

Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures



November 2024

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Version History

Current Version:

Version 1.45 - 20/08/2025 - Updated Anti-Bullying Policy

Previous Versions:

Version 1.4 - 01/05/2025 - Updated Board Members, minor formatting fixes.

Version 1.2 - Clarity Around mandated persons - 1/1/2025

Version 1.0 - 1/11/2024

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About

Youth Theatre Ireland

Youth Theatre Ireland's Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures have been created in accordance with the Children First Act (2015) and the Children First: National Guidance for The Protection and Welfare of Children 2017.

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 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 others break down as follows:

Youth Theatres - Six places

Professional Arts Organisations - Two places

Education & Broad Youth Sector - One place

Guiding Principles

We acknowledge that the welfare of the child is of paramount importance

We are 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, we have 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.

We have 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 take a whole-organisation approach to Child Safeguarding

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.



We are aware of the importance of keeping informed of best practice and developments in legislation that relate to child protection and welfare.

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.

Beliefs and Values

We are 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 art form 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.

Core Values

- Commitment to quality provision and experience for young people
- Commitment to equality of participation for all young people
- Commitment to ensuring work is young person-centred and the voice of the young person is represented in our work
- Ensure a balance between artistic value and youth participation.

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.
- Online Communications

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. This 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 Cathal Thornton. They 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 ratios, 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 November 2024 and will be reviewed again in November 2026.

Signed* _____

Sarah Bragg-Bolger
Chairperson, Board of Directors

Our Board Members

Sarah Bragg-Bolger (Chair)

Annie Hoey

Calvin Magee (Secretary)

Máire O'Higgins

Thomas Dowling (Treasurer)

Rebecca Murphy

Julie O'Leary

The Chief Executive Officer is the Director. Youth Theatre Ireland currently employs six full-time and one part-time staff member. 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. This policy was last revised in November 2024, and will be revised again in November 2026.

"Young Person"

When this policy refers to 'young people who access Youth Theatre Ireland's services' it means any young person who:



Participates in a programme organised by Youth Theatre Ireland.



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

This policy makes reference to a number of other policies and procedures that we have developed. These are available on request from the Designated Liaison Person

Child Safeguarding Statement

In accordance with the Children First Act 2015, we have conducted a risk assessment of our services. This 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 Children First Obligations and is on display in our office at 7 North Great George's Street and youththeatre.ie. It will be reviewed every two years or sooner if there is a material change to the legislation.

Youth Theatre Ireland has developed this policy in order to:

Help safeguard the wellbeing of all young people who engage with the organisation.

Ensure we meet our duty of care and that the wellbeing of the young person is of paramount importance in everything the organisation does.

Give employees/volunteers clear guidance on what is expected of them when working with young people.

Help the organisation meet its legal and moral obligations in relation to child safeguarding.

Ensure good practice is followed consistently throughout the organisation and that staff/volunteers meet the highest possible professional standards.

Provide Young People/parents/carers with a clear understanding of what they can expect from the organisation.

Key Personnel

While the safeguarding of children and young people is everyone's responsibility, we recognise there are specific individuals with a greater responsibility when it comes to Child Safeguarding.

Named Person

Youth Theatre Ireland has appointed **Cathal Thornton, 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

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.

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

Designated Liaison Person:
Cathal Thornton
Child Protection and Wellbeing Officer
Contact: 01 878 1301
cathal@youththeatre.ie

Deputy Designated Liaison Person:
Eoghan Doyle
Director
Contact: 01 878 1301
eoghan@youththeatre.ie

Relevant Person:
Cathal Thornton
Child Protection and Wellbeing Officer
Contact: 01 878 1301
cathal@youththeatre.ie

Mandated Persons

We acknowledge that we may from time to time employ persons who are identified as mandated persons as per the list in Appendix 11. 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.

The list of mandated persons can be found in Appendix 11.

Role of the Designated Liason Person

1

- 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.
- Maintain and update Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures

2

- 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

3

- Record all concerns or allegations of child abuse brought to your attention as well as any action taken in response to these concerns.
- 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.

4

- Developing guidelines on good child protection and welfare practice for affiliated youth theatres
- Organising/providing training in Child Protection
- Advise on specific safeguarding issues and concerns
- Managing the Youth Theatre Ireland Garda Vetting Consortium.

Relevant Person

We ensure that a Relevant Person is appointed to act as first point of contact in relation to the youth theatre's Child Safeguarding Statement

Promoting Best Practice

Member youth theatres are responsible for having their own policies and procedures. However, Youth Theatre Ireland does offer support and advice.

We promote 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 to all staff and volunteers.

Providing information to young people and parents/primary carers.

Appointing a Designated Liaison Person/DLP.

Fostering a culture of openness, whereby young people know they can approach staff if they have a concern.

Encouraging young people to develop and voice their opinions and feedback.

Keeping up to date with developments in best practice and reviewing policy and procedure regularly.

Having a whole organisation approach to safeguarding.

Key Messages

If you have a concern about a young person, let the Designated Liaison Person know. Do not investigate. That is the job of Tusla and An Garda Síochana

1.



The Welfare of the young person is of paramount importance.

2.



It is the job of everyone to safeguard young people, including employees, volunteers, freelance contractors, and board members.

3.



If you think a child is in immediate danger, any staff member can contact Tusla/An Garda Síochana.

Responding to and Reporting Child Protection 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.



Types of 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.

See Appendix 4 for Definitions of Abuse

Reasonable Grounds for Concern

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.

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.

An account from a person who saw the child being abused.

Admission or indication by an adult or a child of an alleged abuse they committed.

A child saying or indicating by other means that they have been abused.

Handling a suspicion or 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 not do is nothing.

3

Never attempt to confront an alleged abuser.

4

Do not investigate. That is the job of Tusla/Gardaí

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 may happen next, i.e. you will tell the DLP and a report may be made to Tusla.

Handling a Disclosure

N.B. - The same procedures apply regardless of whether or not a participant is over the age of 18.

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

The following advice on handling a disclosure 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 you
- Do not make false promises, particularly regarding secrecy
- Ask question for clarification only, do not ask leading questions.
- Check with the young person to ensure that what you have heard and understood 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 that will follow.
- Pass the information to the Designated Liaison Person, who will follow reporting procedures.
- Treat the information confidentially, sharing it only on a 'need to know' basis.

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. Try and make an assessment on 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. You should continue to observe the young person about whom the disclosure has been made, for any signs of abuse. Any information should be passed on to the DLP, as a report may be made in the future.

Internal Reporting Procedures

We have 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 receives a disclosure of abuse should immediately contact the DLP. They should create a written report in as much detail as possible using the template provided (see appendix 6)
- The DLP may contact Tusla in advance of making a formal report.
- The DLP will consider whether to inform primary carers. 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 cases where the family's knowledge could impair Tusla's ability to carry out an assessment.
- Youth Theatre Ireland's Confidentiality Policy will be followed. Details will only be shared when it is in the interest of safeguarding the young person.
- The person who made the original report will be informed of the outcome of the decision making process.
- If a decision is made not to report, a confidential written record of how and why this decision was taken will be kept by the DLP.
- The person who made the original report should be provided with the reasons for this decision in writing and be informed that they can still make a report in their personal capacity.
- Employees/volunteers should continue to observe the young person in question.

