

# Mermaid Arts Centre Child Protection Policy

## 1. Mermaid Arts Centre Child Protection Policy Statement

Mermaid Arts Centre is committed to a child centred approach to our work with children and young people. We consider any individual under the age of 18 years as a child and any activities at Mermaid Arts Centre involving this age group should adhere to the following child protection guidelines. We undertake to provide a safe environment and experience, where the welfare of the child is central to any activities or performances programmed for young audiences. We adhere to the recommendations of Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, published by the department of Health and Children. We are committed to implementing the following policies and procedures in relation to

- Code of behaviour for all staff and contractors
- Confidentiality
- Recruitment
- Managing and supervision of staff
- Involvement of primary carers
- Reporting of suspected abuse
- Allegations of misconduct or abuse by staff/contractors
- Reporting of complaints
- Reporting of accidents

The designated member of staff dealing with child protection is [NAME/JOB TITLE]. This policy will be reviewed in [MONTH/YEAR]

Signed:

Date:

## 2. Code of behaviour for staff including visiting contractors

### Child centred approach

All children and young people are to be:

- Treated equally
- Treated with respect
- Listened to
- Involved in decision making processes as appropriate
- Encouraged and supported
- Welcomed by all staff members

### Facilitators and staff

All facilitators and staff working with young people at Mermaid Arts Centre are required to:

- Use appropriate language
- Lead by example
- Create an atmosphere of trust
- Respect personal boundaries
- Discuss and establish a mutual code of behaviour to be adhered to during their time at the centre between young people and the staff/visiting contractors.
- Be aware of children's limitations and of any special needs/requirements
- Provide a safe, supervised working environment
- Ensure children are supervised at all times and ensure all children have been collected safely at the end of the workshops.
- Respect differences of ability, culture, religion and race.

### Good practice

- Details of each child participating in an activity must be registered i.e. name, contact details, and parent/guardian name. Medical conditions and any special requirements should also be noted.
- Parents/guardians must be made fully aware by the facilitator/staff of the importance of prompt collection of children following the workshop.
- Productions staged by visiting contractors i.e. school musicals/children's stage schools must be briefed on their responsibility to provide adequate supervision of all participants during rehearsal, performance and collection times of each show. Mermaid Arts Centre will not be held responsible for supervision. Visiting companies will be encouraged to draft a child protection policy, and will also be requested to read and sign the Mermaid Arts Centre's policy.
- All staff and visiting practitioners must be made aware of the centre's child protection policy and procedures.

- Any concerns regarding children and or young people must be reported to the designated member of staff.
- Depending on the activity and age of the children we advise a ratio of one adult supervisor to every ten participants. This will include the facilitator and if possible a representative of Mermaid Arts Centre staff who has been fully briefed on the centre's child protection policies. In the case of schools participating in workshops, an artist and school teacher must be present to facilitate the session.
- The designated member of Mermaid Arts Centre staff will make unannounced visits during the workshop.
- At the beginning of each workshop the designated member of staff will introduce themselves to the children and parents as Mermaid Arts Centre's children's representative and a contact if they need assistance.
- If the artists are required to document their work with children and young people artists must secure permission from primary carers to take photographs or video.
- All media coverage or publicity photographs (either to be used by Mermaid Arts Centre or the visiting company/facilitator) must be cleared in advance by primary carers.
- All artists are required to sign contracts with Mermaid Arts Centre outlining the terms and conditions of each project.

### **Inappropriate behaviour**

Staff members or facilitators working with children and young people should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with a child, socialising inappropriately with children outside of structured activity time.
- Check with children/young people about their level of comfort if doing touch exercises through drama or dance.
- Avoid the use of offensive or sexually suggestive physical/verbal language.
- Avoid favouritism, ridicule, criticism .
- Avoid physical/verbal chastisement of children.
- Avoid horseplay or inappropriate touch. Seek consent of child in relation to physical contact (except in an emergency or dangerous situation).

### Health and safety

- Never leave children unsupervised or unattended.
- Do not allow children use any dangerous materials.
- Provide appropriate instruction and guidance when using unfamiliar techniques or materials i.e. art classes.
- Provide a safe environment, ensuring workshop room is clean and floor space is clear.
- Limit class size according to activity to avoid overcrowding in the workshops space and to ensure adequate adult supervision.
- Ensure a first aid kit is available.

[NAME] has been designated as the person to contact if you have an issue or concern about a young person's safety or welfare. It is the responsibility of this person to advise staff and visiting companies intending to work with children about policy and procedures in relation to child protection. It is also the responsibility of the designated person to liaise with the Health Services Executive or Garda where appropriate.

[NAME] can be contacted at [TEL] or by email at [EMAIL].

[NAME] has been designated as deputy to [NAME] and can be contacted at [TEL] or by email at [EMAIL]

Both staff members have completed a safety first training module in child protection with the Arts Council.

### 3. Recording and Reporting Procedures

All incidents are to be recorded in an incident log book. This book is kept in the director's office and will remain confidential at all times. Access to the log book will be restricted to the designated person and deputy designated person.

