



Irish Writers Centre Child Protection and Welfare Policy 2018

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Irish Writers Centre Child Protection and Welfare Policy

The Irish Writers Centre (IWC) is committed to an individual focus and best practice approach to our work with children and young people. It is central to the philosophy of the IWC that children, adults and staff members, volunteers, interns and artists are unconditionally respected and kept safe from harm while using our services. Our normal practices and behaviour actively promote delivery of excellent services to writers of all ages as individuals in a safe and engaging environment, where the welfare of the child is paramount.

We will adhere to the *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (2017) and the Children First Act 2015, by having and implementing child protection policies and procedures. We also adhere to the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016.

There is an obligation to anyone who is involved with children to provide them with the highest possible standard of care. Those who accept responsibility for children may be legally responsible for their failure to provide adequate care. Therefore, there is a two-fold benefit in the proper implementation of these policies: firstly the protection of the child and secondly, the protection of the IWC.

In order to ensure mutual protection, staff, volunteers, interns and artists and other organisations working with the IWC will be made familiar with our IWC Child Protection and Welfare Policy and Procedures, Code of Behaviour and Health and Safety guidelines in relation to participation in children and young people's activities.

- We have implemented policies covering:
- Code of behaviour for all staff members, volunteers, interns or artists
- Confidentiality
- Recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers
- Management and supervision of staff, volunteers and interns
- Involvement of primary carers
- Reporting of suspected or disclosed abuse
- Allegations of misconduct or abuse by staff member, volunteer, intern or artist
- Complaints and comments
- Incidents and accidents

For any information about the IWC's Child Protection and Welfare Policy and Procedures, please contact Orla Martin, Administrator and Designated Liaison Person in line with Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017):

Email info@writerscentre.ie Tel 01 8721302

Code of Good Practice for IWC staff, volunteers, interns and artists

By adhering to this Code of Good Practice, staff, volunteers, interns and artists can ensure that our events will be safe and educational for all participants, while those undertaking roles within our organisation will be protected.

Good Practice at the IWC means:

- putting the child's welfare, safety and enjoyment first
- treating all young people equally, and with respect and dignity
- making our activities educational, fun and enjoyable
- building balanced relationships based on mutual trust, which empowers children to share the decision-making process
- giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback
- using appropriate language (physical and verbal), tempering language to the needs and sensitivity of the children present
- challenging use of inappropriate language by children and adults
- planning and preparing appropriately so that each session suits the needs of the group (e.g. activities are age appropriate and allow each child to participate in an enjoyable way)
- always working in an open environment, avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging said open environment
- recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people
- ensuring that manual or physical support is only provided when relevant and necessary, except in emergency situations. Young people should always be consulted and their agreement gained before any physical contact takes place
- involving parents/carers wherever possible and keeping them informed of any issues that concern their children

- ensuring that all children under seven years of age are accompanied to IWC events by a parent or carer
- maintaining accurate policies and procedures in relation to the care of young people
- keeping a written record of any injury or incident that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given including bringing forms and a copy of this policy to all IWC events
- requesting written parental consent if IWC staff members are required to transport young people in their cars

It is important that all IWC staff, volunteers, interns and artists follow this Code of Good Practice. By keeping children and young people at the forefront of our planning and practice, we can be confident that these participants will enjoy their experiences and that our actions will be regarded as safe. In addition staff, volunteers, interns and artists should never:

- Exert undue influence over a young or vulnerable adult participant in order to gain personal benefit or reward
- Spend excessive amounts of time alone with a young person or vulnerable adult.
- Leave children alone or unsupervised
- Engage in rough contact, sexually provocative games, inappropriate touching of any kind, and/or make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child
- Engage in a sexual relationship with a young person. This is considered a breach of trust and a disciplinary matter. If the young person is below the age of consent it may be illegal and hence a criminal matter.
- Use any form of corporal punishment or physical force on a young person.

Following any incident where staff, volunteer, intern or artists feels their actions could be misinterpreted, a written report should be submitted to IWC's Designated Liaison Person.

