

# **Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures**

**November 2018**

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## INTRODUCTION

**YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Child Protection and Welfare Policy** has been created in accordance with the Children First Act (2015) and the *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017*.

In addition to ***Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*** (2017), the other guidelines that have been consulted in the drafting of this policy are the ***Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook*** (HSE 2011), ***Code of Good Practice: Child Protection for The Youth Work Sector*** (Dept of Education, 2003), ***Our Duty to Care: the principles of good practice for the protection of children and young people*** (Dept. of Health and Children, 2002), ***Protecting Our Children and Young People: An NYCI Toolkit for Youth Work Organisations to design, review and evaluate their child protection policy*** (National Youth Council of Ireland, 2011), ***Guidelines for the protection and welfare of children and young people in the Arts Sector*** (The Arts Council, 2006), ***Guidelines for taking and using images of children and young people in the arts sector*** (The Arts Council, 2009), ***Let's Beat Bullying***, (National Youth Council of Ireland, 2007).

## About YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND

Youth Theatre Ireland is the national development organisation for youth theatre. We support a network of youth theatres who deliver year-round programmes of drama workshops and performance opportunities to young people aged 12 - 21 from cities, towns and villages across Ireland.

Established since 1980, Youth Theatre Ireland is unique in its commitment to youth-centred drama practice. At Youth Theatre Ireland, we know that youth theatre is a place to develop young artists and young citizens and we promote youth drama opportunities that focus on the artistic, personal and social development of young people

## **YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND Structure/Governance**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND is a limited company registered with the Companies Office (Reg No.191785) and a registered charity (No. 20023492). The organisation is governed by a voluntary board. There are a maximum number of thirteen places on the board, of which four places are reserved for co-options. The remaining nine Board places are as follows:

Youth Theatres – Six Board Places

Education & Broad Youth Sector – One Board place

Professional Arts Organisation – Two Board places

Directors are elected at the organisation's Annual General Meeting. Co-options are for a three-year term and in considering co-options, the Board must take into account skills sets that may be missing in the existing Board with particular reference to the Theatre, Finance and Law.

The Chief Executive Officer is the Director. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND currently employs three full-time and three part-time staff members. All staff report to the Director, who in turn reports to the Board.

### **Scope of this Policy**

This policy applies to YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's annual programme and its own direct provision of services. It applies to all core staff, management, volunteers, freelance contractors, and anyone else who YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND engages to work with the organisation.

When this policy refers to 'young people who access YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's services' it means any young person who:

- Participates in an event or programme organised by YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND including the National Festival of Youth Theatres, the National Youth Theatre, the Young Critics Programme, the Youth Theatre Members' Forum.
- Accesses information provided by YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND be it via email, post, YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's website, third party sites on which YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has a presence or any other means of communication
- Contacts YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND seeking information or advice

This policy also details YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's approach to parents/primary carers and clarifies what they can expect from the organisation. This policy covers all aspects of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's work with young people including programmes that involve one-off sessions, such as audition clinics, and programmes that include on-going contact, such as the Young Critics Programme. It also covers residential programmes such as the National Youth Theatre.

Member youth theatres are responsible for having their own policies and procedures. However, YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND does offer support and advice. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has revised *Welfare and Child Protection Guidelines for Youth Theatres* (2018) and an accompanying template to support youth theatres in creating or updating their own policies. Templates for Child Safeguarding Statements and Risk Assessments have also been developed for youth theatres. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND delivers Child Protection Training for affiliated youth theatres and YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Designated Liaison Person updates them on developments in terms of legislation and best practice. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Designated Liaison Person is also available to advise youth theatres on specific issues that may occur.

**YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has developed this policy in order to:**

- Help safeguard the wellbeing of all young people who engage with the organisation
- Help ensure YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND meets its duty of care and that the wellbeing of the young person is always of paramount importance in everything YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND does.
- Ensure that YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's ethos is reflected throughout the organisation's work.
- Give employees/volunteers clear guidance on what is expected of them when working with young people.
- Help ensure the organisation meets its legal and moral obligations in relation to child protection
- Ensure good practice is consistently followed throughout the organisation
- Provide clear lines of responsibility and reporting in relation to child protection issues

- Support staff/volunteers in meeting the highest possible professional standards.
- Provide young people/parents with a clear understanding of what they can expect from the organisation.

### **Links to Other Policies**

This policy references a number of other policies and procedures that YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has developed. Staff/volunteers should refer to the YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND Staff Handbook/ YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Volunteer Policy as applicable. Other policies that relate to child safeguarding are referenced and included in this document.

#### Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment

In accordance with the Children First Act 2015, YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has conducted a risk assessment of our services to young people. The risk assessment is included in the Youth Theatre Ireland Child Safeguarding Statement which has also been created in accordance with the act.

The Child Safeguarding Statement details how we meet our obligations under the Children First Act 2015. We circulate it to all staff and volunteers and it is displayed publicly at [www.youththeatre.ie](http://www.youththeatre.ie), the offices of Youth Theatre Ireland at 7, North Great Georges Street, Dublin 1 and in any venue hired for the purposes of our activities for the duration of said activities. We will review our Child Safeguarding Statement every two years or sooner if there is a material change in any of the issues to which it refers.

### **Promoting Best Practice**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND promotes best practice in relation to child protection and welfare by:

- Inducting all employees and volunteers in its Code of Behaviour and Child Safeguarding policy and procedures
- Providing training in Child Safeguarding for staff/volunteers
- Providing information to young people and their parents/primary carers
- Appointing a Designated Liaison Person
- Fostering a culture of openness, whereby young people know they can approach any staff member/volunteer should they have a concern

- Encouraging young people to develop and voice their own opinions and to feedback into the organisation.
- Keeping up to date with developments in professional best practice and legislation
- Reviewing its policies and procedures regularly
- Having a whole organisation approach whereby all adults involved in the organisation are aware of their responsibilities and taking a broad approach to child welfare and protection that permeates all aspects of the organisation's work.

## **SECTION 1: GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND is committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of the young people who access its services. The organisation recognises the responsibility it has as provided for under the Children First Act (2015) and outlined in **Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children** (2017)

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND is a young-person centred organisation. Since its foundation in 1980, the organisation has developed a practice and programmes that have evolved from the needs of young people. Youth drama is a drama practice, which engages young people as active participants by using group or ensemble drama approaches, and which encourages the development of the whole person by using drama methods which respond to the developmental needs of the participants.

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has a duty of care to all young people who access its services. We recognise and value the trust that parents/primary carers show in the organisation when they facilitate their young person's involvement in our programmes/events.

We are mindful that the duty to safeguard the wellbeing of young people is not just about preventing and dealing with serious situations, such as a case of abuse, it is about promoting the best ways of working with young people and ensuring the best possible environment for them.

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND takes a whole-organisation approach to safeguarding young people. An awareness is promoted among all employees/volunteers of the importance of safeguarding the welfare of young people in all aspects of the organisation's work. There is an understanding that this goes beyond child protection concerns but permeates everything we do, from ensuring that venues we use are safe, to having a planned programme that meets the needs of young people, to ensuring that young people can feedback into the organisation.

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND is aware of the importance of keeping informed of best practice and developments in legislation that relate to child protection and welfare.

### **Beliefs and Values of Youth Theatre Ireland**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND is committed to the personal, social and artistic development of young people using drama and theatre. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND advocates the inherent value and the unique relationships between young people and theatre as an artform and is committed to extending and enhancing young people's understanding of theatre and raising the artistic standard of youth theatre and youth drama practice across the country.

#### **We are guided by the following core values:**

- Commitment to quality in provision and experience for all young people
- Commitment to equality of participation for all young people
- We ensure our work is young person-centred and that the voice of young people is represented in all aspects of the work of the organisation
- We ensure a balance between the values of artistic quality and youth participation

Through our practice, Youth Theatre Ireland is committed to protecting and promoting the rights of children and young people, including their right to be protected, treated with respect, listened to and to have their own views taken into consideration in all decisions affecting them. We are committed to ensuring that no young person is disadvantaged in accessing our services or treated differently because of gender, social or ethnic background, family status, sexual orientation, religion or disability.

## Declaration of Guiding Principles

Youth Theatre Ireland is committed to a young-person centred approach in our work. We undertake to provide a safe environment and a positive experience for all young people who engage with the organisation. The welfare of a young person is always of paramount importance.

We engage and work directly with young people through the following activities:

- Drama workshops
- Rehearsals
- Theatre production and performances
- Auditions
- Residential Programmes
- Consultations including on-line and in-person focus groups, youth participation bodies etc.
- We communicate with young people from time-to time online and via email and have procedures in place to manage this.
- International exchanges and residentials

Our guiding principles are underpinned by Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and current legislation such as the Children First Act 2015, Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 and the National Vetting Bureau Act 2012.

The Board of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND recognises the duty of care it has to staff, volunteers and all young people who access the organisation's services and that it is ultimately responsible for ensuring that YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND meets its legal and moral obligations to them. To this end, the organisation has appropriate policies and procedures in place.

The Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures clearly outlines the procedures staff/volunteers should follow if they have a suspicion of abuse or receive a disclosure of abuse from a young person. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has appointed a Designated Liaison Person for Welfare/Child Protection. The current DLP is Louise Holian. She can be contacted on **01-8781301**.

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has adopted a whole organisation approach to child safeguarding. All those involved with the organisation including staff, volunteers and board members are made aware of the role they play in safeguarding the welfare of young people. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND takes a broad approach to welfare/child protection and hence our Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures includes the follow elements: a Code of Behaviour for Staff/Volunteers, guidance on specific areas such as ratio's, residentials, approaches to participants aged over 18, a Communications Policy, an Anti-Bullying Policy, Complaints Procedure, a section on our approach to working with parents/primary carers and a section on Confidentiality. This approach reflects YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's commitment to best professional practice in all areas of our work.

Our guiding principles apply to all paid staff, volunteers, board members and individuals employed on a contract for services basis. All of the above must sign up to and abide by these guiding principles and our child safeguarding procedures.

We will review our guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures every two years or sooner if necessary due to service issues or changes in legislation or national policy This policy was last reviewed in **April 2018** and will be reviewed again in **April 2020**.

Signed\* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \*

[To be signed by Staff and Board]

## **KEY MESSAGES**

- The welfare of a young person is always of paramount importance.
- It is the job of everyone involved in YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND to safeguard the welfare of young people including employees, volunteers, Board members and freelance contracted staff
- If you have a concern about a young person, let the Designated Liaison Person know. Follow YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Internal Reporting Procedures
- If you are a Mandated person as designated under the Children First Act you have a legal obligation to report Child Protection Concerns.
- If you think a child is in immediate danger, any staff member or volunteer can contact Tusla or An Garda Síochána.
- Do not investigate alleged abuse, this is the job of Tusla/An Garda Síochána

## SECTION 2: KEY SAFEGUARDING ROLES

### Named Person:

Youth Theatre Ireland has appointed Louise Holian, Child Protection and Welfare Officer, as named person. This person is responsible for leading the development of guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures and for ensuring that policies and procedures are consistent with best practice.

### Designated Liaison Person:

A Designated Liaison Person has been appointed by Youth Theatre Ireland. The Designated Liaison Person acts as a resource to any young person, staff member and volunteer who have Child Protection concerns. All dealings of a Child Protection nature go through the Designated Liaison Person who in turn may make a referral to Tusla or the Gardaí. The designated liaison person is responsible for ensuring that reporting procedures are followed, so that child welfare and protection concerns are referred promptly to Tusla.

Youth Theatre Ireland will ensure that the Designated Liaison Person is knowledgeable about child protection and provided with any training considered necessary to fulfil this role.

The Designated Liaison Person's role is to:

- Be fully familiar with Youth Theatre Ireland's duties in relation to the safeguarding of children.
- Have good knowledge of our guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures.
- Ensure that the organisation's reporting procedure is followed, so that child protection and welfare concerns are referred promptly to Tusla.
- Receive child protection and welfare concerns from workers and volunteers and consider if reasonable grounds for reporting to Tusla exist.
- Consult informally with a Tusla Duty Social Worker if necessary
- Where appropriate, make a formal report of a child protection or welfare concern to Tusla on behalf of Youth Theatre Ireland, using the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form.
- Inform the child's parents/guardians that a report is to be submitted to Tusla or An Garda Síochána, unless:
  - Informing the parents/guardians is likely to endanger the child or young person;
  - Informing the parents/guardians may place you as the reporter at risk of harm from the family;
  - The family's knowledge of the report could impair Tusla's ability to carry out an assessment.
- Record all concerns or allegations of child abuse brought to your attention as well as any action/inaction taken in response to these concerns.
- Provide feedback to the referrer, as appropriate.
- Ensure that a secure system is in place to manage confidential records.
- Act as a liaison with Tusla and An Garda Síochána, as appropriate.
- Where requested, jointly report with a mandated person.

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's DLP also functions as the Authorised Signatory for Garda Vetting.

In addition, YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Designated Liaison Person has a role in relation to supporting and developing good practice among member youth theatres by:

- Developing guidelines on good child protection and welfare practice for affiliated youth theatres
- Organising/providing training in Child Protection
- Advice on specific safeguarding issues and concerns
- Managing the YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND Garda Vetting Consortium so affiliated youth theatres can avail of the Garda Vetting Service.

**Designated Liaison Person:**

**Louise Holian**

**Child Protection and Welfare Officer**

**Contact: 01 878 1301**

**[louise@youththeatre.ie](mailto:louise@youththeatre.ie)**

Deputy Designated Liaison Person:

**Michelle Carew**

**Director**

**Contact: 01 878 1301**

**[michelle@youththeatre.ie](mailto:michelle@youththeatre.ie)**

### **Mandated Persons**

Mandatory reporting, as outlined by the legislation, places a legal obligation on certain individuals known as 'mandated persons' to report harm or potential harm to children. (A Schedule of Mandated Persons under the Act can be found in Appendix Sixteen.)

Mandated Persons have two principal legal obligations:

1. To report concerns which meet or exceed a particular threshold
2. To assist Tusla in the assessment of mandated reports, where requested to do so.

Further detail on responsibilities and procedures regarding mandated reporting and mandated assistance can be found in Section 3.5

Note: The legal obligation on mandated persons to report only applies to information they acquire in their professional work. **It does not apply outside their work or to information they receive on the basis of a personal relationship.**

Youth Theatre Ireland acknowledges that it may from time to time employ persons who are identified as mandated persons as per the list in Appendix 16. The following procedures will be followed:

- Paid workers who are mandated persons will be made aware of their responsibilities under legislation at the commencement of their employment.
- A list of all mandated persons employed by Youth Theatre Ireland will be kept in hard and soft copy formats within the organisation's HR files.

Youth Theatre Ireland acknowledges that the existence of mandated persons does not remove the existing obligations (moral and often organisational) on others to make a report where there is a concern for a child.

