



Crooked House Theatre Company

Crooked House is the governing organisation that runs Kildare Youth Theatre

Welfare/Child Protection Policy

Updated: February 2022

INCLUDED IN THIS DOCUMENT:

	Policy Statement	Page 3
SECTION 1	Responsibilities of the Youth Theatre	Page 4
SECTION 2	Youth Theatre Leaders	Page 7
SECTION 3	Youth Theatre Members	Page 9
SECTION 4	Recruitment and Selection of Staff / Volunteers	Page 24
SECTION 5	Health and Safety	Page 31
SECTION 6	Child Protection and Dealing with Suspected Abuse	Page 34
SECTION 7	Confidentiality	Page 53
SECTION 8	Parents / Primary Carers	Page 57
SECTION 9	Complaints	Page 58
SECTION 10	Disciplinary / Appeals Procedures	Page 61
SECTION 11	Approach to Interagency Cooperation	Page 63
Appendix 1	Standard Report Form - Tusla	Page 65
Appendix 2	Welfare / Child Protection Reporting Form - Internal	Page 70
Appendix 3	Schedule of Mandated Persons Under the Children First Act 2015	Page 72
Appendix 4	Sample Accident and Incident Report Form	Page 74
Appendix 5	Support & Advice Organisations/Services	Page 77

Important Note on terminology: For the purposes of this policy the term '**staff member**' is used to denote any adult who receives a payment for their role in the youth theatre. In Kildare Youth Theatre we have 10 'staff' members. There are currently 5 others who are 'volunteers'.

POLICY STATEMENT

Welfare/Child Protection Policy Statement

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) is committed to a young-person centred approach in our work. We undertake to provide a safe environment and positive experience, the welfare of the young person being of paramount importance. We will adhere to ***Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017)***. We have developed policies and procedures to ensure this commitment is enshrined in all aspects of the youth theatre. This Welfare and Child Protection Policy gathers all policies and procedures that relate to work with young people. The board of Crooked House Theatre Company recognises it holds ultimate responsibility for the wellbeing of members and staff/volunteers. This policy is targeted at all adults involved in the youth theatre, be they staff or volunteers. Parents and members will be informed of relevant policies and procedures. Youth theatre members will be informed of procedures and policies as they relate to their participation.

We have committed to reviewing the Child Safeguarding Statement and Policy every two years, or sooner if there has been a material change in any of the issues to which it refers. This policy was last reviewed **on 01/02/2022** and will be reviewed again on 08/02/2023

Signed:



Board Members of Crooked House Theatre Company CLG

Signed:



Artistic Director, Crooked House and Designated Person re Child Protection

SECTION 1: Responsibilities of Crooked House

SECTION 1.1: Structure/Governance

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) is governed by a Board of Directors or Members, who also govern Kildare Youth Theatre. Kildare Youth Theatre has a membership structure, and there is a formal Members' Committee charged with running the youth theatre. One of the Crooked House Board sits on the Kildare Youth Theatre Members' Committee. The Board of Crooked House is elected at the organisations' annual general meeting. Members of the youth Members' Committee are elected in October each year.

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) engages two paid staff and between 8 and 12 volunteers to deliver its programme.

The following board members have been allocated specific areas of responsibility:

Mary Linehan is the Deputy Designated Liaison Person for Welfare/Child Protection

Mary Doyle is responsible for Health and Safety.

Evonne Boland is responsible for financial oversight.

SECTION 1.2: Ethos/Approach to young people

Mission Statement

Crooked House Theatre Company CLG was established for the creation and public showing of performance activities (such as plays, films, workshops, and projects) in Newbridge, County Kildare, and touring these in Ireland and abroad; running an arts venue in Newbridge, County Kildare; conducting research actions into theatre, young people, and arts education; and the development and execution of educational and training programmes in theatre and the arts.

Crooked House has the following objectives:

- the design and delivery of developmental, educational and training programmes in the arts for children, young people and adults. These programmes focus mainly on supporting participants' wellbeing, artistic expression, positive mental health, life-skills development and self-confidence. They also develop participants' specific abilities and skills in acting and performance.
- running venues, festivals, exchanges, tours and projects associated with theatre and the arts.
- designing and delivering community development, global development, human rights, and social justice education programmes using theatre and the arts. These programmes raise awareness about social equality, global justice issues, human rights and anti-discrimination in all its forms in an attempt to educate the public about the issues concerned.

- developing and running youth-work projects using the arts (employing good practice in youth-work and adhering to the principles of inclusion, equality, diversity, and access).
- developing and running adult and community-education projects using the arts (in non-formal and informal education programmes)
- creating films and other arts projects (such as musicals, exhibitions of visual art and photography, literature, scripts etc) with young people.
- Running a small venue for showcasing music, theatre, film and other arts activities to the public.
- Conducting and publishing research into theatre and into young people's engagement with the arts.

Kildare Youth Theatre

Established in 1996 by Crooked House Theatre Company, Kildare Youth Theatre is based in the east midlands in Ireland. It has a history of presenting ambitious work, influenced by European theatre-making and Irish narrative traditions. Using Crooked House's wide network of European connections, and availing of the EU's Erasmus+ programme, the young people are able to collaborate with several youth theatre-making projects a year across the continent. In addition to devising its own new work it also stages classical plays, newly scripted plays, and several conference and educational shows each year.

Kildare Youth Theatre is owned by the young members, who run the company as a collective, guided by Artistic Director Peter Hussey. They operate an ensemble model, maintaining 4 year-round ensembles who engage full-time in multiple projects for up to 5 years each. Members run, and rent, the space they use, from which they develop new work, host international exchanges, and provide cultural youth work with the assistance of a team of volunteers from Ireland and Europe. It is supported by the Kildare County Council with project funding from Arts Council Ireland.

Further information is available on www.kildareyouththeatre.com

Membership of Kildare Youth Theatre

Membership of Kildare Youth Theatre is free to all young people aged between 11 and 25. As of February 1st, 2022, there were 87 members registered, 31 of whom are male and 56 of whom are female. They are aged between 10 and 24. The average age is 17.

Most of our work in 2020 and up to May 2021 was online for which we operated online safety procedures. After 2021 we worked in person in safe ways.

We are committed to working with all young people in our region regardless of their economic, social or geographical situation. We will make reasonable accommodation to include young people with disabilities and additional needs.

We have established a members committee to ensure members' voices and opinions are taken on board. This members committee is made up of 12 members who are elected in a vote of all current youth theatre members. This committee meets at least twice yearly and a report is

made to the board of Crooked House after this meeting. We seek members' feedback on an ongoing basis. We have an evaluation session with members at the end of every youth theatre project. We also involve them in programme planning such as the choice of scripts for production. The Members' Committee also has the following sub-committees:

- Artistic Programming and Events (where they suggest elements of the annual artistic programme that they'd like to see implemented or developed)
- Policy Sub-committee – which looks at developing policy regarding a range of issues considered important by the members
- Erasmus Sub Committee – which explores possible projects under Key Action 2 of the Erasmus Programme

The sub-committees report back to the KYT Members' Committee.

Outreach work in schools and youth projects

From late 2021 our team of European Solidarity Corps volunteers, led by Oğuzhan Şahin (Outreach Manager) delivered free weekly workshops in secondary schools in Newbridge and in youth projects in the wider Kildare area. There are teachers or assistants present during the workshops, and there are always at least 2 Crooked House team members co-facilitating. In the event where there is only one Crooked House facilitator available the workshops should be postponed until there are two. The sessions aim to increase confidence, build resilience, and draw young people into a closer relationship with the art-form of theatre. We use devising as a tool to achieve this. Facilitators receive weekly training from Anna Galligan on Youth Drama facilitation.

SECTION 1.3: Policies /Procedures

Policies / Procedures

Kildare Youth Theatre has put the following policies and procedures in place to help ensure the safe participation of everyone involved in the youth theatre, including members, staff and volunteers. We have collected these policies and procedures in this document:

- Welfare/Child Protection Policy and Procedures
- Health and Safety Policy and Procedures
- Confidentiality Statement/Procedures
- Complaints Policy/Procedures
- Procedures for Safe Recruitment of Staff/Volunteers
- Procedures for Supervision, Provision of Training and Support for Staff/Volunteers
- Policy on Adult/Young People Ratios
- Policy on including Members aged 18 or over.
- Code of Behaviour for Leaders
- Group Contract for Members
- Disciplinary/Appeals Procedures
- Policy on Informing Parents
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Procedures for Giving Lifts to Young People
- Procedures for Trips Away

- Guidelines on Dealing with Disruptive Behaviour
- Policy on Communications with young people
- Policy on Use of Images
- Interagency Cooperation
- COVID Precaution Policy
- Working safely online with young people

On starting with the youth theatre volunteers and staff have training days on all policies and procedures. Existing staff/volunteers are informed of any amendments to policies when they are made.

We publish this document on our website and make the link available to parents. In addition, we send all parents and carers an extensive Information Booklet when their child registers with us.

At a Crooked House board meeting once every two years we review the Safeguarding Statement and policy.

Young people are informed of policies that relate to their participation at the session where we draft the group contract. This happens with each ensemble group in the youth theatre. They are informed that they can talk to any adult in the youth theatre should they have a concern or worry.

SECTION 1.4: Ratios

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) adheres to accepted best practice adult/young people ratios for youth work: the minimum adult/young person ratio in any group should ideally be one adult per group of ten plus one other adult, and allowing an additional adult for each group of ten thereafter. The ages of the children and young people, the experience of the volunteers and the staff are taken into consideration. We recognise that safety, ability/disability of young people and the nature of the activities being undertaken may require that these ratios be considerably lower.

We make an assessment of activities to determine the appropriate ratio.

SECTION 2: Youth Theatre Leaders

SECTION 2.1: Code of Behaviour for Staff/Volunteers

Code of Behaviour for Staff/Volunteers

All staff and volunteers must adhere to the following Code of Behaviour

Code of Behaviour for Youth Theatre Leaders

Practice

- Adhere to the youth theatre's ethos and mission statement.
- Be familiar with and follow best practice as outlined in the youth theatre's policies and procedures when working with young people.

- Treat all young people fairly and equitably – do not discriminate on the grounds of gender, race, religion, ethnicity, cultural background, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status, family status, age or disability.
- Listen to and respect the opinions of members.
- Act in a way that is professional and responsible.
- Help create an environment in which members feel comfortable, accepted and able to express themselves.
- Ensure that the material/approach is age appropriate and suits the developmental needs of the group.
- Provide encouragement and support to all young people regardless of their ability.
- All criticism should be constructive and not overly focused on any one individual.
- Where possible, and relevant, criticism should be directed at the work and the skills rather than at the personality of the young person
- Adhere to and encourage the group to enforce the group contract.
- Encourage feedback and discussion.
- Use appropriate language. Avoid jokes or comments that could be interpreted as inappropriate.
- If delivering a workshop session or leading a rehearsal, ensure adequate preparation.
- Be willing to participate in evaluations.
- Never use an individual's personal trauma as material for the drama process.
- Be prepared for situations whereby issues raised in the drama workshop may make a young person uncomfortable or upset. This may even happen with material that seems 'safe'.
- Be aware of your own level of competence and expertise. Do not introduce exercises or material that you do not feel comfortable in delivering, especially if it is physically demanding and/or involves increased risk.
- Be aware that your work with the group and how you conduct yourself will have a bearing on the reputation of the youth theatre.
- Be mindful of participants' level of comfort when doing exercises that require physical contact.
- Facilitate the group, where at all possible, to collectively solve problems, issues and disruptions.

Welfare/Child Protection

- Be familiar with and adhere to the youth theatre's policies and procedures
- Be aware of any medical or other factors that may affect a young person's participation. If privy to sensitive personal information ensure it is managed in line with the youth theatre's **Confidentiality Policy**.
- Report any concerns about the wellbeing of a member to the youth theatre Designated Liaison Person and follow reporting procedures.
- Respect a young person's personal space and privacy.
- Never behave in a way that could be interpreted as inappropriate.
- Never let a situation get out of control. Often the worse thing to do is nothing.
- Adhere to the youth theatre's policy on adult/young person ratios
- Be sensitive to instances of bullying and follow the youth theatre's policy.
- Try to avoid giving lifts to members aged under 18 if at all possible. Follow the youth theatre's policy on transport arrangements.

- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with young people and don't socialise inappropriately with members e.g. outside of organised youth theatre activities. In one-to-one work leave the door ajar, or be prepared for anyone to come into the room at any time.
- Be mindful of how meeting an individual young person could be interpreted. Ideally have another adult present or meet in a public place.
- Be mindful of the danger of creating "dependent" relationships with specific young people. Such relationships can be problematic for both leader and member and often if a young person needs support with a particular issue or situation, you should refer them to a third party with specific expertise. Let the Designated Liaison Person know should an issue arise.
- Recognise the importance and weight of personal promises to members. Never make promises you can't keep e.g. if a young person makes a disclosure of abuse to you, you can't promise confidentiality.
- Follow the youth theatre's Health and Safety policy and procedures. If you have any concerns about the safety of a venue or equipment, inform the appropriate person.
- Follow the youth theatre's policy on communicating with young people by phone, email, social media etc.
- Always have at least one other Crooked House facilitator present in workshops.

SECTION 3: Youth Theatre Members

SECTION 3.1: Definition of youth theatre membership

Youth Theatre Membership

Any young person aged between 11 and 25 who has fully completed a Registration Form is a member of Kildare Youth Theatre.

Members may be involved in more than one youth theatre locally.

All members can partake in all activities of the youth theatre, including auditioning for plays, applying to take part in exchanges and events, and preparing monologues for audition to third level.

Members elect their peers to serve for one year on the Members' Committee.

SECTION 3.2: Group Contract

Group Contract

Kildare Youth Theatre runs several different groups. Each one drafts its own group contract with the facilitators early in the year. A copy of each one is available on request from the facilitators of the groups, or from Crooked House.

SECTION 3.3: Bullying

Anti-Bullying Statement

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) has a no-tolerance approach to bullying. As emphasised throughout this document, Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) is committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of all young people who access its services. It is essential that young people feel safe and comfortable during any youth theatre event or activity. Bullying can not only destroy a young person's experience of participation but also have an impact on their physical and psychological wellbeing.

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) has a whole-organisation approach to the issue of bullying. Prevention of bullying is the role of everyone within the organisation from management to **staff and volunteers**, to young people.

Definition of bullying

Bullying is an extremely complex issue that can take many forms. Recent developments in technology and communications have meant the creation of a whole new arena for bullying that is very visible and can have even more devastating effects than any face to face form. Bullying can be about the power play between individuals and within groups. It can often involve by-standers. *By-standers can be described as those who are neither perpetrators nor targets but are aware that bullying is taking place.* (**Let's Beat Bullying** - NYCI)

Children First (2017) defines bullying as follows:

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression – whether it is verbal, psychological or physical – that is conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating, and occurs mainly among children in social environments such as schools. It includes behaviours such as physical aggression, cyberbullying, damage to property, intimidation, isolation/exclusion, name calling, malicious gossip and extortion. Bullying can also take the form of abuse based on gender identity, sexual preference, race, ethnicity and religious factors. With developments in modern technology, children can also be the victims of non-contact bullying, via mobile phones, the internet and other personal devices.