Recruiting and Selecting Staff and Volunteers

The IWC will recruit and select volunteers and staff in a transparent and equitable fashion and recognises that anyone may have the potential to harm children in some way so we will take all reasonable steps to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children.

We will ensure that staff are carefully selected, trained and supervised by observing the following actions.

- Roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined
Posts will be advertised widely
- All candidates will complete an application form. The application form should elicit information about the applicant's past and include a self-disclosure about any criminal record Staff will be selected by a panel of at least two (or more) representatives through an interview process
- At least two confidential references which are relevant, recent and independent will be sought and verbally confirmed
- Evidence of identity (passport or driving licence with photo) will be collected from staff and volunteers
- No person will be employed who would be deemed to constitute a risk
- Exclusions include
 - ◆ Child-related convictions
 - ◆ Refusal to sign application form and declaration form
 - ◆ Insufficient documentary evidence of identification
 - ◆ Concealing information about suitability for working with children
- There will be a six-month probationary period
- All staff will be required to consent to Garda Clearance and where available this will be sought

Staff Management Policy

To protect our staff and volunteers, and all young people, we undertake that:

New staff and volunteers will

- Take part in mandatory induction training sessions
- Be made aware of our code of conduct, child protection procedures and the identity and role of the designated person
- Undergo a probationary period of six months

All staff and volunteers will

- Receive an adequate level of supervision and review of their work practices
- Read this Child Protection and Welfare Policy
- All staff recruited before IWC's adoption of our Child Protection policy, will complete appropriate declaration form and Garda clearance consent forms at contract renewal and/or extension
- Undergo child protection training

Designated Liaison Person

The IWC has appointed a Designated Liaison Person for Child Protection. The Designated Liaison Person is: Orla Martin, Administrator. The Deputy Designated Liaison Person is: Kiki Drost, Projects Administrator.

The Designated Liaison Person will be available on-call. In the absence of the Designated Liaison Person, due to illness or holiday, the Deputy Designated Liaison Person will be on-call on the same basis. In cases where it is inappropriate for the Designated Liaison Person to investigate issues, i.e. an allegation against the Designated Liaison Person, the role of Designated Person will be taken on by the deputy, supported by the Chairperson of IWC.

Role of the Designated Liaison Person

- Receives and considers all child and vulnerable adult protection concerns
- Maintains contact with appropriate authorities in Community Services, Tusla and An Garda Síochána
- Ensures IWC policy / procedures relating to Child Protection are followed
- Provides information and advice on protection and welfare at IWC
- Manages referrals to Tusla ,with adequate confidential information
- Liaises with Community Services, Tusla and An Garda Síochána
- Consults with management and Chairperson of IWC with regard to Child Protection
- Ensures confidentiality / safe recording of Child Protection issues and of individual case histories
- Provides advice on Child Protection Training needs
- The Designated Liaison Person will maintain his/her training and awareness of Child Protection issues to keep him/her updated on new developments

Mandated Persons

The IWC has appointed a Mandated Person for Child Protection. The Mandated Person is: Orla Martin, Administrator. Email info@writerscentre.ie Tel 01 8721302

Mandated persons are people who have contact with children and/or families and who, because of their qualifications, training and/or employment role, are in a key position to help protect children from harm. Mandated persons include professionals working with children in the education, health, justice, youth and childcare sectors. Certain professionals who may not work directly with children, such as those in adult counselling or psychiatry, are also mandated persons. The list also includes registered foster carers and members of the clergy or pastoral care workers of a church or other religious community and Child Protection Officer.

Mandated persons have two main legal obligations under the Children First Act 2015. These are:

- To report the harm of children above a defined threshold to Tusla;
- To assist Tusla, if requested, in assessing a concern which has been the subject of a mandated report.

The mandated person, under the legislation is required to report any knowledge, belief or reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed, is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed. The Act defines harm as assault, ill-treatment, neglect or sexual abuse, and covers single and multiple instances.