All mandated persons employed by Youth Theatre Ireland will be inducted in, and must agree to familiarise themselves in detail with, Chapter 3 of Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017.

**Mandated Person 1:**

**Louise Holian**

**Child Protection and Welfare Officer**

**Contact: 01 878 1301**

**[louise@youththeatre.ie](mailto:louise@youththeatre.ie)**

**Mandated Person 2:**

**Michelle Carew**

**Director**

**Contact: 01 878 1301**

**[michelle@youththeatre.ie](mailto:michelle@youththeatre.ie)**

**Relevant Person**

Youth Theatre Ireland ensures that a Relevant Person is appointed to act as first point of contact in relation to the youth theatre's Child Safeguarding Statement.

The relevant person will be the most senior staff member in the organisation, i.e. the Director.

**Relevant Person:**

Michelle Carew – Director

Phone: 01 878 1301

Email: [michelle@youththeatre.ie](mailto:michelle@youththeatre.ie)

### **SECTION 3: RESPONDING TO AND REPORTING CHILD PROTECTION OR WELFARE CONCERNS**

This section provides guidance on recognising abuse and outlines the approach and procedures to be followed should any person working with YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND, in a paid or voluntary capacity, receive a disclosure or have a suspicion of abuse in relation to any young person involved in the YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND programme. This section also outlines the role of Mandated Persons.

It is the policy of Youth Theatre Ireland to safeguard the welfare of all children by protecting them from all forms of abuse. We are committed to safeguarding young people and to provide a safe space for children and young people to grow, develop, learn, experiment and have fun.

We will endeavour to safeguard children/young people by:

- Conducting a Risk Assessment to identify potential risks to the young people availing of our services
- Ensuring Youth Theatre Ireland has a formal Child Safeguarding Policy and a Safeguarding Statement in place that is regularly reviewed and updated.
- Sourcing training for all staff members/volunteers that is appropriate to their role, work and contact with young people. Evidence of all Child Protection training will be kept on file.
- Ensuring the welfare of the child is paramount in all decisions, activities and programmes involving children and young people.
- Adhering to the procedures set out for the recruitment and selection of staff members/volunteers.
- Providing effective management for staff members/volunteers through supervision, support and training.
- Adopting guiding principles and reflecting these through our code of behaviour for staff members/volunteers.
- Sharing information about Child Protection and good practice with children, parents / guardians, staff members/volunteers.
- Sharing information and working with relevant agencies as appropriate. .
- Submitting, staff members/volunteers for Garda Vetting through Youth Theatre Ireland's Garda vetting consortium.
- The Child Safeguarding Statement, Risk Assessment and Child Safeguarding Policy and procedures will be reviewed every two years, or sooner if there has been a material change in any of the issues to which it refers.
- Promoting an awareness of the definitions of abuse amongst all staff and volunteers

#### **Key Principles of Child Protection and Welfare (taken from Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017))**

There are a number of key principles of child protection and welfare that inform both Government policy and best practice for those dealing with children. These are:

- The safety and welfare of children is everyone's responsibility
- The best interests of the child should be paramount
- The overall aim in all dealings with children and their families is to intervene proportionately to support families to keep children safe from harm
- Interventions by the State should build on existing strengths and protective factors in the family
- Early intervention is key to getting better outcomes. Where it is necessary for the State to intervene to keep children safe, the minimum intervention necessary should be used
- Children should only be separated from parents/guardians when alternative means of protecting them have been exhausted
- Children have a right to be heard, listened to and taken seriously. Taking account of their age and understanding, they should be consulted and involved in all matters and decisions that may affect their lives
- Parents/guardians have a right to respect, and should be consulted and involved in matters that concern their family
- A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents/guardians and families. Where there is conflict, the child's welfare must come first
- Child protection is a multiagency, multidisciplinary activity. Agencies and professionals must work together in the interests of children

### **SECTION 3.1: Recognising 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. 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.

**See Appendix 17 for Definitions of Abuse**

### **SECTION 3.2: Reasonable Grounds for Concern**

Staff / Volunteers should inform the DLP when they have reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected. The DLP will then inform Tusla of same.

Reasonable grounds for a child protection or welfare concern include:

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

**Guidance for mandated persons on the thresholds at which, or above which, they have a statutory obligation to report the concern under the Children First Act 2015 can be found in Chapter 3 of [Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children].**

The guiding principles on reporting child abuse or neglect may be summarised as follows:

1. The safety and well-being of the child must take priority over concerns about adults against whom an allegation may be made
2. Reports of concerns should be made without delay

**If you think a child is in immediate danger and you cannot contact the DLP or Tusla, you should contact the Gardaí without delay.**

### **SECTION 3.3: Handling a Suspicion/Disclosure of Abuse**

It is essential to bear the following points in mind:

- 1. The wellbeing of the young person is the most important consideration**
- 2. The one thing you must never do is nothing.**
- 3. Never attempt to confront an alleged abuser.**
- 4. Do not investigate yourself. This is the job of Tusla and/or Gardaí.**

#### **Handling a Disclosure of Abuse**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND is aware that the youth theatre space is a safe space for the young person and they may feel more comfortable talking about any concerns and difficulties in their lives than in other settings.

A young person may disclose an abuse/abuses perpetrated against him/her. It is essential that they feel supported in what may be an extremely traumatic experience for them. The act of disclosing is a huge act of trust and must be treated with respect, sensitivity and

care. All those who have contact with young people through their roles in YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND should be aware of the possibility of receiving a disclosure of abuse from a young person and familiarise themselves with the advice below. The following advice on handling a disclosure of abuse is adapted from *Code of Good Practice – Child Protection for the Youth Work Sector* (2003):

- React calmly, as over-reacting may alarm the young person and compound feelings of anxiety and guilt
- Listen carefully and attentively; take the young person seriously
- Reassure the young person that they have taken the right action in telling
- Do not make false promises, particularly regarding secrecy
- Do not ask the young person to repeat the story unnecessarily
- Ask questions only for the purpose of clarification. Be supportive, but do not ask leading questions or seek intimate details beyond those volunteered by the child. Detailed investigative interviews will, if necessary, be carried out by Child and Family Agency Staff member or members of the Garda Síochana
- Check with the young person to ensure that what has been heard and understood by you is accurate.
- Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser
- Record the conversation as soon as possible in as much detail as possible.
- Sign and date the record
- Explain and ensure that the young person understands the procedures which will follow
- Pass the information to the Designated Person, who will follow reporting procedures.
- Treat the information confidentially, sharing it only with persons who have a right to hear it i.e. on a 'need to know' basis only

**Remember:**

You have to be honest with the young person making the disclosure. Inform them that you have to act on the information you have received. You cannot promise secrecy. Explain to them what will happen next i.e. you will tell the Designated Liaison Person and a report may be made to Tusla.

A disclosure of abuse by a participant over 18 years of age must be handled with the same sensitivity as that of a disclosure by a younger person. If making a report ideally it should be with the consent of the victim. However, regardless of whether consent is given, if the alleged abuser still poses a risk to a child/young person, a report will be made to the Statutory Authorities. [Staff members/volunteers] should follow the reporting procedures outlined in the **Internal Reporting section**.

### **Dealing with a disclosure about a young person received from another young person:**

If a young person tells you they have been informed by another young person that they are being subjected to abuse, treat them with sensitivity. Reassure them that they are doing the right thing in talking to you. Take a softly-softly approach and while taking on board the information they give you, do not interrogate them. Try and make an assessment of the impact the information has had on the young person and if you have any concerns, contact their parents to suggest they keep an eye on them, without revealing the details of the conversation you had with their son/daughter. Keep a written report and pass it on to the DLP, who will follow YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's internal reporting procedures (**See Section 5.4 Below**). You should continue to observe the young person about whom the disclosure has been made, without being intrusive, to see if they display signs and symptoms of abuse. Any relevant information should be passed on to the DLP as a report may be made in the future.

### **SECTION 3.4: Internal Reporting Procedures**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has adopted the following internal reporting procedure for dealing with disclosures/suspected abuse.

- Any person working with YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND in a voluntary or paid capacity, who has a child protection concern or has received a disclosure of abuse should contact YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Designated Liaison Person immediately. They should proceed to create a written report outlining the reasons for their suspicions/details of the disclosure with as many facts as possible recorded. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Internal Reporting Form should be used (**See Appendix Seven**). This report should be passed on to the DLP as soon as possible.
- The DLP consults YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Welfare Committee. The DLP may also contact Tusla for advice in advance of making a formal report. In the case of an emergency, the DLP can make a report without consulting the Welfare Committee.
- When making a report to the Child and Family Agency, the Designated Liaison Person will follow the **standard reporting procedures** detailed below.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Confidentiality Policy should be followed. (**See Section 6**) Details should only be provided to those with a direct need to know and information will only be shared when it is in the interest of safeguarding the young person.
- The Welfare Committee will consider whether to inform the primary carers that a report is being made. The primary carers will be informed except in cases where there is a belief that by doing so the child will be placed at further risk or in

cases where the family's knowledge of the report could impair Tusla's ability to carry out an assessment. The primary carers/family will not be informed if the person making the report reasonably believes it may place them at risk of harm from the primary carers/family.

- If a decision is taken to inform the parents/primary carers, an assessment will be made by the Welfare Committee of the best way to communicate the information and as to whether the DLP is putting his/herself at any risk by doing so.
- The person who made the original report will be informed of the outcome of the decision-making process.

### **If a decision is taken not to report**

- If a decision is taken not to report, a confidential written record of how and why this decision was taken should be created and kept by the DLP. Any information will be retained as a report may be made in the future in light of other developments.
- The person who made the original report should be provided with the reasons for this decision in writing and informed that they can still make a report in their personal capacity. As instructed by Children First (2015), staff/volunteers will be made aware of the standard reporting procedure and the provisions of the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act (1998), which offers protection from civil liability for anyone who makes a report, once they are acting in good faith.
- The employee/volunteer should continue to observe the young person in question. They should record information that they feel is relevant.

### **Record-Keeping**

- Child protection records should be factual and include details of contacts, consultations, actions taken and who undertook this action.
- Child protection records should be updated as required and reviewed regularly by the Designated Liaison Person.
- Youth Theatre Ireland and Its Mandated Person/ DLP will cooperate in the sharing of records with TUSLA where necessary for the protection or welfare of a child.
- All child protection records will be kept safely and securely and managed in line with Youth Theatre Ireland's Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy (Section 7).

### **YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Welfare Committee**

The Welfare Committee advises and supports the Designated Liaison Person. The DLP consults them in advance of making a report to the Statutory Authorities and in cases where a specific welfare issue arises that the DLP feels they need advice on. The identity of the young person involved in any specific situation will only be revealed if necessary or unavoidable.

### **See Appendix Six: Diagram of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Internal Reporting Procedures**

### **Emergencies/Outside Child and Family Agency Office Hours**

In the case of an emergency, any staff member or volunteer can make a report to Tusla or the Garda Síochána. They should contact the DLP as soon as possible to inform them of the situation and any action taken. Due to the possibility of persons other than the DLP making a report, staff on YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND events are provided with copies of Tusla Standard Reporting Form **(See Appendix Eight)**. Staff members/volunteers need to familiarise themselves with the standard reporting procedure below.

### **SECTION 3.5: Reporting Procedures for Mandated Persons**

Mandatory reporting, as provided for under Children First 2015, places a legal obligation on certain individuals known as 'mandated persons' to report harm or potential harm to children.

Mandated Persons have two principal legal obligations:

1. To report concerns which meet or exceed a particular threshold
2. To assist Tusla in the assessment of mandated reports, where requested to do so.

### **Mandated Persons and Youth Theatre Ireland**

Youth Theatre Ireland acknowledges that certain employees and freelance contracted staff will be Mandated Persons as per the definition provided in the Children First Act 2015.

Youth Theatre Ireland will support Mandated Persons by:

- Advising them of their status as Mandated Persons at the point of contracting.
- Providing information on the role and legal obligations of Mandated Persons under the Act.
- Supporting the Mandated Person to access advice, information and training for Mandated Persons via Tusla.

Employees and Freelance staff engaged by Youth Theatre Ireland who are Mandated Persons, will be identified as such in their Employment Contract or Contract for Services and their obligations as Mandated Persons will be a term of their contract.

## **Making A Mandated Report**

- Any Mandated Persons employed by Youth Theatre Ireland must report concerns of harm or potential harm to children to Tusla by following the Standard Reporting Procedures in Section 5.6. They must indicate on the report form that it is a Mandated Report.
- Guidance for mandated persons on the thresholds at which, or above which, they have a statutory obligation to report the concern under the Children First Act 2015 can be found in Chapter 3 of Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children.
- Additionally, Youth Theatre Ireland requires Mandated Persons to inform the DLP that they are making a report and to make reports jointly with the DLP.
- Where Mandated Persons are in doubt about whether a concern reaches the legal definition of harm for making a mandated report, Tusla can provide advice in this regard. You can find details of who to contact to discuss your concern on the Tusla website ([www.tusla.ie](http://www.tusla.ie)). If your concern does not reach the threshold for mandated reporting, but you feel it is a **reasonable concern** about the welfare or protection of a child, you should report it to the Youth Theatre Ireland DLP.

## **Mandated Assisting**

Any Mandated Person employed by Youth Theatre Ireland, should be aware that they may be required by Tusla to assist them in the assessment of mandated reports.

### **Important Note:**

Mandated persons cannot make anonymous reports under the Act.

## **SECTION 3.6: Standard Reporting Procedure**

Staff and volunteers wishing to report a concern should in the first instance contact the Designated Liaison Person (DLP). The below procedures are for making a report directly to Tusla and should be followed by the DLP and any mandated person employed by Youth Theatre Ireland.

Any staff member /volunteer who is unhappy with a decision made by the DLP not to make a report based on a concern held by the staff member/volunteer, may follow the Standard Reporting Procedure to report a concern directly to Tusla.

## Standard Reporting Procedure for Designated Liaison Persons and Mandated Persons

You should always inform Tusla if you have reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected. You can report your concern in person, by telephone or in writing – including by email – to the local social work duty service in the area where the child lives.

The DLP should consult with the Youth Theatre Ireland Welfare Committee before making a report to statutory authorities but can make a report without consultation where there is an immediate risk to the child.

### **Tusla Social Work Office for YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND is in Dublin 1**

**Phone: 01- 8566856 (Office hours: 9am-5pm)**

Should a child protection concern occur during an event outside Dublin, the advice from Tusla is to contact the local Social Work Office. This local office will pass the information on to another office if appropriate e.g. the local office of the young person about whom there is a concern. A list of national contacts for Tusla can be found in **Appendix Fourteen** of this document.