Preventing Bullying

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) has adopted the following strategy for preventing bullying and creating an anti-bullying environment:

1. Creating and implementing an Anti-Bullying Policy and procedures.
2. Encouraging an openness among adults/young people and fostering a culture of mutual respect and cooperation.
3. A discussion around bullying takes place during the drafting of group contracts with young people. Members are made aware of the youth theatre's no-tolerance approach to bullying. At the end of the discussion there will be a clear understanding of the consequences of bullying.
4. We also draw attention to wider considerations such as attitudes towards each other and use of language.
5. Members are be given a clear message about the importance of reporting bullying and details of how to report it.
6. Bullying as a theme is explored at least once in each groups creative and dramatic work.

How Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) will deal with instances of Bullying

While we have developed the following approach, we recognise that every instance of bullying will be different and have its own unique considerations.

The overriding consideration in every instance will be protecting the well-being of the young person/young people involved.

Where there is a clear observable instance of bullying:

- If an adult involved in the group becomes aware of an instance of bullying, they should act immediately.
- If they witness bullying themselves in a group situation, they should make a clear statement that the behaviour is not acceptable and make reference to the group contract and the discussion around bullying.
- They should take a record of the incident and pass this on to the Designated Liaison Person as soon as possible.
- The Designated Liaison Person and staff or volunteer will meet with the young people involved to discuss the incident. Separate meetings will take place with the suspected perpetrator and target. The target will be asked how they want to proceed but it should be made clear that it cannot be ignored. Depending on the severity of the incident, whether there is an acknowledgement that the behaviour is wrong with a commitment not to display the behaviour again, and the views of the target, there may be no further action. The Designated Liaison Person and the staff or volunteer who reported the incident originally will continue to monitor the situation.
- In more serious incidents or where the same young person(s) display the behaviour again, the Designated Liaison Person will meet again with the young people involved to discuss the further incidents. The parents of all the young people involved will be informed.
- At this stage the agreed consequences/sanctions will be initiated for the perpetrator(s).
- If following the agreed sanctions, the perpetrator once again displays the behaviour, suspension or permanent exclusion from the project will be considered. This action will only be taken as a last resort and full consideration will be given to the effect it may have on the perpetrator and the victim. It may be deemed appropriate to refer the young person to another agency with specific expertise. Any action will be discussed with the parents of the young person, unless it is felt that doing so would put the young person at risk.
- The target of the bullying will be supported throughout the process. The staff or volunteer in question and/or the Designated Liaison Person will continue to check in with them regularly and also with their parents (if appropriate). Advice may be sought from an organisation with specific expertise on how best to support them. It may be felt necessary to refer them to another organisation/agency.
- In the case of an expulsion, a discussion will be had with the other members of the group so that they understand the action taken and have an opportunity to air any concerns or worries they may have. The target of the bullying will be consulted before any group discussion takes place.
- A written record will be kept at each stage of the process.

Where there is a suspicion that bullying is taking place.

- If a staff or volunteer has a suspicion that bullying is taking place, they should inform the Designated Liaison Person and discuss the reasons for the suspicion and the best way to proceed.
- It may be that a decision is made to have a general group discussion on how the group are getting along and reference the group contract etc. Participants will be reminded that they can approach any adult involved in the youth theatre if they are having any issues.
- Depending on the nature of the suspicion, the person who is the suspected target of the bullying may be approached for an informal chat.
- If they confirm an instance of bullying, the procedure outlined above will be followed.
- If they do not confirm an instance of bullying or do not believe there is a problem, the staff or volunteer and Designated Liaison Person will continue to monitor the situation and may take the decision that there is a case of bullying. In which case they will talk to the target again and then the perpetrator(s). From this point on they will carry out the procedure outlined under the previous section.
- A written record will be kept at each stage of the process

If A Young Person is Aware of Bullying:

- If a young person is a target of bullying or is aware that bullying is taking place, they can talk to any adult involved in the youth theatre.
- The staff or volunteer should be aware that how they react is important. They should be calm and measured in their reaction and reassure the young person that they have done the right thing in telling them about the situation.
- While they should ask the young person how they would like to proceed, the staff or volunteer should make it clear that if there is a case of bullying, the youth theatre cannot ignore it and will have to act.
- The staff or volunteer will discuss the situation with the Designated Liaison Person and they will decide the best way to proceed. Depending on the specific circumstances, it may be decided that a general group discussion and a reminder of the group contract is sufficient or it may be that the other procedures outlined above are followed.
- The identity of the young person who has reported the situation, will not be shared with the group. The staff or volunteer and/or DLP will continue to check-in with this young person.

Responses/Sanctions

The following are potential responses/sanctions they may be used in a case of bullying. The chosen approach will depend on the severity of the behavior and the wishes of the target.

1. An apology to the target and a commitment not to display the behavior again.
2. Time-out.
3. Increased supervision.
4. Missing out on a social activity, a theatre trip or other opportunity.
5. An individual 'contract' or agreement could be developed setting out the behavioural improvements required and the rewards for their attainment.

6. A mediated meeting between ourselves, the two young people, and a parent of each young person.
7. Temporary or Permanent Exclusion. Permanent exclusion will be considered for more severe instances of bullying or where the other responses/sanctions have not worked. Consideration will be given to the possible consequences on the young people in question and the rest of the group. Where a young person is being excluded, we will inform their parents. We may also seek advice from an organisation with specialist expertise to ascertain the supports and services available to the young person in question.

Cyber-bullying

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) is aware of the prevalence of this form of bullying and the need to take action to prevent it. We have taken the following steps:

- Developed a **Communications with Young People Policy** that outlines how the youth theatre manages its presence on the Internet.
- This policy outlines the measures the youth theatre takes to monitor and control its presence on interactive sites such as social networking platforms and the steps it takes to protect users and in particular young people.
- We have developed a **Use Of Images Policy** that describes how it gathers, uses and retains images of young people and this is in line with advised best practice.
- We make a clear statement, in the two policies referenced above, that online bullying is not acceptable and will be dealt with very seriously. Any instance of bullying will be reported to those who run the site and, if appropriate, to the Gardaí.
- We promote safe and responsible use of the Internet by members.
- Members are made aware of the serious nature of cyberbullying and its potential consequences.
- We are aware that there is legislation in Ireland that has relevance to misuse of the Internet such as the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) (Amendment) Act 2007, the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act (1997) and the Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998.

Serious instances of bullying

Children First (2017) states:

In cases of serious instances of bullying where the behaviour is regarded as possibly abusive, you may need to make a referral to Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána.

SECTION 3.4: Members aged 18 and over

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) takes the following approach to working with members over 18:

- The same group contract applies to all members. This is made clear during the drafting of the group contract. All participants have the same rights and responsibilities.
- Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) has a no-alcohol/drugs rule that applies before and during workshops, rehearsals and performances regardless of the age of the

participant. We have case-by-case guidelines for exchanges abroad but in all such cases we adhere to the relevant legislation of the area/country. We also have an **Alcohol and Drugs Policy**.

- While we don't request parental consent for those aged over 18, we do request information on medical conditions, additional needs etc. We also require contact details of next of kin in case of an emergency.
- We seek consent from those over 18 for use of images.
- A disclosure of abuse by a participant over 18 will be treated with the same sensitivity as that of a disclosure by a young person who is under 18. In cases of retrospective abuse, a report needs to be made where there is a **current or potential future risk** to children from the person against whom there is an allegation. The term retrospective abuse refers to abuse that an adult discloses that took place during their childhood. A Retrospective Abuse Report Form can be downloaded from: <http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/publications-and-forms#SRP>

SECTION 3.5: Dealing with Challenging or Disruptive Behaviour

In its work with young people, Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) emphasises the benefits and rewards for positive behaviour. However, there may be occasions when the behaviour of a young person or a group of young people disrupts the work of the group and impacts negatively on other members. Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) promotes positive behaviour and creates an environment where disruptive behaviour is not acceptable by:

- Where possible, facilitating and supporting the members themselves to define and manage issues that they consider disruptive or challenging.
- Creating a Group Contract with the participants that outlines not only the rights of participants but also their responsibilities and the kind of behaviour that is unacceptable.
- Emphasising on an ongoing basis, the necessity of teamwork and cooperation, not only to ensure that the objectives of the youth theatre are met, but also to ensure that everyone involved has a positive experience.
- Promoting awareness of the benefits to be gained from giving full commitment and focus to the youth theatre and the goals that can be achieved by doing so.

Dealing with Instances of Disruptive Behaviour

There are a whole range of behaviours that could be termed 'disruptive'. It is impossible to offer appropriate responses for the full range of behaviours. The following are general pointers. If a staff member or volunteer is unsure about how to handle a specific situation, they should contact the Designated Liaison Person.

- Staff members or volunteers should always react calmly, regardless of the level of frustration involved. They should never act in a way that intimidates, ridicules or

humiliates any young person. Any response should be in line with the youth theatre's Code of Behaviour for Staff/Volunteers.

- The response to any instance of disruptive behaviour should always be proportionate.
- The response should be initiated as soon as possible and should be explained in full to the participant.
- More than one staff member or volunteer should be present when dealing with disruptive behaviour.
- A written record should be kept of the behaviour and the response to it. This should be given to the Designated Liaison Person as soon as possible.
- The staff member or volunteer should contact the Designated Liaison Person to discuss involvement of the parents and the best way to go about this.

Possible Responses to Disruptive Behaviour

As indicated above, each scenario will be different and responses should always be proportionate.

- Depending on the seriousness of the behaviour, it may be sufficient for the disruptive nature of the behaviour to be explained to the young person and the Group Contract referenced.
- Some way of making amends/restitution – e.g. if something is broken, it is replaced or if a possession is taken, it is returned.
- Time-out
- Increased supervision
- Sanctions such as missing out on a social activity, a theatre trip or other opportunity.
- An individual 'contract' or agreement could be developed setting out the behavioural improvements required and the rewards for their attainment.
- Temporary or Permanent Exclusion. Permanent exclusion will only be considered when other possible options have been exhausted and/or when it is felt that the behaviour is putting other young people at risk. Full consideration will be given to the possible consequences on the young person in question and the rest of the group.

Additional Support/Referral

To ensure that a young person's needs are being met and that they are getting the best possible support, additional or specialist advice may be sought from other agencies or organisations. It may be felt that it is necessary to refer a young person to another agency.

If it is felt that the behaviour is the result of some trauma or that the young person who is displaying disruptive behaviour is at risk in any way, a decision may be taken to make a report to Tusla - Child and Family Agency. The youth theatre's Internal Reporting Procedures should be followed.

Parents/Primary Carers and Disruptive Behaviour

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) recognises the importance of informing parents/primary carers about their young person's participation in the youth theatre and any issues pertaining to it. In terms of disruptive behaviour, parents/primary carers will be informed about any instance of disruptive behaviour that elicits a response beyond the more informal one outlined in Possible Response 1 above. If it is felt that informing a parent/primary carer of a young person will put them at risk, they will not be informed. Crooked House's Designated Liaison Person may seek advice from Tusla if they have a concern about informing parents/guardians.

SECTION 3.6: Communications with Young People

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) is committed to ensuring all communications with young people are safe, respectful, appropriate, and professional. Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) uses a number of media to communicate with young people including:

Mobile phone

Post

Email

Youth Theatre Website

Slack

Facebook

Messenger

What's App

The youth theatre is aware of the potential for such media to be used by those who would wish to exploit and harm young people. Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) is committed to taking all reasonable measures to ensure all young people who are in receipt of communications or have access to Crooked House and Kildare Youth Theatre's online presence are not put at risk of any harm.

TELEPHONE/MOBILE PHONE:

- Any phone communication with young people should only be used for the effective and efficient delivery of the youth theatre programme.
- Access to phones that include members' contact details are controlled and restricted to those with a direct need to access them.
- Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) does not provide young people's phone numbers to any third party unless there is a legitimate reason and the young person in question gives their permission. An example of this is where a member is being interviewed by a local newspaper. Parents/Primary carers must also give permission if a young person is under 18.
- If contacting young people by text message, group texts will be used where possible instead of text messages to individuals.
- In a circumstance when it is necessary to send a text to an individual young person, the text should also be sent to the young person's parent/primary carer.

- Copies of all text messages sent to young people should be retained.
- No images of members should be taken by staff members or volunteers on their personal phone. Images may be taken on the youth theatre phone. Any such images should be managed in line with the youth theatre Use of Images policy.
- Staff members or volunteers should never send any communication that could be interpreted as offensive or inappropriate.
- The youth theatre requires staff members or volunteers be aware of the possibility of bullying via mobile phone, not only among young people participating on its programme, but also the possibility that Staff members or volunteers may use a mobile phone to bully a young person. There is also a possibility that a young person may use a mobile phone to harass or target a staff member or volunteer. Any such occurrences will be taken seriously and should be reported to the Designated Liaison Person. All such instances will be managed in line with the youth theatre's **Anti-Bullying Policy**
- The youth theatre requires that all adults involved in the youth theatre be aware of the risk of abuse being carried out/initiated by mobile phone. Any staff member or volunteer who has any concerns about a mobile phone communication received by a young person should follow the youth theatre's **Internal Reporting Procedure**.
- Staff members or volunteers and members should be aware that the sending of offensive or indecent material by mobile phone is treated very seriously under Irish Law.
- Staff members or volunteers should not use a mobile phone or other device to play video/audio for young people unless the content is appropriate or it is directly related to a youth theatre activity.

USE OF EMAIL:

- Staff members or volunteers should not use their own personal email account to communicate with young people. A dedicated youth theatre email account has been set up for this purpose.
- All email communications with young people should be professional, appropriate and respectful.
- Any email communication with young people should only be used for the effective and efficient delivery of the youth theatre programme.
- Copies of emails sent to members are to be retained on the youth theatre email account.
- In circumstances where an adult engaged by the youth theatre needs to contact members in relation to a project from an email address other than the youth theatre email address, he/she is required to get permission from the Designated Liaison Person in advance and set up an email address specifically for the purpose. He/she should cease to use this email account once the project is completed. All emails should be CC'd to the youth theatre's address and all replies to the email from members should also be forwarded to the youth theatre email.
- 'Joke' and 'circular' emails even if they seem innocuous should not be forwarded to members.
- Emails sent to and received from members should be retained on the youth theatre email account.
- Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) requires that all staff/volunteers be mindful of the possibility of email communications being used not only by a member to bully another member but also as a means for an adult to bully a young person or vice versa.

Any such occurrence should be taken seriously and reported to the Designated Liaison Person. All instances will be managed in line with our **Anti-Bullying Policy**.

