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AN COIMISIÚN LE RINCÍ GAELACHA

# CHILD PROTECTION AND WELFARE POLICY

Guidelines  
for  
Teachers, Adjudicators, Members, Volunteers and  
Employees  
Working with Children and Young People

**UPDATED SEPTEMBER 2017**

**"The objective of An Coimisiún is to preserve and promote Irish dancing including step dancing, céili dancing and other team dancing, and also to promote the use of the Irish language."**

"An Coimisiún wish to acknowledge the assistance of Barnardos in the development of this policy document."

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This policy has been developed in compliance with Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011). It sets out the value base, standards and procedures required for Teachers, Adjudicators, Members, Volunteers and Employees to ensure the safety and welfare of children and young people. It should be utilised where circumstances require, for example, weekly classes, events, residential activities and overseas trips organised by Teachers and Adjudicators registered with An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha.

For the purposes of this document:

**'An Coimisiún'** refers to An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha, the body with whom Teachers and Adjudicators are registered and to which this policy belongs.

**'Teacher'** refers to any Teacher registered with An Coimisiún.

**'Adjudicator'** refers to any Adjudicator registered with An Coimisiún.

**'Member'** refers to any person elected to any An Coimisiún Committee or sub-committee including Teachers and Adjudicators.

**'Employee'** means any person employed by An Coimisiún on a permanent, temporary, contractual or short-term basis.

**'Volunteer'** refers to any person (18 years or over) who has an involvement in An Coimisiún in any unpaid capacity.

**'Designated Liaison Person'** refers to the appointed person(s) within each Region and Country who act as the nominated contact/liaison point(s) between An Coimisiún and the relevant official authorities, such as social services, police, etc.

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## Policy Statement

An Coimisiún recognises that the safety and welfare of children and young people is of paramount importance and is committed to taking every appropriate step to ensure the safety and well-being of the children and young people with whom we engage, regardless of class, gender, race, creed, age or ability. An Coimisiún has a 'zero tolerance' policy with regard to abuse, intimidation, bullying (physical or emotional), racism and sexist behaviour directed towards children and young people. An Coimisiún acknowledges the right of children and young people to be treated with respect at all times, to be listened to and to have their views taken into consideration in matters that affect them.

**Teachers, Adjudicators, Members, Volunteers and Employees with An Coimisiún recognise that the welfare of children is paramount and we will endeavour to safeguard children by:**

- Having a reporting procedure to respond to concerns around children's welfare and safety
- Having a confidentiality statement
- Having a code of behaviour for Teachers, Adjudicators, Members, Volunteers and Employees
- Having a safe recruitment procedure
- Having a procedure to respond to accidents
- Having a process to respond to complaints
- Developing a staff allegations procedure
- Developing a disciplinary procedure

**In order to safeguard children and young people An Coimisiún will:**

- Appoint a National Designated Liaison Person
- Appoint regional Designated Liaison Persons
- Arrange for the provision of training on the child protection policy
- Ensure that Designated Liaison Persons attend appropriate child protection training
- Share information about the child protection policy and good practices with families and children
- Review the group's child protection policy and practices every two years

## Scope of the Policy

All Teachers, Adjudicators, Members, Employees and Volunteers registered with or employed by An Coimisiún must be aware of this policy and it is their duty to oversee its implementation.

This policy statement should be publicly displayed at all classes and events which are run by Teachers or other persons registered or employed by An Coimisiún.

Classes and other events run by Teachers, Adjudicators and other persons involved with An Coimisiún are the responsibility of those who are organising these events. While this policy and best practice should equally apply to all such events, An Coimisiún can only oversee and manage events which the organisation itself organises and runs<sup>1</sup>.

***“All children and young people should enjoy classes taught by Teachers registered with An Coimisiún and competitions registered with or organised by An Coimisiún and all their relevant facilities and activities in an environment free of physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect.”***

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<sup>1</sup> This policy has been developed in compliance with Irish legislation and to reflect Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011). Where activities or events are undertaken in other jurisdictions, local policies should reflect relevant legislation or guidance.



## Principles of Good Practice

1. An Coimisiún recognise that children and young people have rights as individuals and will treat them with dignity and respect.
2. An Coimisiún shall raise awareness about protecting the welfare of children and young people.
3. An Coimisiún will adopt and consistently apply a rigorous and clearly defined method of vetting Teachers, Adjudicators, Employees and Volunteers.
4. An Coimisiún shall plan an appropriate response procedure in relation to concerns, allegations, incidents and disclosures of alleged or suspected incidents of abuse.
5. An Coimisiún shall stay abreast of emerging technologies and web-based programmes to ensure that all dancers, regardless of age or ability, can enjoy all An Coimisiún has to offer in a safe and secure environment.
6. An Coimisiún shall ensure best practice with regards to photography and videography.
7. Child protection and welfare issues shall be on the agenda of each meeting of An Coimisiún and An Buancoiste.

## Definitions

**'A Child'** means a person under the age of 18 years, excluding a person who is or has been married.

Child abuse is categorised under four headings: Neglect, Emotional Abuse, Physical Abuse and Sexual Abuse.

**Neglect** can be defined in terms of an omission where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults,

and/or medical care. Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time.

*(2.2 Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children)*

**Emotional Abuse** is normally to be found in the relationship between a parent/carer and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's developmental need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met.

*(2.3 Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children)*

**Physical Abuse** is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction, or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of the parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents.

