

Lime Tree Theatre | Belltable

Child Safeguarding Procedures

The Lime Tree Theatre | Belltable staff will at all times adhere to the best practice in child safeguarding as outlined in the document: Children First National Guidance 2017. Below are the details of the company's procedures

PROCEDURE I

Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child available of our service

Louise Donlon has been designated as the person to contact if a member of staff or a member of the public has an issue or concern about any aspect of a child or young person's safety and welfare. It is the responsibility Louise Donlon to support and advise staff about policy and procedures in relation to child protection and to ensure that procedures are followed. It is also the responsibility of Louise Donlon to liaise with the Health Service Executive or Gardai where appropriate.

Louise Donlon can be contacted at the Lime Tree Theatre | Belltable at (061) 953400, ext 7 or on her mobile (087) 683 6142.

The Deputy Designated person will be Gillian Fenton. She can be contacted at (061) 953400, ext 3 and (087) 7840270

Grounds for concern

The Lime Tree Theatre | Belltable has made a copy of *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* available to all staff. Chapter 2 of this document: ***Child Abuse: What is it, How do I recognise it, How do I report it?*** outlines the various types and forms of abuse: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. It is attached to this document as Appendix 1

Neglect:

Neglect occurs when a child does not receive adequate care or supervision to the extent that the child is harmed physically or developmentally. It is generally defined in terms of an omission of care, where a child's health, development or welfare is impaired by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, medical care, intellectual stimulation or supervision and safety. Key features include:

- *Malnourishment, lacking food, unsuitable food or erratic feeding*
- *Non-organic failure to thrive, i.e. a child not gaining weight due not only to malnutrition but also emotional deprivation*
- *Failure to provide adequate care for the child's medical and developmental needs, including intellectual stimulation*
- *Inadequate living conditions – unhygienic conditions, environmental issues, including lack of adequate heating and furniture*
- *Lack of adequate clothing*
- *Inattention to basic hygiene*
- *Lack of protection and exposure to danger, including moral danger, or lack of supervision appropriate to the child's age*
- *Persistent failure to attend school*
- *Abandonment or desertion*

Emotional Abuse:

Emotional abuse is the systematic emotional or psychological ill-treatment of a child as part of the overall relationship between a caregiver and a child. Key features include:

- *Rejection*
- *Lack of comfort and love*
- *Lack of attachment*
- *Lack of proper stimulation (e.g. fun and play)*
- *Lack of continuity of care (e.g. frequent moves, particularly unplanned)*
- *Continuous lack of praise and encouragement*
- *Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming of the child*

- *Bullying*
- *Conditional parenting in which care or affection of a child depends on his or her behaviours or actions*
- *Extreme overprotectiveness*
- *Inappropriate non-physical punishment (e.g. locking child in bedroom)*
- *Ongoing family conflicts and family violence*
- *Seriously inappropriate expectations of a child relative to his/her age and stage of development*

Physical Abuse:

Physical abuse is when someone deliberately hurts a child physically or puts them at risk of being physically hurt. It may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents. Physical abuse can include the following:

- *Physical punishment*
- *Beating, slapping, hitting or kicking*
- *Pushing, shaking or throwing*
- *Pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling*
- *Use of excessive force in handling*
- *Deliberate poisoning*
- *Suffocation*
- *Fabricated/induced illness*
- *Female genital mutilation*

Sexual Abuse:

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or arousal, or for that of others. It includes the child being involved in sexual acts (masturbation, fondling, oral or penetrative sex) or exposing the child to sexual activity directly or through pornography.

Child sexual abuse may cover a wide spectrum of abusive activities. It rarely involves just a single incident and in some instances occurs over a number of

years. Child sexual abuse most commonly happens within the family, including older siblings and extended family members.

Cases of sexual abuse mainly come to light through disclosure by the child or his or her siblings/friends, from the suspicions of an adult, and/or by physical symptoms. It should be remembered that sexual activity involving a young person may be sexual abuse even if the young person concerned does not themselves recognise it as abusive.

Examples of child sexual abuse include the following:

- *Any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child*
- *An invitation to sexual touching or intentional touching or molesting of a child's body whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification*
- *Masturbation in the presence of a child or the involvement of a child in an act of masturbation*
- *Sexual intercourse with a child, whether oral, vaginal or anal*
- *Sexual exploitation of a child, which includes:*
 - o *Inviting, inducing or coercing a child to engage in prostitution or the production of child pornography [for example, exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, videotape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of an image by computer or other means]*
 - o *Inviting, coercing or inducing a child to participate in, or to observe, any sexual, indecent or obscene act*
 - o *Showing sexually explicit material to children, which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse*
- *Exposing a child to inappropriate or abusive material through information and communication technology*
- *Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person*

Circumstances which may make children more vulnerable to harm:

If you are dealing with children, you need to be alert to the possibility that a welfare or protection concern may arise in relation to children you come in contact with. A child needs to have someone they can trust in order to feel able to disclose abuse they may be experiencing. They need to know that they will be believed and will get the help they need. Without these things, they may be vulnerable to continuing abuse.