- Email communications can be used as a means of abuse/initiating abuse. Any staff member or volunteer who becomes aware of any suspicious communication, should follow the youth theatre's **Internal Reporting Procedure**.

YOUTH THEATRE WEBSITE

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) recognises the importance of having a website that is professional and does not expose users to any risks. The organisation is particularly aware of the need to ensure safe use for young people.

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) takes the following measures

- The youth theatre does not share any information collected via the website with any third party under any circumstances.
- We do not post content that could be viewed, outside the context of a performance or a play, as offensive or inappropriate. Promotional material should take this into account where possible.
- Security measures are taken to ensure the website isn't susceptible to hackers.
- While the youth theatre website does link to third party sites, we cannot be responsible for the content on these sites, every reasonable effort is taken to ensure that such sites are appropriate and relevant to the youth theatre's work.
- Images contained on the site comply with our **Use of Images Policy**.
- **Peter Hussey, Vasiliki Psarra** and **Charlie Hughes-Farrell** monitor the site on a regular basis.
- Any content that is inappropriate or offensive will be removed as soon as we become aware of it.

Acceptable Usage Policy

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) asks that all users of the site comply with the following:

Users should not:

- Use the site to bully, harass or target any other user
- Add content or create a link to content that could be interpreted as offensive or inappropriate
- Use inappropriate language
- Use any content including images from the site without receiving permission from us.
- Misuse or take out of context any content on the site including images or video footage.

THIRD PARTY SITES / SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) currently has a presence on the following third party sites:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube

- Vimeo

Due to the ever-changing nature of online technologies, there may be other sites on which it may be beneficial to have a presence in the future.

The purposes of these sites are to create an online community and to encourage dialogue among those with a shared interest. Any forum that is open to a wide or even a select group of people is vulnerable to misuse including the posting of inappropriate content or the promotion of organisations/events that do not fit with the youth theatre's ethos. There is a danger that social networking platforms can be used by unscrupulous individuals to defraud users or to make contact with young people with a view to 'grooming' them for abuse.

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) takes every reasonable effort to ensure safe use of any third party sites by adhering to the following:

- With the safety of our members in mind, we have considered the most appropriate and safest settings for our presence on these platforms.
- **Peter Hussey** and **Vasiliki Psarra** and **Charlie Hughes-Farrell** supervise the moderation of all third-party sites and all such sites are checked on a regular basis.
- Inappropriate content will be removed as soon as we become aware of it.
- Staff members or volunteers should separate their own personal social networking presence from that of the youth theatre.
- We request that anyone who wishes to set up a social networking presence associated with the youth theatre but not managed by it, (e.g. an alumni group), contact us in advance. Any content included on these sites should be appropriate and not damage the reputation of the youth theatre.
- Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) will take bullying or harassment by anyone who uses our third party sites very seriously. Any instance will be reported to those who run the website and if appropriate to the Gardaí.
- Staff members or volunteers should report any suspicious behaviour by a user. If abuse is suspected, staff/volunteers should follow the youth theatre's **Internal Reporting Procedures**.
- Other users may request us to post/share content. Such requests will be considered on an individual basis and must be in keeping with the youth theatre ethos and/or of relevance to the members.
- We do not require any users of third party sites to disclose personal information.
- We will promote safe use of social networking among our members when drafting the group contract.
- In the case of a youth theatre project where use of social media is an aspect of the project, staff members or volunteers will provide clear guidance to young people on safe use of the platform(s) in question.
- Use of images/video footage will be in line with youth theatre policy.
- We will not tag or provide any contact details for members on any site/platform.
- Any comments or content that could be interpreted as bullying any other user will be treated extremely seriously and will be managed in line with our **Anti-Bullying Policy**.

Acceptable Usage Policy for Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) Third Party Sites:

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) requires that those who use/access CHT's presence on a third party sites/platforms:

- Follow the code of conduct/terms of use provided by the platform's creators.
- Do not post content/comments that could be interpreted as inappropriate or offensive
- Do not attempt to defraud or target any other user.
- Do not bully or harass any other user
- Do not copy content, images or footage without receiving prior permission from the youth theatre.
- Do not misuse or take out of context any content, images, or footage posted.
- Do not post links to potentially inappropriate or offensive content
- Do not tag photos/videos posted by the youth theatre.
- Do not add comments to photos/videos that may identify individual young people.
- Do not identify individual young people e.g. when utilising the 'check-in' function on Facebook.

Legislation and the Internet

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) is aware that there is legislation in Ireland that has relevance to misuse of the Internet such as the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) (Amendment) Act 2007, the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act (1997) and the Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998. We will make a report to the statutory authorities if there is a criminal dimension to any misuse that relates to the youth theatre's internet presence.

SECTION 3.7: USE OF IMAGES/VIDEO

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) is conscious of the responsibility it has for ensuring any images/video footage of young people are used in a safe and responsible manner that does not put any young person at risk. Photographs and visual images are regarded as personal data under the Data Protection Acts 1998/2003. Therefore, all images must be obtained fairly and used only for one or more specified legal purpose.

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

- Images/videos of young people will only be recorded if there is a valid reason relating to the youth theatre programme.
- Consent for the use of images/footage is sought from members and from the parents/guardians where a participant is under 18.
- A refusal of permission will not restrict the participation of a young person in the youth theatre.
- No images should be taken by staff or volunteers with their own mobile phone.
- Participants and primary carers are informed in advance as to the specific uses of any

images/video (e.g. promotional and archival purposes) and as to whether they will be provided to third parties. We will only use images/footage for the reasons specified.

- Care will be taken that young people whose images are captured are dressed in a way that is appropriate to their age.
- Every precaution will be taken to ensure no image/footage used will expose any member to embarrassment or distress.
- We only provide images/video footage to reputable third parties when there is a legitimate reason for doing so e.g. distributing images to the media when promoting a production. We may also share images with funders when requested to do so.
- We will only identify/provide names of individual young people to third parties in a situation where they are being publicly acknowledged. Parental consent will be sought before providing any details of a young person aged under 18.
- When using images/video the youth theatre will not provide information that could be used to make contact with a young person.
- Images/video will mostly only be used in the context in which they were captured. However, some may be used in the design of future posters or project images. In this case, permission for use will be sought and where possible, the finished product will be shown to the young person for approval before it is used publically.
- Information such as date taken, names, context of images, and whether consent was provided will be stored with images that are retained.
- While in the vast majority of cases images of groups will be used rather than images of individual participants there may be exceptions e.g. in the case of a publicity image when it is agreed that an image of an individual young person is the best way to represent a production or event. If the image of a single young person is used, we will be especially careful that the image is appropriate and that tight control is maintained over how the image is used and distributed.
- Images will be reflective of the diversity of our members.
- We will be particularly sensitive when using images of young people whom we are aware are vulnerable and/or have additional needs.
- Any misuse of images/footage should be reported to the Designated Liaison Person as soon as possible.
- If any individual is unhappy with the manner an image/footage is obtained, used or retained by the youth theatre, they should follow our **Complaints Procedure**. Any such complaint will be taken very seriously and procedures will be followed in full.
- While we can not completely control and regulate the taking of photos or video footage at our productions/events by youth theatre members or members of the public, we request that any such images/video are not made available in the public sphere, are used in a way that is appropriate and are kept within the context in which they were captured.
- It will be made clear to members that there are situations when it is inappropriate to capture photos/footage of each other. For example, while young people are getting dressed or undressed. During the drafting of the group contract, young people will be made aware of safe capturing and use of images. It will be made clear to them that they need to think carefully before they post an image where it can be viewed by others and should not take images out of context. They will be made reminded there are unscrupulous individuals who might use images to identify young people and may seek to make contact with them.
- Staff or volunteers should be alert to the possibility of members capturing and

distributing images with a view to causing another young person embarrassment or upset. Participants will be informed that any such occurrence will be taken extremely seriously and will be treated as an instance of bullying. Depending on the circumstances, it may be treated as a child protection issue and a report may be made to the statutory authorities.

Use of images/footage on the Internet

The posting of images/footage on the Internet is an area of particular risk and Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) is cognisant of the possibility of images and video being used and manipulated by those who seek to harm children and young people and the danger of any information provided being used to contact a young person with a view to grooming them for abuse.

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) takes the following steps for the use of images/footage on the Internet:

- Particular care will be taken when posting such content on the Internet that it is appropriate, does not provide any information that could be used to contact or locate a young person and does not put a young person at risk in any other way.
- While it is impossible to completely control use of images once they are posted to the internet, we request that all users of our own website and any third party sites on which we have a presence adhere to the following, taken from our Acceptable Usage Policy:
 - Do not use any content including images from the site without receiving permission from Crooked House and Kildare Youth Theatre.
 - Do not misuse or take out of context any content on the site including images or video footage.
 - Do not tag photos posted by the youth theatre
 - Any comments added should be respectful and not targeted at any particular young person.
 - Do not add comments to photos that may identify young people in the photo.

SECTION 3.8: Transport Arrangements

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) has adopted the following approach to giving lifts to members:

- Parents/primary carers are informed that they should ensure their young person has a safe way to get to and from youth theatre. If they are collecting their son/daughter, they are asked to do so on time.
- It is made clear to parents/primary carers, that if they are collecting their son/daughter and are delayed, they need to contact the youth theatre to let the leaders know. They are informed of this via the **Information Sheet for Parents/Primary Carers**.
- While it is advised that staff or volunteers don't give lifts to members, there may be circumstances where there is no alternative such as if you feel that a young person will be left in a potentially dangerous situation otherwise.
- If young people under 18 are to be given lifts consent to do so must be obtained in writing from the parents/guardians.
- If a staff or volunteers decides that there is no alternative to giving a young person a

lift, they should ideally have another adult or failing that another young person in the car. They should inform the parents/primary carers that they will be bringing their son/daughter home. The staff or volunteers should also inform the Designated Liaison Person or, if it is the Designated Liaison Person giving the lift, another adult from the youth theatre should be informed.

- Staff or volunteers should not give lifts to young people on a regular basis unless written consent has been obtained from the parent/carer.
- Staff or volunteers should check their motor insurance policies to ensure that they are covered under these circumstances.

SECTION 3.9: Trips Away From Home

Participation in an exchange or a festival can be one of the most enjoyable and rewarding aspects of youth theatre involvement. To be sure that such trips run smoothly Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) has adopted the following policy and procedures:

- Leaders for trips away will be given a clear description of roles and responsibilities. We will choose leaders who are comfortable with the level of responsibility and are equipped to react appropriately should an issue arise or emergency occur. We will also select individuals that members will feel comfortable approaching should they have an issue or concern.
- Leaders will have received child protection training.
- They will have completed the Garda Vetting process and have been recruited in line with the youth theatre's **Recruitment and Selection Policy**.
- We will endeavour to ensure the gender of the leaders reflects the gender make up of the group.
- We will provide clear information about the trip/event to parents and primary carers and ensure we have parental consent and contact details for all members aged under 18.
- Medical and dietary details such as allergies and medical conditions will be requested.
- Parents will be requested to ensure that young people have an adequate supply of any medication with them.
- We will also seek medical, dietary and home contact details for those over 18 in case of an emergency.
- We will inform parents/primary carers in the event of an emergency that renders the young person unable to travel home with the group, they may have to travel to the location of the trip/event.
- Parents/primary carers will be informed of the pick up point and drop off point for the trip. It will be emphasised that members must be dropped off and collected at the allocated time.
- We will agree group rules in advance with the members travelling and provide a copy to parents. Most trips and exchanges are alcohol-free. All trips and exchanges involving under 18 year olds are alcohol-free. In those cases where over 18s are travelling, a group contract will be drawn up in advance to include the issue of alcohol consumption. Where projects involve only 18+ year olds local laws, culture and regulations will apply. No one will be permitted to become drunk while away.
- If travelling abroad, we will ensure that the leaders are familiar with relevant laws and customs of the destination country.

- We will adhere to best practice ratio's i.e. one leader to every eight young people plus allow an additional one adult for every eight young people after that. If the group are younger or some members have additional needs, we may decide to bring more leaders.
- Leaders will be provided with copies of the youth theatre's Incident/Accident Report forms and other relevant documentation. All leaders travelling will be familiar with the youth theatre's Welfare and Child Protection policy and have contact details for the Designated Liaison Person.
- We will check the trip is covered by our insurance and if this is not the case, we will take out additional insurance.
- All young people will be expected to have an in-date EHIC card
- We will ensure that the organisers of the exchange/festival provide information such as local doctors and where the nearest hospital is. We will also seek information on whether First Aid is available on-site.
- We will endeavour to ensure that one of the leaders is a competent first aider and provide a well stocked First Aid kit.
- We will carry out a risk assessment for the trip to ensure that eventualities are covered. For example we will decide what would happen if a young person was taken to hospital or if a member was in serious violation of the group rules
- A staff or volunteer will be designated as contact person for the travelling leaders. This is someone who is available should they need advice or have any concerns.
- Leaders will have access to money in case of an emergency.
- Leaders are instructed to raise issues and concerns with the organisers. For example if they feel there are health and safety concerns.
- Leaders travelling are made aware of the need to strike a balance between the members' privacy and the necessity of supervision especially when they are in the accommodation. For example, leaders will knock before entering a young person's room.
- Males and females will be in separate dorms
- Where possible leaders will sleep in rooms separate from the young people but this may not always be possible. In such cases male leaders will sleep in male dorms and females in female dorms.
- In the cases of other and non-binary genders we will come to an agreement during the group planning and contract stage and parents consulted about our decisions.

SECTION 4: Recruitment and Selection of Staff/Volunteers

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) recognises good recruitment practice is an important element in safeguarding the welfare of our members. We will adhere to the following procedure for the recruitment of paid staff. The Chairperson of the Board of Crooked House will be responsible for overseeing the recruitment process.

1. A clear role/job description will be developed. This will include:
 - the nature of the role/job being filled.
 - information on the youth theatre – its mission statement, outline of its ethos etc.
 - an outline of the duties involved.

- hours of employment, whether the job is full-time, part-time etc.
- who they will report to e.g. Chairperson
- the minimum level of competencies and skills required will be identified
- the conditions of employment will be stated e.g. a fixed contract, permanent. There should be details of any probationary period. The current probationary period is six months
- we may also provide details of salary depending on the role.
- For any roles involving *relevant work*, as defined by the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016, it will be made clear that the role is subject to garda vetting.

2. Posts will be advertised publicly. Depending on the role, this could be through a local newspaper or a newsletter/website targeted at the youth/arts sectors. We will also be mindful that any role description or advertisement must comply with Equality legislation.

3. All candidates should complete an application form. A tailored application form is drafted for each post being filled. Each form will include:

- the applicant's address/contact numbers
- previous employment history
- any previous relevant experience
- relevant training
- any other relevant skills they may have
- declaration of suitability for a role involving direct work with young people
- the names, addresses and telephone numbers of two referees (not family members). It is desirable that one of the referees be a current/recent employer.