*(2.4 Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children)*

**Sexual Abuse** occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or that of others.

*(2.5 Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children)*

## **Recognising Abuse or Neglect**

Child abuse or neglect can often be difficult to identify and may present in many different forms. A list of examples and indicators is contained in Appendix A: Indicators of Child Abuse as Defined in Children First 2011.

## **Guidelines for recognition**

The ability to recognise abuse can depend as much on a person's willingness to accept the possibility of its existence as it does on their knowledge and information. There are three stages in the identification of abuse:

1. Considering the possibility
2. Looking out for signs of neglect or abuse (see Appendix A)
3. Recording of information

## **Reasonable Grounds for Concern**

Reasonable grounds for concern might include:

- Physical signs of neglect over a period of time
- An injury for which no reasonable explanation can be offered
- Disclosure of abuse by a child or young person
- Disclosure of abuse by another person
- Age-inappropriate sexual knowledge
- Displaying fearful responses to parents or carers
- A cluster or pattern of signs or injuries

It is important to remember that signs and symptoms can be non-specific and may have a reasonable or alternative explanation; however, if you are concerned, the information should be recorded and reported to your Designated Liaison Person.

## **Dealing with Disclosures**

If a child or young person gives an indication that he/she may want to tell you about a problem you should:

- Arrange a time and place where you can talk privately as soon as possible, remember to do this within sight of others.
- Stay calm and reassuring.

- Explain that you cannot promise to keep what the child or young person tells you a secret and that you may need to talk to other people to ensure that they are safe and protected.
- Listen to and do not dismiss what the child or young person tells you – explain that, whatever the circumstances, s/he has support available.
- Do not press for details or ask leading questions – some cases of abuse need further and possibly extensive investigation. It is better for the child or young person if he/she does not have to repeat the details unnecessarily. Remember it is your responsibility to record and report, not to investigate.
- Do not make promises to the individual – the situation may cause you to react emotionally and cause you to make promises that cannot be fulfilled.
- Tell the child or young person that you are pleased that he/she has decided to tell someone, and he/she was absolutely right to tell.
- Let the child or young person know that you believe her/him and understand how difficult it is to talk about such experiences.

A wide range of possible situations can fall into the category of a 'disclosure'. Because it is impossible to know in advance what a child or young person will say, it is advisable to always follow the suggestions given above. Children or young people may tell you about incidents involving bullying or concerns about a home situation. Such disclosures may not indicate abuse, but may need to be followed up in relation to the code of conduct, or they may require no further action. All disclosures should be noted using the child or young person's own words, and be dated and signed by you.

In cases where the child or young person is at risk or the disclosure is obviously of a serious nature, you will need to follow the procedure as dictated by An Coimisiún.

After you have talked with the child or young person, follow the procedure laid down for reporting such incidents to the Designated Liaison Person.

## **Role of the Designated Liaison Person**

The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is responsible for dealing with child protection or welfare concerns, ensuring they are reported to the relevant statutory authorities, in compliance with this policy.

The role of DLP is an important one within An Coimisiún. The person appointed should be familiar with the activities of the organisation, have a good knowledge of child safeguarding, be able to deal with complex issues and should undertake specific training in child protection to support them in their role. The DLP receives reports of concerns from Teachers, Adjudicators, Members, Volunteers or Employees and compiles a report for the statutory authorities. S/he ensures the proper reporting procedures are followed, that records are kept in a secure and confidential manner and that Teachers, Adjudicators, Members, Volunteers or Employees are supported in dealing with child protection or welfare concerns. The DLP consults informally with a duty social worker to seek advice in relation to:

- whether a formal report is required
- discussing the concerns with the parents

and any other related concern. Any such consultation should be noted and the decision to report or not should be recorded on file.

## What to Do if you are Concerned About a Child or Young Person

If a Teacher, Adjudicator, Member, Volunteer or Employee has a concern or a query that a child or young person may have experienced abuse or neglect they are obliged to:

- Report these concerns without delay to the DLP in their region or the National DLP<sup>2</sup>. Information provided should include:
  - Child's/young person's name, date of birth and contact details (that is, address and contact numbers).
  - Contact details for parents or carers, if different from child's/young person's.
  - The details of and reasons for, the concern (clear, factual descriptions).
  - Notes of any disclosure or explanations offered by the child or young person, using their own words.
  - Details of the person posing a risk to the child or young person, if known.
  - Indicate if parents or carers have been informed (see below) and their response.
  - Name and contact details of person reporting<sup>3</sup> and their relationship to the child or young

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<sup>2</sup> The Regional DLP responds to concerns in their region. The National DLP responds to concerns that are reported to them by Teachers, Adjudicators, Members, Volunteers or Employees where the Regional DLP is unavailable.

<sup>3</sup> Where the person raising the concern wishes to remain anonymous, the Child and Family Agency endeavours to respect this; however, total anonymity cannot be guaranteed. Persons reporting to statutory authorities 'reasonably and in good faith' are protected from personal liability.

person (for example, Teacher, Adjudicator, supervising adult, etc.).

- Any other relevant information known (for example, other services or professionals involved; other children who may be at risk; any previous incidents or concerns which may have occurred but not been considered significant or serious at the time).
- Record their concerns. As detailed above, include the exact words used by the child/young person or parent, the nature of their concern and any evidence to support this concern, sign and date the record.
- This confidential record must be stored securely in a locked place.
- This information and discussions relating to it are confidential and information should be shared on a 'need to know' basis only.
- Where the DLP decides that the concern must be reported to the social work department of the Child and Family Agency, it is good practice to inform the parent of the child or young person, unless it is considered that this might place the child or young person in danger.
- If the DLP is unsure whether telling the parent might endanger the child or young person, they should have an 'informal consultation' with the social work department. When speaking to the social worker they should outline that they are making an informal consultation and go over their concerns and query about whether telling the parent might endanger the child or young person. The Social Worker will advise on this and will assist the DLP to consider how best to talk to the parent about the concern.