Record-Keeping

- Child Protection records should be factual and include details on contacts, consultations, actions taken, and who took these actions.
- All child protection records will be kept safely and securely and managed in line with Youth Theatre Ireland's Confidentiality Policy.

In the case of an emergency, any staff member or volunteer can make a report to Tusla or An Garda Síochána. They should contact the DLP as soon as possible to inform them of the situation and of action taken.

Mandated Reporting

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

The list of mandated persons can be found in appendix 11.

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 if requested to do so.

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 Standard Reporting Procedures 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). 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.

Making a report to

Tusla

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. This can be done on portal.tusla.ie.

The report should be filed with the Tusla office that corresponds to where the child lives.

Information to include

The name, address, and age of the child.

Names and addresses of parents/guardians, and school the child attends.

Names, if known, of who is allegedly harming the child or not caring properly.

A detailed account of your grounds for concern.

Names of other children in the household if known.

Your name, contact details, and relationship to the child.

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, a report should still be made to Tusla.

Responding to Complaints and Allegations

Everyone working with Youth Theatre Ireland has a responsibility to ensure all young people are treated fairly. Sometimes, complaints are made against staff or volunteers. We recognise that where an allegation is made against an employee, Youth Theatre Ireland 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 the employee is treated fairly in line with the Dignity at Work Policy.

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

A Garda investigation of a possible criminal offence

Investigation and assessment by Tusla about whether a child is at risk of/subject to abuse

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 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 DLP will follow standard reporting procedures as outlined above.

The director will liaise with An Garda Síochána and Tusla to agree the strategy for investigation.

We have noted 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'.

Procedures 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 young people (see 'Peer Abuse', Glossary)

The parents/guardians of young people should be informed immediately. Advice should be taken from statutory authorities as to how this might best be done. Decisions regarding the future participation of the young person alleged to have committed the abuse should be made at management level.

Procedure when a complaint or allegation has been made against an employee.

- The matter must 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 Reasonable Ground For Concern raised will be considered.
- Legal advice will be sought in relation to employment and contractual issues.
- The DLP will follow standard reporting procedures.
- 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 the allegation.
- The director will also notify Tusla or any other organisation working with children with which the accused may be involved.
- If the allegation is against the director, the allegation should be referred to the chairperson of the board. If the allegation is against the DLP, another suitably qualified staff member will follow reporting procedures.
- The parents/guardians of the young person will be informed immediately. Advice should be taken by the statutory authorities on this. The director and DLP will liaise on this.
- After the above has taken place, the director should advise the employee of the situation and follow the agreed disciplinary procedures.
- Youth Theatre Ireland will identify how best to support the person accused in line with advice from the statutory authorities and our own legal advice.
- Youth Theatre Ireland will keep comprehensive records of any allegations made, how they were managed, any action taken, and decisions reached. These records must be stored confidentially, with a copy made available to the individual concerned.
- In the case where an accused is found to be innocent, consideration will be given to the appropriate support the organisation can provide the individual concerned.

Procedure when a complaint or allegation has been made against a volunteer.

The same procedures will be followed should an allegation be made against a volunteer or an individual employed under a short term contract.

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 principles as it would treat employees. i.e. a manner that is fair, transparent, and in accordance with 'natural justice'.

Code of Behaviour

We have developed the following code of behaviour for all those who work with young people

Practice

Treat all young people fairly and equitably - do not discriminate on grounds of gender, race, ethnicity, cultural background, sexual orientation, soci-economic status, family status, age, or disability.

It is never appropriate to use an individual's personal trauma as material for the drama process.

Be aware of participants' level of comfort when doing exercises that require physical contact.

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 the group contract is always upheld.

Ensure you are adequately prepared.

Ensure that the material/approach is age appropriate and meets the developmental needs of the group.

Be aware the work you do with the group and how you conduct yourself will have a bearing on the reputation of Youth Theatre Ireland.

Provide encouragement and support to all young people regardless of their ability.

Be prepared for situations whereby issues raised in the workshop may make a young person uncomfortable or upset. This may even happen with material that seems safe.

Evaluate and reflect on your own practice. Include the opinions of young people when evaluating the work.

Be aware of your own level of competence and expertise. Don't introduce exercises or material you don't feel comfortable delivering.

Any criticism should be constructive and made in good faith.

Encourage constructive feedback and discussion.

Code of Behaviour

We have developed the following code of behaviour for all those who work with young people

Welfare

Familiarise yourself with Youth Theatre Ireland's policies and procedures including its Child Protection and Welfare Policy. Follow these procedures if you have a concern.

Familiarise yourself with any medical or other factors that may affect a young person's participation.

If you have a concern about a young person report it immediately to Youth Theatre Ireland's DLP.

Respect a young person's personal space and privacy.

Be aware of how you behave around young people. Never act in a way that could be interpreted as inappropriate.

Never let a situation get out of control. The worst action is no action.

Never take a session on your own.

Be sensitive to instances of bullying and be familiar with Youth Theatre Ireland's Anti-Bullying Policy.

If you have to speak with a young person privately, try to do so in view of other adults.

Recognise the importance and weight of personal promises to young people. Never make a promise you can't keep.

Avoid giving lifts to young people. However, you should never leave a young person in a potentially dangerous situation. If a scenario arises where the safest course of action is to offer a young person a lift, inform the DLP and parent/primary care-giver of the young person immediately.

Be mindful of the danger of creating 'dependent' relationships with young people. Such relationships can be problematic for both leader and young person and often if a young person needs support with a specific issue you should refer them to a third party with specific expertise. Let the DLP know should an issue arise.

Report any health and safety concerns to the appropriate person. Always ensure that spaces and equipment are safe.

Avoid spending excessive amounts of time with young people and do not socialise inappropriately with them.

A Note on Physical Contact

There can be confusion around the 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 is it okay to make physical contact with them, for example, if demonstrating an exercise. Be specific, "Is it alright if I put my right hand on your left shoulder?".

After a performance, it should be okay for the director to congratulate a young person with a hug. A good guideline for this situation is that the contact is acceptable when it is initiated by the young person.

Group Contracts

We develop 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 of their rights and the support that is available to them during their participation.

Some Information to include

Respect one another

Always be on time

Listen to one another.

**Follow instructions from staff/
welfare team and don't wander
off.**

Be open to trying new things.

**It is okay to take a break when
you need one.**

Each programme will have its own unique group contract to suit them, these are just sample elements that should be included at minimum.

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.

Youth Theatre Ireland Anti-Bullying Charter

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 staff or volunteers after they investigate the situation.

Sanctions may include:

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

What is Bullying?

From Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children:

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, cyber bullying, 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 of bullying which may take place. These include, but are not limited to:

Direct Bullying - Where the behaviour is obvious, and bystanders are aware of it. For example: Physical or verbal bullying.

Indirect Bullying - where the behaviour is more difficult to recognise. For example, intimidation or isolation.

Verbal Bullying - including slandering, ridiculing, slagging, abusive phone calls, name calling, and more.