After the closing date, at least two youth theatre reps will shortlist from the applications received. The shortlist will be decided upon with reference to the competencies and required skills included on the job/role description.

4. Interviews

All paid positions will require an interview with shortlisted candidates. An interview panel will be brought together that includes two representatives from the youth theatre and one external person with expertise related to the role.

- Questions covered will include the following. These questions are examples and can be amended depending on the nature of the role.
 - why the interviewee is interested in this particular role?
 - their understanding of what the role involves
 - their past experience and how this relates to the role
 - their understanding of youth theatre
 - knowledge of the local community
 - their attitudes towards young people and their approach to working with them
- The interview will be a two-way exchange of information. A panel member will provide information on the role and on the youth theatre. There will be an opportunity for the interviewee to ask questions.
- We will develop a marking system for each interview. This will involve outlining the core requirements of the position and also any desirable experience, qualities of the ideal candidate and evolving a marking scheme that allows those conducting the interview to evaluate candidates accordingly. The successful candidate will be the one who scores

highest marks.

- If we are not satisfied that we have found a suitable candidate, we will re-advertise the position.

Once selection has taken place:

- We will adhere to The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016 which makes it clear that a contract cannot be issued or employment commenced until the garda vetting process is complete for any roles that involve what '*relevant work*'. The garda vetting process for the successful applicant will be initiated as a matter of urgency.
- We will confirm the ID of the selected applicant. The Chairperson will request official photo ID i.e. a passport or driver's licence.
- All references will be followed up. Rather than relying solely on written references, the Chairperson shall speak to referees by telephone.
- Once the garda vetting process is satisfactorily completed, a contract of employment will be issued. The contract will include but is not limited to the following:
 - the nature of the contract will be stated e.g. the period of time covered, part-time/full-time.
 - details of the probationary period.
 - hours of employment. It will be made clear whether additional hours may be required. We will also state whether there will be remuneration for extra work or whether a time in lieu system will operate.
 - details of the person to whom the employee reports. This will normally be the Chairperson.
 - outline of unacceptable conduct and disciplinary procedures
 - the contract will also state the staff member must adhere to the youth theatre's ethos, approach to working with young people, Code of Behaviour, Welfare and Child Protection Policy and any other relevant policies/procedures
 - re-vetting period for all staff/volunteers i.e. every three years.
 - an outline how the contract can be terminated.

Garda Vetting Policy

As detailed already Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) has a robust recruitment/selection policy. While we recognise the importance of garda vetting in safeguarding the wellbeing of our members, we also recognise that it is only one aspect of safe recruitment.

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) is a member of Youth Theatre Ireland's Garda Vetting Consortium. As a member of the Consortium we have agreed to the following:

- We are familiar with the provisions of the **National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016**. We are also confirming representatives from the youth theatre/organisation have read Youth Theatre Ireland's Garda Vetting Consortium Policy and we agree to adhere to the policy.
- It is an offence to engage a person, paid or voluntary, to carry out relevant work without having first received a garda vetting disclosure.
- We cannot issue a contract of employment or make any agreement with an employee or volunteer until the vetting process is complete.

- It is an offence to use garda vetting disclosures in any way that contravenes the legislation including the sharing of garda vetting disclosures with any third party.
- We are required to inform all applicants they can request a copy of their garda vetting disclosure. If requested, we will provide a copy of his/her disclosure to an applicant.
- Any existing employees/volunteers who carry out relevant work, and have not previously been vetted, must have completed the vetting process by 31st December 2017.
- The Minister for Justice may set a period for re-vetting of employees/volunteers. It will be an offence under the legislation not to submit employees/volunteers for re-vetting within this period. (Until this period is prescribed the re-vetting period is a matter of organisational policy. Youth Theatre Ireland recommends re-vetting takes place every three years).
- We will not accept an existing garda vetting disclosure from an individual.
- We will inform any person to whom we have provided a copy of their garda vetting disclosure, that the disclosure cannot be used as proof of vetting.
- We have nominated a Designated Liaison Person for garda vetting. We recognise that the DLP is the only person with whom Youth Theatre Ireland's Liaison Person will share or discuss garda vetting disclosures.
- We will inform Youth Theatre Ireland as soon as is practicable should we appoint a new Designated Liaison Person.
- We will follow the procedure for eVetting as outlined in the policy.
- We recognise that each applicant must complete a Vetting Invite Form and we will provide applicants with a copy of the **Information For Vetting Applicants** provided by Youth Theatre Ireland. We will also supply them with a copy of the Garda Vetting Consortium Policy should they request it.
- We will validate the identity of all vetting applicants as outlined in the policy. The DLP will forward a copy of the proof of identity documents to Youth Theatre Ireland's Liaison Person with the completed Vetting Invite Form.
- We will adhere to the guidance provided by the National Vetting Bureau when validating identity.
- We accept that garda vetting is only one aspect of good recruitment and child protection/welfare practice.
- We accept it is the youth theatre's responsibility and not that of Youth Theatre Ireland to ensure all employees/volunteers who carry out relevant work submit a garda vetting application.
- We will ensure all applicants are aware of the necessity of submitting their vetting application without delay.
- We understand that vetting disclosures are of a highly sensitive nature and subject to data protection legislation. We will follow the guidance on confidentiality and retention of garda vetting disclosures provided in the policy.
- We agree to develop a mechanism and procedure for decision-making and appeals based on best practice as contained in the policy.
- We recognise the necessity of managing disclosures within a legislative, human rights and natural justice framework.
- We acknowledge that it is the responsibility of the youth theatre/organisation, and not that of Youth Theatre Ireland, to make decisions on garda vetting disclosures.
- We give permission for the name of the youth theatre and the contact address to be provided to the National Vetting Bureau as is required of all consortia members under the legislation.

- We are aware that if a youth theatre ceases to be affiliated to Youth Theatre Ireland, their membership of the Consortium is automatically terminated.
- We are aware that Youth Theatre Ireland retains the right to terminate a youth theatre/organisation's membership of the Consortium at any time should they be in breach of the policy and this agreement.
- Youth Theatre Ireland reserves the right to make amendments to this policy. Amendments become binding once written notification is sent to Consortium Members.

A copy of Youth Theatre Ireland's Garda Vetting Consortium is available from the youth theatre on request.

Our Designated Liaison Person for Garda Vetting is [Peter Hussey](#).

Who do we Vet?

We will adhere to the garda vetting legislation and vet those who carrying out relevant work:

Relevant work is defined by the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016 as follows:

any work or activity which is carried out by a person, a necessary and regular part of which consists mainly of the person having access to, or contact with children in:

- *Childcare Services*
- *Schools*
- *Hospitals and health services*
- *Residential services or accommodation for children or vulnerable persons*
- *Treatment, therapy or counselling services for children or vulnerable persons*
- *Provision of leisure or physical activities to children or vulnerable persons (unless this is incidental to the provision of services to a mixed group including adults)*
- *Promotion of religious beliefs*

The only exemptions to vetting listed are:

Persons who assist occasionally and on a voluntary basis in certain activities or events be they school, sport or recreational. This provision recognises the occasional but necessary involvement or assistance of parents or other persons in certain activities in which children or vulnerable persons are participating. [The National Vetting Bureau Act] will apply where such involvement includes coaching, mentoring, counselling, teaching or training of children or vulnerable persons.

Hence we require all staff/volunteers who have any facilitation, training or teaching role in the youth theatre to submit a vetting application form.

We also vet those who fall into the following categories:

- Any person whose role involves supervision of young people e.g. a leader for a trip away or an volunteer/staff member who fulfils the 'second adult' in the workshop space role. Also included is anyone engaged to carry out extra supervision for productions etc.
- Any person with an admin role who may carry out supervision of members or have direct contact with members through their role.

- Directors/Assistant Directors of productions
- Stage Managers and Production Managers
- Costume/Lighting/Sound Designers and Operatives
- Those documenting events involving members
- Those evaluating events involving members
- Any person whose role may involve communicating directly with young people.

As required by the National Vetting Bureau, we do not vet board or committee members unless their role requires direct work or contact with young people.

We recognise that we cannot issue a contract or engage the services of anyone carrying out relevant work without receiving a garda vetting disclosure. Therefore when planning our programme, we will make an assessment of the individuals we will need to deliver elements of the programme that involve relevant work with children/young people. Once these potential staff or volunteers have been identified, we will contact them to begin the garda vetting process.

Decision-Making on Garda Vetting Disclosures

We recognise that while the well-being of children/young people is of paramount importance, receiving a disclosure outlining a conviction in relation to a potential staff or volunteer does not necessarily mean this person cannot be employed by the youth theatre.

As advised by Youth Theatre Ireland we have created a decision-making committee for making decisions on garda vetting. The members of the committee are [Peter Hussey](#), [Mary Linehan](#) and [Mary Doyle](#).

We will adhere to the decision-making guidance provided in Youth Theatre Ireland's Garda Vetting Consortium Policy including the factors to be considered when making decisions on garda vetting disclosures.

We will also follow Youth Theatre Ireland's advised procedure for Disputes/Appeals as contained in the organisation's Garda Vetting Consortium Policy.

For details of our approach to confidentiality and retention of garda vetting disclosures, see our **Confidentiality Policy**.

Garda Vetting of Under 18's

To be considered a leader of Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) you must be aged 18 or over. We do not permit any person under 18 to assume a position of responsibility or supervise members. For this reason, we do not require anyone under 18 to be vetted.

International Vetting

Under the Irish vetting system, even if an applicant has no Irish addresses, they are still required to make an application for garda vetting. The e-Vetting system allows inclusion of addresses from anywhere in the world.

Where an potential staff member/volunteer has no Irish addresses (or has spent a considerable period of time outside Ireland) we will also request a copy of the standard police clearance available in the jurisdiction(s) in question.

4.2: Supervision/Support/Training of Staff

All new staff members are inducted into the ethos, policies and procedures of the youth theatre. The Chairperson or CEO will meet with them and carry out an induction session. The staff or volunteer will be advised who they report to and who to contact should any issues or concerns arise relating to any aspect of their work. This will normally be the Artistic Director.

- Their training and support needs will be discussed at this meeting.
- Child Protection Training will be sourced for all staff or volunteers who have direct contact with young people. It is the responsibility of the Designated Liaison Person to source this training. Every effort will be made to ensure the training takes place within the probationary period.
- Depending on the role, the needs of the staff or volunteers and the resources available to the youth theatre other training will also be sourced. This may include First Aid training, facilitation training, other artistic training such as directing, training in the admin, finance and funding aspects of youth theatre.
- A meeting will be organised with the staff or volunteer near the end of their probationary period. This meeting will give both parties the opportunity to assess how the staff or volunteer is getting on and a decision can be reached on whether their engagement will continue.
- The AD will meet with the staff or volunteer on a regular basis at agreed intervals. These intervals will be agreed at the initial meeting with the new staff or volunteer and will be reviewed at the end of probation period meeting. The AD will report to the board on these meetings.
- A staff or volunteer will be asked to attend a board meeting at least once a year to report on their work but can also request to report to the board at any meeting.
- Staff or volunteers will be encouraged to link in with other organisations and networks such as Youth Theatre Ireland.
- All adults involved in the youth theatre including those who work on a short-term basis with the group will be encouraged to offer feedback on their experience. This could be via structured evaluations or by submitting a report.

4.3: Selection and Support of Volunteers

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) recognises that in order to ensure the wellbeing of members is safeguarded, volunteers are subject to the same policies, procedures and selection processes as paid staff.

There are however some slight differences as detailed here.

Selection of Volunteers:

- Rather than a job description, voluntary positions will have a role description. Most of the elements of a job description will still be present. There will be a description of the role and details of the kinds of experience and qualities the youth theatre are seeking.
- Information such as hours of work will be outlined.

- A volunteer application/information form has been developed that includes a declaration of suitability.
- References will still be sought and checked.
- Volunteers are subject to the provisions of the National Vetting Bureau Act in the same manner as paid staff. Our **Garda Vetting Policy** will be adhered to in full for volunteers.
- Volunteers will have a 'trial period' rather than a probationary period. The trial period is currently six months.
- Rather than a formal interview two youth theatre representatives will meet with the potential volunteer. This meeting will allow them to assess the suitability of the volunteer for the role. It is also an opportunity for the potential volunteer to decide whether the role is suitable for them.

Training/Support:

- All new volunteers are inducted into the ethos, policies and procedures of the youth theatre. This Chairperson will meet with them and carry out an induction session. The volunteer will be advised who they report to and who to contact should any issues or concerns arise relating to any aspect of their work. This will normally be the AD.
- Their training and support needs will be discussed at this meeting.
- Child Protection Training will be sourced for all volunteers who have direct contact with young people. It is the responsibility of the Designated Liaison Person to source this training. Every effort will be made to ensure the training takes place within the trial period.
- Depending on the role, the needs and interests of the volunteer and the resources available to the youth theatre other training will also be sourced. We are particularly eager that those who give their time for free benefit from their involvement with the youth theatre by increasing their skill levels and experience.
- A meeting will be organised with the volunteer near the end of their trial period. This meeting will give both parties the opportunity to assess how the volunteer is getting on and a decision can be reached on whether their engagement will continue.
- The AD will meet with the volunteer on a regular basis at agreed intervals. These intervals will be agreed at the initial meeting with the new volunteer and will be reviewed at the end of trial period meeting. The AD will update the board on the volunteer meetings.
- Volunteers will be encouraged to link in with other organisations and networks such as Youth Theatre Ireland.
- All adults involved in the youth theatre including those who work on a short-term basis with the group will be encouraged to offer feedback on their experience. This could be via structured evaluations.

SECTION 5: Health and Safety

Health and Safety Policy and Procedures

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) is aware of the duty of care it has to staff, volunteers, young people and all those who access its services.

We use **1 Main Street, Newbridge** for our weekly workshops and productions. We have been provided with a copy of the Health and Safety Policy including the Safety Statement for the venue.

In terms of the youth theatre's responsibility to safeguard the physical wellbeing of young people the youth theatre has taken the following steps:

- We ensure that venues for our events/activities are fit for purpose and well maintained.
- We adhere to the safety instructions and fire regulations provided by venues we use.
- If staff or volunteers identify a hazard in a venue, they should inform the venue's staff.
- Risk Assessments are carried out for general youth theatre activities and for productions.
- Fire Drills are organised twice a year in cooperation with the venue.
- Twice yearly our smoke and fire alarms are tested by a Fire Safety company.
- We take a register of all who are present at our workshops.
- We ensure appropriate levels of supervision are provided for all activities/events.
- We have procedures in place should an emergency arise. **(See Section Below)**
- All activities are led by practitioners who have a high level of expertise in the particular practice. We recognise that this is particularly important in activities where there is an increased level of physical risk. Participants are informed when they carry out exercises with increased risk, that these exercises should only be attempted under expert supervision.
- Checks are made to ensure equipment/materials used are safe and fit for purpose.
- Activities are age appropriate and developed with the specific abilities and needs of the participants in mind.
- We assess proposed activities in advance at Members Committee meetings. Health and Safety is always a factor that is considered when programming events and activities.
- **Peter Hussey** is responsible for the implementation of youth theatre Health and Safety policy/procedures. It is the responsibility of all staff or volunteers to familiarise themselves with the Health and Safety policy and procedures and observe them in their work.
- Youth theatre members will be instructed in manual handling techniques if they are moving sets etc.
- Health and Safety Policy and procedures are reviewed annually.