- The DLP will record this conversation, the advice given, the name of the Social Worker, and will date and sign the record and store securely, as outlined earlier.
- The DLP will advise the Teacher, Adjudicator, Member, Volunteer or Employee who raised the concern about the advice and direction given by the social work service. The person who knows the child/young person or parent should inform the parent of the concern and that, in compliance with the child protection policy, a referral is being made to the social work department.
- This information and discussions relating to it are confidential and information should be shared on a 'need to know' basis only.

## What Actions Does the DLP take

- When the DLP is made aware that there is a concern that a child or young person has experienced abuse or neglect they should, without delay:
  - Consider whether these concerns meet the criteria for reporting as outlined in *Reasonable Grounds for Concern* (see page 8).
  - Where the DLP believes that they **meet** the criteria they should report the concerns immediately to the social work department of the Child and Family Agency using the Standard Report Form (see Appendix G: The Standard Report Form), completing it as fully as possible.
  - Where the DLP believes that the situation is urgent they should call the social work office and make their referral by phone. They will be required to submit this referral in writing using a Standard Report Form.
    - Fax or hand deliver the Standard Report Form to the relevant social work office. (For a full list



of contact details for social workers please see the following website: <http://www.tusla.ie/get-in-touch/duty-social-work-teams> and click on your county.

- This confidential record must be stored securely in a locked place.
- This information, and discussions relating to it, is confidential and information should be shared on a 'need to know' basis only.
- Where the DLP is **unsure** whether the concern meets the criteria for referral to the social work department they will have an informal consultation by phone with the Duty Social Worker. As outlined earlier, they will state that they wish to have an informal consultation and they will outline the concerns without disclosing the identity or address of the child or young person. If the Duty Social Worker states that it appears there are reasonable grounds for concern, the DLP must submit a written report.
- As outlined earlier, informal consultation with the Duty Social Worker may also be used by the DLP to discuss how to talk to parents about a concern, as well as to discuss whether to inform parents of the concern.
- The National DLP will provide support and guidance about processes to the Regional DLPs as required.

## **Emergency or Out-of-Hours Referrals**

In the event of an emergency out-of-office-hours or where a child or young person is in immediate danger, the Gardaí (police) should be contacted.

This can be done through any Garda Station or by making a '112' or '999' call.

It should be stated that you wish to make an emergency child protection referral and state your name, organisation and the location of the child or young person.

The reason for the referral should be given in clear, factual manner (for example, it is unsafe for the child to return home, or a parent has failed to collect the child and cannot be contacted).

No child or young person should be left in a situation of immediate danger, in this instance contact the appropriate authorities.

## **Record Keeping**

Keeping accurate and reliable records is essential to safeguarding children and young people. Records should include<sup>4</sup>:

- Registers of all children/young people participating in activities including names, contact details and dates of birth.
- Parents names, and contact details if different from the child's.
- Details of persons (if any) authorised to collect or care for the child, other than the parents/carers, including contact details.
- Emergency contact details.
- Registers of attendance.
- Records of incident or accidents – which should be clear, factual, accurate, objective and legible.
- Parental consent for activities, including travel, trips or residential.

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendices for sample forms

# Recording Child Protection and Welfare Concerns

Reports of concerns in relation to children rely on the quality of the information recorded.

Records in relation to child protection and welfare concerns should be kept securely in locked cabinets with access restricted to the DLP and named Employees and/or Board Members. Electronic records should be password protected and have restricted access, as above. Records are confidential and should only be shared on a 'need to know' basis and with relevant statutory authorities.

## Confidentiality

When dealing with a conversation regarding a child protection and welfare concern, Teachers, Adjudicators, Members, Volunteers and Employees should clarify that there are limits to confidentiality at the beginning of the conversation. They should reassure the individual that the limits are to ensure the child or young person's safety and well-being. The individual should be informed that someone else must be informed to ensure the child's/young person's safety or well-being, and they should be told who will be informed.

An Coimisiún will never promise to keep secrets. However, information of a confidential nature will be shared on a 'need to know' basis and with the statutory authorities as required where there are concerns about the welfare or safety of child/young person. Sharing of information in this regard is not a breach of confidentiality or data protection.

**Considerations of confidentiality will not be allowed to override the rights of children or young people to be protected from any form of abuse.**

# **Recruitment and Management of Employees, Volunteers or Contractors**

Ensuring the suitability of persons who work, or have contact with, children and young people is a core element of safeguarding children and young people.

All roles within An Coimisiún (Employees, including Adjudicators directly employed by An Coimisiún, Members and Volunteers) should have a role description which clearly states their obligation to adhere to this policy and procedures.

A clear recruitment and selection process will be implemented:

- A clear role description will be provided for each role in An Coimisiún.
- Each applicant will be provided with information about the organisation and its activities.
- Applicants will be required to complete an application form and to provide proof of identity.
- All applicants working or having contact with children or young people will be subject to Garda (police) vetting.
- Where relevant, applicants will be short-listed on the basis of agreed criteria for the role.
- Interviews will be carried out by at least two representatives of An Coimisiún.
- A minimum of two recent references will be sought in writing and confirmed by phone.
- All contracts will stipulate that holders will comply with the An Coimisiún child protection and welfare policy and procedures, including its code of conduct.