Some children may be more vulnerable to abuse than others. Also, there may be particular times or circumstances when a child may be more vulnerable to abuse in their lives. In particular, children with disabilities, children with communication difficulties, children in care or living away from home, or children with a parent or parents with problems in their own lives may be more susceptible to harm.

*The following list is intended to help you identify the range of issues in a child's life that may place them at greater risk of abuse or neglect. **It is important for you to remember that the presence of any of these factors does not necessarily mean that a child in those circumstances or settings is being abused.***

Parent or carer factors:

- *Drug and alcohol misuse*
- *Addiction, including gambling*
- *Mental health issues*
- *Parental disability issues, including learning or intellectual disability*
- *Conflictual relationships*
- *Domestic violence*
- *Adolescent parents*

Child factors:

- *Age*
- *Gender*
- *Sexuality*
- *Disability*
- *Mental health issues, including self-harm and suicide*
- *Communication difficulties*

- *Trafficked/Exploited*
- *Previous abuse*
- *Young carer*

Community factors:

- *Cultural, ethnic, religious or faith-based norms in the family or community which may not meet the standards of child welfare or protection required in this jurisdiction*
- *Culture-specific practices, including:*
 - o *Female genital mutilation*
 - o *Forced marriage*
 - o *Honour-based violence*
 - o *Radicalisation*

Environmental factors:

- *Housing issues*
- *Children who are out of home and not living with their parents whether temporarily or permanently*
- *Poverty/Begging*
- *Bullying*
- *Internet and social media-related concerns*

Poor motivation or willingness of parents/guardians to engage:

- *Non-attendance at appointments*
- *Lack of insight or understanding of how the child is being affected*
- *Lack of understanding about what needs to happen to bring about change*
- *Avoidance of contact and reluctance to work with services*
- *Inability or unwillingness to comply with agreed plans*

BULLYING

It is recognised that bullying affects the lives of an increasing number of children and can be the cause of genuine concerns about a child's welfare.

While bullying can happen to any child, some may be more vulnerable. These include: children with disabilities or special educational needs; those from ethnic minority and migrant groups; from the Traveller community; lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) children and those perceived to be LGBT; and children of minority religious faiths.

There can be an increased vulnerability to bullying among children with special educational needs. This is particularly so among those who do not understand social cues and/or have difficulty communicating. Some children with complex needs may lack understanding of social situations and therefore trust everyone implicitly. Such children may be more vulnerable because they do not have the same social skills or capacity as others to recognise and defend themselves against bullying behaviour.

Reasonable grounds for concern would include:

- (i) specific indication from the child or young person that s/he has been abused;
- (ii) an account by a person who saw the child/young person being abused
- (iii) evidence, such as an injury or behaviour, which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way;
- (iv) an injury or behaviour which is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are collaborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse (an example of this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indications of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour);
- (v) consistent indication, over a period of time, that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

Recording procedures

An incident book for recording concerns about the protection of children and young people will be kept in the Lime Tree Theatre | Belltable. Louise Donlon and the Deputy Designated

person will have access to these records. They will be stored in a secure manner and confidentiality will be maintained at all times in accordance with our Confidentiality Statement.

Staff should record the following information in relation to children and young people:

- Suspicions
- Concerns
- Worrying observations
- Behavioural changes
- Actions and outcomes

Dealing with a disclosure

- Stay calm and listen to the child/young person, allow him or her enough time to say what s/he needs to say;
- don't use leading questions or prompt details
- reassure the child/young person but do not promise to keep anything secret
- don't make the child/young person repeat the details unnecessarily
- explain to the child/young person what will happen next (explanation should be age appropriate).

Reporting Procedures

- The person who expresses the concern should be involved and kept informed
- Actions and outcomes should be noted;
- All details should be recorded, including date, time, the people involved in the concern or disclosure and the facts in the incident book
- Information recorded should be factual. Any opinions should be supported by facts;
- Inform Louise Donlon or her deputy if she is unavailable;
- Louise Donlon may contact the Health Service Executive Duty Social Work Department for an informal consultation prior to making a report;

- Information will be shared on a strictly 'need to know basis', (see Section 4: Confidentiality statement)
- If there are reasonable grounds for concern as outlined above, Louise Donlon will contact the Duty Social Worker in the Health Service Executive area using the standard reporting form available from the Health Service Executive.
- Reports to the Duty Social Worker can be made verbally initially and then followed by the standard reporting form. Reports should be made to the Health Service Executive without delay;
- If Louise Donlon or the deputy Designated person is not available, contact the local Duty Social Worker of the Health Service Executive directly;
- In cases of emergency outside of Health Service Executive Social Work Department hours, contact the Gardai. In situations that threaten the immediate safety of a child/young person, it may be necessary to contact the Gardai.

Dealing with a retrospective allegation

The staff of the Lime Tree Theatre | Belltable will follow the procedures on dealing with a retrospective allegation as per the procedure outlined in Chapter 3 of Children First: National Guidance.