Confidentiality Statement

The IWC is committed to ensuring people's rights to confidentiality. However, in relation to child and vulnerable adult protection and welfare we undertake that:

- Information will be forwarded on a 'need to know' basis in order to safeguard the child. Information about an incident should only be divulged if it is needed to remove the child or vulnerable adult from harm. Do not discuss this incident with anyone other than those who need to know.
- The IWC cannot guarantee total confidentiality where the best interests of the child is at risk
- Primary carers, children and vulnerable adults have a right to know if personal information is being shared and/or a report it being made to the Tusla, unless doing so could put the child or vulnerable at further risk
- All information relating to Child Protection incidents will be stored appropriately and securely in the IWC offices, The Irish Writers Centre values the trust and information of all associated with the Centre. In compliance with the General Data Protection

Regulation (GDPR) our Privacy Policy can be found under the governance section of our website <https://irishwriterscentre.ie/pages/privacy-policy>

Rules to guide use of photography and video

Any recording or photography at IWC events must be undertaken with the consent of both the young person and their parents or guardians.

- For events where children are attending as part of a school or other group, signed consent forms will be sought from all participants via their group leader. For example, where a class is attending an event, consent forms will be sent in advance to the group leader for distribution to parents and guardians.
- For events where children are attending as individuals and where places are booked in advance, (parental) consent forms will be distributed to all participants in advance.
- For events where children and vulnerable adults are attending as individuals but where places are not booked in advance, notices will be displayed at the event and at any information or ticketing stand informing participants that photographs may be taken at the event.
- Any photographer documenting events for IWC will be clearly identified to artists and event staff.
- Where a selection of participants are asked to participate in a photograph e.g. a media photocall, permission must be sought from the accompanying adult before a young person is moved to a different location. A member of the event team must accompany the young people and return them to the group as soon as photography is completed
- To reduce the risk of inappropriate use, only use images of young people in suitable dress. The content of the photograph should focus on the activity not on a particular child.

The use of inappropriate images should be reported to the Designated Liaison Person.

IWC Procedure for Reporting

Procedure for Dealing with Concerns / Suspicion of Abuse

Staff, volunteers, interns and artists working with young people must share their concerns about child protection or child welfare with the Designated Liaison Person or the Chairperson of the IWC. Information that staff, volunteers, interns and artists should record in relation to children and young people:

- suspicions
- concerns
- worrying observations
- behavioural changes

Reasonable Grounds for Concern

The statutory authorities must be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child or young person may have been abused, is being abused, or is at risk of abuse.

The following examples constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

- Specific indication from the child that she/he was abused.
- An account by the person who saw the child being abused.
- Evidence such as injury or behaviour, which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused in another way.
- Consistent indication, over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect/abuse. (It should be noted that IWC staff, volunteers, interns and artists will rarely be in an appropriate position to make informed judgements regarding this ground for concern. Any queries or concerns in this regard should be discussed and actions authorised through the Designated Liaison Person.)

Procedure for Dealing with a Disclosure or Allegation

It is important that allegations are handled in a sensitive and discreet manner and any response to a child making an allegation should take the following into consideration:

- Actively listen to the child adult, ensuring that they feel heard.
- Inform the child of your duty to report their disclosure as early as possible in the conversation. Never agree to keep the disclosure secret.
- React calmly. Over-reaction may intimidate and increase any feelings of guilt.
- Reassure the child that it was right to tell someone what happened.
- Be careful when asking questions. Conversation should be supportive and for the purpose of clarification. Never ask leading questions.
- Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser to the child.