Teachers and Adjudicators who register with An Coimisiún are required to:

- Be Garda vetted
- Attend child protection training

- Uphold An Coimisiún's child protection and welfare policy and code of conduct

## **Responding to Allegations of Abuse against An Coimisiún Employees or Volunteers**

Where an allegation is made that a child or young person has been neglected or physically, sexually or emotionally abused by an Employee or Volunteer, the reporting procedures and child protection and welfare policy as outlined on pages 11 to 14 will be followed.

Where the alleged abuse occurred within the context of An Coimisiún activities or events, a dual process will be put in place.

**The welfare of the child/ren or young person will be of paramount concern and any protective measures required<sup>5</sup>, will be implemented without delay.**

A named person (other than the DLP) will be appointed to deal with the person against whom the allegations have been made.

The principles of natural justice will be applied in relation to the person against whom the allegations are made. The person must be informed that the allegation has been made against him or her and the nature of the allegation. They should be afforded the opportunity to respond. The response should be noted and included in the formal report to the statutory authorities. All stages of the process should be accurately recorded, signed and dated.

An Coimisiún will liaise closely and cooperate fully with any investigation undertaken by the statutory authorities.

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<sup>5</sup> For example, in the case of an Employee this may be up to, and including, suspension on full pay

Where an allegation is made against an Employee or Volunteer with An Coimisiún, this should be reported without delay to the Chairperson of the Coiste Faire or the Chairperson of An Coimisiún.

### **The National and Regional Designated Liaison Persons:**

1. The National DLP will be responsible to, and report to, the Chairperson and An Buancoiste of An Coimisiún.
2. The DLPs are responsible for ensuring that accurate and timely reports are made to the authorities in relation to child protection and welfare concerns.
3. The Regional DLPs will be responsible to An Coimisiún and report to the National DLP. They will inform the National DLP when a report has been made to the Child and Family Agency.
4. The National DLP and the Regional DLPs have responsibility to ensure that the policy and procedures in relation to child protection and welfare concerns are adhered to.
5. The National DLP has responsibility for updating information in relation to child protection and welfare, and monitoring (via the Chairperson) the effectiveness of the child protection and welfare policy for children and young people.
6. The Chairperson of An Coimisiún has responsibility for ensuring that the DLPs are provided with confidential support and debriefing opportunities in relation to their duties.

## **Complaints Procedure**

An Coimisiún recognises that from time to time people (adults or children) may be dissatisfied with some aspect of our work or feel that their expectations have not been met. We are committed to treating all complaints in an open, transparent and fair manner, and we value feedback which will inform how

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we engage with children, young people and their parents, and which will enable us to make improvements where necessary. Most complaints can be resolved informally through respectfully speaking to the person/people involved, listening and providing additional information, explanations or an apology where warranted.

Formal complaints must be made in writing to the Chairperson of An Coiste Faire. All written complaints will be acknowledged in writing and an outline of steps to be taken will be explained, along with a timescale – usually around 20 working days.

Persons against whom complaints are made have a right to know a complaint has been made, the substance of the complaint, and to be provided with an opportunity to respond. This will be recorded and stored securely.

Following investigation, feedback will be provided to the complainant on the findings of the investigation and any actions to be taken as a result.

## **Guidelines for Teachers**

1. Teachers will treat children and young people with courtesy, respect and dignity. They will value each child and young person and recognise their individuality.
2. Teachers will help children and young people develop, using methods appropriate to their age and stage of development, and will maximise their contribution to the group.
3. Teachers will encourage children and young people to treat others with dignity and respect.
4. Teachers will use appropriate language with children and young people, and encourage them to speak to each other in ways which build up dignity and mutual respect. They will avoid and discourage put-downs and disparaging remarks.

5. Teachers will be sensitive to the needs of the children and young people with whom they work and will demonstrate their ability to regulate their own personal responses.
6. Teachers will recognise the issues of power and responsibility. They will avoid appearing to favour a particular child or young person.
7. Teachers will be aware of the parents/guardians arrangements for the delivering and collecting of children/young people from An Coimisiún activities, and generally will maintain good communication with parents.
8. When a 'class' consists of both males and females, the staffing should, where possible, reflect the composition of the participants.
9. Teachers will ensure that any person who assists in the running or management of their class has been vetted.

## **Code of Conduct for Teachers**

In order to ensure that classes run smoothly and children and young people enjoy and benefit from their participation, the following code of conduct is suggested:

1. Teachers will arrive at least 10 minutes before their first class.
2. Each class must begin and end on time.
3. The class must not be left unattended at any time.
4. Attendance records are the Teacher's responsibility and must be completed before each class begins.
5. Teachers will avoid being on their own with a child or young person.
6. Teachers will avoid taking children or young people alone on car journeys, however short. Where this is unavoidable, the child or young person will sit in the back seat. Parents will be advised and give consent before departure.



7. Teachers will avoid taking children or young people to a Teacher's home.
8. Teachers will ensure that their use of touch with children and young people respects the dignity of the individual child or young person e.g. when using touch to demonstrate correct posture or move they will first explain this to the child or young person and seek their permission to move their foot or arm.
9. Bullying and any form of abuse of children/young people by teachers working with them will not be tolerated.
10. Teachers will not tolerate bullying of children/young people by their peers.
11. Discrimination of any kind is unacceptable within An Coimisiún.

### **Teachers should never:**

1. Allow an allegation made by a child to go unrecorded and/or unreported to the DLP.
2. Make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child or engage in sexually suggestive discussions, contact or behaviour.
3. Provide personal care for a child or young person where they can do it for themselves.
4. Sleep in a room with children without at least one other adult being present.
5. Friend a child or young person on social media.