- Contact numbers for all Tusla offices nationwide are given as an appendix in this document and are also available on the Tusla website ([www.tusla.ie](http://www.tusla.ie)) or through the Tusla National Office (Tel. 01-7718500).
- If you are concerned about a child but unsure whether you should report it to Tusla, you may find it useful to contact Tusla to informally discuss your concern. This provides an opportunity to discuss the query in general and to decide whether a formal report of the concern to Tusla is appropriate at this stage. If the concern is below the threshold for reporting, Tusla may be able to provide advice in terms of keeping an eye on the child and other services that may be more suitable to meeting the needs of the child and/or family.
- **Under no circumstances should a child be left in a situation that exposes him or her to harm or to risk of harm pending Tusla's intervention.** In the event of an emergency where you think a child is in immediate danger and you cannot get in contact with Tusla, you should contact the Gardaí. This may be done through any Garda station. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's local garda station is **Fitzgibbon Street. Phone: 01-6668400.** If you do not have the number of a local garda station, phone 999 or 112.
- The **Standard Report Form [included in Appendix Eight of this document]** should be used when reporting child welfare and protection concerns to Tusla. If a report is made by telephone, this form should be completed and forwarded subsequently to Tusla.

### **Information to include when making a report:**

To help Tusla staff assess your reasonable concern, they need as much information as possible. You should provide as much relevant information as you can about the child, his/her home circumstances and the grounds for concern. These 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 description of injuries)
- Names of other children in the household
- Name of school the child attends
- Your name, contact details and relationship to the child

You should give as much information as possible to social workers at an early stage so that they can do a full check of their records. For instance, they can see if the child and/or a sibling have been the subject of a previous referral, or if an adult in the household had previous contact with the child protection services.

While it is possible to report a concern anonymously, Youth Theatre Ireland requires that the DLP includes their name on the report.

### **Concerns about an adult who may pose a risk to children**

Where concerns arise about whether an adult may pose a risk to children, even if there is no specific child named in relation to the concern, (For example, based on known or suspected past behaviour, a concern could exist about the risk an individual may pose to children with whom they may have contact.) The DLP will report any such reasonable concerns to Tusla.

### **Retrospective disclosures by adults**

The term retrospective abuse refers to abuse that an adult discloses that took place during their childhood. A Retrospective Abuse Report Form can be downloaded from the Tusla website and the link is available in the Appendices of this document. The DLP can, if required, support the individual to make this report.

In cases of retrospective abuse, a report needs to be made, where there is a current or potential future risk to children from the person against whom there is an allegation. In this instance, the DLP should follow Standard Reporting Procedures as in 3.6 of this document.

### **Cases not reported to Tusla or An Garda Síochána**

Where a decision is taken not to report concerns to Tusla or An Garda Síochána, the DLP will give individual staff member/ volunteer who raised the concern a clear written statement of the reasons why the organisation is not taking such action. The staff

member/ volunteer should be advised that if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free as individuals to consult with, or report to, Tusla or An Garda Síochána. The provisions of the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 apply once they communicate 'reasonably and in good faith'

A full list of the relevant legislation concerning child protection and welfare is provided in **Appendix Thirteen** of this policy

### **What will happen after a report is made?**

If you make a report about a child, Tusla will normally acknowledge it, and may contact you for further information, if necessary. It is understandable that you would like to be assured that the matter is being followed up. However, to protect the privacy of the child and family, it may not be possible for Tusla to inform you of the progress or outcome of Tusla's contact with the child or family, unless you are involved in discussions around family support or child protection plans. If you continue to have concerns about the child, or if additional information comes to light, you should contact Tusla.

### **Role of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND after a report is made**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Designated Liaison Person, and if appropriate the staff member to whom the disclosure was made, will continue to be available to support the young person. We will encourage and support them in maintaining their involvement with the organisation. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND is aware that there are organisations that have specific expertise on welfare and child protection and the DLP may decide to contact one or more of these organisations for advice. We are also aware that there may be circumstances when it is more appropriate to refer a young person to an organisation with specific expertise. **(For a List of National Support Organisations See Appendix Fourteen)**

If there is any doubt about the best way to support the young person, YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Designated Liaison Person will contact Tusla for advice.

### **Section 3.7: DEALING WITH AN ALLEGATION AGAINST AN EMPLOYEE/VOLUNTEER/ YOUNG PERSON**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND recognises that where an allegation is made against an employee, it has a dual responsibility in respect of both the young person and the employee. As with all Child Protection concerns, the welfare of the young person is of paramount importance. At the same time, YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has a duty to ensure that any employee is treated fairly in line with its Dignity at Work Policy.

As a matter of urgency, the organisation will take any necessary measure to ensure that no young person is exposed to unnecessary risk.

There may be three strands in the consideration of an allegation:

1. A Garda investigation of a possible criminal offence

2. Investigation and assessment by Tusla about whether a child is at risk of/subject to abuse.
3. Consideration by an employer of disciplinary action in respect of an incident.

## Procedures

There are two procedures to be followed when allegations of abuse are made against volunteers or employees:

- The reporting procedure in respect of the young person.
- The procedure for dealing with the employee against whom the allegation is made.

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND follows best practice by allocating different people responsibility for dealing with each of these procedures. The Designated Liaison Person will have responsibility for the reporting procedure in respect of the young person. The Director will have responsibility for dealing with allegations made against an employee.

The DLP will follow standard reporting procedure as outlined in **Section 3.6**

The Director will liaise with An Garda Síochána and Tusla to agree the strategy for investigation and refer to matters such as the possible collusion of other members of staff. The Director will remain in contact with the statutory authorities throughout the period of the investigation. We have noted that the *Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act* (1998) applies to organisations, as well as individuals, provided they report the matter 'reasonably and in good faith'.

### **Procedure where a Complaint or Allegation involving abuse has been made against an Employee**

- If an allegation is made against an employee, the matter should be reported to the Director immediately and without delay.
- The Director will assess the allegation promptly and carefully.
- Any action taken will be based on an opinion formed 'reasonably and in good faith'.
- The Director will contact the HR Sub-committee of the Board of Directors and they will decide whether a formal report should be made to Tusla.
- The reasonable grounds for concern as detailed in the Child Protection and Dealing with Suspected Abuse section of this document will be considered.
- Legal advice will be sought in relation to employment and contractual issues.
- Alongside the reporting of the allegation by the Director to Tusla, the Designated Liaison Person will follow the standard reporting procedure in respect of the young person.
- The Director will inform the employee/volunteer (in private and with due consideration of confidentiality and natural justice) that an allegation has been made and explain the nature of that allegation.
- The employee should be afforded the right to respond in accordance with established disciplinary procedure. The response should be noted and passed to Tusla as part of the formal reporting procedure.

- The Director will also notify Tusla of any other organisation working with children with which the alleged abuser is thought or known to be involved.
- If the allegation is against the Director, the allegation should be referred to the Chairperson of the Board/equivalent senior person. If the allegation is against the Designated Liaison Person, another suitably qualified staff member will be given the role of reporting in relation to the young person.
- The parents/guardians of the young person will be informed immediately of the complaint against the employee/volunteer unless by doing so you endanger the young person. Advice should be taken from the statutory authorities as to how this might best be done. The Director and Designated Liaison Person will liaise on this.
- After the consultations referred to above have taken place, and when pursuing the question of the future position of the employee, the Director should advise the employee of the situation and should follow the agreed disciplinary procedures outlined in the Staff Handbook.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND is very mindful that the person accused will need support pending an investigation. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND will identify how we can best do this in line with advice from the statutory authorities and our own legal advice while taking account of resource implications.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND will keep comprehensive records of any allegations made, details of how the allegations were managed and details of any action taken and decisions reached. These records must be stored confidentially and a copy given to the individual concerned.
- In the case where an allegation has been determined to be unfounded/unproven and the person accused is innocent, consideration will be given to the most appropriate support the organisation can provide to the person concerned.

### **Volunteers/Short-term Contracted Staff**

The same procedures will be followed should an allegation be made against a volunteer or an individual employed under a short-term contract for services. While some of the considerations that relate to employees such as Employment Law do not apply, YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND is committed to treating any individual whose services it engages and against whom an allegation is made, according to the same principle as it would treat employees i.e. in a manner that is fair, transparent and in accordance with 'Natural Justice'.

### **Procedure to be followed where an Allegation is made against Another Young Person:**

If an allegation is made against another young person, it should be considered a child protection issue for both the young people involved and child protection procedures should be adhered to for both the victim and the alleged abuser.

The parents/guardians of the young people concerned should be informed immediately. Advice should be taken from the Statutory Authorities as to how this might best be done. Decisions regarding the future participation in the youth organisation of the young person alleged to have committed abuse should be made at management level and with advice from an organisation/individual with expertise in the area.

**See Section 6 for YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Approach to Confidentiality**

## **SECTION 4: WORKING SAFELY WITH YOUNG PEOPLE**

### **Section 4.1: Code of Behaviour for Working with Young People**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has developed the following Code of Behaviour for all staff/volunteers who work with young people:

#### **Practice**

- Treat all young people fairly and equitably – do not discriminate on the grounds of gender, race, religion, ethnicity, cultural background, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, family status, age or disability.
- Listen to and respect the opinions of participants.
- Act in a way that is professional and responsible.
- Work to create an environment where young people feel comfortable, accepted and able to express themselves freely.
- Ensure that the material/approach is age appropriate and suits the developmental needs of the group.
- Provide encouragement and support to all young people regardless of their ability.
- All criticism should be constructive and not focused on any one individual.
- Create and enforce the group contract/rules
- Encourage constructive feedback and discussion.
- Ensure you are adequately prepared
- It is never acceptable to use an individual's personal trauma as material for the drama process.
- Be prepared for situations whereby issues raised in the drama workshop may make a young person uncomfortable or upset. This may even happen with material that seems 'safe'.
- Be aware of your own level of competence and expertise. Don't introduce exercises or material that you don't feel comfortable in delivering especially if it is physically demanding and/or involves increased risk.
- Be aware that the work you do with the group and how you conduct yourself will have a bearing on the reputation of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND.
- Be aware of participants' level of comfort when doing exercises that require physical contact. **\*(See Note on Physical Contact below)**
- Evaluate and reflect on your practice. Include the opinions and feedback of young people when evaluating the work.

## **Welfare/Child Protection**

- Familiarise yourself with YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's policies and procedures including its **Child Protection and Welfare Policy** and others as appropriate to your role. Follow YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's reporting procedures if you have a child protection concern. (See **Section on Reporting Procedures**)
- Familiarise yourself with any medical or other factors that may affect a young person's participation. If you are privy to such sensitive information, follow YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Confidentiality Policy. (**See Section 6**)
- If you have a concern about the wellbeing of a young person, report it to YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Designated Liaison Person. (**See Section on Reporting Procedures**).
- Respect a young person's personal space and privacy.
- Be aware of how you behave around young people. Never behave in a way that could be interpreted as inappropriate. Be aware of the language you are using and its context. Avoid jokes or comments that could be interpreted as inappropriate.
- Never let a situation get out of control. Often the worst action to take is no action.
- Avoid taking a session on your own.
- Be sensitive to instances of bullying and familiarise yourself with YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's policy on dealing with situations of bullying.
- Try to avoid giving lifts to young people if at all possible. However, you should never leave a young person in a potentially dangerous situation. Use your common sense if a scenario arises where you feel it is necessary to bring a young person home and inform the YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND Designated Liaison Person and parent/primary carer of the young person in question.
- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with participants and don't socialise inappropriately with them.
- If you do have to talk to a young person in private, make sure you inform another adult. If possible, the meeting should take place in view of other adults. Do not meet with a young person outside of organised group activities.
- Be mindful of the danger of creating "dependent" relationships with specific young people. Such relationships can be problematic for both leader and young person and often if a young person needs support with a particular issue or situation, you should refer them to a third party with specific expertise. Let the Designated Liaison Person know should an issue arise.

- Recognise the importance and weight of personal promises to young people. Never make promises you cannot keep e.g. if a young person makes a disclosure of abuse to you, you cannot promise confidentiality.
- Report any health and safety concerns to the appropriate person. **(See Section 3.7 on Health and Safety)**
- Check that any equipment/set/props etc. you use are safe and suitable for your purpose.
- Follow YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's guidance on communicating with young people through mobile phone, email etc. and use any images/footage in line with YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's policy. **(See Section on Communications with Young People)**

#### **\*Note on Physical Contact**

There can be confusion around the whole area of physical contact with young people. Sometimes in the drama space, physical contact can be necessary to an exercise or scene. It is important that staff/volunteers use their common sense. Ask a young person if it is ok to make physical contact with them, for example, if demonstrating an exercise. After a performance, it should be ok for the director to congratulate a young person with a hug. A good guideline in these kinds of situations is that the contact is acceptable when it is initiated by the young person.

## **Section 4.2 Group Contracts**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND develops a group contract for all events involving young people. The contract is created with the young people at the commencement of a project. This process helps ensure that participants understand what is expected of them but also that they are informed about their rights and the support that is available to them during their participation.

### **Sample Group Contract**

**The following is a sample group contract for a YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND event. Young people and YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND staff will agree a different group contract for each programme.**

Group Contract for \_\_\_\_\_ (Insert details of programme)

### **Rights of Participants**

Participants on \_\_\_\_\_ (Insert details of programme) have the right to:

- A good experience on the programme
- Be fully informed about the programme
- Offer ideas, suggestions and opinions and have them respected by other participants and adult leaders
- Fair and equal treatment
- Offer their feedback on the programme
- Feel safe at all times
- Have their concerns addressed
- Adequate breaks and rest periods
- Feel comfortable and not be exposed to bullying or threatening behaviour
- Constructive and balanced feedback on their work on the programme

### **Responsibilities of Participants**

- Respect other participants and adult leaders

- Abide by the Group Contract
- Be open to mixing with new people from a range of different backgrounds
- Commit to the programme in full
- Be punctual and stick to the agreed timetable
- Listen to and respect the opinions of others
- Be open to trying new exercises and new ways of working through drama
- Let a Welfare Officer know if they have a concern or a problem
- Attend Check In Meetings
- Respect the venues the group uses and help ensure they are left in good condition
- Report any Incidents or Accidents to the Welfare Officer
- Let the Welfare Officers know as early as possible if they require time off
- Never act in a manner that is disruptive to the group
- Never use language that may offend another participant or a leader
- If you are taking photos or video of other participants, be careful how you use them. There are people out there who target young people on the Internet so do not identify anyone in any images you post.
- Never post a comment, photograph or footage that could cause hurt or embarrassment to another participant.

**Always remember you are representing your youth theatre!**

### **Anti-Bullying Policy**

I am aware that YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has a no tolerance approach to bullying of any kind. I agree to be respectful to my fellow participants at all times. I understand that any instance of bullying will be treated very seriously.

The following sanctions have been agreed and anyone who is found to be bullying another participant will be subject to these sanctions. The sanctions used will depend on the severity of the bullying and will be decided by adult leaders after they investigate the situation:

- A verbal warning
- Missing out on a social activity such as a cinema or theatre trip
- Suspension from the programme for a specified period
- In more severe cases or in the case of persistent bullying, the participant(s) carrying out the bullying, may be sent home.