Reporting Procedure

- Record the concern, including the date, time of and people involved in the concern/disclosure and the facts in the IWC Incident Book and directly to the Designated Liaison Person. Information recorded should be factual. Any opinions recorded should be supported by facts.
- Inform the Designated Liaison Person. or if unavailable the Deputy Designated Liaison Person.
- The most appropriate person should discuss the concern/consult with parents/carers where necessary. Parents/carers should be told of a report to Tusla unless it is likely to put the child at further risk.
- The Designated Liaison Person may contact Tusla for an informal consultation prior to making a report, Tusla – Child and Family Agency, The Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, Saint John's Road West, Dublin 8. Tel 01 7718500
- The appropriate HSE department is Dublin North Child Protection Services Social Work Office, 22 Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1. Tel: (01) 855 6871. Office Hours are Monday to Friday 9.30am to 5pm

- Outside office hours all child protection concerns should be referred to the Gardaí, local contact is Store Street Gardaí Station 01 - 6668000
- The HSE operates an out-of-hours Crisis Intervention Service in the Dublin area, which can be accessed by emergency services like Hospitals and the Garda Síochána outside of office hours. Crisis Intervention Service: Office Hours Tel (01) 838 7122
- Information will be shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis. If there are reasonable grounds for concern as outlined above, the Designated Liaison Person will contact Tusla. Reports to the duty social staff can be made verbally initially and then followed by the standard reporting form.
- Reports will be made to Tusla without delay. If the Designated/Deputy Liaison Person is not available then contact the local Social Staff of the Health Service Executive directly. In emergencies which are out of Health Service Executive Social Work hours, contact the Gardaí. There may be extreme situations, which threaten the immediate safety of a child where it may be necessary to contact the Gardaí.

Out-of-hours Emergencies

Any out-of-hours emergencies should be reported immediately to the Designated Liaison Person, or the Deputy Designated Liaison Person who will then decide whether to contact An Garda Síochána or Tusla where appropriate.

Concerns not requiring Tusla Referral

The Designated Liaison Person will decide whether or not to refer matters to the Tusla, recording their decision.

Any matters not referred to Tusla, should be noted within a Child Protection incident file, along with any decisions made and signed by the Designated Liaison Person and the Chairperson.

The Designated Person will inform the staff member, volunteer, intern or artist in writing of any decision not to refer to Tusla.

If any staff member, volunteer, intern or artist feels uncomfortable with a decision made in this context, they have the right and responsibility to file a report of their own.

Dealing with Allegations

In the event of an allegation against an employee/volunteer/intern/artist:

There are two separate procedures to be followed:

1. The reporting procedure in respect of the child
2. The procedure for dealing with the worker

The Designated Liaison Person will deal with issues related to the child. The Chairperson will deal with issues related to the worker.

- The first priority is to ensure that no child or young person or vulnerable adult is exposed to unnecessary risk
- If allegations are made against the Designated Liaison Person then contact the Deputy Designated Liaison Person
- The reporting procedures should then be followed. Parents/carers and children (age appropriate) should be informed of actions planned and taken
- The employee/volunteer/intern/artist will be informed as soon as possible that an allegation has been made against him/her and the nature of the allegation
- The employee/volunteer/intern/artist should be given the opportunity to respond
- Any action following an allegation of abuse against an employee should be taken in consultation with Tusla and Gardaí
- After consultation the Chairperson will advise person accused and agreed procedures will be followed.

Dealing with a Retrospective Allegation

Some adults may disclose abuse that took place during their childhood. Such disclosures may come to light when an adult attends counselling, or is being treated for a psychiatric or health problem.

The reporting requirements under the Children First Act 2015 apply only to information that the Mandated Person or Designated Liaison Person received or became aware of since the Act came into force, whether the harm occurred before or after that point. However, if there is reasonable concern about past abuse, where information came to the attention of the Mandated Person or Designated Liaison Person, before the Act and there is a possible continuing risk to children, the concern should be reported to Tusla under this Guidance.

Complaints Procedure

If the event of a complaint or comment from a participating child, or their parent/carer/guardian:

- Complaints and comments will be logged in the incident book, which is stored in a locked cabinet at the Administrator's desk, in accordance with GDPR policy.
- Reports of complaints should include contact details of the person making the complaint, an outline of the complaint as well as details of the response of staff members present.
- Complaints will be responded to within three days
- All staff members have responsibility for directing complaints/comments to the Designated Liaison Person, Orla Martin, Administrator
- Verbal complaints will be responded to at the time of complaint and all details will be logged in the incident book
- Anyone who makes a verbal complaint should be encouraged to submit details of their complaint in writing also.