- When recording an incident the following should be recorded:  
All details: date, time and everyone involved. All information should be factual.
- The nature of the disclosure or concern.
- Any information shared is to be treated with the utmost confidentiality.
- If there are any reasonable grounds for concern the designated person will contact the duty social worker in the HSE for advice and consultation. The duty social worker will determine whether there are reasonable grounds to proceed with the complaint and formally report the incident.
- In case of emergencies outside of HSE working hours the Garda may be contacted.

#### **4. Confidentiality statement**

Mermaid Arts Centre is committed to ensuring the individual's right to confidentiality. However, in relation to child protection and welfare we undertake that:

- Information will only be forwarded on a need to know basis in order to safeguard a child.
- Giving such information to others for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality.
- We cannot guarantee total confidentiality where the best interests of the child are at risk.
- Primary carers, children and young people have a right to know if information is being shared.

#### **5. Recruitment and selection policy statement**

Mermaid Arts Centre undertakes to ensure to the best of their ability that staff are carefully selected, trained (where necessary) and supervised to provide a safe environment for all children by observing the following principles:

- Roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined for each job.
- We will endeavour to select the most suitably qualified personnel.
- Candidates will be required to submit an up to date c.v and to sign contracts in the event of being offered a position.
- Candidates will be required to read and sign our child protection policy.
- Candidates will be required to sign our child protection declaration form, declaring their suitability to work with young people and compliance with Garda checks when they become available.
- Candidates are required to provide two written references that are recent, independent, and verbally confirmed where necessary.
- Permanent staff will interviewed by a panel of at least two representatives of Mermaid Arts Centre.
- No person deemed to constitute a risk to young people will be employed.

#### **Exclusions will include:**

- Any child-related convictions.
- Refusal to sign a declaration form.
- Insufficient documentary evidence of identification.
- Concealing information on one's suitability of working with children.
- All staff must give their consent to Garda clearance, and where available this will be sought.

## **6. Managing and supervising staff: policy statement**

To protect staff (paid and voluntary) and children, Mermaid will undertake that new staff will:

- Take part in mandatory induction training session.
- Be introduced to the organisation's code of conduct, child protection procedures, and designated person.
- Undergo a probationary period to be agreed in line with the length of the programme/activity.

### **All staff will:**

- Receive an adequate level of supervision and review of their work practices.
- Be expected to have read and signed the child protection policy statement.
- Be provided with child protection training.

## **7. Policy Statement on the involvement of primary carers**

Mermaid Arts Centre is committed to being open with all primary carers.

### **We undertake to:**

- Advise primary carers of our child protection policy.
- Inform primary carers and schools of all activities.
- Issue contact/consent forms where relevant.
- Comply with health and safety guidelines.
- Operate child-centred policies in accordance with best practice.
- Adhere to recruitment guidelines.
- Ensure as far as possible that activities are age appropriate.
- If the centre/staff have concerns about the welfare of the child the designated person will:
  - Respond to the needs of the child.
  - Inform primary carers on an on going basis unless this action puts the child at further risk.
  - Where there are child welfare concerns the designated person is obliged to pass these on to the duty social worker at the HSE and in out of hours emergency the Garda.
- The designated person will be available for consultation with primary carers in the case of any concern over a child's welfare

## **8. Procedure for dealing with an allegation against staff**

In the event of an allegation against Mermaid Arts Centre staff two separate procedures will be followed. [NAME] will deal with issues relating to the child. Mermaid Arts Centre's Director will deal with allegations against the staff member.

### **In respect of the child:**

- Reporting procedures as outlined on page 4 of this document will be followed.
- The first priority is to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk.
- If allegations are made against the designated member of staff, the deputy designated person should be contacted.
- Both the primary carers and the child should be informed of actions planned and taken.

### **In respect of the staff member:**

- The staff member will be informed as soon as possible of the nature of the allegation.
- The staff member will be given the opportunity to respond.
- The chairperson of the centre will be informed.
- Any action following an allegation of abuse against an employee should be taken in consultation with the HSE and Garda.
- During the reporting and investigation process the staff member may be assigned to alternative duties and have increased supervision.
- After consultation the chairperson should advise the person accused and agreed procedures will be followed.

## **9. Complaints and comments procedures**

- Complaints or comments received will be responded to within two weeks.
- [NAME] has responsibility for directing complaints/comments to the director.
- Verbal complaints will be logged and responded to.
- A confidential log book will be kept in the director's office with access restricted to the designated person, deputy designated person and director.

## 10. Accidents procedure

In the event of an accident the following procedures must be undertaken:

- Staff trained in first aid must assess the seriousness of the accident and take appropriate action. Medical centre, hospital and local Garda contact numbers are available from the box office.
- If the accident is serious i.e. cannot be treated by staff and First Aid provisions available at Centre, primary carers must be notified, and alternative medical attention must be sought.
- An accident report form must be completed by a staff member that witnessed the event.
- The designated person and the director must be briefed of any accidents that occur at the centre.
- An accident log book is available at the box office.
- Events preceding the accident and any other persons involved must be noted along with the actions taken.
- A First Aid box is available in the green room, dressing rooms, box office, café, and backstage.

The following staff members have completed occupational First Aid training in [MONTH/YEAR]:

- [NAME]                      [JOB TITLE]
- [NAME]                      [JOB TITLE]
- [NAME]                      [JOB TITLE]