child, for example, using modern technology to prey on children and making arrangements to meet with a child where the intention is to sexually exploit the child. The Act also recognises the existence of underage, consensual peer relationships where any sexual activity falls within strictly defined age limits and the relationship is not intimidatory or exploitative.