Accidents Procedure

- Any accidents which take place but must fully logged in the IWC's incident book, including a full report of the circumstances
- The IWC's first-aid boxes are available at the main office, above the Administrator's desk and regularly restocked
- The accident/incident books are stored in a locked cabinet as per GDPR policy, in a locked cabinet at the Administrators desk
- Staff should ensure children and young people and vulnerable adults are aware of risks of dangerous material in relation to workshops and other appropriate events
- Details of the IWC's public liability insurance will be made available to venues for IWC's events.

Appendix 1.a IWC Child Incident Report Form

IWC Incident Record Form CONFIDENTIAL

Your name: _____ Your position: _____
Child's name (Initials): _____ Child's date of birth: _____
Parents / guardians names: _____
Child's home address (and phone number, if available): _____

What prompted your concerns (include date and time of any incident, also any physical and behavioural signs you have observed):

Have you spoken to the child about this? As best you can, record exactly what the child said and what you said: (remember, do not lead the child – record actual details. Continue on separate sheet if necessary)

Action taken so far: Have parents been contacted? (if unsure contact an agency – see below) What has been said?

External agencies contacted (date & time)

Yes/no

Gardaí / I If 'yes'

Name, unit and contact number: Details of advice received:

Tusla/Health Services Executive/Social Worker yes/ no

If 'yes' which service? Name and contact number: Details of advice received:

Which: Name and contact number:

Signature: _____ Print name: _____ Date: _____

Remember to maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis. Information about an incident should only be divulged if it is needed to remove the child from harm. Do not discuss this incident with anyone other than those who need to know. If unsure get advice before contacting child's parents.

NB: A copy of this form should be sent to Tusla after the telephone report with the original going to the IWC Child Protection Officer who will keep it in a designated locked drawer.

Appendix 1.b IWC Incident Report Form

IWC Incident Record Form CONFIDENTIAL

Your name:

Your position: Name (Initials):

Home address (and phone number, if available):

What prompted your concerns (include date and time of any incident, also any physical and behavioural signs you have observed):

What has been said:

Action taken so far:

External agencies contacted (date & time)

Yes/no Gardaí / I If 'yes' Name, unit and contact number: Details of advice received:

Tusla/HSE/Social Worker yes/ no

Other (e.g. ISPCC, NSPCC)

If 'yes' which service? Name and contact number: Details of advice received:

Signature:

Print name:

Date:

Remember to maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis. Information about an incident should only be divulged if it is needed to remove the child from harm. Do not discuss this incident with anyone other than those who need to know.

NB: A copy of this form should be sent to Tusla after the telephone report with the original going to the IWC Child Protection Officer who will keep it in a designated locked drawer.

Appendix Two – IWC Volunteer, Staff, Intern Declaration

CONFIDENTIAL

1. IWC Volunteer Application Form

1. Name (Mr/Mrs/Ms) _____

Other surname previously known by: _____

2. Address

Previous addresses within last 5 years:

i)

ii)

iii)

Tel No. (Daytime) _____ (Evening) _____

3. Date of Birth ____/____/____ Place of Birth _____

4. PPS number (ROI) _____

5. Do you suffer from any illness/disability/medical condition which may at times affect your ability to work with children and young people? If so, please give details:

6. Please supply the name, address, telephone numbers and position of two people (nonrelative), who know you well and can provide us with a reference.

7. You must tell us now if you have a case pending or if you have ever been convicted of a criminal offence, or cautioned by the police, or bound over. You must include all offences, even minor matters such as motoring offences, and spent conviction, that is, things which happened a long time ago. If you leave anything out it may affect your application. The disclosure of a criminal record or other information will not debar you from registration/appointment unless IWC considers that the conviction renders you unsuitable. In making this decision IWC will consider the nature of the offence, how long ago it was committed and what age you were at the time and other factors which may be relevant.

Please complete below to give us this information and return it with your application.

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence or been the subject of a caution; a Bound Over Order; or are you at present the subject of criminal investigations?