Gesture bullying - including non-verbal gestures or glances which can convey threatening or frightening meaning/intent.

Physical bullying - such as pushing, shoving, assaults, and damage to another person's property.

Extortion - The deliberate extortion of money or other items of property accompanied by threats.

Relational bullying - behaviour which sets out to deliberately damage another person's friendship or feeling of inclusion in a friend group. For example exclusion or isolation.

E-Bullying/Cyber bullying - using web pages, social networking sites, emails, text, etc. To abuse, intimidate, and attack others either directly or indirectly such as through rumour-spreading.

Mobbing - Which means the target is being bullied by a group of perpetrators, and not just one perpetrator.

Racial Bullying - can be expressed physically, socially, or psychologically when one is labelled negatively as being different from others by virtue of one's race.

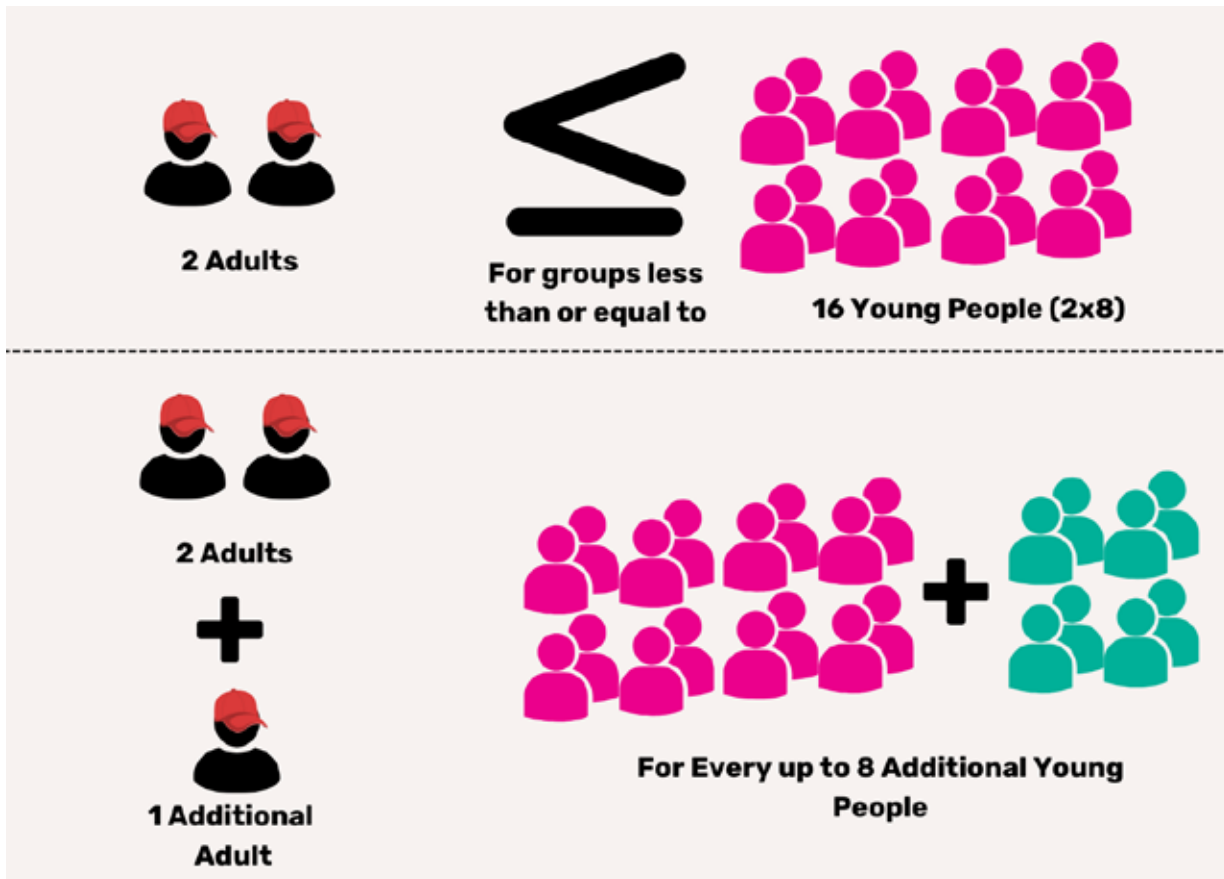
Homophobic and biphobic bullying - Bullying that is typically aimed at young people who are gay or perceived to be gay. It can include name-calling, isolation, and violence.

Transphobic Bullying - Bullying that is based on a young person's gender identity or expression.

Ratios

While we recognise that depending on the group and young people involved, different levels of supervision are required, we are subscribed to the best practice as outlined in *Working Safely in a Youth Club (NYCI, 2018)*:

- The minimum adult/young person ratio in any group should ideally be one adult per group of eight young people, plus one other adult, and allowing an additional adult for each group of eight thereafter
- Safety, ability/disability of young people and the nature and/or location of the activities being undertaken may require that the 8:1 ratio be lowered considerably.



On Youth Theatre Ireland projects there are typically at least three adults. A member of staff, an outside artist/contractor, and at least one member of the Welfare team.

Preventing Bullying

We have adopted the following strategy for preventing bullying and creating an anti-bullying environment. While we have developed the following approach, we recognise that every instance of bullying is different and has its own unique circumstances. The overriding consideration in every instance will be protecting the well-being of the young person/people involved.

Be familiar with and implement the anti-bullying policy and procedures.

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.

Staff/Volunteers receive induction in Youth Theatre Ireland's Anti-Bullying Policy.

Encourage openness among staff, volunteers, and young people and foster a culture of mutual respect and co-operation.

We will also draw attention to wider considerations such as attitudes towards each other and use of language.

Participants on any Youth Theatre Ireland Programme will be given a clear message about the importance of reporting bullying and details of how to do so.



Responding To Bullying

**What to do
when there
is a clear
observable
instance of
bullying.**

- If a staff member or 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 appropriate and make reference to the group contract and the discussion around bullying.
- They should make a record of the incident and pass this on to the DLP as soon as possible.
- The DLP and another member of staff 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.
- The DLP and staff will continue to monitor the situation.
- The victim of the bullying will be supported throughout the process. Advice may be sought from an organisation with specific expertise. It may be felt necessary to refer the victim to another organisation or agency.
- A written record must be kept at each stage of the process.

The Sanctions Process.

- 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, no further action may be needed.
- In more serious incidents or where the same young person(s) display the behaviour again the DLP will meet again with the young people involved to discuss the further incidents. The parents of all young people involved will be informed.
- If following the agreed sanctions, the perpetrator once again displays this 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 felt it is appropriate to refer the young person to another agency with specific expertise. Any action will be discussed with parents/primary care-givers.
- In the case of expulsion, a discussion will be had with other members of the group so they have a chance to understand the action taken and air any concerns they may have.

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 DLP 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. 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 that there is a problem, the staff member and DLP will continue to monitor the situation and may take the decision that there is a case of bullying. In this instance, they will talk to the victim again and then the perpetrator(s). From this point on they will carry out the procedure outlined in the previous section.
- A written record will be kept at each stage of this process.