## **Guidelines and Code of Conduct for Adjudicators**

1. Adjudicators will treat children and young people with courtesy, respect and dignity. They will value each child and young person and recognise their individuality.
2. Adjudicators will use appropriate language with children and young people, and encourage them to speak to each

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other in ways which build up dignity and mutual respect. They will avoid and discourage put-downs and disparaging remarks.

3. Adjudicators will be sensitive to the needs of the children and young people with whom they work and will demonstrate their ability to regulate their own personal responses.
4. Adjudicators will recognise the issues of power and responsibility. They will avoid appearing to favour a particular child or young person other than through impartial adjudication at a competitive event.
5. Discrimination of any kind is unacceptable within An Coimisiún.
6. An Coimisiún is committed to ensuring that children and young people who participate in events organised, or in association with, An Coimisiún are treated fairly and that decisions made in relation to scoring are clear and unbiased. Adjudicators must demonstrate that decisions about how children and young people's dancing is scored are objective and transparent. Where one child is moved two or three places up without objective reasoning, another dancer moves two or three places down. The consequence of this is that the child who is moved down may perceive that they are being punished for something they had no control over and this has the effect of demeaning them and reducing their feelings of self-worth.

**Adjudicators should never:**

1. Allow an allegation made by a child to go unrecorded and/or unreported to the DLP.
2. Make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child or engage in sexually suggestive discussions, contact or behaviour.
3. Provide personal care for a child or young person where they can do it for themselves.

4. Sleep in a room with children without at least one other adult being present.
5. Friend a child or young person on social media.

## **Code of Conduct for Parents**

An Coimisiún adopts a child-centred approach and philosophy in the running of classes to ensure children and young people are at all times provided with a high standard of dancing tuition. It does this by requiring Teachers and Adjudicators who are registered with An Coimisiún to agree to uphold the organisations philosophy and standards. Enforcement of this conduct is the responsibility of every Member and any queries about this code should be referred to the Chairperson of An Coiste Faire..

Parents/Guardians have an influential role to play in encouraging their children to adopt positive attitudes to maintain the ethos of An Coimisiún.

It is required that Parents/Guardians agree to the following:

- Know the start and finish times of your child's class/classes. It is the Parents/Guardians responsibility to ensure the child arrives promptly and safely to each lesson.
- In the instance of a child having more than one lesson per day, it is the Parents/Guardians responsibility to supervise the child/children between lessons.
- Parents/Guardians must collect their child immediately after class finishes from the main building. Children are not permitted outside the main building.
- Teachers are not responsible for children/young people before, between or after their class/classes.
- Respect the Teacher's opinion and encourage your child to do likewise.

- Show appreciation for the Teachers/Volunteers.
- Praise good performance and effort from all individuals and groups.
- Congratulate all participants regardless of the outcome.
- Use correct and appropriate language at all times.
- Support your child's involvement and help them to enjoy their dancing experience.
- Respect the rights, dignity, diversity and worth of every child/young person regardless of their gender, ability, ethnic and cultural background or religion.
- Be prepared to attend/support events organised by the class for your child.
- It is the Parents/Guardians responsibility to inform the Teachers/Volunteers of any conditions, medical or otherwise, regarding their child.
- It is the responsibility of Parents/Guardians to ensure their child's understanding and cooperation of the Code of Conduct for Child/Young Persons.
- It is the responsibility of Parents/Guardians to check each week regarding forthcoming events or unexpected changes in classes.

## **Code of Conduct for Children / Young Persons**

All children/young people are encouraged to be open with their Teacher and share any concerns or complaints.

It is required that all children/young people agree to the following:

- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of everyone equally.
- Show respect to your Teacher during your dancing lesson.

- Bullying of children/young people by their peers will not be tolerated.
- Discrimination of any kind is unacceptable within An Coimisiún.
- Good behaviour is expected at all times, especially during class.
- No running around the building, no running on the stairs.
- Children/young people are not permitted outside the building.
- On entering and exiting the building, the main door must be used at all times.
- Be on time for lessons, so as not to disrupt the smooth running of the lesson.
- Food or chewing gum is not permitted during lessons.
- All mobile phones must be switched off during lessons.
- Work hard at your dancing in your own time at home.
- Enjoy your dancing.

# **Appendix A: Indicators of Child Abuse as Defined in Children First 2011**

The term child abuse is used to describe ways in which children are harmed by someone in a position of power. There are many different ways in which children can be harmed.

## **Neglect**

Possible signs and symptoms:

- Abandonment or desertion
- Children persistently being left alone without adequate care and supervision
- Malnourishment, lack of food, inappropriate food or erratic feeling
- Lack of warmth
- 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/young person's age
- Non-organic failure to thrive (that is, a child not gaining weight due only to malnutrition but also to emotional deprivation)
- Failure to provide adequate care for the child's or young person's medical and developmental problems
- Exploited, overworked

## **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional neglect and abuse is found typically in a home or relationship lacking in emotional warmth. It is not necessarily associated with physical deprivation.