Risk Assessments

Risk assessments are conducted as part of Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) programme planning.

There are seven aspects to our Risk Assessment:

- Identify Risk
- Identify people who might be harmed and how
- Potential Outcomes
- Likelihood of these Outcomes
- Potential Severity of these Outcomes
- Action Required to Reduce Risk

- Details of when and how the Action will be taken.

Illness/Injuries/Emergencies

In any emergency situation, the wellbeing of the young person(s) will always be our overriding concern and any action taken should reflect this. Although every emergency situation will be different and will have its own unique factors, the following is an outline of the procedures that should be followed by staff/volunteers.

- A well-stocked First Aid Kit is available at all times. We will endeavor to train staff or volunteers in First Aid. If a youth theatre trained First Aider is not available, staff or volunteers can contact the on-duty venue First Aid person.
- staff or volunteers are provided with details of local doctors/ hospitals and other local emergency services such as the Gardaí
- staff or volunteers are provided with emergency contact details for parents and also details of any dietary/medical requirements a participant may have. **(This information is to be managed as outlined in our Confidentiality Policy).**
- We will inform parents/primary carers of illness and/or injuries suffered by their son/daughter
- Depending on the severity of the illness/injury, the following steps may be taken:
 - it may be decided that it is sufficient for the participant to sit out the session
 - it may be decided that the best course of action is for the young person to leave the session early. If this is the case, we will contact the parents/primary carers. We will request that they collect the member in question. If they are unable to do so, the staff or volunteer must ask them if they are agreeable for the young person to make their own way home.
 - it may be decided that the young person requires the attention of a medical professional. In this case, the parents will be asked to come to the venue as soon as possible.
 - If the illness/injury is thought to be serious and/or life threatening, an ambulance should be requested immediately. A staff or volunteer should accompany the young person to the hospital if a parent/primary carer is not present. The parent/primary carer will be asked to go to the hospital as soon as possible so that the staff or volunteer can leave.
 - If the Designated Liaison Person is not present, he/she should be informed also.
- An **Accident/Incident Report Form** should be completed by the appropriate person as soon as possible. **[For our Accident/Incident Report Form, see Appendix 4 of this document]**. The best person to complete this will usually be the First Aid person who made the initial assessment but it may be that they are not aware of all the relevant information e.g. if someone else goes to the hospital with the young person. In this case, they should complete the report together. Staff should contact the Designated Liaison Person if they are unsure how to proceed with this.

Note: If a staff or volunteer leaves the venue, for example, to accompany a member to hospital, the Designated Liaison Person or Chairperson, (if not present) should be informed as soon as possible.

Retention Periods

Risk Assessments: 10 years

Insurance

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) has Insurance Cover with Hiscox SA via JLT Brokers. This cover includes Public Liability Insurance and Employer Liability Insurance (that includes cover for volunteers). At the time of renewal of policy, we provide the insurance company with an outline of our programme for the year. If there are adjustments to the programme, we contact the Insurance Company to inform them and where necessary the insurance cover is adjusted accordingly.

SECTION 6: Child Protection and Dealing with Suspected Abuse

SECTION 6.1

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) is committed to safeguarding its members from abuse from within the youth theatre but also recognises the duty it has in relation to dealing with any suspected abuse/disclosures of abuse from its members. The youth theatre recognises that the welfare of the child/young person is of paramount importance in all cases of suspected/alleged abuse.

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) Child Protection Policy

It is the policy of Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) to safeguard the welfare of all children by protecting them from all forms of abuse. Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) is committed to safeguarding young people and to provide a safe space for children and young people to grow, develop, learn, experiment and have fun.

We will endeavour to safeguard children/young people by:

- Ensuring Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) has a formal Welfare and Child Protection Policy and a Safeguarding Statement in place that is regularly reviewed and updated.
- Sourcing training for all staff or volunteers engaged in Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) that is appropriate to their role, work and contact with young people. Evidence of all Child Protection training will be kept on file.
- Ensuring the welfare of the child is paramount in all decisions, activities and programmes involving children and young people.
- Adhering to the procedures set out for the recruitment and selection of staff or volunteers.
- Providing effective management for staff or volunteers through supervision, support and training.
- Adopting Child Protection guidelines and reflecting these through our code of behaviour for staff or volunteers.

- Sharing information about Child Protection and good practice with children, parents / primary carers, staff or volunteers.
- Sharing information and working with relevant agencies as appropriate.
- Taking part in multi-disciplinary teams as appropriate.
- Submitting staff or volunteers for Garda Vetting through Youth Theatre Ireland's Garda vetting consortium.
- The Child Safeguarding Statement and Policy must be reviewed every two years, or sooner if there has been a material change in any of the issues to which it refers.
- Promoting an awareness of the definitions of abuse amongst all staff and volunteers

The policy applies to youth theatre to staff or volunteers, members, to visitors and facilitators.

Key Principles of Child Protection and Welfare

Taken from Children First 2017

There are a number of key principles of child protection and welfare that inform both Government policy and best practice for those dealing with children. These are:

- The safety and welfare of children is everyone's responsibility
- The best interests of the child should be paramount
- The overall aim in all dealings with children and their families is to intervene proportionately to support families to keep children safe from harm
- Interventions by the State should build on existing strengths and protective factors in the family
- Early intervention is key to getting better outcomes. Where it is necessary for the State to intervene to keep children safe, the minimum intervention necessary should be used
- Children should only be separated from parents/guardians when alternative means of protecting them have been exhausted
- Children have a right to be heard, listened to and taken seriously. Taking account of their age and understanding, they should be consulted and involved in all matters and decisions that may affect their lives
- Parents/guardians have a right to respect, and should be consulted and involved in matters that concern their family
- A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents/guardians and families. Where there is conflict, the child's welfare must come first
- Child protection is a multiagency, multidisciplinary activity. Agencies and professionals must work together in the interests of children

Welfare Committee and External Welfare Contact

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre)'s welfare committee is made up by the following people;

Peter Hussey

Mary Linehan

Mary Doyle

Our External Welfare contact is **Louise Holian, YTI.**

The Rights of the Child

For the purpose of this policy “a child” means a person under the age of 18 years, who is or has not been married. Ireland ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992. The Convention is in essence a “bill of rights” for all children. It contains rights relating to every aspect of children’s lives including the right to survival, development, protection and participation.

The Role of the Designated Liaison Person

A Designated Liaison Person has been appointed by the [board of Crooked House](#). The Designated Liaison Person acts as a resource to any young person, staff member and volunteer who have Child Protection concerns. All dealings of a Child Protection nature go through the Designated Liaison Person who in turn may make a referral to Tusla - Child and Family Agency or the Gardaí.

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) Designated Liaison Person:

Peter Hussey

Contact Details:

Phone: **087 2759420**

Email: petermhussey@gmail.com

In the absence of the Designated Liaison Person, staff, volunteers and young people can contact **Vasiliki Psarra on 083 0587134** for advice and support on Child Protection / welfare concerns and / or disclosures.

Taken from Children First 2017

Appointing a designated liaison person

Both public and private organisations that are providing services to children should consider appointing a designated liaison person in keeping with best practice in child safeguarding. This person 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 should be knowledgeable about child protection and should be provided with any training considered necessary to fulfil this role.

You should make the name and contact details of the designated liaison person available to all staff and volunteers working within your organisation. It may also be useful to appoint a deputy designated liaison person who will assume responsibility when the designated liaison person is not available or on leave.

ROLE OF DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON

The designated liaison person is responsible for ensuring that reporting procedures within your organisation are followed, so that child welfare and protection concerns are referred promptly to Tusla. Details on what is a reasonable concern and how to report it to Tusla can be found in Chapter 2 of this *Guidance*. **The designated liaison person should record all concerns or allegations of child abuse brought to his or her attention**, and the actions taken in relation to a concern or allegation of child abuse.

If, as a designated liaison person, you decide not to report a concern to Tusla, the following

steps should be taken:

- The reasons for not reporting should be recorded
- Any actions taken as a result of the concern should be recorded
- The employee or volunteer who raised the concern should be given a clear written explanation of the reasons why the concern is not being reported to Tusla
- The employee or volunteer should be advised that if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free to make a report to Tusla or An Garda Síochána

MANDATED PERSONS

What is mandatory reporting and who are mandated persons?

Mandatory reporting, as outlined by the legislation, places a legal obligation on certain individuals known as 'mandated persons' to report harm or potential harm to children. Not everyone who works with children and young people will be a mandated person and not every organisation who works with young people will have a mandated person. As a result of their qualifications and training, certain professionals are deemed to be mandated. These include doctors, nurses, teachers, guards and youth workers who hold a professional qualification. Safeguarding Officers and Child Protection Officers, **employed in a dedicated welfare/child protection** role in religious, sporting, recreational, cultural, educational bodies and organisations offering services to children, are also considered mandated persons. The mandatory reporting provision of the legislation commenced on 11th December 2017.

*Note: The legal obligation on mandated persons to report only applies to information they acquire in their professional work. **It does not apply outside their work or to information they receive on the basis of a personal relationship**. This is important for youth theatres to recognise, as you may have volunteers who are teachers, nurses, guards, youth workers etc. In relation to their role in the youth theatre, they have the same reporting responsibilities as any other person e.g. to report to the Designated Liaison Person and follow the organisation's reporting procedures. Further information can be found in Chapter 3 of Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children:*

http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Children_First_National_Guidance_2017.pdf

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) have clarified that they do not have a mandated person working within the youth theatre.

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) acknowledges that the existence of mandated persons does not remove the existing obligations (moral and often organisational) on others to make a report where there is a concern for a child.

SECTION 6.2: Definitions of Abuse / Neglect

Please note: These definitions are taken directly from Children First 2017 and as required, they should not be altered in any way.

TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE AND HOW THEY MAY BE RECOGNISED

In this *Guidance*, ‘a child’ means a person under the age of 18 years, who is not or has not been married.

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time. Abuse and neglect can occur within the family, in the community or in an institutional setting. The abuser may be someone known to the child or a stranger, and can be an adult or another child. In a situation where abuse is alleged to have been carried out by another child, you should consider it a child welfare and protection issue for both children and you should follow child protection procedures for both the victim and the alleged abuser.

The important factor in deciding whether the behaviour is abuse or neglect is the impact of that behaviour on the child rather than the intention of the parent/carer.

The definitions of neglect and abuse presented in this section are not legal definitions. They are intended to describe ways in which a child might experience abuse and how this abuse may be recognised.

Neglect

Child neglect is the most frequently reported category of abuse, both in Ireland and internationally. Ongoing chronic neglect is recognised as being extremely harmful to the development and well-being of the child and may have serious long-term negative consequences.

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. Emotional neglect may also lead to the child having attachment difficulties. The extent of the damage to the child's health, development or welfare is influenced by a range of factors. These factors include the extent, if any, of positive influence in the child's life as well as the age of the child and the frequency and consistency of neglect.

Neglect is associated with poverty but not necessarily caused by it. It is strongly linked to parental substance misuse, domestic violence, and parental mental illness and disability.

A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when neglect becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer. This may become apparent where you see the child over a period of time, or the effects of neglect may be obvious based on having seen the child once.

The following are features of child neglect:

- Children being left alone without adequate care and supervision
- 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. Once-off and occasional difficulties between a parent/carer and child are not considered emotional abuse. Abuse occurs when a child's basic need for attention, affection, approval, consistency and security are not met, due to incapacity or indifference from their parent or caregiver. Emotional abuse can also occur when adults responsible for taking care of children are unaware of and unable (for a range of reasons) to meet their children's emotional and developmental needs. Emotional abuse is not easy to recognise because the effects are not easily seen.

A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when the behaviour becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer.

Emotional abuse may be seen in some of the following ways:

- 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

There may be no physical signs of emotional abuse unless it occurs with another type of abuse. A child may show signs of emotional abuse through their actions or emotions in several ways. These include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, risk taking and aggressive behaviour.

It should be noted that no one indicator is conclusive evidence of emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is more likely to impact negatively on a child where it is persistent over time and where there is a lack of other protective factors.

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. A reasonable concern exists where the child's health and/ or development is, may be, or has been damaged as a result of suspected physical abuse.

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

The Children First Act 2015 includes a provision that abolishes the common law defence of reasonable chastisement in court proceedings. This defence could previously be invoked by a parent or other person in authority who physically disciplined a child. The change in the legislation now means that in prosecutions relating to assault or physical cruelty, a person who administers such punishment to a child cannot rely on the defence of reasonable chastisement in the legal proceedings. The result of this is that the protections in law relating to assault now apply to a child in the same way as they do to an adult.

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:
 - » 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]
 - » Inviting, coercing or inducing a child to participate in, or to observe, any sexual, indecent or obscene act
 - » 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

An Garda Síochána will deal with any criminal aspects of a sexual abuse case under the relevant criminal justice legislation. The prosecution of a sexual offence against a child will be considered within the wider objective of child welfare and protection. The safety of the child is paramount and at no stage should a child's safety be compromised because of concern for the integrity of a criminal investigation.

In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that in criminal law the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years for both boys and girls. Any sexual relationship where one or both parties are under the age of 17 is illegal. However, it may not necessarily be regarded as child sexual abuse. Details on exemptions for mandated reporting of certain cases of underage consensual sexual activity can be found in Chapter 3 of this *Guidance*.

Age of consent

In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that in criminal law the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years for both boys and girls. Any sexual relationship where one or both parties are under the age of 17 is illegal. However, it may not necessarily be regarded as child sexual abuse.

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:
- Female genital mutilation
- Forced marriage
- Honour-based violence
- 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

You should consider these factors as part of being alert to the possibility that a child may be at risk of suffering abuse and in bringing reasonable concerns to the attention of Tusla.

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.

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression – whether it is verbal, psychological or physical – that is conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating, and occurs mainly among children in social environments such as schools. It includes behaviours such as physical aggression, cyberbullying, damage to property, intimidation, isolation/exclusion, name calling, malicious gossip and extortion. Bullying can also take the form of abuse based on gender identity, sexual preference, race, ethnicity and religious factors. With developments in modern technology, children can also be the victims of non-contact bullying, via mobile phones, the internet and other personal devices.

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.