Yes / No If yes, please state below the nature and date(s) of the offence(s)

Please note you are advised that under the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Exceptions) (Amendment) Order (NI) 1987 you should declare all convictions including spent convictions.

8. I declare that the above information is true and agree that I will abide and accept the terms and conditions of membership / participation.

Signed _____ Date: _____

Depending on the nature of your volunteer position, it is our policy to ask for a check to be carried out by the Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety Pre-Employment Consultancy Service (N.I.) or to the Garda Central Vetting Unit. The purpose of the check is to make sure that people are not appointed who might be a risk to vulnerable people. The Check will tell us whether you have a criminal record, or whether the DHSS& PS holds any other information about you which might have a bearing on your suitability. Any information which we receive will be treated confidentially, and will be discussed with you before we make a final decision. After that decision is made the information will be destroyed.

I understand that a Pre-Employment Constancy service check/Garda Vetting may be carried out before my application for registration/appointment can be confirmed.

Appendix Three – IWC Parental Consent Form

IWC Parental Consent Form

The **Irish Writers Centre** is committed to a child-centred approach to our work with children and young people*. It is central to the philosophy of the Irish Writers Centre to provide a safe environment and experience, where the welfare of the child/young person is paramount. We will adhere to the Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017) and the Children First Act 2015.

In consideration of the Irish Writers Centre registering my child for Irish Writers Centre activities or classes, I acknowledge and agree to the following policies, waiver, and release of liability:

1.) Drop-off and Pick-up. Please be sure to arrive to drop off and pick-up your child within 15 minutes of the stated start and finish times of the class or activity. If you need to arrange for someone other than the registered parent or guardian to pick up your child, please send a note to class or send an email to info@writerscentre.ie with the full name and phone number of the person who will be picking up your child that day. The name of the parent(s) or guardian(s) listed below will be the designated drop-off and pick-up person for the duration of the class, course, or activity.

2) Photo Release. From time to time Irish Writers Centre staff will take photos of the Irish Writers Centre classes and/or activities. These photos may be posted to our website or social media pages. I understand that I have the right to request that my child not be photographed and must inform the Irish Writers Centre of my wishes in regards to my child's participation in photography. Please send an email to info@writerscentre.ie if you would like your child to be excluded from photography.

3.) Behavioural Problems. I understand that if my child is continually disruptive, is physically or verbally abusive toward the instructor or other students, or exhibits other ongoing behavioural problems during the class, that I will be notified by phone call to come pick-up my child immediately and may not receive any refund of tuition.

4.) I knowingly and freely assume all such risks, both known and unknown, and assume full responsibility for my child's participation in Irish Writers Centre classes and activities. I acknowledge that my child does not have any allergies or health conditions that would prevent him or her from participating in the Irish Writers Centre activities.

Request for consent

I agree that my child may take part inat the Irish Writers Centre.

- YES / NO

I agree that photographs/recordings of my child may be taken when he/she is attending classes/courses at the Irish Writers Centre.

- YES / NO

I agree that the images may be used by the Irish Writers Centre in its publications/website/social media without using my child's personal details.

- YES / NO

I agree acknowledge that the Irish Writers Centre has implemented procedures for sign-in and sign-out of children attending Irish Writers Centre classes and activities to help ensure the children's safety both when arriving and departing the Centre. Children may not be signed in until 15 minutes before the beginning of class and must be picked up as promptly as possible or within 15 minutes of the end of the class. (If you need an early sign-in or late sign-out please request in advance to info@writerscentre.ie and we will do what we can to accommodate you.)

- YES / NO

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

References

Children First Act 2015

Children First National Guidance for Child Protection and Welfare 2017

Tusla, 'Guidance on Developing a Child Safeguarding Statement'

Tusla, Child Safeguarding; Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice

Tusla, 'A Guide for the Reporting of Child Protection and Welfare Concerns'

Tusla, 'Best Practice Principles for Organisations in Developing Children First Training Programmes'

Tusla, e-learning module, Introduction to Children First

National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016.

Child Care Act 1991