



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

STAGECRAFT IRELAND

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INTRODUCTION

We in StageCraft Ireland value and encourage the participation of children and young people in our workshops and activities. We acknowledge that participation in physical theatre can enhance physical, emotional and social development. We recognise the dignity and rights of all children and are committed to their protection and support.

In keeping with this we will work to do all in our power to create safe environments for children and young people in order to secure their protection and enable their full participation in the appropriate events.

THE PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING OUR DOCUMENT

The Principles are derived from:

- International Law
- Domestic Legislation

These Principles include the following:

The principles derived from civil sources are:

- All adults have a duty to report allegations or suspicions of child abuse, where reasonable grounds for concern exist, irrespective of the status of the person suspected or their relationship to them or to the child.
- Due regard must be given to the criminal dimension of any action.
- It is the statutory duty of the civil authorities, not individuals or organisations, to investigate reports of child abuse.
- A proper balance must be maintained between protecting children and respecting the needs and rights of carers and adults however, where there is a conflict, the welfare of the child must be paramount.
- Actions taken to protect a child should not in themselves be abusive or cause the child unnecessary distress. Every action and procedure should consider the overall needs of the child.
- Organisations have a corporate responsibility to operate effective systems to assure the protection of children. They should ensure best practice in relation to recruitment and selection processes, provide appropriate training and ensure that all personnel are aware of their responsibility both to prevent child abuse and to report concerns about child abuse.
- All agencies and disciplines concerned with the protection and welfare of children must work cooperatively in the best interests of children.

DEFINITION OF CHILD ABUSE

Definition of Child Abuse

Child abuse occurs when the behaviour of someone in a position of greater power than a child or young person abuses that power and causes harm to that child or young person. Child abuse, for our purposes, is categorised into four groups:

1. Emotional abuse
2. Physical Abuse
3. Sexual Abuse
4. Neglect

Emotional abuse:

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. Emotional abuse is normally found in the relationship between a caregiver and child.

Physical abuse:

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child; e.g. shaking a child, excessive force.

Sexual abuse:

Sexual abuse occurs where a child is used by another person for his or her gratification for sexual arousal or for that of others.

Indirect abuse of children occurs where children have been photographed, videotaped or filmed for pornographic purposes or subjected to gross and obscene language or indecent images.

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 medical care.

Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point. It is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs that is likely to result in significant harm.

Examples of neglect include:

- Where a child suffers a series of minor injuries as a result of not being properly supervised or protected.
- The consistent failure of a child to gain weight or height may indicate that they are being deprived of adequate nutrition
- Where a child consistently misses school, this may be due to bullying or deprivation of intellectual stimulation and support.

When developing structures to safe-guard children in our Parish, sensitive cognisance is taken of children with special vulnerabilities who may need additional support.

¹For Signs and Symptoms of each type of abuse, see Appendix 1

CHILD PROTECTION REPRESENTATIVE

As part of our policy Stagecraft Ireland will nominate or renew a Child Protection Representative at each AGM. The person appointed should have the personal qualities, interest and life experience fitting to the tasks involved. He or she should also have completed a child protection-training course.

The responsibilities of the Child Protection Representative will be:

- To promote awareness of our child protection policies to participants, volunteers, tutors and anyone associated with our productions who will be coming in contact with children and young people
- To ensure that the public has ready access to contact details for the Child Protection Representative
- To facilitate anyone bringing an allegation or suspicion of child abuse to the attention of the Authorities, should they wish to have such support.
- StageCraft Ireland employees or contractors in carrying out their tasks will give the Child Protection Representative any assistance needed.
- The Child Protection Representative does not deal with the reported child abuse him/herself, but refers it to the Authorities.

MAKING INFORMATION AVAILABLE

To assist the reporting of child protection concerns, the contact details of the *Child Protection Representative, the H.S.E. and the Gardai* will be made available to participants along with a copy of this policy. Each volunteer worker, together with the participants and Tutors of Stagecraft Ireland, will be asked to read it to ensure that everyone knows the Policy on Child Protection.

We recommend that all workshop facilitators and child entertainers operating on regular or intermittened time scales, including visiting groups, be made aware of the policies and procedures for child protection in operation by Stagecraft Ireland and shall be asked to confirm that they will implement these policies and procedures.

<p style="text-align: center;">BEST PRACTICE AND CODE OF BEHAVIOUR WHEN WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE</p>

Code of Good Practice

- Listening to children and young people;
- Valuing and respecting them as individuals;
- Rewarding their efforts as well as achievements;
- Involving them in decision making (where appropriate);
- Encouraging and praising them.