Bullying in schools is a particular problem due to the fact that children spend a significant portion of their time there and are in large social groups. In the first instance, the school authorities are responsible for dealing with such bullying. School management boards must have a code of behaviour and an anti-bullying policy in place. If you are a staff member of a school, you should also be aware of your school's anti-bullying policy and of the relevant guidelines on how it is handled.

In cases of serious instances of bullying where the behaviour is regarded as possibly abusive, you may need to make a referral to Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána.

Section 6.3 Reasonable Grounds for Concern

This Section is taken directly from Children First 2017.

You should always inform Tusla when you have **reasonable grounds for concern** that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected. If you ignore what may be symptoms of abuse, it could result in ongoing harm to the child. It is not necessary for you to prove that abuse has occurred to report a concern to Tusla. All that is required is that you have

reasonable grounds for concern. It is Tusla's role to assess concerns that are reported to it. If you report a concern, you can be assured that your information will be carefully considered with any other information available and a child protection assessment will be carried out where sufficient risk is identified.

Reasonable grounds for a child protection or welfare concern include:

- Evidence, for example an injury or behaviour, that is consistent with abuse and is unlikely to have been caused in any other way
- Any concern about possible sexual abuse
- Consistent signs that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect
- A child saying or indicating by other means that he or she has been abused
- Admission or indication by an adult or a child of an alleged abuse they committed
- An account from a person who saw the child being abused

Guidance for mandated persons on the thresholds at which, or above which, they have a statutory obligation to report the concern under the Children First Act 2015 can be found in Chapter 3 of [Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children].

The guiding principles on reporting child abuse or neglect may be summarised as follows:

1. The safety and well-being of the child must take priority over concerns about adults against whom an allegation may be made
2. Reports of concerns should be made without delay to Tusla

If you think a child is in immediate danger and you cannot contact Tusla, you should contact the Gardaí without delay.

SECTION 6.4: Handling a Disclosure of Abuse

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) aims to provide a safe space for the young person and they may feel more comfortable talking about any concerns and difficulties in their lives than in other settings.

A young person may disclose an abuse/abuses perpetrated against him/her. It is essential that they feel supported in what may be an extremely traumatic experience for them. The act of disclosing is a huge act of trust and must be treated with respect, sensitivity and care. Remember that a disclosure can be made to any individual involved in the youth theatre and not necessarily the Designated Liaison Person. For this reason all adults involved in the youth theatre need to be aware of the possibility and familiar with these guidelines on handling a disclosure.

The following advice on handling a disclosure of abuse is adapted from ***Code of Good Practice – Child Protection for the Youth Work Sector*** (2003):

- React calmly, as over-reacting may alarm the young person and compound feelings of anxiety and guilt
- Listen carefully and attentively; take the young person seriously
- Reassure the young person that they have taken the right action in telling
- Do not make false promises, particularly regarding secrecy
- Do not ask the young person to repeat the story unnecessarily

- Ask questions only for the purpose of clarification. Be supportive, but do not ask leading questions or seek intimate details beyond those volunteered by the child. Detailed investigative interviews will, if necessary, be carried out by Tusla staff or members of the Garda Síochana.
- Check with the young person to ensure that what has been heard and understood by you is accurate.
- Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser
- Record the conversation as soon as possible in as much detail as possible.
- Sign and date the record
- Explain and ensure that the young person understands the procedures which will follow
- Pass the information to the Designated Liaison Person, who will in turn report it to the Statutory Authorities for investigation
- Treat the information confidentially, sharing it only with persons who have a right to hear it i.e. on a 'need to know' basis only

Remember:

You have to be honest with the young person making the disclosure. Inform them that you have to act on the information you have received. Explain to them what will happen next i.e. you will tell the Designated Liaison Person who will decide whether to make a report to the authorities.

A disclosure of abuse by a member over 18 years of age must be handled with the same sensitivity as that of a disclosure by a younger person. If making a report ideally it should be with the consent of the victim. However, regardless of whether consent is given, if the alleged abuser still poses a risk to a child/young person, a report will need to be made to the Statutory Authorities. Staff or volunteers follow the reporting procedures outlined in **the Internal Reporting section**.

Important Points To Remember If you receive a disclosure of abuse or have a suspicion of abuse

- 1. The well being of the young person is the most important consideration**
- 2. The one thing you must not do is nothing.**
- 3. Never attempt to confront an alleged abuser.**
- 4. Do not investigate yourself. This is the job of Tusla - Child and Family Agency and/or Gardai**

SECTION 6.5: Internal Reporting Procedures

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) has adopted the following internal reporting procedure for dealing with disclosures/suspected abuse.

- Any person working with Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) in a voluntary or paid capacity, who has a child protection concern or has received a disclosure of abuse should contact Crooked House's Designated Liaison Person immediately. Crooked House and Kildare Youth Theatre's DLP is **Peter Hussey** and they can be contacted on **087 2759420**. The person who has the concern should proceed to create a written report outlining the reasons for their suspicions/details of the

disclosure with as many facts as possible recorded. Crooked House's Internal Reporting Form should be used (Appendix 2). This report should be passed on to the DLP as soon as possible.

- The DLP will consult the youth theatre's welfare committee. The DLP may also contact Tusla – Child and Family Agency for advice in advance of making a formal report. In the case of an emergency, the DLP can make a report without consulting the Welfare Committee.
- When making a report to Tusla, the Designated Liaison Person will follow the standard reporting procedures detailed below.
- The Designated Liaison Person informs the **board** they are making a report.
- Crooked House & Kildare Youth Theatre's confidentiality policy and procedures should be adhered to. Details should only be provided to those with a direct need to know and information will only be shared when it is in the interest of safeguarding the young person.
- Crooked House and Kildare Youth theatre's board will consider whether to inform the parents/primary carers that a report is being made. The parents/primary carers will be informed except in cases where there is a belief that doing so will further endanger the child or the person making the report. Advice on informing parents can be sought from Tusla.
- If a decision is taken to inform the parents/primary carers, an assessment will be made by Crooked House and Kildare Youth theatre's board of the best way to communicate the information and as to whether the Designated Liaison Person is putting his/herself at any risk by doing so.

Taken from Children First 2017

The Children First Act 2015 does not require you to inform the family that a report under the legislation is being made to Tusla. However, it is good practice to tell the family that a report is being made and the reasons for the decision.

It is not necessary to inform the family that a report is being made if by doing so the child will be placed at further risk or where the family's knowledge of the report could impair Tusla's ability to carry out a risk assessment. Also, you do not need to inform the family if you reasonably believe that by doing so it may place you at risk of harm from the family.

- The person who made the original report will be informed of the outcome of the decision-making process.

If a decision is taken not to report

- If a decision is taken not to report, a confidential written record of how and why this decision was taken should be created and kept by the Designated Liaison Person. Any incident reports should be retained. It may be that a report will be made in the future in light of other developments.
- The staff member or volunteer who made the original report should be informed of the decision taken. If a report hasn't been made, they should be provided with the reasons for this decision in writing and informed that they can still make a report in their personal capacity. All staff member or volunteers should be made aware of the steps to take to make a report and the provisions of the **Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act (1998)** which offers protection from civil liability for anyone who makes a report, once they are acting in good faith.
- The staff member or volunteer involved may continue to keep an eye on the young person in question. They should record information they feel is relevant and continue to liaise with the Designated Liaison Person. While they should make themselves available to the young person, they need to be sensitive and not intrusive. It is important that they don't suggest or tell the young person that they think abuse is taking place. The leader themselves should continue to be open to alternative

SECTION 6.6: Standard Reporting Procedures

Taken From Children First 2017

Who to contact

You should always inform Tusla if you have **reasonable grounds for concern** that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected. You can report your 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. You can find contact details for the Tusla social work teams on the Tusla website (www.tusla.ie).

If you are concerned about a child but unsure whether you should report it to Tusla, you may find it useful to contact Tusla to informally discuss your concern. This provides an opportunity to discuss the query in general and to decide whether a formal report of the concern to Tusla is appropriate at this stage. 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.

Standard Reporting Procedure for Designated Liaison Persons

- Any person reporting a child abuse concern should do so without delay to Tusla - Child and Family Agency. The report will usually be made to a Duty Social Worker. A report can be made in person, by telephone or in writing.

The local Tusla Social Work Office for Crooked House and Kildare Youth Theatre is in Naas.

**Child and Family Agency,
St Marys,
Craddockstown Road,
Naas,
Co Kildare
Telephone: 045 882400**

Contact numbers for Tusla offices nationwide are available on the Tusla website (www.tusla.ie) or through the Tusla National Office (Tel. 01-7718500). Before deciding whether or not to make a formal report, you may wish to discuss your concerns with a health professional or directly with Tusla through your local office.

- **Under no circumstances should a child be left in a situation that exposes him or her to harm or to risk of harm pending Tusla intervention.** In the event of an emergency where you think a child is in immediate danger and you cannot get in contact with Tusla, you should contact the Gardaí. This may be done through any Garda station. Kildare Youth Theatre's local garda station is **Newbridge Garda Station. Telephone: 045 431212.**
- If you do not have the number of a local garda station, phone 999 or 112. An emergency out-of-hours social work service provides social work consultation and advice to the Gardaí. The Gardaí have access to an on-call social worker and placements for children who need them due to the immediate risk to their safety.

- The **Standard Report Form for reporting child welfare and protection concerns to Tusla** (Appendix 1) should be used by **professionals, staff and volunteers in organisations working with or in contact with children, or providing services to children** when reporting child welfare and protection concerns to Tusla. If a report is made by telephone, this form should be completed and forwarded subsequently to Tusla

What information to include

To help Tusla staff assess your reasonable concern, they need as much information as possible. You should provide as much relevant information as you can about the child, his/her home circumstances and the grounds for concern. These could 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 your 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
- Your name, contact details and relationship to the child

You should give as much information as possible to social workers at an early stage so that they can do a full check of their records. For instance, they can see if the child and/or a sibling have been the subject of a previous referral, or if an adult in the household had previous contact with the child protection services. It also helps social workers to prioritise cases for attention, as they are not in a position to respond immediately to all cases. However, they will always respond where a child is in immediate danger or at high risk of harm. It will also help Tusla to decide if another service would be more appropriate to help meet the needs of the child, i.e. a community or family support service rather than a social work service.

Can a report be made anonymously?

While it is possible to report a concern without giving your name, it may make it difficult for Tusla to assess your concern. All information that you provide will be dealt with in a professional manner. While Tusla cannot guarantee confidentiality, in general it will not reveal the names of members of the public who report suspected child abuse without their permission.

Remember, if you are a mandated person, you cannot submit a report of a mandated concern anonymously, as to do so will mean you are not complying with your obligations under the Act.

What happens after a report is received by Tusla?

Tusla has the statutory responsibility to assess all reports of child welfare and protection concerns. Assessments are carried out by Tusla social workers. If concerns are found after the initial checks, further evaluation involving a detailed examination of the child and family's circumstances will follow.

If concerns about a child's welfare are found, but do not involve a child protection issue, then the family may be referred to community or family support services. If no concerns are found, then the information gathered is recorded and kept on a confidential file where it will be examined if further concerns or more information comes to light.

If you make a report about a child, Tusla will normally acknowledge it, and may contact you for

further information, if necessary. It is understandable that you would like to be assured that the matter is being followed up. However, to protect the privacy of the child and family, it may not be possible for Tusla to inform you of the progress or outcome of Tusla's contact with the child or family, unless you are involved in discussions around family support or child protection plans. If you continue to have concerns about the child, or if additional information comes to light, you should contact Tusla.

Concerns about an adult who may pose a risk to children

While in most cases concerns for the welfare or safety of a child develop from your own observation or knowledge of the child or their family, sometimes concerns arise about whether an adult may pose a risk to children, even if there is no specific child named in relation to the concern. For example, based on known or suspected past behaviour, a concern could exist about the risk an individual may pose to children with whom they may have contact. You should report any such reasonable concerns to Tusla, who will try to establish whether or not any child is currently at risk from the individual in question.

While Tusla will make every effort to examine such cases, it is a very complex area involving the accused's constitutional rights to their good name, privacy and the right to earn a living, as well as the requirements of natural justice. Tusla must work within the Constitution, the law, the legal system and the demands of natural justice to balance the conflicting rights of those involved. This may limit how much feedback Tusla can provide to you on the progress or outcome of the case. Tusla's examination can be greatly improved if the alleged victim feels able to cooperate with Tusla in its assessment or investigation.

Retrospective disclosures by adults

- In cases of retrospective abuse, a report needs to be made where there is a **current or potential future risk** to children from the person against whom there is an allegation. The term retrospective abuse refers to abuse that an adult discloses that took place during their childhood. A Retrospective Abuse Report Form can be downloaded from: <http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/publications-and-forms#SRP>
- The HSE National Counselling Service is in place to listen to, value and understand those who have been abused in childhood. The service is a professional, confidential counselling and psychotherapy service and is available free of charge in all regions of the country (see www.hse-ncs.ie/en). The service can be accessed either through healthcare professionals or by way of self-referral (Freephone 1800 477477).

Cases not reported to Tusla or An Garda Síochána

In those cases where an organisation decides not to report concerns to Tusla or An Garda Síochána, the individual employee or volunteer who raised the concern should be given a clear written statement of the reasons why the organisation is not taking such action. The employee or volunteer should be advised that if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free as individuals to consult with, or report to, Tusla or An Garda Síochána. The provisions of the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 apply once they communicate 'reasonably and in good faith'

Making A Mandated Report

Guidance for mandated persons on the process of making a mandated report can be found in Chapter 3 of Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children. An explanation of mandated persons can be found in Section 6.1. A full list of Mandated Persons can be found in Appendix 3 and can be used to check whether you do / do not have Mandated persons working within your youth theatre.

Legal protection

- The Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 makes provision for the protection from civil liability of persons who have communicated child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to designated officers of Tusla - Child and Family Services or to any member of An Garda Síochána. This protection applies to organisations as well as to individuals. This means that even if a communicated suspicion of child abuse proves unfounded, a plaintiff who took an action would have to prove that the person who communicated the concern had not acted reasonably and in good faith in making the report.
- A person who makes a report in good faith and in the child's best interests may also be protected under common law by the defence of qualified privilege.

Freedom of information

- Notwithstanding the requirement of all professionals involved in child protection and welfare cases to share relevant information, records are nevertheless confidential. They do not belong to individuals (except for independent practitioners) and are the property of the organisations that keep them. Under the **Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003**, members of the public have a right of access to records concerning them held by any public body and a right to have official information about themselves amended where it is incorrect, incomplete or misleading. Members of the public also have a right to be given reasons for decisions made concerning themselves. Requests to see records are processed in the first instance through the public body that holds the records. In the event of refusal of access, the decision may be appealed and the ultimate arbiter is the Information Commissioner. At present, these Acts apply to Tusla - Child and Family Agency, but not to An Garda Síochána.
- The **Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003** afford similar rights to individuals to access personal data held about them by any entity whether in the public or private sector. The right to access applies to records held by Tusla and An Garda Síochána. However, the right to access does not apply in a range of circumstances that may be relevant in a child welfare context. Equally, the right of access does not extend to any information that identifies a third party where that third party had an expectation of confidence. Accordingly, it would not be necessary to provide any information that would identify a person making a child welfare report in response to a request under the Data Protection Acts.
- A full list of the relevant legislation concerning child protection and welfare is provided in **Appendix 7** of the Youth Theatre Ireland Welfare and Child Protection Policy Guidelines.