If a Young Person is Aware of Bullying

- If a young person is a victim of bullying or is aware bullying is taking place, they can talk to any adult involved in a 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, it will be made 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 DLP 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 the case that the sanction procedures may need to be 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

We are aware of the prevalence of cyber bullying and the need to take action to prevent it. Due to the constantly changing nature of online spaces, Youth Theatre Ireland recognises that these actions do not form an exhaustive list.

We have developed a communications policy that outlines our presence on the internet. This policy outlines the measures Youth Theatre Ireland takes to monitor and control our presence on social networking platforms and the steps taken to protect users and in particular young people.

We have developed a use of images policy that describes how we gather, use, and retain images of young people. This is in line with advised best practice.

We promote safe and responsible use of the internet by participants on our programmes and promotes safe-use guidelines for young people.

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.

We make a clear statement 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 is aware 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), the Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998, and Coco's Law (2020)

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 cyber-bullying. 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 parents/primary carers of the perpetrator and inform them about their young person's behaviour.
- Contact the perpetrator's youth theatre and let them know what is happening.
- Contact the parents/guardians of the victims and inform them about the situation.
- Provide those involved with guidance on good practice for dealing with bullying.
- Offer the support of the DLP to the victim.
- In the case of cyber bullying, report the behaviour to those who run the service and, in serious cases, contact the gardaí,



While any instance of bullying should be taken seriously, more severe instances should be reported to Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána. If a staff member/volunteer has concerns, they should follow Youth Theatre Ireland's Internal Reporting Procedures.

Communications

With Young People

We are committed to ensuring all communications with young people are safe, respectful, appropriate, and professional. Youth Theatre Ireland uses the following outlets to communicate with young people:



Telephone:
Calls
Texts
Whatsapp



Emails:
To Young People
To Parents/
Guardians



Online Platforms:
Youththeatre.ie
Facebook
Youtube
Instagram
Zoom

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



- Staff/Volunteers should not give out their own personal mobile phone numbers. All communications via mobile phone should be on the Youth Theatre Ireland Welfare phone or through the Youth Theatre Ireland Landline phones/Linkus phone app.
- Any phone communication should only be used for the effective and efficient delivery of Youth Theatre Ireland programmes and should cease upon completion of the programme.
- Access to members' contact details are controlled and restricted to those with a direct need to access them.
- Youth Theatre Ireland does not provide young peoples' phone numbers to third parties unless there is a legitimate reason and the young person or parents/guardians give consent.
- Copies of all messages to and from young people shall be retained on the Youth Theatre Ireland welfare phone for at least 30 days after the project is concluded.
- No images should be taken by staff or volunteers with the Youth Theatre Ireland welfare phone unless for the purposes of a Youth Theatre Ireland event programme and should be transferred to a Youth Theatre Ireland computer as soon as possible, and not kept on the phone.
- Staff/volunteers should never send any communication that could be interpreted as offensive or inappropriate.
- Youth Theatre Ireland asks that staff be aware of the risk of abuse being initiated/carried out by phone.
- 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 audio/video content for young people unless it is directly related to a programme.



E-Mail



- 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. Where appropriate, a young person's youth theatre leader should be cc'd.
- If a staff member is emailing a young person, they should CC the DLP.
- Communication with young people should stop once their project ceases and their email address should not be used in future.
- 'Joke' and 'Circular' emails should not be forwarded, even if they seem innocuous.
- Youth Theatre Ireland requires all staff and volunteers be mindful of email communications to be used not only for a young person to bully another young person, but also as a means for an adult to bully a young person. Any such occurrence should be taken seriously and reported to the DLP or director of Youth Theatre Ireland.
- Email communications can be used as a means of abuse/initiating abuse. Any staff member or volunteer who becomes aware of any suspicious communication should follow internal reporting procedures.





- 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 third parties under any circumstances.
- Youth Theatre Ireland does not host content on the website that could be viewed as offensive or inappropriate.
- Security measures are taken to ensure the website isn't susceptible to hacking.
- Youth Theatre Ireland does not post contact details of other organisations/individuals on the website unless it has explicit permission to do so.
- Images contained on the site comply with Youth Theatre Ireland's use of images policy.
- Youth Theatre Ireland staff monitor the site on a regular basis.
- Any content that is inappropriate or offensive will be removed as soon as we become aware of it.

Users of Youththeatre.ie 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



As a young person-focused organisation, Youth Theatre Ireland's approach is dynamic and forward-looking, and recognises the need to engage with new media and technologies not only for sharing information with stakeholders and the general public, but also the potential such platforms have as tool for the dissemination and even creation of artistic work.

Youth Theatre Ireland has a presence on the following sites:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Youtube
- Microsoft Forms
- Trello
- 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. Staff adhere to the following code of practice when using third party sites:

- Staff supervise the moderation of all third-party sites and check on a regular basis.
- Inappropriate content will be removed as soon as staff becomes aware of it.
- Staff/Volunteers should separate their own personal social media presence from that of Youth Theatre Ireland.
- Youth Theatre Ireland will take bullying or harassment by anyone who uses Youth Theatre Ireland's third party platforms very seriously. Any instance will be reported to those who run the website and if appropriate, the Gardaí.
- Staff/Volunteers should report any suspicious behaviour. If abuse is suspected, staff/volunteers should follow Youth Theatre Ireland's internal reporting procedures.
- 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 platforms in question.
- Use of images/videos will be in line with Youth Theatre Ireland policy.
- No young people will be individually identified on third party sites.
- Images and videos should not be tagged with identifying information.
- Youth Theatre Ireland asks that any users who set up networks associated with Youth Theatre Ireland programmes (such as NYT Alumni Groups) act in a way that will not damage the reputation of Youth Theatre Ireland, but are aware that this may be beyond our control.

Third-Party Sites Cont.



- Youth Theatre Ireland is aware that third parties may tag Youth Theatre Ireland in posts on third party social media websites. Youth Theatre Ireland ensures that content from other parties is fitting with the ethos and values of Youth Theatre Ireland. Any content that goes against these values will be untagged and removed.
- 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.
- Any personal information gathered via Microsoft Forms or Monday.com will be gathered only for the safe and efficient delivery of programmes and will be deleted when no longer needed.

Youth Theatre Ireland is aware 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), the Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998, and Coco's Law (2020).

Youth Theatre Ireland has identified a need to re-examine our practice online, and in particular our use of social media. As part of the revision of this document we have committed to an in-depth review of our procedures on third party sites in during the lifetime of this policy.

Data Protection Policy

Youth Theatre Ireland is conscious of the responsibility it has to ensuring any personal information gathered is used in a safe and responsible manner that does not put any young person at risk. Rights regarding personal information are detailed under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018.

The seven principles of GDPR are as follows:

- Lawfulness, Fairness, and Transparency
- Purpose Limitation
- Data Minimisation
- Accuracy
- Storage Limitation
- Integrity and Confidentiality
- Accountability

Youth Theatre Ireland recognises that the guarantee of confidentiality is an important factor in determining the level of trust its stakeholders hold in the organisation. Youth Theatre is committed to handling information in a manner that complies with the above principles.