General Conduct

- Physical punishment of children is not permissible under any circumstances.
- Verbal abuse of children or telling jokes of a sexual nature in the presence of children can never be acceptable. Great care should be taken if it is necessary to have a conversation regarding sexual matters with a child or young person.
- Being alone with a child or young person may not always be wise or appropriate practice. If a situation arises where it is necessary to be alone with a child, another responsible adult should be informed immediately, by telephone if necessary. A diary note that the meeting with the young person took place, including the reasons for it, should be made.
- Best practice in relation to travel with children and young people should be observed. Personnel should not undertake any car or minibus journey alone with a child or young person. If, in certain circumstances, only one adult is available, there be a minimum of two children or young people present for the entire journey. In the event of an emergency, where it is necessary to make a journey alone with a child, a record of this should be made and the child's parent or guardian should be informed as soon as possible.
- Children and young people should not be permitted to remain in festival venues after a production or workshop unless there are at least two adults present.
- All children and young people must be treated with equal respect; favouritism is not acceptable.
- Personnel should not engage in or tolerate any behaviour – verbal, psychological or physical – that could be construed as bullying or abusive.
- A disproportionate amount of time should not be spent with any particular child or group of children.
- Under no circumstances should event or workshop personnel give alcohol, tobacco or drugs to children or young people.
- Alcohol, tobacco or drugs must not be used by personnel who are supervising or working with children or young people.
- Only age-appropriate language, material on media products (such as camera phones, internet, video) and activities should be used when working with children and young people. Sexually explicit or pornographic material is never acceptable.

Respect for Physical Integrity

- The physical integrity of children and young people must be respected at all times.
- Personnel must not engage in inappropriate physical contact of any kind – including rough physical play, physical reprimand and horseplay (tickling, wrestling). This should not prevent appropriate contact in situations where it is necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of a child (for example, where a child is distressed).
- If during a workshop a tutor needs to demonstrate a physical action by touch the tutor should first explain by words what they are about to do and then ask the child if they can show them before demonstrating the action

Respect for Privacy

- The right to privacy of children and young people must be respected at all times.
- Particular care regarding privacy must be taken when young people are in locations such as changing areas, swimming pools, showers and toilets.
- Photographs of children or young people must never be taken while they are in changing areas (for example, in a locker room or bathing facility).
- Tasks of a personal nature (for example, helping with toileting, washing or changing clothing) should not be carried out for children or young people if they can undertake these tasks themselves.

Meetings with Children and Young People

- If any aspect of the festival necessitates meeting a child solo, such meetings should not be held in an isolated environment. The times and designated locations for meetings should allow for transparency and accountability (for example, be held in rooms with a clear glass panel or window, in buildings where other people are present, and with the door of the room left open).
- Both the length and number of meetings should be limited.
- Parents or guardians should be informed that the meeting(s) took place, except in circumstances where to do so might place the child in danger.
- Visits to the home should not be encouraged, nor should meetings be conducted in such locations.
- When the need for a visit to the home of a child or young person arises, professional boundaries must be observed at all times.

Children with Special Needs or Disabilities

- Child with special needs or disability may depend on adults more than other children for their care and safety, and so sensitivity and clear communication are particularly important.
- Where it is necessary to carry out tasks of a personal nature for a child with special needs, this should be done with the full understanding and consent of

- parents or guardians.
- In carrying out such personal care tasks, sensitivity must be shown to the child and the tasks should be undertaken with the utmost discretion.
 - Any care task of a personal nature which a child or young person can do for themselves should not be undertaken by a worker.
 - In an emergency situation where this type of help is required, parents should be fully informed as soon as is reasonably possible.

Vulnerable Children and Adults

- Since especially vulnerable children may depend on adults more than other children for their care and safety, sensitivity and clear communication are of utmost importance.
- Workers should be aware that vulnerable children may be more likely than other children to be bullied or subjected to other forms of abuse, and may also be less clear about physical and emotional boundaries.
- It is particularly important that vulnerable children should be carefully listened to, in recognition of the fact that they may have difficulty in expressing their concerns and in order that the importance of what they say is not underestimated.