SECTION 6.7: Handling an allegation against a staff member / volunteer / young person

The following is adapted from Code of Good Practice: Child Protection for the Youth Work Sector (2nd Edition, May 2003)

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) recognises that where an allegation is made against a staff member or volunteer, it has a dual responsibility in respect of both the young person and the staff member or volunteer. As with all Child Protection concerns, the welfare of the young person is of paramount importance.

As a matter of urgency, the youth theatre will take any necessary measure to ensure that no young person is exposed to unnecessary risk.

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

1. A Garda investigation of a possible criminal offence
2. Investigation and assessment by Tusla whether a child is at risk of/subject to abuse.
3. Consideration by an employer of disciplinary action in respect of an incident.

Procedures

There are two procedures to be followed when allegations of abuse are made against a staff member or volunteer:

- The reporting procedure in respect of the young person.
- The procedure for dealing with the staff member or volunteer against whom the allegation is made.

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) follows best practice by allocating different people responsibility for dealing with each of these procedures. The Designated Liaison Person will have responsibility for the reporting procedure in respect of the young person. The Chairperson of the Board will have responsibility for dealing with allegations made against a staff member or volunteer.

The Designated Liaison Person will follow standard reporting procedure as outlined in this policy.

The **Chairperson** will liaise with An Garda Síochána and Tusla to agree the strategy for investigation and refer to matters such as the possible collusion of other members of staff. The **Chairperson** will remain in contact with the statutory authorities throughout the period of the investigation. We have noted that the *Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act* (1998) applies to organisations, as well as individuals, provided they report the matter 'reasonably and in good faith'.

Procedure where a Complaint or Allegation involving abuse has been made against an Employee

- If an allegation is made against a staff member or volunteer, the matter should be reported to the **Chairperson** immediately and without delay.
- The **Chairperson** will assess the allegation promptly and carefully.
- Any action taken will be based on an opinion formed 'reasonably and in good faith'.
- The **Chairperson** will contact the Welfare Committee and they will decide whether a formal report should be made to Tusla.
- The reasonable grounds for concern as detailed in the Child Protection and Dealing with Suspected Abuse section of this document will be considered.
- The first priority should be to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk and the **Chairperson** should take any necessary protective measures.
- Legal advice will be sought in relation to employment and contractual issues.
- Alongside the reporting of the allegation by the **Chairperson** to Tusla, the Designated Liaison Person will follow the standard reporting procedure in respect of the young person.
- The **Chairperson** will inform the staff member or volunteer (in private and with due consideration of confidentiality and natural justice) that an allegation has been made and explain the nature of that allegation.
- The staff member or volunteer should be afforded the right to respond in accordance with established grievance procedure. The response should be noted and passed to Tusla as part of the formal reporting procedure.
- The **Chairperson** should also notify Tusla and any other organisation working with children with which the alleged abuser is thought or known to be involved.

- If the allegation is against the **Chairperson**, the allegation should be referred to a member of the Welfare Committee. If the allegation is against the Designated Liaison Person, another suitably qualified staff member or volunteer will be given the role of reporting in relation to the young person.
- The parents/guardians of the young person will be informed immediately of the complaint against the staff member or volunteer unless by doing so you endanger the young person. Advice should be taken from the statutory authorities as to how this might best be done. The **Chairperson** and Designated Liaison Person will liaise on this.
- The Chairperson will maintain a close liaison with the Statutory Authorities when managing the allegation.
- After the consultations referred to above have taken place, and when pursuing the question of the future position of the staff member or volunteer the **Chairperson** should advise the staff member or volunteer of the situation and should follow the agreed disciplinary procedures.
- Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) is very mindful that the person accused will need support pending an investigation. Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) will identify how we can best do this in line with advice from the statutory authorities and our own legal advice while taking account of resource implications.
- Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) will keep comprehensive records of any allegations made, details of how the allegations were managed and details of any action taken and decisions reached. These records must be stored confidentially and a copy given to the individual concerned.
- In the case where an allegation has been determined to be unfounded/unproven and the person accused is innocent, consideration will be given to the most appropriate support the organisation can provide to the person concerned.

Note on Volunteers

The same procedures will be followed should an allegation be made against a volunteer. While some of the considerations that relate to employees such as Employment Law do not apply, Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) is committed to treating any individual whose services it engages and against whom an allegation is made, according to the same principle as it would treat staff members i.e. in a manner that is fair, transparent and in accordance with 'Natural Justice'.

Procedure to be followed where an Allegation is made against Another Young Person

If an allegation is made against another young person, it should be considered a child protection issue for both the young people involved and child protection procedures should be adhered to for both the victim and the alleged abuser.

The parents/primary of the young people concerned should be informed immediately. Advice will be taken from the Statutory Authorities as to how this might best be done. Decisions regarding the future participation in the youth theatre of the young person alleged to have committed abuse should be made at management level and with advice from an organisation/individual with expertise in the area.

SECTION 7: Confidentiality

[Confidentiality Policy and Procedures]

Confidentiality involves managing sensitive information that, in the context of youth theatre, is provided in the expectation that it will be properly managed. Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) recognises that a guarantee of confidentiality is an important factor in determining the level of trust its members and their parents/primary carers have in us. The youth theatre is

committed to handling confidential information in a manner that is respectful, purposeful, professional and meets statutory requirements.

The following information is held by the youth theatre and should be treated as confidential. This list is not exhaustive:

- Staff member or volunteer records including application forms that contain personal information, details of any disciplinary action etc.
- Garda Vetting Information including garda vetting application disclosures
- Member Information/Parental Consent Forms that include details such as date of birth, information on medical conditions etc.
- Welfare/Child Protection Reports
- Contact information for stakeholders, supporters etc.
- Marketing information such as audience members, individual donors and supporters

Who has access to confidential information:

The following have access to confidential information through their involvement with the youth theatre:

- Designated Liaison Person
- Chairperson
- Staff members or volunteers who work directly with young people.

Managing Confidential Information

Confidential information as defined above is stored **in a filing cabinet in the office**. This information is stored securely in **a locked box folder**.

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) requires that all those who have access to confidential information as a result of their involvement, adhere to the following:

- Be aware of the sensitive nature of the information to which you are privy and recognise the responsibility you have as a result of having access to this information.
- Familiarise yourself with the youth theatre's confidentiality policy and act accordingly
- Be aware that information including written reports is the property of Crooked House and Kildare Youth Theatre.
- Use confidential information only for the purpose(s) for which it was provided and the purpose(s) for which you are authorised to use it.
- Do not pass personal contact information on to third parties without the express permission of the person in question.
- Do not share confidential information or pass it on to a third party unless it is absolutely necessary as in the case of a child protection concern. Making a child protection report is not a breach of confidentiality.
- All computers containing youth theatre information should have a log-on password.
- Robust security passwords should be used for all confidential files
- Hard copy files/computer files should be retained and destroyed/deleted in line with the youth theatre's retention policy. (See Below)

- Be aware that confidential information may also be contained on other media such as audio or video files.
- A staff member or volunteer may receive information that is confidential in error as in the case of an overheard conversation. Any information gained in this fashion is subject to the same conditions as information gained in an authorised manner and should not be shared.
- Staff members or volunteers should be particularly careful when they are in possession of confidential/personal sensitive information in the workshop space or in a public space.
- The requirement of confidentiality continues to apply after an individual's involvement with the youth theatre ceases.
- Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) is aware of the particularly sensitive nature of garda vetting disclosures and records of child protection concerns. Should the Designated Liaison Person cease engagement with the youth theatre or no longer carry out this role, any garda vetting disclosures/child protection reports should be passed on to the Chairperson in a sealed file. They will then be given to the new Designated Liaison Person.
- As already stated under no circumstances will garda vetting disclosures be shared with third parties.
- Where a disclosure has been returned outlining convictions or specified information, the identity of the applicant will be shared on a need to know basis. The DLP and the Chairperson will be aware of the identity of the applicant. The other member of the decision-making committee will be given any relevant information in relation to the disclosure but will only be informed of the identity if this is necessary or unavoidable. For example, it might be decided in some cases that the full decision-making committee will meet with the applicant.

Breaches of Confidentiality

A breach of confidentiality may lead to a disciplinary procedure. **(See Disciplinary Procedures Section).**

Data Protection Privacy Policy

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) is aware of the Data Protection Acts (1998/2003 and subsequent amendments). These Acts govern all aspects of the treatment of sensitive information. We are committed to the following eight principles of Data Protection as summarised by the Office of the Data Commissioner:

- Obtain and process information fairly
- Keep it only for one or more specified and lawful purposes
- Use and disclose it only in ways compatible with the purposes for which it was initially given
- Keep it safe and secure
- Keep it accurate and up-to-date
- Ensure that it is adequate, relevant and not excessive
- Retain it no longer than is necessary for the specified purpose or purposes
- Give a copy of his/her personal data to any individual, on request.

Retention Policy

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) has developed the following retention policy stating the retention periods for the various types of information it holds. After the stated period has elapsed the information will be deleted from computers and any hard copy files will be shredded.

All financial documentation including end of year accounts, other financial statements, invoices, receipts etc. - 7 Years

Records of youth theatre activities including production images, programmes etc. - Permanent

Strategic plans, programme plans etc. - Permanent

Recruitment Records: Unsuccessful applications for vacant posts/ Written record for of interview panel's recommendation - 1 Year

Personnel Records: Applications and Curriculum Vitae of candidates who accept and take up a post. References, Contracts of Employment, Training Records, Resignation/Retirement Letter, Annual leave records, sick leave records, compassionate leave records, study leave records, jury service records - Permanent

Disciplinary Records - 1 Year

Details of Grievance Procedures - Six months

(Please note: In cases of more serious disciplinary/grievance procedures or where an allegation of abuse is made against an employee, the records can be kept permanently).

Members' Personal Details: These will be kept for the duration of a young person's participation in the youth theatre and for 2 years after they leave.

Records of Complaints Procedures: 5 years

Garda Vetting Information including disclosures: Proof of Identity and garda vetting disclosures for staff members or volunteers will be retained until the staff member or volunteer is re-vetted when the existing records will be replaced with the new information/disclosure. Where a staff member's or volunteer's involvement finishes, we will retain their garda vetting records for 1 year from the finish date.

Welfare Reports/Child Protection Reports - Permanent

Please note: If there are any outstanding issues relating to any area of the youth theatre's work, the period of retention for any documentation related to this issue, will only commence once the issue is satisfactorily resolved.

SECTION 8: Approach to Parents/Primary Carers

APPROACH TO WORKING WITH PARENTS/PRIMARY CARERS

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) has a young-person centred approach and promotes the importance of viewing young people as social and artistic beings in their own right.

We aim to create a space where they can be themselves away from any pressures they may have in their lives. At the same time, we also recognise the rights of parents to be involved in, and informed about their son/daughter's lives including their participation in youth theatre.

Parents are performing an act of trust when their son/daughter joins the youth theatre and we are obligated to honour that trust by safeguarding the wellbeing of their young person. We are aware that parents and families are also valued supporters of the youth theatre through their attendance at our productions, support of fundraising initiatives etc.

We encourage dialogue with parents/primary carers and encourage them to contact us should they have any questions or concerns. We especially encourage ongoing communication with parents/primary carers of young people who are vulnerable and/or have additional needs.

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) takes the following approach to parents/primary carers of youth theatre members:

- We value the cooperation of parents in facilitating young people's involvement in the youth theatre programme
- We recognise the right parents/primary carers have to be informed about their young person's involvement and their right to be informed about any issues that affect their son/daughter.
- We have developed an Information Sheet for Parents/Primary Carers. This serves not only to inform them about youth theatre's ethos/approach but gives details of the various policies and procedures the youth theatre has in place to safeguard the wellbeing of their young person.
- We require parental consent for participation of those under 18. We also request consent for using images of those under 18. We have developed a Primary Carer/Parental Consent Form. **[Appendix 9]**.
- We request additional consent for away trips or other events/activities outside regular youth theatre activities.
- We require details from parents of any dietary/medical requirements affecting a young person under 18.
- Parents are provided with contact details for the youth theatre so they can contact us they require further information about any aspect of their young person's participation. They are also provided with contact details for the Designated Liaison Person should they have a specific issue or concern that they wish to discuss.
- Parents/primary carers will be informed as soon as is practicable should their young person fall ill or suffer an accident during an event/activity.
- Parents are provided with details of the youth theatre's Complaints Procedure.
- Parents are informed about performances and other public events that will allow them to personally experience the youth theatre's work and witness the achievements of their son/daughter.

Parents and Child Protection

As stated in Children First (2017), parents/guardians have a right to respect, and should be consulted and involved in matters that concern their family. *Section 6.5 Internal Reporting Procedures* outlines the process for discussing a concern with parents/guardians before reporting and the circumstances in which this is not advised, as it may further endanger the child or the person making the report.

From Children First (2017)

The Children First Act 2015 does not require you to inform the family that a report under the legislation is being made to Tusla. However, it is good practice to tell the family that a report is being made and the reasons for the decision.

It is not necessary to inform the family that a report is being made if by doing so the child will be placed at further risk or where the family's knowledge of the report could impair Tusla's ability to

SECTION 9: Complaints Procedure

Crooked House TC and Kildare Youth Theatre: Complaints Procedure

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) is committed to meeting the highest possible standards in youth theatre. We welcome feedback, both negative and positive, on all aspects of our work. We evaluate all our programmes and actively seek member input. There may be occasions when a member or other stakeholder feels they have not received the best possible service from the youth theatre. In such a circumstance, it is important we are informed and have developed this complaints procedure to help ensure that any such feedback is dealt with in an efficient, systematic and satisfactory manner. We recognise that complaints can be of varying severity and will deal with complaints in a manner that is reflective of their nature.

Definition of a complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, which suggests failure to perform a function or provide a service in line with stated organisational practices and policies.

Who can access our complaint procedure?

This procedure can be accessed by any individual, group or organisation, who has had either direct or indirect involvement with the youth theatre. Here are some examples:

- Youth theatre members
- Parents/Primary carers of members
- Stakeholders such as funders, support agencies, the management of venues we use
- Members of the general public including audience members who attend productions

Accessibility

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) will endeavour to make this procedure easily accessible to all these individuals/organisations. We recognise that some individual may require additional support in accessing the procedure such as in the case of an individual with a disability or where there is a language issue, we will take all reasonable measures to provide this support.