Signed

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### **Section 4.3 Anti-Bullying Policy**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has a no-tolerance approach to bullying. As emphasised throughout this document, YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND is committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of all young people who access its services. It is essential that young people feel safe and comfortable during any YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND event or activity. Bullying can not only destroy a young person's experience of participation but also have an impact on their physical and psychological wellbeing.

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has a whole-organisation approach to the issue of bullying. Prevention of bullying is the role of everyone within the organisation from management to staff/volunteers to young people.

Anyone can be affected by bullying be they staff, management, volunteers, young people. We also recognise that any of these individuals can also be a perpetrator of bullying. The issue of bullying as it relates to staff members is covered in the Dignity at Work Section in the YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND Staff Handbook.

**Children First: National guidance for the protection and welfare of children (2017) defines bullying as follows:**

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.

**Types of Bullying**

There are several forms or types of bullying which may take place.

These include:

- **Direct bullying** – where the behaviour is obvious and bystanders are aware of it e.g. physical or verbal bullying
- **Indirect bullying** – where the behaviour is more difficult to recognise, e.g. intimidation or isolation
- **Verbal bullying** – including slandering, ridiculing, slagging, abusive telephone calls, name calling etc.;
- **Physical bullying**– including pushing, shoving, assaults, damage to person's property
- **Gesture bullying** – including non-verbal gestures/ glances which can convey threatening or frightening messages/intent
- **E-bullying/Cyber-bullying** – using web pages, social networking sites, emails, text etc. to abuse, intimidate and attack others, either directly or indirectly, e.g. rumour mongering
- **Relational bullying** – behaviour which sets out to deliberately damage another person's friendship or feelings of inclusion in a friendship group, e.g. exclusion, isolation etc.
- **Extortion** – the deliberate extortion of money or other items of property accompanied by threats

- **Homophobic bullying** – bullying that is typically aimed at young people who are gay or who are perceived to be gay. It can include name-calling, isolation and violence
- **Racial bullying** – can be expressed physically, socially or psychologically when one is labelled negatively as being different from others according to one's race
- **Mobbing** – which means that the target is being bullied by a group of perpetrators and not just one perpetrator.

***(Let's Beat Bullying, NYCI 2007)***

### **Preventing Bullying**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has adopted the following strategy for preventing bullying and creating an anti-bullying environment:

1. Creating and implementing an Anti-Bullying Policy and procedures.
2. Encouraging an openness among staff/volunteers/young people and fostering a culture of mutual respect and cooperation.
3. A discussion around bullying takes place during the drafting of group contracts with young people. Participants on all YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND programmes are made aware of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's approach to bullying. At the end of the discussion there will be a clear understanding of the consequences of bullying.
4. We will also draw attention to wider considerations such as attitudes towards each other and use of language.
5. Participants on any YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND programme will be given a clear message about the importance of reporting bullying and details of how to report it.
6. Staff/volunteers receive induction in YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Anti-Bullying Policy.

### **How YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND will deal with instances of Bullying**

While we have developed the following approach, we recognise that every instance of bullying will be different and have its own unique considerations.

The overriding consideration in every instance will be protecting the well-being of the young person/young people involved.

**Where there is a clear observable instance of bullying:**

- If a staff member/volunteer becomes aware of an instance of bullying, they should act immediately.
- If they witness bullying themselves in a group situation, they should make a clear statement that the behaviour is not acceptable and refer to the group contract and the discussion around bullying.
- They should take a record of the incident and pass this on to the Designated Liaison Person as soon as possible.
- The Designated Liaison Person and staff member will meet with the young people involved separately to discuss the incident. The victim will be asked how they want to proceed but it should be made clear that it cannot be ignored. Depending on the severity of the incident, whether there is an acknowledgement that the behaviour is wrong with a commitment not to display the behaviour again, and the views of the victim, there may be no further action. The Designated Liaison Person and the staff member who reported the incident originally will continue to monitor the situation.
- In more serious incidents or where the same young person(s) display the behaviour again, the Designated Person will meet again with the young people involved to discuss the further incidents. The parents of all the young people involved will be informed.
- At this stage, the agreed consequences/sanctions will be initiated for the perpetrator(s)\*.
- If following the agreed sanctions, the perpetrator once again displays the behaviour, suspension or permanent exclusion from the project will be considered. This action will only be taken as a last resort and full consideration will be given to the effect it may have on the perpetrator and the victim. It may be that it is felt appropriate to refer the young person to another agency with specific expertise. Any action will be discussed with the parent of the young person.
- The victim of the bullying will be supported throughout the process. The staff member in question and/or the Designated Liaison Person will continue to check in with them regularly. Advice may be sought from an organisation with specific expertise on how best to support them. It may be felt necessary to refer them to another organisation/agency.
- In the case of an expulsion, a discussion will be had with the other members of the group so that they understand the action taken and have an opportunity to air any concerns or worries they may have. The victim of the bullying will be consulted before any group discussion takes place.

- A written record will be kept at each stage of the process.

\*Due to the varied nature of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND projects, the particular sanctions will be different for different events. The sanctions will be agreed on commencement of the project with participating young people.

### **Where there is a suspicion that bullying is taking place.**

- If a staff member/volunteer has a suspicion that bullying is taking place, they should inform the YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND Designated Person and discuss the reasons for the suspicion and the best way to proceed.
- It may be that a decision is made to have a general group discussion on how the group are getting along and reference the group contract etc. Participants will be reminded that they can approach an adult staff member if they are having any issues.
- Depending on the nature of the suspicion, the person who is the suspected victim of the bullying may be approached for an informal chat.
- If they confirm an instance of bullying, the procedure outlined above will be followed.
- If they do not confirm an instance of bullying or do not believe there is a problem, the staff member and Designated Liaison Person will continue to monitor the situation and may take the decision that there is a case of bullying. In which case, they will talk to the victim again and then the perpetrator(s). From this point on they will carry out the procedure outlined under the previous section.
- A written record will be kept at each stage of the process

### **If A Young Person is Aware of Bullying:**

- If a young person is a victim of bullying or is aware that bullying is taking place, they can talk to any adult involved in an YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND project be it a Welfare Officer, a member of the artistic team or the Designated Liaison Person.
- They will be reassured that they have done the right thing in telling us about the situation.
- While they will be asked how they would like to proceed, the staff member should make it clear that if there is a case of bullying, YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND cannot ignore it and will have to act.

- The staff member will discuss the situation with the Designated Liaison Person and they will decide the best way to proceed. Depending on the specific circumstances, it may be decided that a general group discussion and a reminder of the group contract is sufficient or it may be that the other procedures outlined above are followed.
- The identity of the young person who has reported the situation, will not be shared with the group. The staff member/DLP will continue to check-in with this young person.

### **Cyber-bullying**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND is aware of the prevalence of this form of bullying and the need to take action to prevent it. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has taken the following steps:

- Developed a **Communications Policy** that outlines how YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND manages its presence on the Internet. (See **Section 4.5**). This policy outlines the measures YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND takes to monitor and control its presence on interactive sites such as social networking platforms and the steps it takes to protect users and in particular young people.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has developed a **Use of Images Policy** that describes how it gathers, uses and retains images of young people and this is in line with advised best practice. (See **Section 4.6**)
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND makes a clear statement, in the two policies referenced above, that online bullying is not acceptable and will be dealt with very seriously. Any instance of bullying will be reported to those who run the site and, if appropriate, to the Gardaí.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND promotes safe and responsible use of the Internet by participants on its programmes and promotes safe-use guidelines for young people.
- Participants on its programmes are made aware of the serious nature of cyberbullying and its potential consequences.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND is aware that there is legislation in Ireland that has relevance to misuse of the Internet such as the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) (Amendment) Act 2007, the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act (1997) and the Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998.

### **Guidelines for Young People**

The following is taken from: ***Get with It: A Guide to Cyberbullying***:

**Don't Reply** to messages that harass or annoy you. Even though you may really want to, this is exactly what the sender wants. They want to know that they've got you worried and upset. They are trying to mess with your head, don't give them that pleasure. If you respond with an even nastier message it makes them think that they really got to you, and that's just what they want. They might even complain about you!

**Keep the Message.** You don't have to read it, but keep it. Keep a record that outlines, where possible, the details, dates and times of any form of bullying that you experience. This would be useful where any investigation was to be taken by your school, youth organisation, or even the Gardaí.

**Tell Someone you trust.** Talking to your parents, friends, a teacher, youth leader or someone you trust is usually the first step in dealing with any issue. In the case of school related bullying messages, you should also talk to a teacher you trust or guidance counsellor about it. If you need to speak to someone in confidence straight away you can call ChildLine on 1800 66 66 66, or get help through their online services at [www.childline.ie](http://www.childline.ie).

**Block the Sender.** You don't need to put up with someone harassing you. If you are getting messages that upset you on your facebook profile you can block the person simply by clicking the block button. On some mobile phones, you can restrict communications to an approved list of contacts. You might need to check the manual or ask an adult to help you do this. Mobile networks can't bar numbers but they will help you to change your phone number in the case of serious bullying.

**Report Problems** to the people who can do something about it. You can take control by not putting up with offensive content and by reporting it when you come across it. Responsible websites and mobile phone operators provide ways for their users to report things such as pornography, bullying content, or other offensive material.

- (From **Get with It! A Guide to Cyberbullying** a joint initiative from the Office for Internet Safety, O2 Communications Ltd, Barnardos and the National Centre for Technology in Education.)

### **Retrospective Reports of Bullying**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND recognises that there may be circumstances whereby knowledge of bullying only comes to our attention once the young person's participation in a YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND programme is completed. It may also be that bullying may

begin once the programme is over, most likely in a case of cyberbullying. While there are limitations on the direct influence that YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND can have on a young person's behaviour at this stage, we will take whatever measures are at our disposal to stop the bullying. Here are some examples of the action that may be taken:

- Contact the parent's/primary carers of the perpetrator and inform them about their son/daughter/ward's behaviour.
- Contact the perpetrator's youth theatre and let them know what is happening
- Contact the parents of the victim and inform them about the situation.
- Provide those involved with guidance on good practice in dealing with bullying.
- Offer the support of the Designated Liaison Person to the victim
- In the case of cyberbullying, report the behaviour to those who run the service and, in serious cases, to the Gardaí.

While any instance of bullying should be taken seriously, more severe instances of bullying should be reported to Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána. If a YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND staff member/volunteer has a serious concern about the welfare of a young person, they should follow YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Internal Reporting Procedures. **(See Section 3.4)**

#### **Section 4.4 Ratios**

While YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND recognises that different groups and situations, will require different levels of supervision, we do subscribe to the following key principles that are recommended as good practice in the youth work sector:

- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND adheres to the following advice on ratio's as outlined in the **Code of Good Practice – Child Protection for The Youth Work Sector** (2003):  
*The minimum adult/young person ratio should ideally be one adult per group of eight plus one other adult, and allowing an additional adult for each group of ten thereafter. Local circumstances, the ages of the children, the experience of the volunteers and the staff should be taken into consideration.*
- When planning activities/events, one of the considerations is the most appropriate adult/young person ratio.

- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND takes all reasonable measures to ensure that the gender of the staff/volunteers reflects the gender of the group

#### **SECTION 4.5: Communications with Young People**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND is committed to ensuring all communications with young people are safe, respectful, appropriate, and professional. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND uses several media outlets to communicate with young people including:

##### **Telephone**

##### **Mobile phone**

##### **Email**

**Web:** Via its own website but also through use of third party sites including social networking platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

The organisation is aware of the potential for such media to be used by those who would wish to exploit and harm young people. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND is committed to taking all reasonable measures to ensure all young people who are in receipt of communications or have access to YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's online presence are not put at risk of any harm.

#### **TELEPHONE/MOBILE PHONE:**

- Staff/volunteers should not give out their own personal mobile phone numbers. All communications via mobile phone should be on an YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND mobile phone
- Staff/volunteers should not contact a young person or store their number on their personal phone.
- Any phone communication with young people should only be used for the effective and efficient delivery of a YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND programme and should cease upon completion of the programme.
- Access to phones that include members' contact details are controlled and restricted to those with a direct need to access them.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND does not provide young people's phone numbers to any third party unless there is a legitimate reason and the young person in question gives their permission. (Parents/Primary carers must also give permission if a young person is under 18).

- If contacting young people by text message, group texts should be used instead of text messages to individuals.
- In a circumstance when it is necessary to send a text to an individual young person, the text should also be sent to the young person's youth theatre leader. If this is not possible or appropriate, it should be sent to either the Designated Liaison Person or the Director of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND.
- In the case of an emergency, where a young person cannot be located or if they are in danger of harm, a Welfare Officer can contact individual young people by telephone. A staff member, in the case of an emergency, may contact a young person on their personal phone but the number is not to be retained.
- Copies of all text messages sent to young people should be retained on the YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND mobile for at least thirty days after an activity/event.
- No images should be taken by YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND staff/volunteers with any mobile phone unless for the purposes of a YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND event/programme and only after parental consent has been received. Any such images should only be taken with a YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND mobile phone and be transferred to a YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND computer as soon as possible. They should not be retained on the mobile phone. All images should be managed in line with YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND policy. **(See Section 4.6)**
- Staff/volunteers should never send any communication that could be interpreted as offensive or inappropriate.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND requires that staff/volunteers be aware of the possibility of bullying via mobile phone, not only among young people participating on its programme, but also the possibility that a staff/volunteer may use a mobile phone to bully a young person. There is also a possibility that a young person may use a mobile phone to harass or target a staff member/volunteer. Any such occurrences will be taken seriously and should be reported to the Designated Liaison Person. All such instances will be managed in line with **YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Anti-Bullying Policy (See Section 4.3)**
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND asks that staff be aware of the risk of abuse being carried out/initiated by mobile phone. Any staff member/volunteer who has any concerns about a mobile phone communication received by a young person should follow YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's **Internal Reporting Procedures (See Section 3.4)**
- Staff/volunteers and participants should be aware that the sending of offensive or indecent material by mobile phone is treated very seriously under Irish Law.

- Staff/volunteers should not use a mobile phone or other device to play video/audio for young people unless the content is appropriate and it is directly related to an event/programme.