Trips away from Home

- All trips, including day trips, overnight stays and holidays, need careful advance planning, including adequate provision for safety in regard to transport, facilities, activities and emergencies. Adequate insurance should be in place.
- Written consent by a parent or guardian specifically for each trip and related activities must be obtained well in advance.
- A copy of the itinerary and contact telephone numbers should be made available to parents and guardians.
- There must be adequate, gender-appropriate, supervision for boys and girls.
- Arrangements and procedures must be put in place to ensure that rules and appropriate boundaries are maintained in the relaxed environment of trips away.
- Particular attention should be given to ensuring that the privacy of young people is respected when they are away on trips.
- The provision of appropriate and adequate sleeping arrangements should be ensured in advance of the trip.
- Sleeping areas for boys and girls should be separate and supervised by two adults of the same sex as the group being supervised.
- At least two adults should be present in dormitories in which children or young people are sleeping. Under no circumstances should an adult share a bedroom with a young person.
- If, in an emergency situation, an adult considers it necessary to be in a children's

dormitory or bedroom without another adult being present they should (a) immediately inform another adult in a position of responsibility and (b) make a diary note of the circumstances.

BEST PRACTICE PROCEDURES

In order to implement the Protection Policy StageCraft Ireland will put the following procedures in place:

1. PARENTAL CONSENT

Ensure that a signed consent form from parents or guardians is obtained prior to the participation of children and young people in events, activities and groups where a parent or guardian is not present to supervise.

Parents or guardians should be asked to indicate if the children have any specific dietary requirements, medical needs or special needs

2. RECORD KEEPING

- An accurate record should be kept for each child and young person participating in activities, including, but not limited to, age, gender, parent or guardian contact details, attendance, programme details and medical information. This record should include a copy of the consent form or letter signed by the parent or guardian. It should also contain details of emergency contact numbers.
- A written record of organisers, supervisors, employees and volunteers in attendance at events, such as meetings, workshops and productions activities, should be kept.
- An Incident/Accident Report Form should be completed in the event of and accident or incident relating to a child.

3. USE OF COMPUTERS

- Any youths volunteering or training in the office or graphic design department should have a clear policy in place regarding the use of email and the internet:
- Where a computer is used by more than one person, each person should be obliged to have a unique username and password, or where this is not possible, to maintain a signed record of the date, time and duration of their use of the computer.
- Where children or young people can access a computer in the office, it should be accessible only through the use of a username and password unique to each child.

Where this is not possible, the children or young people should be obliged to provide a signed record of the date, time and duration of their use of the computer.

- Computers, which can be accessed, by children or young people should always have appropriate filtering software.
- All computers in the office should be monitored regularly to ensure that they are being used in accordance with the stated policy. Where there is any suspicion or doubt, a person with specialist knowledge of computer hardware and software should be asked to assess the purposes for which the computer has been used.

RECRUITMENT & TRAINING OF VOLUNTEERS

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

‘Safe practice starts with safe recruitment procedures’. Most people who apply to work with children and young people in Stagecraft Ireland are well-motivated and potentially suitable for the various tasks involved. It is most important, however, that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that this is, in fact, the case. As well as enhancing the prospects of identifying the best person for the post, rigorous recruitment procedures can act as a deterrent to unsuitable applicants.

Some of the principles, which enhance the safety of recruitment, include:

- Always applying thorough selection procedures regardless of who the applicant is and whether the position is full-time, part-time, permanent, paid or voluntary.
- Judging the suitability of applicants across a broad range of criteria, through interview.
- Ensuring that interviews are conducted by more than one person and that at least one of those interviewing has established competence in interviewing and selection for posts involving work with children.
- Taking all reasonable steps to exclude unsuitable candidates by insisting on and verifying references, qualification and previous records of employment.

KEY ISSUES IN RECRUITMENT PROCESSES

The safety of recruitment processes can also be enhanced by ensuring that due attention is paid to the following key issues.

- **CLEAR DEFINITION OF ROLE**
- **WRITTEN APPLICATION FORM**
- **INTERVIEWS**
- **DECLARATION FORM**
- **REFERENCES**
- **GARDA VETTING**

APPENDIX 1

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF ABUSE

Signs and Symptoms of Emotional Child Abuse

- Rejection
- Lack of praise or encouragement
- Lack of comfort and love
- Lack of attachment
- Lack of proper stimulation
- Lack of continuity of continuity of care
- Serious over-protectiveness
- Inappropriate non-physical punishment
- Family conflicts and/or violence
- Inappropriate expectations of a child's behaviour – relative to his or her age and stage of development
- Every child who is abused sexually or physically is also emotionally abused