Possible signs and symptoms:

- Rejection
- Lack of comfort and love

- Lack of attachment
- Lack of proper stimulation (for example, play and fun)
- Lack of continuity of care (frequent moves, particularly unplanned)
- Continuous lack of praise and encouragement
- Serious over-protectiveness
- Inappropriate non-physical punishment (for example, locking in bedrooms)
- Family conflicts and/or violence
- Every child who is sexually or physically abused or neglected is also emotionally abused
- Inappropriate expectations of a child relative to his/her age and stage of development

### **Physical Abuse**

Possible signs and symptoms:

- Bruises (non-accidental bruises are likely to occur on soft tissue; for example, cheek, buttocks, lower back, back, thighs, calves, neck)
- Fractures
- Swollen joints
- Burns/scalds (with explanations that are not consistent with the injury)
- Abrasions/lacerations
- Haemorrhages (retinal, subdural)
- Damage to body organs
- Poisonings – repeated (alcohol, drugs)
- Failure to thrive
- Coma/unconsciousness
- Death

### **Sexual Abuse**

Child sexual abuse or adult sexual violence covers a wide spectrum of abusive activities. It rarely involves a single

incident and often occurs over an extended period of time. Physical signs may be not evident due to the nature of abuse and/or the fact that disclosure may be made some time after the abuse took place.

Possible physical indicators:

- Bleeding from vagina/anus
- Difficulty in passing urine/faeces
- An infection may occur secondary to sexual abuse (medical assessment required)
- Noticeable and uncharacteristic change in behaviour
- Hints about sexual activity
- Age-inappropriate understanding of sexual behaviour
- Inappropriate seductive behaviour
- Sexually aggressive behaviour with others
- Uncharacteristic sexual play with peers/toys
- Unusual reluctance to join in normal activities that involve undressing

In younger children:

- Mood change where child becomes withdrawn, fearful, acting out
- Lack of concentration, especially in education setting
- Bedwetting, soiling
- Pains, tummy aches, headaches with no evident physical cause
- Skin disorders
- Reluctance to go to bed, nightmares, changes in sleep patterns
- School refusal
- Separation anxiety
- Loss of appetite, overeating, hiding food

In older children:

- Depression, isolation, anger



- Running away
- Drug, alcohol, solvent abuse
- Self-harm
- Suicide attempts
- Missing school or early school leaving
- Eating disorders

### **Remember**

- Look for a cluster of signs and symptoms.
- Record and date in a diary or notebook all observations of worrying marks/behaviour and keep these observations safe. They are confidential material as well as possible evidence.
- Seek advice about what you see and hear from the Regional Designated Liaison Person.
- Some of these signs, even in combination, are not necessarily proof in themselves that abuse has taken place.
- All signs/indicators need careful assessment relative to the child's circumstances.

## **Appendix B: Bullying**

Bullying is defined by the Department of Education and Skills' guidelines as repeated physical, verbal or psychological aggression directed by an individual or group against others. Bullying can occur at any age, in any environment, and can be long or short-term.

### **Cyber bullying**

Cyber bullying is bullying through the internet, mobile phone or social networking sites used by children and young people.

### **Effects of bullying**

Many children who are being bullied are afraid to speak out. They are scared of reprisals if they tell someone. Reports have shown that as young people grow older, they are less likely to tell someone. They become more and more isolated, experience depression and in extreme cases, can harm themselves or attempt suicide.

### **Signs of bullying**

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that he/she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and should investigate if a child or young person, for example, displays:

- Fear of attending a class or group
- Poor concentration or inability to concentrate
- Withdrawn behaviour
- Depression
- Loss of confidence
- Reluctance to go out
- Shortage of money – may ask for money or steal (to pay bully)
- Torn clothes, broken glasses, missing clothes, money or other possessions
- Repeated signs of bruising and injuries
- Fear of using the internet or mobile phone

- Nervousness and jumpiness when a cyber message is received

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

Where a Teacher, Adjudicator, Member, Volunteer or Employee is concerned about the incident or impact of bullying on a child or young person they should follow the procedures in relation to child protection and report their concerns to the DLP. The DLP should consult with the duty social worker as outlined earlier.

## **Appendix C: Guidelines for Away/ Residential Trips**

1. Provide full information on the trip and itinerary well in advance to parents/carers, children and young people.
2. Obtain any relevant information in relation to health, medication or care needs, allergies, etc.
3. Ensure you have emergency contact details for parents/carers.
4. Ensure accommodation is appropriate to the needs of those travelling (for example, separate accommodation for children and adults, gender, disability access etc.)
5. On journeys, ensure there is always another adult present.
6. If it is an overnight trip or residential, always check the rooms in pairs.
7. Do not place yourself in a situation where you are spending excessive amounts of time alone with one young person, away from other people. If you are speaking one-to-one, ensure that the door to the room is kept open at all times.
8. If you are in a hotel / residential setting never, under any circumstances, take a child or young person into your bedroom.
9. Where a child requires intimate personal care, ensure it is carried out under guidance from parents or carers, with the permission of the child or young person and in an open and transparent manner.
10. Do not go into the toilet alone with children or young people.
11. Be mindful of how and where you touch children or young people. In general avoid breasts, buttocks or groin area.

# Appendix D: Child Protection Statement

## TO BE AVAILABLE AT ALL CLASSES

An Coimisiún is committed to taking every appropriate step to ensure the safety and well-being of the children and young people with whom it works, regardless of class, gender, race, creed, age or ability. An Coimisiún has a 'zero tolerance' policy with regard to abuse, intimidation, bullying (physical or emotional), racism and sexist behaviour directed towards children. All An Coimisiún Teachers, Adjudicators, Members and Volunteers must be aware of this policy and it is their duty to guarantee its implementation.