#### **USE OF EMAIL:**

- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND staff, who have access to a YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND email account, should not use their own personal email account to communicate with young people. All emails should be in line with YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Email Policy as contained in the **YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND Staff Handbook**.
- All email communications with young people should be professional, appropriate and respectful.
- Any email communication with young people should only be used for the effective and efficient delivery of a YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND programme and should cease upon completion of the programme. All email communication should be copied to the participant's youth theatre leader where appropriate and this should be visibly copied e.g. cc rather than bcc. If the email is to young people involved in a YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND specific project, the email should be copied to another member of staff.
- In circumstances where an adult engaged by YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND needs to contact participants in relation to a project from an email address other than an YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND email address, they should get permission from the Director of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND in advance and set up an email address specifically for the purpose. They should cease to use this email account once the project is completed. The Director of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND, or Designated Liaison Person, should be included in all emails sent including those sent in reply to a response from a young person.
- Communication with young people should stop once the project ceases and their email address should not be used in the future.
- 'Joke' and 'circular' emails even if they seem innocuous should not be forwarded to young people.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND requires all staff/volunteers be mindful of the possibility of email communications being used not only by a participant to bully another participant but also as a means for an adult to bully a young person. Any such occurrence should be taken seriously and reported to the Designated Liaison Person or the Director of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND. All instances will be managed in line with YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Anti-Bullying Policy. **(See Section 4.3)**

- Email communications can be used as a means of abuse/initiating abuse. Any staff member/volunteer who becomes aware of any suspicious communication, should follow **YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Internal Reporting Procedure. (See Section 3.4)**
- Use of emails should be in line with Data Protection Legislation. **(See Section 6: Confidentiality)**

## YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND WEBSITE

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's website serves many important functions in the organisation. It is a source of information both for stakeholders and the general public but also a valuable promotional tool for YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND and youth theatre in Ireland. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND recognises the importance of having a website that is professional and does not expose users to any risks. The organisation is particularly aware of the need to ensure safe use for young people.

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND takes the following measures

- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has developed a privacy policy that is contained on the YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND website. The organisation does not share any information collected via the website with any third party under any circumstances.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND does not post content that could be viewed as offensive or inappropriate.
- Security measures are taken to ensure the website isn't susceptible to hackers.
- While the YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND website does link to third party sites and YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND cannot be responsible for the content on these sites, every reasonable effort is taken to ensure that these sites are appropriate and relevant to the work of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND does not post contact details of other organisations/individuals on the website unless it has explicit permission to do so.
- Any comments posted to the YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND blog are moderated before they can be viewed on the website.
- Images contained on the site comply with YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's **Use of Images Policy (See Section 4.6)**.

- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Administrative Officer monitors the site on a regular basis.
- Any content that is inappropriate or offensive will be removed as soon as we become aware of it.

### **Acceptable Usage Policy**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND asks that all users of the site comply with the following:

Users should not:

- Use the site to bully, harass or target any other user
- Add content or create a link to content that could be interpreted as offensive or inappropriate
- Use inappropriate language
- Use any content including images from the site without receiving permission from YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND.
- Misuse or take out of context any content on the site including images or video footage.

### **THIRD PARTY SITES / SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND is a young-person focused organisation. Its approach is dynamic and forward-looking and it recognises the need to engage with new media and technologies not only for sharing information with its stakeholders and the general public, but also the potential such platforms have as tools for the dissemination and even the creation of artistic work.

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has a presence on the following third party sites:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- DropBox
- YouTube
- Vimeo

Due to the ever-changing nature of online technologies, there may be other sites on which it may be beneficial to have a presence in the future.

The purposes of these sites are mainly to create an online community and to encourage dialogue among those with a shared interest. Any forum that is open to a wide or even a select group of people is vulnerable to misuse including the posting of inappropriate content or the promotion of organisations/events that do not fit with the YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND ethos. There is a danger that sites involving social networking can be used by unscrupulous individuals to defraud users or to make contact with young people with a view to 'grooming' them for abuse.

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND takes every reasonable effort to ensure safe use of any third-party sites by adhering to the following:

- The Administrative Officer and Youth Theatre Officer supervise the moderation of all third-party sites and all such sites are checked on a regular basis.
- An assessment is made of the site and the most suitable settings for a YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND presence before any content goes live.
- Inappropriate content will be removed as soon as YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND becomes aware of it.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND staff/volunteers should separate their own personal social networking presence from that of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND requests that anyone who wishes to set up a social networking presence associated with YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND but not managed by it, e.g. the alumni of an NYT or for the participants of a festival, contact YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND in advance. Any content included on these sites should be appropriate and not damage the reputation of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND will take bullying or harassment by anyone who uses YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's third party sites very seriously. Any instance will be reported to those who run the website and if appropriate to the Gardaí.
- Staff/volunteers should report any suspicious behaviour by a user. If abuse is suspected, staff/volunteers should follow **YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Internal Reporting Procedures. (See Section 3.4).**
- Youth theatre leaders/members, professional theatre companies, theatre/drama practitioners, arts organisations and youth work organisations working for the benefit of young people are welcome to post content on YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND third party sites. Content from other parties is considered on an individual basis and

will be removed if not in keeping with YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND ethos or if not of relevance to the interests of young people and/or theatre as an artform.

- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND does not require any users of third party sites to disclose personal information.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND will promote safe use of social networking and other third-party sites among participants on its programme when drafting the group contract.
- In the case of a programme where use of social media is an aspect of the programme, as in the case of the Young Critics, staff will provide clear guidance to young people on safe use of the platform(s) in question.
- Use of images/video footage will be in line with YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND policy.

### **Acceptable Usage Policy for YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND Third-Party Sites:**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND requires that those who use/access YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's presence on a third-party site:

- Follow the code of conduct/terms of use provided by the site's creators.
- Do not post content/comments that could be interpreted as inappropriate or offensive
- Do not attempt to defraud or target any other user.
- Do not bully or harass any other user
- Do not copy content, images or footage without receiving prior permission from YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND.
- Do not misuse or take out of context any content, images, or footage posted.
- Do not post links to potentially inappropriate or offensive content
- Do not tag photos/videos posted by YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND
- Do not add comments to photos/videos that may identify individual young people.
- Do not identify individual young people when utilising the 'check-in' function on Facebook.

## **Legislation and the Internet**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND is aware that there is legislation in Ireland that has relevance to misuse of the Internet such as the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) (Amendment) Act 2007, the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act (1997) and the Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998. We will make a report to the Statutory Authorities if there is a criminal dimension to any misuse that relates to YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Internet presence.

### **Section 4.6: Use of Images/Video Footage of Young People**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND is conscious of the responsibility it has for ensuring any images/video footage of young people are used in a safe and responsible manner that does not put any young person at risk. Photographs and visual images are regarded as personal data under the Data Protection Acts 1998/2003. Therefore, all images must be obtained fairly and used only for one or more specified legal purposes.

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has developed the following policy on use of images/footage, informed by the Arts Council's ***Guidelines for taking and using images of children and young people in the arts sector (2009)***:

- Images/footage of young people will only be recorded if there is a valid reason relating to the YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND programme.
- Consent for the use of images/footage is sought from young people participating on YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND events, and from the parents/guardians where a participant is under 18.
- A refusal of permission will not restrict the participation of a young person on a YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND programme.
- No images should be taken by YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND staff/volunteers with any mobile phone unless for the purposes of a YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND event/programme and only after parental consent has been received. Any such images should be transferred to a YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND computer as soon as possible and should not be retained on the mobile phone.
- Participants and primary carers are informed in advance as to the specific uses of any images/footage and as to whether they will be provided to third parties.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND will only use images/footage for the reasons specified.
- Care will be taken that young people whose images are captured are dressed in a

way that is appropriate to their age.

- Every precaution will be taken to ensure no image/footage used may expose any participant to embarrassment or distress.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND only provides images/footage to third parties when there is a legitimate reason for doing so e.g. distributing images to the media when promoting a National Youth Theatre production or in the case of an YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND event being featured as part of a wider event as in the case of the Young Critics panel and the Dublin Theatre Festival. We may share images with funders for non-commercial purposes where the funder has adequate policies in place.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND will only identify/provide names of individual young people to third parties in a situation where they are being publicly acknowledged e.g. if a youth theatre member has been cast in a National Youth Theatre and a local newspaper wants to run a feature on him/her. Parental consent will be sought before providing any details of a young person aged under 18.
- When using images/footage YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND will not provide information that could be used to contact a young person.
- Images/footage will only be used in the context in which they were captured.
- Information such as date taken, names, context of images, and whether consent was provided will be stored with images that are retained.
- While in the vast majority of cases images of groups will be used rather than images of individual participants there are exceptions e.g. if a participant's local newspaper was seeking an image of them for a feature. Another exception might be in the case where a publicity image is taken of an individual young person and it is agreed that this is the best way to represent a production or event. If the image of a single young person is used, YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND will be especially careful that the image is appropriate and that tight control is maintained over how the image is used and distributed.
- It is important that images are reflective of the diversity of young people participating on any YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND programme.
- We will be particularly sensitive when using images of young people whom we are aware are particularly vulnerable.
- Any misuse of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND images/footage should be reported to the YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND Director or Designated Liaison Person.
- If any individual is unhappy with the manner an image/footage is obtained, used or retained by YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND, they should follow YOUTH THEATRE

IRELAND's Complaints Procedure. Any such complaint will be taken very seriously and procedures will be followed in full.

- While YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND cannot completely control and regulate the taking of photos or video footage at its events by participants or members of the public, we request that any such images/footage are not made available in the public sphere, are used in a way that is appropriate and are kept within the context in which they were captured.
- It should be made clear to participants that there are situations when it is inappropriate to capture photos/footage of each other. For example, while participants are getting dressed or undressed. During the drafting of the group contract, young people should be made aware of good practice on capturing and distributing images. It should be made clear to them that they need to think carefully before they post an image where it can be viewed by others and should not take images out of context. They should be made aware that there are unscrupulous individuals who might use images to identify young people and may seek to contact them.
- Staff/volunteers should be alert to the possibility of participants capturing and distributing images with a view to causing another young person embarrassment or upset. Participants should be informed that any such occurrence will be taken extremely seriously and will be treated as an instance of bullying. Depending on the circumstances, it may be treated as a child protection issue and a report may be made to the statutory authorities.

### **Use of images/footage on the Internet.**

The posting of images/footage on the Internet is an area of particular risk and YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND is cognisant of the possibility of images and footage being used and manipulated by those who seek to harm children and young people and the danger of any information provided being used to contact a young person with a view to grooming them for abuse.

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND takes the following steps for the use of images/footage on the Internet:

- Particular care should be taken when posting such content on the Internet that it is appropriate, does not provide any information that could be used to contact or locate a young person and does not put a young person at risk in any other way.
- While it is impossible to completely control use of images once they are posted to the internet, YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND requests that all users of its own website and

any third-party sites on which it has a presence adhere to the following, taken from YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Acceptable Usage Policy:

- Do not use any content including images from the site without receiving permission from YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND.
- Do not misuse or take out of context any content on the site including images or video footage.
- Do not tag photos posted by YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND.
- Any comments added should be respectful and not targeted at any particular young person.
- Do not add comments to photos that may identify individual young people in the photo.

#### **Section 4.7: Health and Safety**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND is aware of the duty of care it has to staff, volunteers, young people and all those who access its services. The organisation is cognisant of its responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Acts and has developed a Safety Statement as required. In terms of its responsibility to safeguard the physical wellbeing of young people YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has taken the following steps:

- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND uses venues for its events/activities that are fit for purpose and well maintained
- Follows the safety instructions and fire regulations provided by venues it uses.
- If staff/volunteers identify a hazard in a venue, they should inform the appropriate person in the venue immediately.
- Risk Assessments are carried out. **(See Section Below)**
- Fire Drills are organised in cooperation with the venue.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND takes a register of all who are present at its events/activities
- Ensures appropriate levels of supervision are provided for all activities/events.  
YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND engages the services of Welfare Officers for events involving young people that involve overnight stays.
- Has measures in place should an emergency arise. **(See Section Below)**
- All activities are led by practitioners who have a high level of expertise in the particular practice. We recognise that this is particularly important in activities where there is an increased level of physical risk. Participants should be informed

when they carry out exercises with increased risk, that should only be attempted under expert supervision.

- Checks are made to ensure equipment/materials used are safe and fit for purpose.
- Activities are age appropriate and developed with the specific abilities and needs of the participants in mind.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND assesses proposed activities in advance at team meetings. Health and Safety is always a factor that is considered when programming events and activities.
- The Director is responsible for the implementation of Health and Safety policy within the organisation. It is the responsibility of all staff to familiarise themselves with Health and Safety policy and procedures and observe them in their work.

### **Risk Assessments**

Risk assessments are conducted as part of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's programme planning.

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has developed a Risk Assessment Template that it uses when planning activities and events such as the National Youth Theatre and National Festival of Youth Theatres. There are seven aspects to YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND Risk Assessment:

1. Identify Risk
2. Identify people who might be harmed and how
3. Potential Outcomes
4. Likelihood of these Outcomes
5. Potential Severity of these Outcomes
6. Action Required to Reduce Risk
7. Details of when and how the Action will be taken.

**(See Appendix 2: Risk Assessment Template)**

### **Emergency Procedures**

The following measures have been put in place should an emergency occur during an YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND event/activity:

- A well-stocked First Aid Kit is available at all events and an individual with training in

First Aid is present.

- Staff are provided with details of local doctors and hospitals, other local emergency services such as the Gardaí
- Staff are provided with emergency contact details for parents and details of any dietary/medical requirements a participant may have. **(This information is to be managed as outlined in YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Confidentiality Policy see Section 6).**

### **If an emergency occurs during an YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND event/activity**

In any emergency situation, the wellbeing of the young person(s) should always be the overriding concern and any action taken should reflect this. Although every emergency situation will be different and will have its own unique factors, the following is an outline of the procedures that should be followed by staff/volunteers.

If a participant becomes ill/receives an injury:

- The person with First Aid training will make an initial assessment.
- Depending on the severity of the illness/injury, the following steps may be taken:
  - it may be decided that it is sufficient for the participant to sit out the session
  - it may be decided that the best course of action is for the young person to return to the accommodation. If the young person is under 18, they must be accompanied by a Welfare Officer and another adult. **\*See Note Below**
  - It may be decided that the young person requires the attention of a medical professional. The young person should be brought to the nearest doctor by a Welfare Officer and another adult. **\*See Note Below**
  - If the illness/injury is thought to be serious and/or life threatening, an ambulance should be requested immediately. A Welfare Officer should accompany the young person to the hospital.
  - In any case of illness/injury, the parents/primary carers should be informed as soon as possible.
  - If YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Designated Liaison Person is not present, he/she should be informed also.
  - An **Accident/Incident Report Form (See Appendix One)** should be completed by the appropriate person as soon as possible. The best person

to complete this will usually be the First Aid person who made the initial assessment but it may be that they are not aware of all the relevant information e.g. if someone else goes to the hospital with the young person. In this case, they should complete the report together. Staff should contact the Designated Liaison Person if they are unsure how to proceed with this.