The following information is held by Youth Theatre Ireland and should be treated as confidential:

- Personnel records for core staff
- Volunteer information/Information regarding those whose services are engaged short-term
- Participant records for training courses
- Garda Vetting information including application forms and disclosures
- Participant Information/Parental consent forms that include details such as date of birth, medical information, etc.
- Welfare/Child Protection Reports
- Information that is gathered for research purposes, such as ethnicity, age, etc.
- Information that is commercially sensitive, such as programme plans
- Contact information such as phone numbers and email addresses
- Marketing information such as audience members, individual donors, supporters.

Who has access to information?

Director of Youth Theatre Ireland



Personnel records including application forms, appraisals, disciplinary records, etc. Garda vetting information as outlined in Garda Vetting Policy (Appendix 12) Affiliate, members, and individual membership renewal forms. Information on participants such as details of medical conditions or special requirements that may impact a participant's involvement on a programme.

Deputy Director of Youth Theatre Ireland



Member/Programme application information. Information on participants of Youth Theatre Ireland Programmes such as medical conditions or special requirements. Membership renewal forms.

Administrator



Information on core staff such as addresses, dates of birth, PPS numbers. Information on participants involved in Youth Theatre Ireland's Programmes.

Child Protection and Wellbeing Officer



Garda Vetting information including disclosures of convictions/prosecutions. Welfare and child protection records/reports and information on young people who participate on Youth Theatre Ireland Programmes. Membership renewal forms.

National Training Co-Ordinator



PPS Numbers, special requirements of Participants, appraisals, disciplinary records, etc. in relation to training courses. Information on participants involved in Youth Theatre Ireland's Programmes.

National Programme Co-Ordinator



Participant information/Parental consent information . Information on participants involved in Youth Theatre Ireland's Programmes.

Special Projects Officer



PPS Numbers, special requirements of participants, appraisals, disciplinary records, etc. in relation to training courses. Information on participants involved in Youth Theatre Ireland's Programmes.

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

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.



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 related 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

We require all those with access to confidential information adhere to the following guidelines:

- Be aware of the sensitive nature of the information and recognise the responsibility you have due to having access to this information
- Be aware that this information is always the property of Youth Theatre Ireland
- Use confidential information only for the purpose intended
- Do not pass on personal information to third parties without the express permission of the person in question
- All company devices must be password protected
- Confidential files must be password protected
- Files and hard copies are subject to Youth Theatre Ireland's retention policy.
- Staff should not share information that is potentially commercially sensitive.
- When confidential information is taken outside the Youth Theatre Ireland office, or handled by individuals not part of the team, e.g. welfare officers on events, it must be returned to the DLP immediately following the completion of the project.
- The requirement of confidentiality continues to apply after an individual's involvement with Youth Theatre Ireland cases.
- Youth Theatre Ireland acknowledges there are some instances when a child's confidential information must be shared e.g. - in case of a child safeguarding concern or a medical emergency. In this instance the wellbeing of the child is of paramount importance.

GDPR

We apply the principles of GDPR in the following ways:

- Youth Theatre Ireland 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.
- Youth Theatre Ireland clarifies the purposes for which all information is required when it is being requested.
- Youth Theatre Ireland 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.
- Youth Theatre Ireland only use contact details for marketing purposes where the individual explicitly 'opts-in' to being contacted.
- Youth Theatre Ireland 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.
- Youth Theatre Ireland 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.
- Youth Theatre Ireland 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 a Youth Theatre Ireland programme.
- Youth Theatre Ireland 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 National Garda Vetting Bureau.
- Youth Theatre Ireland 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

We have 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:

Corporate Records **Permanent**

Financial Records

End of year Audited Accounts/Bank Statements/Pension Statements **Permanent**

Other financial documentation including management accounts, financial statements, invoices receipts, credit card statements **7 Years**

Programme Files **Permanent**

Research Records **Permanent**

Funding Records **Permanent**

Management Plans and Procedures **Permanent**

Including Strategic plans, risk assessments.

Recruitment Records

Unsuccessful applications for vacant posts **1 Year**

Job Descriptions, Adverts, Vacancy Notifications **Permanent**

Written record of interview panel's recommendation **1 Year**

Personnel Records

Applications of candidates who take up a post, references, contracts of employment, training records, resignation/retirement letters, pension contribution records.

Leave records **Permanent**

Disciplinary Records **Permanent**

Details of Grievance Procedures **Permanent**

Contracts for Services	6 Years after contract expires
Legal Records	Permanent
Membership Records	Permanent
Health and Safety Records	Until Superseded
Safety Statements	10 Years
Risk Assessments	10 Years
Accident/Incident Reports	
Participant Information/Parental Consent Forms	Permanent - With the removal of non-essential information, e.g. dietary information.
Garda Vetting Information	See Vetting Policy
Welfare/Child Protection Reports	Permanent

Once the retention period has elapsed, hard copy information will be destroyed by shredding. Any information held on a computer or digital storage, will be deleted.

Youth Theatre Ireland stores all information in a protected environment. Confidential information is stored on the Youth Theatre Ireland Sharepoint, with access limited to Youth Theatre Ireland staff. Particularly sensitive information such as information related to Garda Vetting and Child Protection reports are held in a password protected folder. Such files are accessible only by the DLP. If the DLP is absent for a substantial period of time, they can be accessed by the Director.



Use of images & Video

We are conscious of the responsibility it has for ensuring any images or video footage of young people is used in a safe and responsible manner that does not put any young people at risk. Photographs and videos are regarded as personal data and therefore must be obtained fairly.

We have developed the following policy, informed by the Arts Council's *Guidelines for taking and using images of children and young people in the arts sector (2009)*:

- Images/Footage will only be recorded if there is a valid reason relating to the programme.
- Consent is sought from young people over 18 and from parents/guardians for those under 18.
- A refusal will not restrict the participation of a young person on a Youth Theatre Ireland Programme
- If it is impossible to take an image on a Youth Theatre Ireland device. Staff may use their own devices, but must immediately send any images to the Youth Theatre Ireland phone, and delete the images from their device.
- 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 to ensure young people whose images are captured are dressed appropriately.
- Every precaution will be taken to ensure no images or footage may expose a participant to embarrassment or distress.
- Youth Theatre Ireland only provides images/footage to third parties when there is a legitimate reason to do so e.g. reporting to funders or promoting programmes.
- 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. a local media report on a young person's participation on a programme.
- When using footage, Youth Theatre Ireland will not provide any details that can be used to contact a young person
- Images and footage will only be used in the context they are captured.
- Information such as date taken, names, context of images, and whether consent was provided will be stored with images that are retained.

- Group images are used rather than individual images wherever possible. If the image of a single 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 and footage should be reported to the Director or DLP.
- If any individual is unhappy with the manner an image/footage is obtained, used, or retained, they should follow the Youth Theatre Ireland complaints procedure.
- While Youth Theatre Ireland cannot completely control and regulate the taking of photos or videos at 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 and videos of each other. This should be brought to their attention during the drafting of the group contract.
- All images must retain the name of the original photographer.