### **The policy states:**

*“All children and young people should enjoy classes taught by Teachers registered with An Coimisiún and competitions registered with or organised by An Coimisiún and all their relevant facilities and activities in an environment free of physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect.”*

### **DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON**

The Designated Liaison Person for \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Tel \_\_\_\_\_

# **Appendix E: Guidelines for Reporting Accidents**

## **TO BE AVAILABLE AT ALL CLASSES**

### **PROTOCOL TO BE FOLLOWED IN THE EVENT OF AN ACCIDENT/INCIDENT**

- In the event of an accident a copy of the relevant form must be filled in immediately.
- In the case of a child or young person, Teacher/Adjudicator makes contact with parents / guardians informing them of the nature of the accident and what action was taken.
- This form must be signed and dated by the Teacher/Adjudicator and any witnesses.
- The completed accident form must be stored securely, in a locked drawer.

## Appendix F: The Legislative Context

Key legislation and guidance in Ireland which underpins child protection practice includes:

- **The Child Care Act 1991** amended by the **Child and Family Agency Act 2013** (which established Tusla The Child and Family Agency) imposes a statutory duty to promote the welfare of children who are not receiving adequate care and protection.
- **Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011)** establishes that the welfare of child is of paramount consideration. It provides direction to social workers, Gardaí and other professionals in relation to responding to child protection concerns. It outlines the responsibilities of people working with children to ensure their welfare and protection.
- **National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012** (due to be commenced 2014) provides a statutory basis for vetting of persons working with or having contact with children and vulnerable adults.
- **The Criminal Justice (withholding of information on offences against children and vulnerable persons) Act 2012** introduced mandatory reporting of certain crimes against children and vulnerable persons.
- **The Criminal Justice Act (Reckless Endangerment of Children) 2006** makes it an offence if a person causes or permits any child to be placed or left in a situation which creates a substantial risk to the child or fails to take reasonable steps to protect the child.
- **The Protection of Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998** provides protection from civil liability and

protection of employment for persons reporting suspicions or allegations of child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith'. It offers protection to Employees from discrimination and dismissal who report abuse. It creates a criminal offence of knowingly reporting false allegations of abuse.

- **The Children First Bill 2014** (not yet enacted) places **Children First (2011)** on a statutory footing and provides for certain professionals and other persons working with children to have statutory reporting obligations.
- **Data Protection Acts 1998 and 2003** enable individuals to establish the existence of personal data, to have access to that data and to have inaccurate data rectified or erased. It requires data controllers to make sure that the data they keep is collected fairly, is accurate and up-to-date, is kept for lawful purposes and is not used or disclosed in any manner incompatible with those purposes.
- **Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003** enable the public to obtain access to information in the possession of public bodies and to have corrected any personal information relating to them in the possession of such bodies.
- **TUSLA Standard Report Forms**  
Original of these forms can be downloaded at [www.tusla.ie/up;loads/content/Children\\_First\\_SRF.pdf](http://www.tusla.ie/up;loads/content/Children_First_SRF.pdf)





## STANDARD REPORT FORM

(For reporting CP&W Concerns)

### 6. Relationships

Details of Mother		Details of Father	
Name:		Name:	
Address: (if different to child)		Address: (if different to child)	
Telephone No's:		Telephone No's:	

### 7. Household composition

Name	Relationship	DOB	Additional Information e.g. School/ Occupation/Other:

### 8. Name and Address of other personnel or agencies involved with this child

	Name	Address
Social Worker		
PHN		
GP		
Hospital		
School		
Gardaí		
Pre-School/Crèche/YG		
Other (specify):		

### 9. Details of person(s) allegedly causing concern in relation to the child

Relationship to child:	Age	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>
Name:	Occupation		
Address:			

### 10. Details of person completing form

Name:		Occupation:	
Address:		Telephone No's:	
Signed		Date:	

## **Appendix H: Forms and Records**

A leaflet informing parents, children and young people about the group (including the day, time, place, leader in charge, aims and objectives) should be accompanied by a form that captures information necessary for the enrolment of the child/young person.

The information on all of the forms is confidential and should be stored securely.

### **Trip Information Form**

Additional information and a consent form will be required whenever children will be away from their parent/guardian for overnights or residential weeks or weekends.

An information sheet containing all relevant details should be sent three weeks in advance to the parent/guardian for any trip or outing where the children are taken away from their usual meeting place, even if only for a few hours, or if they are to be involved in a special event (for example, day long programme or overnight). It should include a detailed itinerary of the time away.

The consent form should be completed by the child or young person's parent/guardian and returned to the Teacher in advance of the event, otherwise the child should not be permitted to attend the event.

The Teacher should ensure that when the forms are returned for each child, that a note is made of all relevant information (particularly in relation to medical or other needs) and that they are brought away with the group.

A copy of the forms should also be left with a responsible person.

A Teacher (preferably with some first aid or medical training) should be made responsible for seeing that the various instructions are carried out (for example, that medicines are taken at required times).

When taking groups of younger children away, it is usually best for medicines (other than asthma inhalers) to be taken into the care of a leader. This will avoid them becoming lost or experimented with by other children.

Remember that Teachers should not dispense any medication without written parental permission.

### **Accident/Incident Report Form**

To be completed by Teacher, Adjudicator, Member, Volunteer or Employee and witnesses in the event of any accident or incident. If an accident occurs where emergency treatment is necessary, take the individual to the nearest casualty department (make sure you know in advance where that is) or local surgery. Contact the parents/next of kin as soon as possible and take the child or young person's health form to the hospital or doctors with you.

Aim to have a Teacher with a first aid qualification on every residential trip. Complete the accident/incident report form as soon as possible.

# Appendix I: Parental Consent Form

Please complete this form in full as it is necessary for your child's safety and protection.