Confidentiality Statement

We in the Lime Tree Theatre | Belltable are committed to ensuring peoples' rights 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 the child/young person
- Giving such information to others for the protection of a child or young person is not a breach of confidentiality
- total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where the best interests of the child or young person are at risk

- Primary carers, children and young people have a right to know if personal information is being shared and/or a report is being made to the Health Service Executive, unless doing so could put the child/young person at further risk;
- Images of a child/young person will not be used for any reason without the consent of the parent/carer (however, we cannot guarantee that cameras/videos will not be used at public performances)
- Procedures will be put in place in relation to the use of images of children/young people;
- Procedures will also be put in place for the recording and storing of information in line with our confidentiality policy.

PROCEDURE II

Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers to work with children

The Lime Tree Theatre | Belltable will ensure that staff are carefully selected, trained and supervised to provide a safe environment for all children and young people, by observing the following principles:

- Roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined for every job (paid or voluntary)
- Posts will be advertised widely
- We will endeavour to select the most suitably qualified personnel
- Candidates will be asked to sign a declaration form
- At least two written references that are recent, relevant, independent and verbally confirmed will be necessary
- Staff will be selected by a panel of at least two (or more) representatives through an interview process
- No person who would be deemed to constitute a 'risk' will be employed
- Some of the exclusions would include:
 1. Any child related convictions;
 2. Refusal to sign declaration form;
 3. Insufficient documentary evidence of identification;
 4. Concealing information on one's suitability to working with children
- There will be a relevant probationary period;¹
- All staff will be required to consent to Garda clearance, and where available this will be sought
- Legal advice will be sought when developing policy and procedures in relation to the safe recruitment and selection of staff.

¹ The probationary period will be one year

Staff management policy statement

To protect both staff (paid and voluntary) and children/young people, the Lime Tree Theatre | Belltable undertakes that

New staff will:

- Take part in a mandatory induction training session
- be made aware of the Lime Tree Theatre | Belltable's code of conduct, child protection procedures and the identity and role of who has been designated to deal with the issues of concern;
- undergo a probationary or trial period.

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.

Specific factors that would exclude a person working or volunteering in the organisation:

- Criminal conviction for any child protection issue

PROCEDURE III

Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm

The Lime Tree Theatre | Belltable will ensure that all staff attend training at least once a year in child protection

When new staff join the organisation, prior to commencement, they will receive in-house training on the procedures the organisation has for the protection of children.

All staff will receive a copy of Children First: National Guidance for the Protections and Welfare of Children and will be asked to sign a declaration that they have read and understood its provisions and implications.

All staff must complete the online training introduction to Children First as available on the Tusla website.

PROCEDURE IV

Procedure for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla

The relevant person for reporting child protection concerns is Louise Donlon. Tusla will be informed if we have reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected. We may report our concern in person, by telephone or in writing — including by email — to the local social work duty service in the area where the child lives. The contact details for the Tusla social work teams on the Tusla website www.tusla.ie.

Should we be concerned about a child but are unsure whether we should report it to Tusla, we may contact Tusla to informally discuss our concern. This will provide us with an opportunity to discuss the query in general and to decide whether a formal report of the concern to Tusla is appropriate. If the concern is below the threshold for reporting, Tusla may be able to provide advice in terms of keeping an eye on the child and other services that may be more suitable to meeting the needs of the child and/or family.

Information to be provided to Tusla

We will provide as much information as possible, including as much relevant information as we can about the child, his/her home circumstances and the grounds for concern. These may include:

- The child's name, address and age
- Names and addresses of parents or guardians
- Names, if known, of who is allegedly harming the child or not caring for them appropriately
- A detailed account of the grounds for concern (e.g. details of the allegation, dates of incidents, and description of injuries)
- Names of other children in the household
- Name of school the child attends
- Our names, contact details and relationship to the child and the nature of our engagement with the child in respect of our work at the Lime Tree Theatre | Belltable.

PROCEDURE V

Procedure for maintaining a list of the persons in the relevant service who are mandated persons

As per Appendix 2 of Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children Schedule of Mandated Persons under the Children First Act 2015, a mandated person includes “the safeguarding officer, child protection officer or other person (howsoever described) who is employed for the purpose of performing the child welfare and protection function of religious, sporting, recreational, cultural, educational and other bodies and organisations offering services to children”.

The safeguarding officer at the Lime Tree Theatre | Belltable is Louise Donlon and is therefore a mandated person under the Children First Act 2015.

It is intended that a new safeguarding officer will be trained and appointed in June 2021.

The name of the mandated person will always be available on our web-site

www.limetreetheatre.ie

PROCEDURE VI

Procedure for appointing a relevant person

The Lime Tree Theatre | Belltable will appoint designated person who will be the resource person for any staff member or volunteer who has child protection concerns and will liaise with outside agencies. The designated liaison person will receive specific child protection training necessary to fulfil this role.

The name and contact details of the designated liaison person will be available to all staff working in the Lime Tree Theatre | Belltable. A deputy designated liaison person will assume responsibility when the designated liaison person is not available or on leave.

Currently, the designated person is Louise Donlon. The deputy designated person is Gillian Fenton.

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