Use of images & Video Online

The posting of images and videos on the internet is an area of particular risk and Youth Theatre Ireland is cognizant of the possibility of images and footage being used or manipulated to harm young people and children.

We have taken the following steps for the use of footage and images on the internet:

- Any content posted on the internet must not provide any information that can be used to contact or locate a young person, or put them at risk in any way.
- While it is impossible to completely control any images once they are posted to the internet, youth theatre Ireland requests all users adhere to the following:
 - Do not use any content, including any images from the site without receiving permission from Youth Theatre Ireland
 - Do not misuse or take out of context any footage from the website, including videos or photos.
 - Do not tag photos posted by Youth Theatre Ireland
 - Any comments posted should be respectful and not target any particular young person
 - Do not add comments to photos that may identify young people in the photos.
 - All photos posted must credit the original photographer.



Working Online

**For more information
see our separate
policy - 'Working
Safely Online in
Youth Theatre.'**

Permission and Consent

The digital age of consent is 16 so if the young person is under that age, permission will be sought by Youth Theatre Ireland staff member from a parent or guardian for use of each individual app / social media site or their involvement in the online project/ activity. Clear guidance should be given on levels of engagement, dates and times of online sessions or workshops, content and requirements of the young person participating for example how they will receive zoom/app invitations

Investigate Barriers

Youth Theatre Ireland staff will consult with participants and their parents / guardians that they are comfortable using the app/online platform and whether they are experiencing any barriers to participation such as weak broadband access, limited access to equipment or if there is any limitation that impacts their ability to interact via screen such as visual impairment/ insecurity around using the camera. All efforts will and should be made by Youth Theatre Ireland staff to extend methods of inclusion.

Open Communication

If any young person or a parent/ guardian has an issue or concern regarding their involvement, Youth Theatre Ireland staff should ensure they have access to the projects lead contact's work email or the welfare phone number so that the matter can be addressed as soon as possible.

Invitation Only

Youth Theatre Ireland staff members should not require young people to have an account to participate in video meetings such as ZOOM, instead participants should be invited by email with a link from a Youth Theatre Ireland staff member or via their youth theatre leader on the organisation's behalf.

Official Accounts Only

Video Meetings should be hosted from an account held and managed by Youth Theatre Ireland, not from a staff members personal account.

Check the Settings

More than one Youth Theatre Ireland staff member should have access to the video app account details and act as a co-host. Youth Theatre Ireland staff will ensure that meetings are password protected and can only be joined by invitees adhering to the video platform rules and regulations

Recording

If recording a meeting is necessary, staff should store the recording securely on the Youth Theatre Ireland Zoom Cloud for a specified period of time in line with the projects retention policy. It is essential that permission is sought from the young person and their parent/ guardian as this is classified as data processing.

Prepare in Advance

Youth Theatre Ireland staff should make themselves familiar with the features of the chosen app in advance, and provide clear guidance for young people, their parents/ guardians and youth theatre leaders where relevant on the safe use of the app prior to working online.

Working Together

Youth Theatre Ireland staff will create an online group contract with the young people participating in the online activity in the same way they would do in the physical space this should include any expectations around rules/ codes of conduct, how the group will treat other, inclusion, dressing appropriately, positive feedback.

Ratios

The same Youth Theatre Ireland staff to young people ratios and procedures apply online as they would in the physical space - see section on Ratios

Vetting

Any person employed by Youth Theatre Ireland to carry out relevant work and engage with young people online is required to be fully vetted prior to commencing work. See section on Recruitment

Reporting Concerns

If a Youth Theatre Ireland staff member has a child protection or welfare concern whilst working online with a group, they should follow procedures and report to the DLP in the usual way.

Apps and Safeguarding

When choosing the App(s) that work best for the specific activity, it is important to also consider the appropriateness of each platform from a safeguarding point of view. In particular, it is important to consider whether use of these apps comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). As images and video of people is considered personal data, any app used is processing data on the organisations behalf and is therefore a Third-Party Data Processor.

Third-Party Sites



- Youth Theatre Ireland is aware that third parties may tag Youth Theatre Ireland in posts on third party social media websites. Youth Theatre Ireland ensures that content from other parties is fitting with the ethos and values of Youth Theatre Ireland. Any content that goes against these values will be untagged and removed.
- 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.
- Any personal information gathered via Microsoft Forms or Monday.com will be gathered only for the safe and efficient delivery of programmes and will be deleted when no longer needed.

Youth Theatre Ireland is aware 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), the Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998, and Coco's Law (2020).



Health & Safety

We work in a variety of locations. Youth Theatre Ireland ensures the following on all programmes:

Health and Safety Responsibilities:

Any buildings used are safe and meet required standards

There is sufficient heating and ventilation

Toilets and washing facilities are to standard and meet accessibility requirements of participants.

Fire precautions are in place.

First aid facilities are adequate

Insurance is adequate.

In the event there is an accident or incident, reporting procedures should be followed.

For more information, see Health and Safety Policy.

Residentials

Youth Theatre Ireland policies apply to all young people, regardless of age.

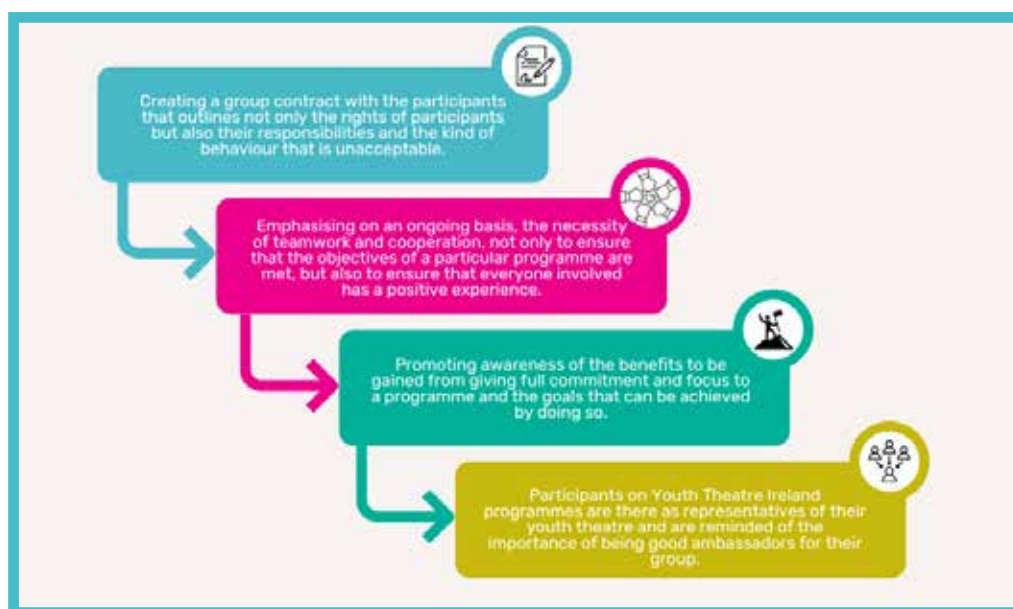
We organise a number of programmes that involve overnight stays. We adhere to the following procedures for residentials:

- Welfare officers are engaged for any project, and will stay overnight on residential programmes.
- Welfare Officers are provided with a clear role description, are Garda vetted, and receive induction on Youth Theatre Ireland's Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Welfare officers complete Child Protection Awareness Programme Training and are provided with reporting forms.
- Welfare Officers are provided with the DLP's contact details.
- Clear information about the programme and overnight element is provided to parents/primary care givers. Important information such as dietary requirements, contact details, and necessary medication are sought.
- 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 are drug and alcohol free events.
- Welfare officers are provided with emergency cash.
- If there is an issue related to accommodation, Welfare Officers should inform the venue manager and DLP.
- Ongoing dialogue should take place between the welfare and artistic teams so the relevant people are aware of any support participants may need.
- All staff should be mindful of the balance between members' privacy and the necessity of supervision in the accommodation.