Signs and Symptoms of Physical Abuse

- Bruises
- Fractures
- Swollen joints
- Burns or scalds
- Abrasions or lacerations
- Haemorrhages
- Damage to body organs
- Poisonings – repeated
- Failure to thrive
- Coma or unconsciousness
- Death

Signs & Symptoms of Child Sexual Abuse

- Bleeding from vagina or anus
- Difficulty or pain in passing urine or faeces
- An infection may occur secondary to sexual abuse, which may or may not be a definitive sexually transmitted disease. Professionals should be informed if a child has a persistent vaginal discharge or has warts or a rash in the genital area.
- Noticeable and uncharacteristic change or behaviour
- Hints about sexual activity
- Age-inappropriate understanding of sexual behaviour
- Inappropriate seductive behaviour
- Sexually aggressive behaviour with others uncharacteristic sexual play with peers or with toys

- Unusual reluctance to join in normal activities which involve undressing, for example, games or swimming

Particular behavioural signs and emotional problems suggestive of child abuse in young children (0-10)

- Mood change, for example acting out or the child becomes fearful or withdrawn
- Lack of concentration (change in school performance)
- Bed wetting, soiling
- Psychosomatic complaints: pains, headaches
- Skin disorders
- Nightmares, change in sleep patterns
- School refusal
- Separation anxiety
- Loss of appetite
- Isolation

Particular behavioural signs and emotional problems suggestive of child abuse in older children (over 10)

- Mood change, for example, depression, failure to communicate
- Running away
- Drug, alcohol, or solvent abuse
- Self-mutilation
- Suicide attempts
- Delinquency
- Truancy
- Eating disorders
- Isolation

Signs and Symptoms of Child Neglect

- Abandonment or desertion
- Children persistently left alone without adequate care and supervision.
- Malnourishment, lacking food, inappropriate food or erratic feeding.
- Lack of warmth
- Lack of adequate clothing
- 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
- Non-organic failure to thrive, that is, a child not gaining weight, not alone due to malnutrition but also due to emotional deprivation
- Failure to provide adequate care for a child's medical problems
- Exploited, overworked

APPENDIX 2

StageCraft Ireland Policy Statement

We at StageCraft Ireland value and encourage the participation of children and young people in our festival events and activities. We acknowledge that participation in physical theatre can enhance physical, emotional and social development. We recognise the dignity and rights of all children and are committed to their protection and support.

In keeping with this we will work to do all in our power to create safe environments for children and young people in order to secure their protection and enable their full participation in the appropriate events.

APPENDIX 3

StageCraft Ireland Policy Statement Contact Personnel

Child Protection Representative (Mariosa Hume)	085 8112051
Local Garda Siochana (Tullamore)	057 93 21305
Garda Central Vetting Unit (Thurles)	0504 27300
Big Brother Big Sister (Caroline McDermot)	086 8596866
Citizens Information Centre (Tullamore)	057 9352204
Samaritans Helpline	1850 609 090
Childline	1850 666 666
Emergency Numbers	999 or 112

APPENDIX 4

Children's Code of Behaviour

1. Treat all other children with respect, and do not use bullying tactics.
2. Be fair and do not spread rumours or tell lies about other children or adults.
3. Abide by the rules as set out in StageCraft Ireland's policy on Child Protection.
4. Respect the venues used by the StageCraft and promote good behaviour.
5. Do not harm any other children, or property.
6. Do not shout or argue with other participants.
7. Do not use violence or physical contact with others.
8. Talk to the person in charge if you have a problem of any kind.
9. Behave in a manner suitable to the production at hand.
10. Do not use or bring unwarranted or dangerous substances into any StageCraft production or venue.
11. The use of mobile phones is prohibited during workshops or performances.
12. Smoking or drinking is not tolerated under any circumstances.

APPENDIX 5

Travelling Permission Consent Form:

Event: _____

Venue: _____

Date: _____ *Pick-up location:* _____

Drop off time: _____ *Drop off location:* _____

Children:

I have read and accept the conditions and rules as set out in the Code of Ethics and good behaviour when travelling with a StageCraft Ireland production or organised trip and I agree to abide by the rules.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian:

I have read and accept the conditions and rules as set out in the Code of Ethics and good behaviour when my child is travelling on a stagecraft Ireland production or trip.

Name of Child(ren): _____

Parent/Carer's name: _____

Emergency contact number: _____

Date: _____