**\*Note: If additional adults are needed to supervise the remaining group or to travel with the Welfare Officer, the YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND Office should be contacted. The Welfare Officer should not leave until the relief person arrives.**

### **In the case of hospitalisation**

- If it is feasible, the Designated Liaison Person should travel to the hospital as soon as possible to support the Welfare Officer or to relieve them if appropriate. If this is not feasible, as in the case of a trip abroad, the DLP should remain in regular phone contact with the Welfare Officer and consideration will be given to the best way to support him/her.
- If the parents/primary carers do not state their intention to travel to the hospital, the Designated Liaison Person can request that they do so.

### **If a young person has to travel home due to an illness/injury.**

If the young person is unable to continue with the project due to the illness or injury, and is aged under 18, YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Designated Liaison Person can request that the parents travel to the location of the project to bring the young person home.

### **Maintenance of Records/Review**

There is currently no legislation in Ireland that defines the retention period for Health and Safety records. However, the 2005 Health and Safety at Work Act, requires an employer to keep a record of any accident or dangerous occurrence that is reportable to the Health and Safety Authority for a period of ten years.

### **YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND retention periods:**

Safety Statements: Holds until superseded

Risk Assessments: 10 years

Accident/Incident Reports: 10 years

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND reviews its Health and Safety policy and procedures on an annual basis.

## **Insurance**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has Insurance Cover that is tailored to its needs. This cover includes Public Liability Insurance, Employer Liability Insurance and Directors and Officers Insurance. At the time of renewal of policy, YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's General Manager meets with the insurance company to discuss the specifics of the YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND programme in the year ahead. If there are adjustments to the programme, the Administrative Officer contacts the Insurance Company to inform them and the insurance cover is adjusted accordingly.

## **Section 4.8: Residentials**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND organises a number of programmes that involve overnight stays for young people. This can be for a single night or for a period of a number of weeks as in the case of the National Youth Theatre. We adhere to the following procedures for residentials:

- Welfare Officers are engaged for any project that involves overnight stays.
- Welfare Officers are provided with a clear role description. All Welfare Officers are subject to garda vetting. Welfare Officers are inducted in YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Code of Behaviour for Staff/Volunteers.
- All Welfare Officers receive induction in YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Child Protection and Welfare Policy and procedures
- Welfare Officers are provided with Accident/Incident Report Forms, YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND Internal Reporting Forms and the Tusla Standard Reporting Form.
- They are provided with contact details for YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Designated Liaison Person and are instructed to contact her should an accident occur or if a child protection concern arises. They are also instructed that in the case of a child protection emergency they can report a concern directly to Tusla /An Garda Siochana and are given contact details for these authorities.

- Clear information about the programme and the overnight element of it is provided to parents/primary carers. Parental consent and contact details are requested for all members aged under 18. Dietary and medical requirements are requested for all participants. Parents are requested to ensure that young people have an adequate supply of any necessary medication with them. If members will be doing additional activities that involve a higher level or risk than usual activities, permission will be sought. Personal information will be treated in line with YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Confidentiality Policy. **(See Section 6)**
- Parents/primary carers are informed that in the event of an emergency that renders the young person unable to travel home by themselves or if a young person is hospitalised, they will have to travel to the location of the event.
- All YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND events involving the participation of young people are alcohol and drug free for all participants regardless of age.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has developed a Health and Safety procedures **(see Section 4.7)**. All Welfare Officers are provided with a copy and discuss it with the Designated Person during induction.
- Welfare Officers will have access to money in cash form in case of an emergency.
- If there is an issue in relation to the accommodation/venues used, Welfare Officers should inform the accommodation/venue manager. They should also inform the Designated Liaison Person as soon as possible.
- Ongoing dialogue should take place between welfare and artistic teams on an event so that the relevant people are aware of any difficulties that a young person is experiencing and can offer them the necessary support. Any discussions should be conducted in the strictest confidentiality and any written records should be treated in line with YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's **Confidentiality Policy (see Section 6)**
- There needs to a balance struck between the members' privacy and the necessity of supervision especially when they are in the accommodation. All staff need to be mindful of this. They should avoid being alone with a young person. If they need to talk to young people individually, they should do so in a public place where they are visible to other adults. Any supervisory rounds while young people are in bedrooms should be done in pairs. Staff should always knock before entering a young person's bedroom.

**There are more specific considerations that need to be applied to participation in International events, YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has developed guidelines to planning/participating in trips abroad. *Go Happy, Come Back Safely*. These guidelines will be followed for international projects.**

#### **Section 4.9 Approach to Working with Participants aged 18 or over**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND works with young people aged 12-25. Individual programmes are developed with the needs and abilities of the target age group in mind. There are events such as the National Festival where all young people within the age spectrum participate. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND values the contribution that young people over 18 make to the organisation and to youth theatre in general. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND takes the following approach to those over 18 who participate in its programme:

- The same Group Contract applies to everyone who participates on an YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND programme, regardless of age. All participants have the same rights and responsibilities.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has a no-alcohol/drugs rule, regardless of the age of the participant
- While YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND doesn't request parental consent for those aged over 18, we do request details of someone to contact in the case of an emergency
- Seeks consent from those over 18 for use of images
- A disclosure of abuse by a participant over 18, should be treated with the same sensitivity as that of a disclosure by a young person who is under 18. The consent of the participant should be sought before making a report to Tusla. However, regardless of whether consent is given, if the alleged abuser still poses a risk to a child/young person, a report will need to be made to the Statutory Authorities. Staff/volunteers should follow the reporting procedures outlined in **Section 3.4**. Details of the HSE National Counselling Service will be provided to the participant in question.

#### **SECTION 4.10: Dealing with Disruptive Behaviour**

In its work with young people, YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND emphasises the benefits and rewards for positive behaviour. However, there may be occasions when the behaviour of a young person or a group of young people disrupts work on the programme and impacts on other participants. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND promotes positive behaviour and creates an environment where disruptive behaviour is not acceptable by:

- Creating a Group Contract with the participants that outlines not only the rights of participants but also their responsibilities and the kind of behaviour that is unacceptable.
- Emphasising on an ongoing basis, the necessity of teamwork and cooperation, not only to ensure that the objectives of a particular programme are met, but also to ensure that everyone involved has a positive experience.
- Promoting awareness of the benefits to be gained from giving full commitment and focus to a programme and the goals that can be achieved by doing so.
- Participants on YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND programmes are there as representatives of their youth theatre and are reminded of the importance of being good ambassadors for their group.

### **Dealing with Instances of Disruptive Behaviour**

There are a whole range of behaviours that could be termed 'disruptive'. It is impossible to offer appropriate responses for the full range of behaviours. The following are general pointers. If a staff member/volunteer is unsure about how to handle a specific situation, they should contact the Designated Liaison Person.

- Staff/volunteers should always react calmly, regardless of the level of frustration involved. They should never act in a way that intimidates, ridicules or humiliates any young person. Any response should be in line with YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Code of Behaviour for Staff/Volunteers.
- The response to any instance of disruptive behaviour should always be proportionate.
- The response should be initiated as soon as possible and should be explained in full to the participant.
- More than one staff member/volunteer should be present when dealing with disruptive behaviour.
- A written record should be kept of the behaviour and the response to it. This should be given to the Designated Liaison Person as soon as possible.

- The staff member/volunteer should contact the Designated Liaison Person to discuss involvement of the parents and the best way to go about this.

### **Possible Responses to Disruptive Behaviour**

As indicated above, each scenario will be different and responses should always be proportionate. The nature of the YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND programme will also have an impact on the kind of responses available. For example, a very short-term programme may not allow a time-out as a possible response. Below are some possible responses:

1. Depending on the seriousness of the behaviour, it may be sufficient for the disruptive nature of the behaviour to be explained to the young person and the Group Contract referenced.
2. Some way of making amends/restitution – e.g. if something is broken, it is replaced or if a possession is taken, it is returned
3. Time-out from a programme
4. Increased supervision
5. Sanctions such as missing out on a social activity or a theatre trip.
6. An individual 'contract' or agreement could be developed setting out the behavioural improvements required and the rewards for their attainment.
7. Temporary or Permanent Exclusion. Permanent exclusion will only be considered when other possible options have been exhausted and/or when it is felt that the behaviour is putting other young people at risk. Full consideration will be given to the possible consequences on the young person in question and the rest of the group.

### **Additional Support/Referral**

To ensure that a young person's needs are being met and that they are getting the best possible support, additional or specialist advice may be sought from other agencies or organisations. It may be felt that it is necessary to refer a young person to another agency.

If it is felt that the behaviour is the result of some trauma or that the young person who is displaying disruptive behaviour is at risk in any way, a decision may be taken to make a

report to Tusla. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Internal Reporting Procedures should be followed. **(See Section 3.4)**

### **Working with Parents/Primary Carers**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND recognises the importance of informing parents/primary carers about their young person's participation on the YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND programme and any issues pertaining to it. In terms of disruptive behaviour, parents/primary carers will be informed about any instance of disruptive behaviour that elicits a response beyond the more informal one outlined in Possible Response 1 above. If it is felt that informing a parent/primary carer of a young person will put them at risk, they will not be informed. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Designated Liaison Person may seek advice from Tusla if they have a concern about informing parents/primary carers.

### **Section 4.11 Guidelines for YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND projects involving youth theatre groups and groups from other youth work organisations**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND organises several projects that involve collaboration with youth theatres and other youth groups. This policy relates to those collaborative projects that involve the participation of groups of young people. In the case of these types of collaborations, it is important to have a clear understanding of the roles and the responsibilities of both YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND and the other groups involved. The policy is based on the understanding that collaborating groups have policies, such as Child Protection policies, that reflect accepted best practice.

While YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has put the following guidelines in place as a framework for these kinds of projects, we are cognisant of the importance of having open dialogue around the particulars of each project. There are a multitude of scenarios that can occur within any particular project and it is impossible to legislate in advance for each possible scenario. As with every aspect of the work of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND, the overriding principle to be followed in all situations is the wellbeing of the young person will always be the most important consideration.

### **General**

1. For any YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND project that involves the participation of a group of young people from a youth theatre or other organisation, the youth theatre/organisation must provide their own leaders. These leaders are responsible for the young people in their group. Depending on the nature of the project, there may be specific requirements in relation to leaders. For example, organisations should provide 2 leaders aged over 21 for residential projects.
2. The youth theatre's/organisation's own procedures/policies should be followed in matters that affect a youth theatre's/organisation's own group and that do not affect or involve young people from other groups.
3. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's policy and procedures will be followed if an issue or concern arises under the following circumstances:
  - during a YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND-led activity
  - involves a YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND staff member/volunteer
  - involves a freelance practitioner whose services have been engaged by YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND
4. While each group participating can have their own rules in relation to internal matters, leaders and young people from different groups must be willing to agree shared rules on matters that affect all groups. This could be agreeing a group contract, rules around acceptable behaviour during activities, or lights-out times in the case of a residential project.
5. A Code of Behaviour for Leaders should be agreed. Depending on the nature of the project, this may be drafted by YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND and circulated in advance or may be created in collaboration between all leaders at the start of a project.
6. Depending on the nature of the project, a Code of Conduct for young people may be circulated in advance or a Group Contract drafted with participants on commencement of the project.
7. While YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has Public Liability Insurance in place, each group should ensure that they have adequate insurance to cover their participation in the project.

### **Welfare/Child Protection**

8. The leaders from the youth theatre/other organisation are responsible for getting the group to and from the project location.
9. All leaders involved in a YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND project should have been recruited in line with best practice guidelines and should have completed the garda vetting process. Youth theatres/ organisations should only send leaders about whom they do not have child protection concerns. Leaders should also have completed child protection training.
10. Youth theatres/organisations should ensure that they have parental consent for the young person's participation in the project and that they have given permission for the information to be passed on to YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND. Relevant information pertaining to medical, dietary or special needs of the participants should be provided to YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND well in advance of the project beginning. Where leaders of other groups will have a supervisory role over young people from another group, relevant information pertaining to the young people will be shared on a need to know basis. Any sensitive personal data will be managed in line with YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Confidentiality Policy.
11. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has a no tolerance approach to bullying. Any instance of bullying involving young people from the same group should be managed in line with that group's policy. Any instance involving a young person from another group will be managed in line with YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's anti-bullying policy, in collaboration with the leaders of the groups of the young people in question.
12. Photographs/video footage of young people aged under-18 should only be taken if parental consent has been received in advance. If images/footage involve young people from one youth theatre/organisation and are being used by that youth theatre/organisation, they should be managed in line with that their own policy and procedures. If a youth theatre/organisation is using images/footage of young people from other groups or a mix of groups, they should follow YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's policy. If young people from more than one group are represented in images/footage, they should be managed in line with YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's policy.
13. Should any leader have a child protection concern or receive a disclosure of abuse during an YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND event in relation to a young person in their own group, they should follow their own organisations reporting procedures. There

may be circumstances when the YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND Designated Liaison Person should also be informed. For example, if the concern relates to a leader from another group or YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND representative or in any circumstance where other young people involved in the project may be at risk. If the concern/disclosure relates to a young person from another group, they should inform YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Designated Liaison Person and YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's policy and procedures will be followed.

14. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Designated Liaison Person or the Director of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND should be informed of any allegation made that relates to an YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND project. If an allegation of abuse is made against a leader from any group during a YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND event, YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's reporting procedures in relation to the alleged victim should be followed. While the youth theatre's/organisation's own policy should be followed regarding any employment/disciplinary issues about the leader, YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND and the alleged perpetrator's own youth theatre/organisation should collaborate on liaising with the statutory authorities. The criminal dimension of any allegation will not be ignored. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND recognises the necessity of cooperation between itself, the statutory authorities and any other groups involved in such circumstances. Guidance may be sought from Tusla /An Gardaí Síochána about the best way to proceed.
15. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND recognises the extremely sensitive nature of allegations of peer abuse and will seek advice from the statutory authorities should this kind of allegation arise during a project. The need for cooperation and sensitivity from group leaders of the young people involved is essential. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND will seek advice from the statutory authorities on the best way to manage an allegation of this type and will consider it a child protection issue for all young people under 18 involved.
16. Any phone, email or online communications between a leader and a young person involved in a YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND project should be safe and responsible. Leaders when communicating with young people from their own group should follow their own policy and procedures. Otherwise YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's policy and procedures should be followed. There should be no reason for a leader to be in contact with a young person from another group before or after a project.
17. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND staff on duty will have copies of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Internal Reporting Form, YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Incident and

Accident Reporting Form and the Tusla Standard Reporting Form. They will also have details of local Garda Stations and the local Tusla Office.

### **Confidentiality**

18. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND requires that any adult who has access to sensitive personal data through their involvement with a YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND project, treats it with the utmost confidentiality and only shares it on a need to know basis. Information should only be shared in the interests of the young person as in the case of a medical emergency or should a child protection issue arise. We wish to emphasise that sharing concerns in relation to a child protection issue is not a breach of confidentiality.