Read carefully the note below to ensure you are in a position to give consent. Please inform us of any changes to this information as soon as possible. Information concerning programmes will be displayed in the class and every attempt will be made to provide advanced notice of out of class activities. Occasionally this notice may be limited to take advantage of transport or other offers.

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth:- \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact Name \_\_\_\_\_

and Number \_\_\_\_\_

My son/daughter is participating in (Please give name of programme/activity (if regular dance classes state REGULAR CLASS))

\_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE IDENTIFY BELOW ANY ILLNESSES, CONDITIONS, ALLERGIES OR DISABILITIES OF WHICH WE SHOULD BE AWARE (i.e., asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, heart trouble or any allergy to a particular food or drink).

-----  
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IS HE/SHE CURRENTLY TAKING ANY FORM OF

MEDICATION?     Yes                       No

If yes, please give details:

-----  
-----

DOES S/HE NEED TO BE IN POSSESSION OF OR NEED TO BE ABLE TO ADMINISTER MEDICATION DURING PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES?

Yes                       No

CAN S/HE ADMINISTER THIS MEDICATION WITHOUT

ASSISTANCE?                       Yes                       No

PLEASE DETAIL ANY OTHER INFORMATION YOU FEEL MAY BE USEFUL TO US IN CARING FOR YOUR CHILD

-----  
-----

Can your child walk home alone?     Yes                       No

My child can be collected by:

Name of Individuals \_\_\_\_\_

Ph Number \_\_\_\_\_

Or \_\_\_\_\_

Ph Number \_\_\_\_\_

A child will not be permitted to attend an activity without a completed parental consent form. A hand written note will not be accepted.

**Signed (legal guardian)** \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE: The Teacher should ensure that the person giving this consent and filling in this form is the legal guardian of the child in question.**

Programmes that include a residential experience will be notified and will require the completion of a further detailed consent form.

# Appendix J: Accident/Incident Report Form

This form must be completed as soon as possible after an accident/incident and stored safely.

Teachers should ensure that they maintain an Accident/incident Book.

Name of person: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Age if child or young person: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Parent \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Address (if different from injured party) \_\_\_\_\_

## Witness 1:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Age if child or young person: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

## Witness 2:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Age if child or young person: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

## Location of Accident/Incident:

Date of Accident/Incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Accident/Incident

**Signed by Witness 1** \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed by Witness 2** \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Action Taken**

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Reported to \_\_\_\_\_

By \_\_\_\_\_

How \_\_\_\_\_

When \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix K: Quick Reference Sheet for Receiving a Child Protection Report

<b>Step 1:</b> <b>Speaking with the person reporting</b>	<b>Step 2:</b> <b>Information to make note of</b>	<b>Step 3:</b> <b>Reporting to the Designated Liaison Person</b>
<p>Talk to the child/young person/person reporting privately as soon as possible, within sight of others.</p> <p>Stay calm.</p> <p>Do not promise to keep a secret.</p> <p>Listen to the child/young person.</p> <p>Don't press for details or ask leading questions. It is your responsibility to record and report, not to investigate.</p> <p>Reassure them they were right to tell, that you</p>	<p>Record the disclosure, as closely as possible use their words. Information you note should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child's name, date of birth and contact details (address and phone numbers)</li> <li>Contact details for parents or carers.</li> <li>The details of, and reasons for, the concern – give clear, factual descriptions.</li> <li>Notes any disclosure words used by the child/young person.</li> <li>Who is the risk to the child or young person.</li> <li>Have parents/carers been told and what is their response.</li> <li>Name and contact details of person reporting the concern, and their relationship to the child or young person (for example, Teacher, Adjudicator, supervising adult, etc.).</li> </ul>	<p>Report the concerns without delay to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) in your region or the National DLP.</p> <p>This information and discussions relating to it are confidential and information should be shared on a 'need to know' basis only.</p>

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## Appendix L: Quick Reference Sheet for DLP Receiving a Child Protection Report

<p><b>Step 1: Consider</b></p> <p>Do concerns meet the criteria for reporting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical signs of neglect over a period of time</li> <li>An injury with no reasonable explanation</li> <li>Disclosure of abuse</li> <li>Age-inappropriate sexual knowledge</li> <li>Displaying fearful responses</li> <li>A cluster or pattern of signs or injuries</li> </ul>	<p><b>Step 2: If they meet the criteria</b></p> <p>Report concern to the social work department, filling out a Standard Report Form (SRF).</p> <p>If urgent, phone the social work office.</p>	<p><b>Step 4: If safe to do so, inform the parents</b></p> <p>Inform the person who raised the concern about the advice and direction given by the social work service</p> <p>The person who knows the child/young person or parent should inform the parent of the concern and that, in compliance with the child protection policy, a referral is being made to the social work department.</p> <p>This information and discussions are confidential and should be shared on a 'need to know' basis.</p> <p>The National DLP guides the Regional</p>
	<p><b>Step 3: If unsure whether concerns meet the criteria</b></p> <p><b>Phone the duty social worker.</b></p> <p><b>State you wish to have an informal consultation.</b></p> <p><b>Outline the concerns without disclosing the identity or address of the child/young person.</b></p> <p><b>If the duty social worker states that there are reasonable grounds, submit a written SRF.</b></p> <p><b>The duty social worker can advise you on whether and how to talk to parents about a concern.</b></p>	

Contact information for social work departments is available at <http://www.tusla.ie/get-in-touch/duty-social-work-teams>

In the event of an emergency out-of-office-hours or where a child or young person is in immediate danger, the Gardai (police) should be contacted by making a '112' or '999' call.