Disruptive Behaviour

When working with young people, we emphasise the benefits and rewards for positive behaviour. However, there may be occasions when the behaviour of a young person or group of young people disrupts work on the programme and impacts other participants. Youth Theatre Ireland promotes positive behaviour and creates an environment where disruptive behaviour is not acceptable by:



There are a wide range of behaviours that can be seen as disruptive and it is impossible to list appropriate responses to any and all instances. The following are general pointers, and any ambiguity should be cleared up by speaking with the DLP.

1. Always react calmly, regardless of the level of frustration. Never react in a way that intimidates, ridicules, or humiliates a young person.
2. The response to any disruptive behaviour should always be proportionate.
3. The response should be initiated as soon as possible and explained in full to the participant.
4. More than one staff member should be present when dealing with disruptive behaviour.
5. A written record should be kept of the behaviour and the response to it. This should be given to the DLP as soon as possible.

Disruptive Behaviour

If it is felt the behaviour may traumatise a young person in any way, a report may be made to Tusla.

Possible Responses to Disruptive Behaviour:

1. Depending on the severity of the behaviour, it may be sufficient to explain the disruptive nature of the behaviour to the young person in question, making reference to the group contract.
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 the programme
4. Increased supervision
5. Sanctions such as missing out on an activity or theatre trip.
6. An individual 'contract' or agreement could be developed setting out the behavioural improvements required.
7. Temporary or permanent exclusion - only to 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 for the young person and the rest of the group.

Working with parents/primary carers

We recognise the importance of informing parents/primary carers about a young person's participation on the Youth Theatre Ireland Programme and any issues pertaining to it. In terms of disruptive behaviour, parents/guardians will be informed about any disruptive behaviour that elicits a response beyond the first response above. If it is felt that informing a parent/primary care giver may put a young person at risk, they will not be informed. Youth Theatre Ireland's DLP may seek advice from Tusla if they have a concern about informing parents/primary caregivers.

For more information, see the section below.

Interagency Co-operation

We take the following approach to working with other agencies and organisations in relation to child protection:

- We recognise the necessity of a coordinated approach to child protection and will cooperate with the Gardaí, Tusla, or any other appropriate agency or organisation.
- Once reasonable grounds for concern have been established, Youth Theatre Ireland's DLP will inform Tusla about a child protection issue.
- All staff 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 DLP will use the Tusla online portal to make a report
- Other staff and volunteers have access to internal reporting forms in case an emergency situation arises.
- The DLP and other staff are provided with contact details of the local Tusla office.
- As outlined in our reporting procedures, the DLP and other staff are aware that if they have uncertainty as to whether or not their concern necessitates a response, they can consult informally with a Duty Social Worker.
- All staff and volunteer are informed that in the case of a child protection emergency outside of Tusla Office hours, they need to inform the local Gardaí
- We are aware that there may be a criminal investigation to any child protection issue and will co-operate fully with any investigation.
- We also recognise our 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 may provide more specialised expertise in child protection and the welfare of young people.
- If we are working with another organisation on a programme involving young people, there will be a discussion around child safeguarding procedures and where the responsibility lies in terms of reporting.

Working with Other Organisations

We organise several projects that involve collaboration with other youth theatres and youth groups. In the case of these collaborations it is important to have a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved. We have put the following guidelines in place as a framework for these kind of projects.

1. For any project that involves the participation of young people from another youth theatre or youth group, the visiting group must provide their own leaders. The leaders are responsible for the young people in their group. Depending on the nature of the project, there may be special requirements of leaders.
2. The youth theatre/organisation's own policies should be followed in matters that affect their own group and do not affect participants from other groups.
3. Youth Theatre Ireland's policy will be followed if an issue arises under the following circumstances:
 - During a Youth Theatre Ireland led activity
 - Involving a Youth Theatre Ireland Staff member
 - Involving a freelancer whose services have been engaged by Youth Theatre Ireland
4. While each group can have their own rules in relation to internal matters. Leaders and young people from different groups must agree to shared rules on matters that affect other groups.
5. A code of behaviour for leaders must be agreed
6. Depending on the nature of the projects, a code of conduct for young people may be circulated in advance.
7. Each group should ensure they have adequate insurance to participate.
8. The leaders of each organisation are responsible for getting their group to and from the project location.
9. All leaders should have been recruited in line with best practice guidelines and must have completed Garda vetting. Leaders should have also completed child protection training.
10. Youth theatres/organisations should ensure they have parental consent for young peoples' participation on the project. They should also gather relevant information in line with their own confidentiality policy.

11. We have a no tolerance approach to bullying. Any instance 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 handled by Youth Theatre Ireland's policy. For more information see our Anti Bullying Policy above.
12. Photographs/footage of young people under 17 shall only be taken if parental consent is received in advance. Images and footage of young people from one group shall be handled in line with that groups policy, If a photo or footage involves a mix of young people from different groups it will be managed by Youth Theatre Ireland's policy.
13. Should any leader have a concern or receive a disclosure during a Youth Theatre Ireland event in relation to a young person in their own group, they should follow their own reporting procedures. There may be circumstances where the Youth Theatre Ireland DLP should be informed. If the concern/disclosure relates to a young person from another group, they should inform Youth Theatre Ireland's DLP and our own policy will be followed.
14. Youth Theatre Ireland's DLP or Director should be informed of any allegation made that relates to a Youth Theatre Ireland project. If an allegation of abuse is made against a leader from a group during a Youth Theatre Ireland event, Youth Theatre Ireland's reporting procedures should be followed in relation to the victim, while the organisations own employment/disciplinary procedures should apply to the alleged perpetrator. Guidance may be sought from statutory bodies on how best to proceed.
15. We recognise the sensitive natures of allegations of peer abuse and will seek advice from the statutory authorities should such an allegation arise during a project. We will consider it a child protection issue for all young people under the age of 18 involved.
16. Any communications between a leader and young person involved in a Youth Theatre Ireland project should be safe and responsible. Leaders should follow their own policy for communicating with their young people. There is no reason for a leader to be in contact with a young person from another group before or after a project.
17. Staff will have access to reporting forms and contact details of local Garda Stations and Tusla offices.
18. We require that any adult who has access to sensitive information through their involvement with a project treat it with utmost confidentiality and share it only on a need to know basis.
19. If a participant, parent, leader, or other stakeholder has a complaint, they should follow our complaints procedure outlined below.