### **Complaints**

19. If any participant, leader, parent or other stakeholder has a complaint in relation to a YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND project they should follow YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Complaints Procedure. While complaints can be communicated verbally in person or by phone and email, there is a Complaints Form that the person making the complaint will be asked to complete. For more information contact YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Director Michelle Carew on 01-8781301 or by email on [michelle@youththeatre.ie](mailto:michelle@youththeatre.ie) If the complaint relates to a leader or young person from another organisation, YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Director will communicate the information to the other organisation and discussion will take place on the best way to handle the complaint.

### **Contacting YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Designated Person**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Designated Liaison Person is Louise Holian and she can be contacted through the YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND Office on 01-8781301 or by email on [louise@youththeatre.ie](mailto:louise@youththeatre.ie)

## **SECTION 5: RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

### **Recruitment of Staff**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has developed detailed procedures for recruitment of staff and these are detailed in YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Staff Handbook. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND follows best practice on recruitment by adhering to the following procedures:

- All posts are advertised widely.
- Equality of opportunity governs the recruitment process.
- Job descriptions and person specifications are developed for all roles.
- The shortlisting process is dictated by the job description and person specification.
- Interviews focus on both suitability for the specific role but also the broader suitability of the candidate to work with young people in the context of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND.
- References for successful candidates must be obtained and one of these must be either a current or immediate past employer. While a written reference is required, all referees will also be contacted personally. Successful applicants will also be asked for proof of identification.
- Successful candidates will be subject to garda vetting and all candidates will be informed of this requirement at the advertising stage. **(See Appendix Three : YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Garda Vetting Policy)**
- All applicants are required to sign a written declaration to say that there is no reason why they are unsuitable to work with children or young people.
- No person who would be deemed to constitute a 'risk' will be employed. Applicants with any child-related convictions and applicants who refuse to submit a garda vetting application will cease to be considered for a role. Where details of convictions / specified information are returned in relation to any applicant as part of the garda vetting process, the suitability of each applicant will be considered on a case-by-case basis following the decision-making procedures outlined in the Youth Theatre Ireland Garda Vetting Policy.

### **Support, Training and Supervision of Staff in relation to Child Protection.**

- All staff receive induction training within two weeks of commencing employment and in advance of having direct contact with young people. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures are included in this induction. All staff will be asked to sign the policy to indicate that they understand it and will adhere to the procedures outlined.
- Child Protection Training will be sourced for all staff members. All such staff will be required to complete Tusla's Children First E-Learning Programme but additional training will be sourced where necessary to provide training appropriate to the staff members level of responsibility. Every effort will be made to ensure the training takes place within the probationary period.
- There is a probationary period of 6 months for all new staff members. Extension of service beyond that period will be dependent on the satisfactory performance of duties and conduct as judged by YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND, including the satisfactory completion of the Garda Vetting process. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND recognises its obligations to support the staff member during this period and to fully assist them in becoming familiar with the specifics of their role in addition to the ethos and practices of the organisation.
- All new staff members, who have not completed Child Protection training within the year prior to their commencement with YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND, will be required to attend Child Protection training at the next available opportunity.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND will continue to review Child Protection policies and procedures and communicate changes in legislation and offer guidance on best practice to staff on an ongoing basis.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has appointed a Designated Liaison Person who can advise other staff members on specific child protection issues that may arise.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND holds fortnightly team meetings when staff can update each other on their work and voice any specific issues they have in relation to their programme areas.

### **Recruitment/Selection of Volunteers**

**Note: This section applies to anyone who works in a voluntary capacity with YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND and includes student placements, internships and any government employment schemes such as the Community Employment Scheme.**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has developed a volunteer policy that describes the centrality of volunteers to the organisation and recognises the duty of care that YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has to its volunteers. It also indicates how volunteers fit into the overall structure of the organisation. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND meets best practice in the selection of volunteers by adhering to the following procedures:

- Clear role descriptions are developed for volunteer positions. Applicants are required to complete a Volunteer Application Form. This form includes a declaration of suitability for working with young people **(See Appendix Four)**.
- Applicants are short-listed where appropriate and selected candidates will be asked to attend for interview to assess their interest and suitability and to explain both the specifics of the role and YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's ethos/approach.
- References are requested and referees are contacted personally. Proof of identification is required from volunteers.
- All volunteers who have substantial unsupervised access to young people are subject to garda vetting. Volunteers will be told at the initial stage of contact that they will be subject to vetting. **(See Appendix Three YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Garda Vetting Policy)**.

### **Support, Training and Supervision of Volunteers in relation to Child Safeguarding**

- All volunteers receive an induction into the organisation. Child Safeguarding policies and procedures are explained at this session. All volunteers will be asked to sign the policy to indicate that they understand it and will adhere to the procedures outlined.
- Child Protection Training will be sourced for all volunteers. All such volunteers will be required to complete Tusla's Children First E-Learning Programme but additional training will be sourced where necessary to provide training appropriate to the volunteers level of responsibility.
- For volunteers, who are operating in roles that involve ongoing involvement in the organisation, there will be a trial period. \* **(See note below)** This period will be used to assess the volunteer's suitability for the role but also will allow the volunteer to assess whether their involvement in YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND meets their expectations.

- All volunteers will be allocated a clearly identified supervisor who will arrange regular support meetings with them.
- Any volunteer who has contact with young people because of their role in the organisation, and who has not attended recognised Child Protection training in the year prior to the commencement of their role, will be required to attend Child Protection Training at the next available opportunity.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND will continue to review Child Protection policies and procedures and communicate changes in legislation and advised best practice to volunteers on an ongoing basis.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has appointed a Designated Liaison Person who can advise and support volunteers should they become aware of a specific child protection concern or issue.

\* No full-time volunteer position will last longer than nine months concurrently. For internships of between three and nine months, there will be a one-month probationary period. For internships of three months or less there is no probationary period and the internship can be terminated with immediate effect. A voluntary role can last for longer than nine months if part-time. An appropriate probationary period will be decided for any such voluntary positions.

### **Freelance Contractors/Seasonal Personnel**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND also engages the services of individuals for specific projects on a short-term basis. Workshop Facilitators, Directors of Productions and Welfare Officers for specific events are examples of those who fit into this category. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND selects these individuals because they possess specific skills or experience. An invitation to tender may also be issued for particular roles. In terms of Child Protection, YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND adheres to the following approach/procedure when engaging people for these roles:

- Contracts are issued that explain the role and includes reference to responsibilities and duties in relation to Child Protection.
- The requirement of garda vetting is communicated at the stage of initial contact and included on all contracts. **(See Appendix Three: Garda Vetting Policy)**
- Any individual who will have contact with young people through their role meets with the Designated Liaison Person and is inducted in YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's

Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. They are required to sign the policy to indicate that they understand it and adhere to the procedures outlined.

- All contractors/seasonal personnel will be required to complete Tusla's Children First E-Learning Programme but additional training will be sourced where necessary to provide training appropriate to the level of responsibility.
- The Designated Liaison Person is available as a source of support and advice should they have any issues or concerns.
- Anyone engaged on a freelance or seasonal basis has the same responsibilities as core staff in relation to Child Safeguarding.

## **SECTION 6: CONFIDENTIALITY**

Confidentiality involves managing sensitive information that, in the context of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND, is provided in the expectation that it will be properly managed. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND recognises that a guarantee of confidentiality is an important factor in determining the level of trust its stakeholders hold in the organisation. The organisation is committed to handling confidential information in a manner that is respectful, purposeful, professional and meets statutory requirements.

The following information is held by YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND and should be treated as confidential. This list is not exhaustive:

- Personnel records for core staff.
- Volunteer Information/Information relating to those whose services are engaged on a short-term basis.
- Participant records for the ArtsTrain course
- Garda Vetting Information including garda vetting application forms and disclosures
- Participant Information/Parental Consent Forms that include details such as date of birth, information on medical conditions etc.
- Welfare/Child Protection Reports
- Information that is gathered for research purposes that includes personal details such as ethnicity, age etc.
- Information that is commercially sensitive e.g. programme plans
- Contact information such as phone numbers, email addresses
- Marketing information such as audience members, individual donors and supporters

### **Who has access to confidential information:**

The following have access to confidential information through their involvement in YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND. All core staff have access to contact details of members and other stakeholders and are privy to commercially sensitive information. Staff also have access to information that is related to their specific role(s) including but not exclusively:

- **Director of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND**

Personnel records including application forms, appraisals, disciplinary records etc. garda vetting information as outlined in YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Garda Vetting Policy.

- **General Manager**

Information on core staff such as addresses, dates of birth and PPS numbers. Information on participants involved on YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's programmes and events.

- **Child Protection and Welfare Coordinator /Designated Liaison Person**

Garda vetting information including disclosures of convictions/prosecutions, welfare and child protection records/reports and information on young people who participate in YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND events.

- **National Training Coordinator**

PPS numbers, special requirements of participants, appraisals, disciplinary records etc. in relation to training courses

- **Youth Theatre Officer**

Participant Information/Parental Consent Information

- **Research and Development Officer**

Information gathered through research that includes personal information such as age, ethnicity etc.

Those whose services are secured for specific events such as:

- **Welfare Officers**

Participant information/parental forms, welfare/child protection reports and records

- **Artistic and Production Team on events/productions**

Individuals in this category may be given information on participants such as details of medical conditions or special requirements that may impact on a participant's artistic involvement in a programme or project. This information will only be shared with those who have a direct need to be aware of it and only when it is in the best interests of the young person. Parents/primary carers are informed about how this information is used and permission to disclose it on 'a need to know basis' is sought.

- **Board Members**

All YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND Board Members are privy to commercially sensitive information. There are limited and specific circumstances whereby a board member may be provided with other confidential information. This relates to membership of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's HR and Finance Sub-Committee and YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Garda Vetting Decision-Making Committee specifically.

### **Managing Confidential Information**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND requires that all those who have access to confidential information as a result of their involvement with YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND, adhere to the following:

- Be aware of the sensitive nature of the information to which you are privy and recognise the responsibility you have because of having access to this information.
- Familiarise yourself with YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's confidentiality policy and act accordingly
- Be aware that information including written reports is the property of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND
- Use confidential information only for the purpose(s) for which it was provided and the purpose(s) for which you are authorised to use it.
- Do not pass personal contact information on to third parties without the express permission of the person in question.
- Do not share confidential information or pass it on to a third party unless it is absolutely necessary as in the case of a child protection concern **(See below for more details)**.
- All company computers should have a log-on password
- Robust security passwords should be used for all confidential files
- Hard copy files/computer files should be retained and deleted in line with YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's retention/shredding policy.

- Be aware that confidential information may also be contained on other media such as audio tape or on video.
- Staff should not share information that is potentially commercially sensitive. If unsure about any specific instance, staff should seek clarification from the Director of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND.
- A staff member/volunteer may receive information that is confidential in error as in the case of an overheard conversation. Any information gained in this fashion is subject to the same conditions as information gained in an authorised manner and should not be shared.
- There are circumstances where confidential information is taken outside the YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND Office, for example in the case of an event involving the participation of young people where welfare leaders have copies of Participant Information/Parental Consent Forms. Personal information should be managed with care and should not be left where those without authorisation can access it. This information should be returned to the YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND Office or directly to the Director of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND or the Designated Person. Welfare/CP reports should be given to the Designated Welfare Person or Director of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND only.
- The requirement of confidentiality continues to apply after an individual's involvement with YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND ceases.

### **Confidentiality and Child Welfare/Protection**

- While it is important to respect the right of a young person to privacy and to have their personal information dealt with in a confidential and respectful manner as outlined above, there may be instances when sharing information is necessary because the well-being of a young person is at stake e.g. in the case of a child protection concern about a young person or in the case of a medical emergency. Information relating to young people can only be shared on 'a need to know' basis.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND requires that all staff/volunteers recognise that sharing information with statutory authorities in the case of a child protection concern is not a breach of confidence and is necessary to help safeguard the wellbeing of the young person in question.

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has developed detailed procedures for handling Garda Vetting information. Full details are available in the organisation's **Garda Vetting Policy**.

## **Breaches of Confidentiality**

A breach of confidentiality may lead to a disciplinary procedure.

## **Data Protection Privacy Policy**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND is aware that under the Data Protection Acts (1998/2003 and subsequent amendments) it is a data controller and these acts govern all aspects of the treatment of sensitive information YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND is committed to the following eight principles of Data Protection as summarised by the Office of the Data Commissioner:

- Obtain and process information fairly
- Keep it only for one or more specified and lawful purposes
- Use and disclose it only in ways compatible with the purposes for which it was initially given
- Keep it safe and secure
- Keep it accurate and up-to-date
- Ensure that it is adequate, relevant and not excessive
- Retain it no longer than is necessary for the specified purpose or purposes
- Give a copy of his/her personal data to any individual, on request.

## **How YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND Applies the Eight Principles of Data Protection**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND applies the eight principles in the following ways:

- Is transparent and honest about its use of confidential information and has created this policy to ensure all staff/volunteers/stakeholders are aware of how information is to be managed. All data will be handled fairly and in line with this policy.
- Clarifies the purposes for which all information is required when it is being requested. Only uses the information for stated purpose(s). For example, all booking forms for training courses are used solely for that course and not used to correspond with participants in the future unless they request to be added to YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's contact database.
- Will only use contact details for marketing purposes where the individual explicitly 'opts-in' to being contacted.

- Does not disclose information to third parties except in cases where the person to whom the information pertains gives explicit permission. The only exception would be in a case where safeguarding the wellbeing of a young person necessitated the sharing of information.
- Takes all reasonable measures to ensure information is up to date and accurate. For example, YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND sends out an annual membership form to ensure contact details are up to date.
- Information is stored securely with access limited to those with authorisation.
- Only requests information that is necessary and relevant. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND only requests information when it can demonstrate a legitimate reason for requesting it. In particular, sensitive personal information is only requested in cases where it is required for garda vetting or when having such information helps ensure the wellbeing of the young person e.g. being aware of a medical condition of a participant on an YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND programme.
- Has a retention policy with retention periods stated. Sensitive personal data is destroyed when the purpose for it no longer exists. Garda vetting information is retained in line with advice provided by the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner.
- Provides any individual with a copy of any data held in relation to them, once the request is received in writing, and will comply with this request within 40 days as required by legislation.

### **Retention Policy**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has developed a comprehensive retention/shredding policy stating the retention periods for the various types of information it holds. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has duties under Company Legislation and is committed to maintaining an archive so the history of the organisation itself and youth theatre in Ireland can be preserved. The retention periods are summarised as follows:

<b>Corporate Records</b>	Permanent
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<p><b>Financial Records</b></p> <p>End of year Audited Accounts/Bank Statements/Pension Statements</p> <p>Other financial documentation including management accounts, financial statements, invoices, receipts, credit card statements</p>	<p>Permanent</p> <p>7 Years</p>
<p><b>Programme Files</b></p>	<p>Permanent</p>
<p><b>Research Records</b></p>	<p>Duration of Research Project plus 10 years</p>
<p><b>Funding Records</b></p>	<p>Permanent</p>
<p><b>Management Plans and Procedures (including Strategic Plans, Risk Assessments)</b></p>	<p>Permanent</p>
<p><b>Recruitment Records</b></p> <p>Unsuccessful applications for vacant posts</p> <p>Job Descriptions, Adverts, Vacancy Notifications</p> <p>Written record for of interview panel's recommendation</p>	<p>1 year</p> <p>Permanent</p> <p>1 year</p>
<p><b>Personnel Records</b></p> <p>Applications and Curriculum Vitae of candidates who accept and take up a post</p> <p>References, Contracts of Employment, Training Records, Resignation/Retirement Letter, Pension Contributions Records</p> <p>Annual leave records, sick leave records, compassionate leave records, study leave records, jury service records,</p> <p>Disciplinary Records</p> <p>Details of Grievance Procedures</p>	<p>Permanent</p> <p>At least three years as required by the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997</p> <p>One year</p> <p>Six months</p>

<b>(Please note:</b> In cases of more serious disciplinary/grievance procedures or where an allegation of abuse is made against an employee, the records can be kept permanently)	
<b>Contracts for Services</b>	6 years after expiration of contract
<b>Legal Records</b>	Permanent
<b>Membership Records</b>	Permanent
<b>Health and Safety Records</b> Safety Statements Risk Assessments Accident/Incident Reports	Hold until superseded 10 years 10 years
<b>Participant Information/Parental Consent Forms</b>	Destroyed three months after event unless there is an outstanding issue in relation to a particular participant.
<b>Garda Vetting Information including processed forms and disclosures</b>	1 year unless there is an outstanding issue in relation to a particular garda vetting application
<b>Welfare Reports/Child Protection Reports</b>	Permanent

Once the retention period has elapsed, hard copy information will be destroyed by shredding. Any information held on computer, including copies, will be deleted.

### **Information Access/Storage of Information**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND stores all information in a protected environment. Confidential information is stored in the YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND Office with access limited to YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND Staff. Particularly sensitive information such as information relating to Garda Vetting and Welfare/Child Protection Reports is securely stored in a locked cabinet. Files with such information are sealed and are accessed only by the Designated Person. If the DLP is absent for a substantial period of time, they can be accessed by the Director of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND. Anyone who accesses these files must reseal and sign the file.

### **Good practice for writing reports**

It is important that information is recorded in a clear and objective way. This is especially important should an accident take place or a child protection issue arise. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND requires staff/volunteers to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Reports should be written as soon as possible after an event/incident occurs
- Reports should be written in legible handwriting or typed. They should be signed by the person who is making the report. Any changes made at a future date should be signed and dated also.
- Stick to the facts as much as possible. Try to be as accurate and comprehensive as possible.
- Stay away from supposition and speculation.
- Try and keep your own opinion out of the report.
- If you are using the words of other people, try to record them as accurately as you can, using quotes if possible.
- Use full names, addresses etc.
- Include witness statements if an incident/accident occurs
- If an accident has occurred, it is a good idea to take a photograph of the location where it took place.
- Details of any decisions made should be included
- Reports are the property of the organisation, not the individual who creates them.
- Reports, especially those relating to sensitive matters, should be securely stored and given to YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Director or Designated Person as soon as possible.

## **SECTION 7: APPROACH TO WORKING WITH PARENTS/PRIMARY CARERS**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has a young-person centred approach and promotes the importance of viewing young people as social and artistic beings in their own right. We aim to create a space where they can be themselves away from any pressures they may have in their lives. At the same time, we also recognise the rights of parents to be involved in, and informed about their son/daughter's lives including their participation in youth theatre and the YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND programme. Parents are performing an act of trust when they facilitate their young person's participation in YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND events/activities and we are obligated to honour that trust by safeguarding the wellbeing of their young person. We are aware that parents play an integral role in many youth theatres and are a valuable resource to the sector. They are also audience members for YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND productions /events and have a role in promoting the value of youth theatre and the work of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND.

### **YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND takes the following approach to parents/primary carers of young people involved in its programme:**

- Values the cooperation of parents in facilitating young people's involvement in the YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND programme.
- Recognises the right parents/primary carers have to be informed about their young person's involvement and their right to be informed about any issues that affect their son/daughter.
- Has developed an **Information Sheet for Parents/Primary Carers** that it adapts for various events/activity (**See Appendix Nine**). This serves not only to inform them about YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's ethos/approach but provides details of the specific event/activity with which their son/daughter is involved. It informs them about the various policies and procedures that YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND has in place to safeguard the wellbeing of their young person.
- Requires parental consent for participation of those under 18 in its programme. Requires consent for using images of those under 18. Will also seek consent from parents for certain specific activities that require a higher level of risk.
- Requires details from parents of any dietary/medical requirements affecting a young person under 18. Parents are informed about how this information will be used.
- Parents are provided with details of the on-duty person for the event so they can contact them should an emergency occur or just to check-in to find out how their

young person is getting on. They are also provided with contact details for the Designated Person should they have a specific issue or concern that they wish to discuss.

- Parents/primary carers will be informed immediately if their young person is ill or suffered an accident during an event/activity.
- Parents are provided with details of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Complaints Procedure.
- Parents are informed about performances and other public events that will allow them to personally experience the work of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND and the achievements of their son/daughter.

### **Parents and Child Protection**

No YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND staff member/volunteer, other than the Designated Liaison Person, should inform a parent about a child protection concern/report. The Designated Liaison Person must discuss the situation with the Director before they inform a parent about a Child Protection report, to ensure that they are not putting themselves in any danger. The Designated Liaison Person will liaise with Tusla before informing a parent. If a decision is taken to go ahead and inform the parents/primary carers, the duty social worker can advise the Designated Liaison Person on the best way to do so.

It is not necessary to inform the family that a report is being made if by doing so the child will be placed at further risk or where the family's knowledge of the report could impair Tusla's ability to carry out a risk assessment. Also, you do not need to inform the family if you reasonably believe that by doing so it may place you at risk of harm from the family.

The Designated Liaison Person should keep in mind any knowledge they have of the family and also the information the young person has provided regarding the family. They should consider some of the following:

- What is the existing relationship with the parents?
- What are the perceived possible responses from the parents?
- Are there likely to be any communication difficulties or conflict?

### **When informing parents, it is important to:**

- Be clear, honest and constructive
- Explain that the decision to report is based on a genuine concern for the welfare of

the child

- Express the hope that the child and the family will get the necessary help and support they need
- Continue to liaise with Tusla

## **SECTION 8: COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND is committed to meeting the highest possible standards in delivering its programme, supports and resources to all members/other stakeholders. We welcome feedback, both negative and positive, on all aspects of our work. We evaluate all our programmes and actively seek participant input. There may be occasions when an individual or organisation feels they have not received the best possible service from YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND. In such a circumstance, it is important we are informed and have developed this complaints procedure to help ensure that any such feedback is dealt with in an efficient, systematic and satisfactory manner. We recognise that complaints can be of varying severity and will deal with complaints in a matter that is reflective of their nature.

### **Definition of a complaint**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, which suggests failure to perform a function or provide a service in line with stated organisational practices and policies.

### **Who can access YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's complaint procedure?**

This procedure can be accessed by any individual, group or organisation who has used YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's services either directly or indirectly including:

- Affiliated youth theatres
- Members of affiliated youth theatres
- Non-affiliated youth theatres/youth drama groups
- Individual practitioners
- Parents of young people who access YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's services
- Other client organisations e.g. Local Authorities, funding agencies
- Other shareholders where a contract of provision exists such as corporate sponsors, donors etc.
- Members of the general public who have accessed YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's services e.g. audience members who attend productions

### **Accessibility**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND will endeavour to make this procedure easily accessible to all these individuals/groups. We recognise that some individual may require additional support in accessing the procedure such as in the case of an individual with a disability or where there is a language issue, YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND will take all reasonable measures to provide this support.

### **YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Approach to Complaints**

Any representative of YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND to whom a complaint is made should adhere to the following good practice guidelines:

- Respond in an open, non-judgemental way
- Explain the procedure for handling complaints
- Respect the confidentiality of the person who is making the complaint and the person about whom the complaint is being made
- Make every effort to deal with the complaint in a fair, balanced and objective fashion
- Act on the complaint. Failure to do so may undermine confidence in the organisation and its procedure.

(Adapted from CDYSB Toolkit)

### **Procedure for dealing with Complaints**

#### **Stage One**

- Complaints/concerns can be communicated by phone, email, by post or in person. If a complaint is received verbally, the person making it may be asked to produce a written version.
- While any staff member can receive a complaint, ideally complaints should be addressed to The Director, who will respond to the complaint in the method it was communicated i.e. by letter, email, phone. The Director will explain the complaints procedure in this initial communication.
- A response will be made to the complaint within 5 working days. We will endeavour to resolve less serious complaints at this stage. Possible outcomes are listed under

Stage 2 of the procedure. A written record of the complaint and how it was resolved will be kept.

## Stage Two

- If the complaint is of a more serious nature or if the person is not satisfied with the outcome, the second stage of the procedure is entered into.
- At this stage, full details of the complaint will need to be received in writing. We have developed a Complaints Form (**See Appendix Twelve**) to be filled in by the person making the complaint. The complaint will be formally acknowledged in writing. The person making the complaint will be provided with an explanation of the next stage of the procedure and a realistic time-frame for the completion of the process. They will also be informed who is responsible for investigating the complaint.
- The Complaints Committee is responsible for handling the complaint at this stage of the process. The committee is made up of the Director, Designated Welfare Person and a minimum of one Board Member.
- If the complaint has been responded to at stage one of the process, an examination of the original decision will be carried out.
- If the complaint relates to a specific staff member/volunteer, the procedure as outlined in YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Staff Handbook will be followed in full.
- A meeting may be held between the person investigating the complaint and the person who is making the complaint. They may also meet with the staff member who is the subject of any complaint in line with the procedure outlined in the Staff Handbook.
- Both the person making the complaint and the subject of the complaint will be given the right of representation. This might be a friend or a colleague.
- A written record will be kept at each stage of the process.
- It may be felt that the complaint/concern necessitates the involvement of an outside agency such as Tusla or An Garda Síochána.
- The person making the complaint and the subject of the complaint will be informed of the decision in writing.

- If any disciplinary procedures are deemed appropriate, the procedure outlined in the YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND Staff Handbook will be followed.
- Other possible outcomes may include:
  - either a written or verbal apology
  - an explanation as to the reason for the situation that led to the complaint
  - a review of the situation that led to the complaint
  - an assurance that there will be a change in practice, if this is felt necessary followed by enactment of this change
  - a formal investigation. This could take the form of an investigation by senior management or in a more serious case, an outside agency such as the Gardaí may have to be brought in.
- A written record will be kept at all stages of the process
- All complaints and any records relating to them will be treated as confidential with information shared only on a need to know basis. Complaints are subject to YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Confidentiality Policy **(See Section 6)**

### **Appeals**

If a person who makes a complaint is not happy with the outcome of the procedure outlined above, they have the right to appeal. The complainant must inform YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND of their wish to appeal within 5 working days of being informed of the original decision. The appeal will be handled by the Board. They will examine all the information that has been gathered through the complaints procedure and may hold a further meeting with the person who has made the complaint, the subject of the complaint or both.

A staff member/volunteer also has a right to appeal. The procedure to be followed is outlined in the YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND Staff Handbook.

### **Handling a Concern/Complaint from a Young Person**

As outlined in YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Youth Participation Policy, the input and feedback of young people is integral to both the development of programmes and the broader development of the organisation as a whole. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND fosters an environment of openness and encourages young people to voice any concerns they may have in relation to their involvement with YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND. If a young person has a complaint or wishes to voice a concern, they will be treated with respect and the issue

will be taken seriously. Their complaint/concern will be handled according to the procedure outlined above with the following exceptions:

- The complaint will be handled with extra sensitivity and care and in a way that is age appropriate. The well-being of the young person will be of paramount importance throughout the process.
- The Designated Person will be made available to the young person to support them through the process. If the complaint/concern relates to the DP, another appropriate person will be given this role. Alternatively, the young person can nominate a parent or other adult that they wish to represent/support them during the process. Any meetings with the young person will be conducted with a parent/another appropriate adult present.
- In line with YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND policy, parents/primary carers will be informed of any concerns/issues that relate to their son/daughter once doing so will not put the young person in danger.

### **Complaints that relate to Child Protection Issues**

If a complaint relates to a child protection issue, YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's internal reporting procedures will be followed. If the complaint involves an allegation against a YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND staff member or volunteer, a formal investigation will begin immediately.

## **SECTION 9: INTERAGENCY COOPERATION**

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND takes the following approach to working with other agencies and organisations in relation to child protection:

- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND recognises the necessity of a coordinated approach to child protection and will cooperate with the Gardaí, Tusla and any other appropriate agency or organisation.
- Once reasonable grounds for concern have been established, YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Designated Liaison Person will inform the Tusla about a child protection issue.
- All staff/volunteers are informed of the necessity of making a report under such circumstances.
- Mandated persons employed by Youth Theatre Ireland are made aware of their legal obligation to report child protection concerns.
- The Designated Liaison Person will use the Standard Reporting Form to make a report
- Other staff and volunteers have access to Standard Reporting Forms in case an emergency situation arises.
- The DLP and other staff/volunteers including any mandated persons, are provided with contact details of the local Tusla Office.
- As outlined under YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's reporting procedures, the DLP and other staff/volunteers, are aware that if they are unsure whether the concern constitutes reasonable grounds for concern, they can consult informally with a Duty Social Worker
- All staff and volunteers are informed in the case of a child protection emergency, outside Tusla Office hours, they need to inform the local Gardaí and are provided with contact details for the local station.
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND is aware that there may be a criminal investigation to a child protection issue and will cooperate fully with any investigation
- YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND also recognises that we have a role in continuing to support the young person after a child protection concern is reported.

- We are aware that there are a number of organisations that have specific expertise in relation to child protection and the welfare of children/young people. YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Designated Liaison Person, or another staff member/volunteer, may seek advice from these organisations on a specific issue. There may be circumstances when it is more appropriate to refer a young person to one of these organisations. Included in YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND's Child Protection and Welfare Policy is a list of National Support Organisations that have specific expertise. **(See Appendix Fifteen)**
- If YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND is working with another organisation on a programme involving young people, there will be discussion around the child protection policy and procedures to be used and where responsibility lies in terms of reporting. We will recommend that good practice is followed and that the most robust policy and procedures take precedence.