Participants

Over 18

We value the contributions of young people over 18 to the organisation and to youth theatre in general.

We take the following approach to participants over 18:

The same group contract applies to all participants, regardless of age.

We have a no alcohol/drugs rule, regardless of the age of the participant.

While we don't require parental consent for those aged over 18, we do request details of an emergency contact.

We seek consent from those over the age of 18 for use of images.

A disclosure of abuse by a participant over 18 will be treated with the same sensitivity as that of a disclosure by a young person under 18. The consent of the participant should be sought prior to making a report to Tusla. However, regardless of whether consent is given, if the alleged abuser still poses a risk, a report will need to be made to the statutory authorities.

Working with Parents/Primary Carers

We have a young-person centred approach and promote the importance of viewing young people as social and artistic beings in their own right. At the same time, we also recognise the right of parents to be involved in and informed about their young person's lives including their participation in youth theatre. Parents are performing an act of trust when they facilitate their young person's participating and we are obligated to honour that trust by safeguarding the wellbeing of their young people.

We take the following approach to working with parents and primary carers

We value the cooperation of parents in facilitating their young person's participation.

We recognise the right of parents/primary carers to be informed about their young persons involvement and anything that may affect their wellbeing.

We have developed an information sheet for parents/primary carers (see appendix 7)

We require parental consent for the participation of those under 18. We also require consent for use of images.

We require details from parents of dietary/medical requirements that young people may have.

Parents are provided with the contact number for the Youth Theatre Ireland welfare phone.

Parents/primary carers will be immediately informed if their young person is ill or has suffered an accident during an event.

Parents are provided with details of Youth Theatre Ireland's complaints procedure.

Parents are informed of performances and other public events that will allow them to personally experience their young person's achievements.

Child Protection and Parents/Primary Carers

No staff member, other than the Designated Liaison Person, should inform a parent about a child protection concern/report. The DLP must first discuss the situation with the director, to ensure they are not putting themselves in any danger. The DLP will liaise with Tusla before informing a parent.

There are some instances when it is not necessary to inform a parent/primary carer about a report:

1. When doing so could put the child at further risk
2. When the family's knowledge could impair Tusla's assessment.
3. When informing the family may place you at risk.

We have developed the following code of practice for informing parents/primary carers of child protection concerns

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 family will get the support they
need

Continue
to liase
with Tusla

Youth Theatre Ireland has developed a parents' charter, and will launch this in 2025.



Safe

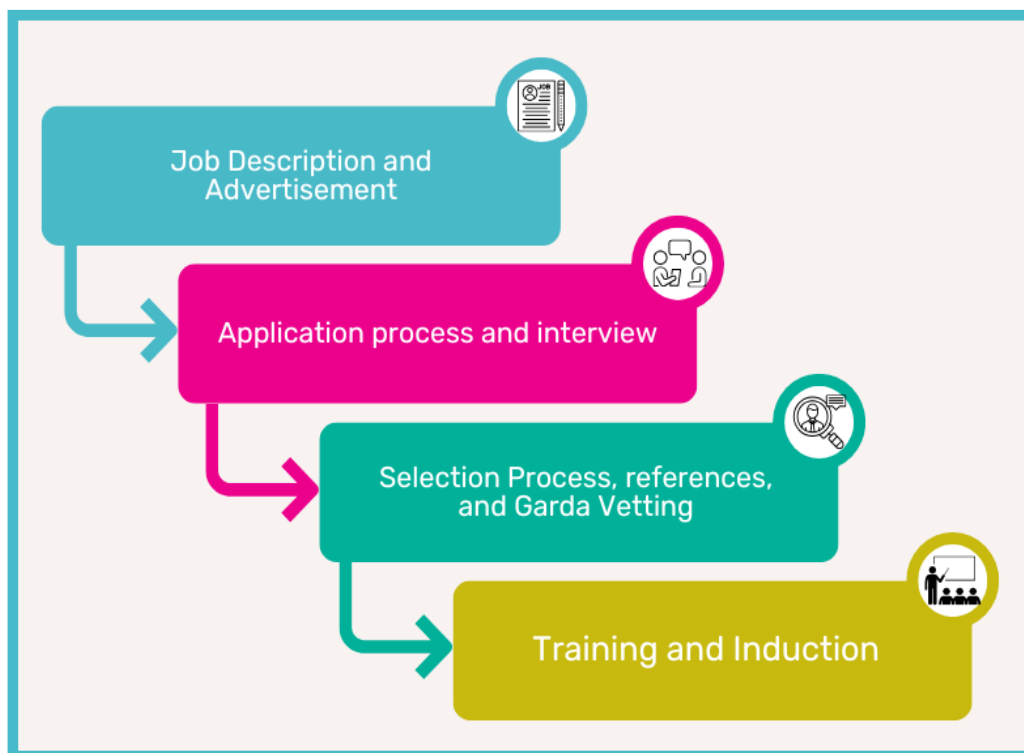
Recruitment

Safe recruitment of staff is one of the key aspects of child safeguarding.

We have developed detail procedures for the recruitment of staff as detailed in the staff handbook. We follow best practice on the safe recruitment of staff by adhering to the following:

1. All posts are advertised widely
2. Equality of opportunity governs the recruitment process
3. Job descriptions and person specifications are developed for all roles, which informs the short listing process
4. Interviews focus on both suitability for the specific role but also the broader suitability of the candidate to work with young people
5. References for successful candidates must be obtained and one of these must be from a current or immediate past employer.
6. Successful candidates will be subject to Garda vetting and all applicants will be made aware of this at the advertising stage.
7. No person who is deemed to constitute a 'risk' to young people will be employed. Applicants with any child related convictions and those who refuse to submit a Garda Vetting application will not be employed.
8. Where details of convictions/specified information are returned from the Garda Vetting bureau, the suitability of the applicant will be considered as outlined in the Garda Vetting Policy (See Appendix 12)
9. All staff are given induction training within two weeks of commencing employment.
10. Child protection training is delivered to all staff members within their six month probationary period. This is comprised of the Tusla Children First E-Learning and the Child Protection Awareness Programme Training.
11. There is a probationary period of six months for all new staff members. Extension of service beyond this period will be dependent on the satisfactory performance of duties and conduct as judged by Youth Theatre Ireland. We recognise our 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.
12. We will continue to review Child Protection legislation and best practice and offer guidance to staff on an ongoing basis.

Recruitment Pathway



Freelance contractors

We also engage the services of individuals for specific projects on a short term basis. Workshop facilitators, directors of productions, and welfare officers are examples of this category of staff member.

We select these individuals because they possess specific skills or experience. An invitation to tender may also be issued for these particular roles.

We adhere to the following procedures for engaging these roles:

- Contracts are issued that clearly explain the role and duties as related to child safeguarding
- The requirement of Garda Vetting is clearly communicated.
- Any individual who will have contact with young people through their role meets with the DLP and is inducted in our Child Safeguarding Procedures and given CPAP training.
- Anyone engaged on a freelance or seasonal basis has the same responsibilities as core staff in relation to Child Safeguarding

Get in touch!



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