Our Approach to Complaints

Any representative of Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) to whom a complaint is made should adhere to the following good practice guidelines:

- Respond in an open, non-judgemental way
- Explain the procedure for handling complaints
- Respect the confidentiality of the person who is making the complaint and the person about whom the complaint is being made
- Make every effort to deal with the complaint in a fair, balanced and objective fashion
- Act on the complaint. Failure to do so may undermine confidence in the organisation and its procedure.

Procedure for dealing with Complaints

Stage One

- Complaints/concerns can be communicated by phone, email, by post or in person. If a complaint is received verbally, the person making it may be asked to produce a written version.
- While any staff members or volunteers can receive a complaint, ideally complaints should be addressed to the Chairperson, who will respond to the complaint in the method it was communicated i.e. by letter, email, phone. The Chairperson will explain the complaints procedure in this initial communication.
- A response will be made to the complaint within 10 working days. We will endeavour to resolve less serious complaints at this stage. Possible outcomes are listed under Stage 2 of the procedure. A written record of the complaint and how it was resolved will be kept.

Stage Two

- If the complaint is of a more serious nature or if the person is not satisfied with the outcome, the second stage of the procedure is entered into.
- At this stage full details of the complaint will need to be received in writing. The complaint will be formally acknowledged in writing. The person making the complaint will be provided with an explanation of the next stage of the procedure and a realistic time frame for the completion of the process. They will also be informed who is responsible for investigating the complaint.
- The Complaints Committee is responsible for handling the complaint at this stage of the process. The committee is made up of the Chairperson, Designated Liaison Person and a minimum of one other
- If the complaint has been responded to at stage one of the process, an examination of the original decision will be carried out.
- A meeting may be held between the person investigating the complaint and the person who is making the complaint.
- If a staff member/volunteer is the subject of any complaint, the person investigating the complaint will also meet with him/her.
- Both the person making the complaint and any staff member/volunteer who is the subject of the complaint will be given the right of representation.
- A written record will be kept at each stage of the process.
- It may be felt that the complaint/concern necessitates the involvement of an outside agency such as Tusla or An Garda Síochána. **If the complaint relates to an allegation of abuse, the procedure outlined for allegations in this policy will be followed in full and will take precedence over this complaints procedure.**
- The person making the complaint and any staff member/volunteer who is the subject of the complaint will be informed of the decision in writing.
- If any disciplinary action is deemed appropriate, we will follow our **Disciplinary Procedures**,
- Other possible outcomes may include:
 - either a written or verbal apology
 - an explanation as to the reason for the situation that led to the complaint
 - a review of the situation that led to the complaint

- an assurance that there will be a change in practice, if this is felt necessary followed by enactment of this change
- a formal investigation. This could take the form of an internal investigation or in a more serious case, an outside agency such as the Gardaí may have to be brought in.
- A written record will be kept at all stages of the process
- All complaints and any records relating to them will be treated as confidential with information shared only on a need to know basis. They will be retained for 5 years after the complaints procedure is satisfactorily completed.

Appeals

If a person who makes a complaint is not happy with the outcome of the procedure outlined above, they have the right to appeal. The complainant must inform the youth theatre of their wish to appeal within 10 working days of being informed of the original decision. The appeal will be handled by a person who was not involved in the original decision. This may be a board member or an external person. He/she will examine all the information that has been gathered through the complaints procedure and may hold a further meeting with the person who has made the complaint, the subject of the complaint or both.

A staff member/volunteer also has a right to appeal any decision. See Section on **Disciplinary Procedures** for more information.

Handling a Concern/Complaint from a Youth Theatre Member

The input and feedback of youth theatre members is especially valued. Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) fosters an environment of openness and encourages young people to voice any concerns they may have in relation to their involvement with the youth theatre. If a young person has a complaint or wishes to voice a concern, they will be treated with respect and the issue will be taken seriously. Their complaint/concern will be handled according to the procedure outlined above with the following exceptions:

- The complaint will be handled with extra sensitivity and care and in a way that is age appropriate. The well-being of the young person will be of paramount importance throughout the process.
- The Designated Liaison Person will be made available to the young person to support them through the process. If the complaint/concern relates to the DLP, another appropriate person will be given this role. Alternatively, the young person can nominate a parent or other adult that they wish to represent/support them during the process. Any meetings with the young person will be conducted with a parent/another appropriate adult present.
- In line with our policy, parents/primary carers will be informed of any concerns/issues that relate to their son/daughter once doing so will not put the young person in danger.

Complaints that relate to Child Protection Issues

If a complaint relates to a child protection issue, the youth theatre's internal reporting procedures will be followed. If the complaint involves an allegation against a youth theatre staff member or volunteer, a formal investigation, as outlined in the **Section on Allegations against Staff Members and Volunteers** will begin immediately.

SECTION 10: Disciplinary Procedures/Appeals for Staff/Volunteers

[Disciplinary Procedures]

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) will adhere to the following good practice adapted from the Labour Relations Committee's **Code of Good Practice: Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures**:

- Copies of disciplinary procedures will be provided to **staff members and volunteers** on commencement of their work with the youth theatre. They will be included in all contracts/agreements issued to staff members/volunteers.
- Disciplinary procedures will normally be managed by the Chairperson. If it is felt appropriate an external person may be asked to manage the process.
- Procedures will be rational and fair.
- The basis for disciplinary action will be clear.
- The details of any allegations or complaints will be put to the person concerned who will be given an opportunity to respond.
- The staff member/volunteer will be given the opportunity to avail of the right to be represented.
- The staff member/volunteer concerned will have the right to a fair and impartial determination of the issues concerned, taking into account any representations made by, or on behalf of, the staff member/volunteer and any other relevant or appropriate evidence, factors or circumstances.
- As a general rule, an attempt should be made to resolve grievance and disciplinary issues between the staff member/volunteer concerned and his/her immediate supervisor. This could be done on an informal or private basis.
 - Disciplinary action may include:
 - An oral warning
 - A written warning
 - A final written warning
 - Suspension
 - Transfer to another role
 - Some other appropriate disciplinary action short of dismissal
 - Dismissal
- Generally the steps in the procedure will be progressive, for example, an oral warning, a written warning, a final warning etc. However there may be instances where more serious action, including dismissal, is warranted at an earlier stage.
- A staff member may be suspended on full pay pending the outcome of an investigation into an alleged breach of discipline.
- Warnings will be removed from a staff member's/volunteer's record after 1 year (unless the offence is deemed to be of a serious nature) and the staff member/volunteer will be advised accordingly.
- We recognise that the operation of a good grievance procedure requires the maintenance of adequate records. We will maintain a comprehensive written record and treat all resulting documentation as confidential. It will be managed in line with our **Confidentiality Policy**.
- We recognise that there are legal obligations around employment issues and that we may seek need to seek legal advice.

Adapted from Code of Practice: Grievance and Disciplinary Procedure, Industrial Relations Act, 1990. Source: The Labour Relations Commission, Ireland. For more: <http://www.lrc.ie/viewdoc.asp?docid=88>

Examples of Offences which may lead to disciplinary action:

The following list of offences is not comprehensive or exclusive:

- Abusing a young person

- Bullying a young person or colleague
- Breach of Health and Safety rules.
- Refusal to carry out instructions from an authorised person.
- Persistent unsatisfactory performance, time keeping or attendance.
- Being under the influence of drink or drugs during the working period
- Falsification of the youth theatre's records or documents.
- Stealing or unauthorised disposal of youth theatre property, misuse of property, materials or equipment.
- Breach of contract/agreement
- Harassment
- Behaviour which may bring the youth theatre into disrepute.
- Violation of Criminal Law.
- Disorderly or violent conduct while on duty.

Appeals

- If a staff member/volunteer believes they were treated unfairly, they will have the right to appeal the disciplinary measures. The staff member/volunteer should write to the Chairperson within five working days of the communication of the original decision. They should indicate their wish to appeal and the outline the reasons for the appeal.
- The Appeal will be handled by a person other than the person who handled the original matter. This could be another board member or an external person. An assessment will be made in each case of the most appropriate person to handle the appeal.
- The person handling the appeal will meet with the staff member/volunteer in question and he/she be informed in advance that they have the right to bring someone with them to the meeting.
- A confidential written record of this meeting will be kept.
- After a decision has been made, the person who managed the disciplinary procedures and the staff member/volunteer will be informed in writing of the outcome. Where the Chairperson of the youth theatre was not involved, he/she will also be written to.
- If the person in questions is a staff member and they are still unhappy with the outcome, they can appeal the case to a Rights Commissioner, the Labour Court and/or the Employment Appeals Tribunal as appropriate.

For more information on this visit the Labour Relations Commission website: <http://www.lrc.ie>

SECTION 11: Approach to Interagency Cooperation

[Approach to Interagency Cooperation]

As outlined in **Children First** (2017), child protection is a multiagency, multidisciplinary activity. Agencies and professionals must work together in the interests of children.

Role of the Child and Family Agency

Tusla has responsibility for child welfare and protection services, family support, educational welfare and a range of other services, including those relating to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.

The specific role of Tusla is to promote the welfare of children who are at risk of not receiving adequate care and protection. Under the Child Care Act 1991, Tusla is obliged to coordinate information from all relevant sources about a child who may not be receiving adequate care and protection. If it is found that a child is not receiving adequate care and protection, Tusla has a

duty to take appropriate action to promote the welfare of the child. This may include supporting families in need of assistance in providing care and protection to their children.

Role of An Garda Síochána

From Children First (2017):

The involvement of An Garda Síochána in cases of alleged child abuse and neglect stems from its primary responsibility to protect the community and to bring offenders to justice. Where it is suspected that a crime has been committed, An Garda Síochána has overall responsibility for the direction of any criminal investigation. It is the function of An Garda Síochána to interview and take any statements that will form part of the criminal investigation file.

Children First (2017) describes in detail how these two agencies should work together.

Crooked House (and Kildare Youth Theatre) takes the following approach to working with other agencies and organisations in relation to child protection:

- We recognise the necessity of a coordinated approach to child protection and will cooperate with the Gardaí, Tusla - Child and Family Agency and any other appropriate agency or organisation.
- We are aware that there are a number of organisations that have specific expertise in relation to child protection and the welfare of children/young people. The youth theatre's Designated Liaison Person, or another staff member/volunteer, may seek advice from these organisations on a specific issue. There may be circumstances when it is more appropriate to refer a young person to another organisations/services. **See Appendix 5 for a list of support organisations/services.**
- If the youth theatre is working with another organisation on a programme/event involving young people, there will be discussion around the welfare and child protection policy and procedures to be used and where responsibility lies in terms of reporting. We will recommend that good practice is followed and that the most robust policy and procedures take precedence.

Section 12: Working Safely Online

It is important to remember that our Child Protection Policies apply equally in the online space as they do in our usual youth theatre activities.

Key points

- Youth theatre leaders should only use youth theatre social media and app accounts to communicate with youth theatre members and maintain separation from their personal online presence.
- Cover use of social media sites and apps within the youth theatre's group contract and discuss safe use of those sites/apps that are used within youth theatre projects
- Develop an Acceptable Usage Policy (AUP) for each social media site which

members and others may access and post it clearly in the 'About' or 'Group Information' sections.

- Do not require any users of the youth theatre's social media sites to disclose personal information. Do not tag or provide contact details for members on social media sites.
- A named youth theatre leader (**Charlie Farrell Hughes**) should moderate the content of all social media sites, monitoring posts, removing inappropriate content and liaising with the Designated Liaison Person (**Peter Hussey**) on any instances of bullying or harassment.

- Choose the safest and most appropriate settings on each social media site / app to safeguard youth theatre members.

The Rules for Leaders Still Apply

CHT and KYT leaders must continue to observe our policies in relation to staff and volunteers. This includes observing correct procedures as per the youth theatre policy on:

- Recruitment and Selection of Staff/ Volunteers (including the requirement re. Garda Vetting)
- Procedures for Supervision, Provision of Training and Support for Staff/Volunteers
- Policy on Adult/Young People Ratios
- Code of Behaviour for Leaders

Any staff/ volunteers of the youth theatre who are communicating with or working with young people online must have been Garda vetted and are fully briefed on the youth theatre's code of behaviour and child protection policy. We will continue to observe correct adult to young person ratios when conducting work online as well as correct procedures for communicating with young people.

The Welfare of The Young Person Is Paramount – Online and Offline

If you note any Child Protection concerns while online working with young people, adhere to the guidelines and reporting procedures as per your youth theatre policy and/or statutory reporting requirements.

From Children First 2017: You should always inform Tusla if you have **reasonable grounds for concern** that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected. You can report your 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.

Contact numbers for Tusla offices nationwide are available on the Tusla website (www.tusla.ie) or through the Tusla National Office (Tel. 01-7718500).

It is important when working online to connect with parents / guardians and to explain why, how and when you intend to organise online youth theatre activities for their child to participate in. It is important to acknowledge that different families will have different rules and approaches to screen-time and so clarity on the purpose and value of online youth theatre activities is important. Other matters to consider include:

- Review the parental permissions in place in respect of your members. Even if the existing permissions cover online communications and working, it is worth reviewing if this covers the downloading and use of apps that you may be using for online working.
- The digital age of consent is 16 so if working with anyone online under that age permission will especially need to be sought from a parent/ guardian for use of each individual app / social media site. However, it is best practice to have relevant parental permissions in place for all members aged 18 and younger. For information on the digital age of consent see: <https://www.webwise.ie/news/gdpr-digital-age-consent/>

Safeguarding and Video Conferencing Apps

Popular video-conferencing apps such as Zoom, Skype, Houseparty and Google Hangouts have various pros and cons in terms of their suitability for working with groups online, including the number of people who can participate at once etc.

When choosing the App(s) that work best for your youth group, it is important to also consider the appropriateness of each platform from a safeguarding point of view.

Check the Small Print

In particular, it is important to consider whether use of these apps comply with the youth theatre's Data Protection Policy and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). As images and video of people is considered personal data, any app used by the youth theatre to host activities is processing data on the youth theatre's behalf and is therefore a Third Party Data Processor. The youth theatre therefore should carefully consider the Terms and Conditions when opening an account and exercise reasonable care to ensure that the Third Party Data Processor carries out the processing in compliance with the GDPR.

By Invitation Only - Tips for Managing Video Meetings

Whatever App you decide to use, here are some handy pointers for managing video meetings in a way that considers the wellbeing of all involved:

- Do not require young people to have an account to participate, instead invite participants by email with a link to the meeting.

- Meetings should be hosted from an account held and managed by the youth theatre and not from a leader's personal account. More than one youth theatre staff member or volunteer should have access to the account details.
- Ensure that meetings are password protected and can only be joined by invitees.
- Never invite anyone to join a meeting unless they are a member or leader with the youth theatre.
- It is not advisable to record the meeting. If you do record the meeting, store the recording securely on youth theatre equipment for a specified period of time. It is essential that you inform participants and their parents and guardians that you will be recording the meeting, and get their permission to do so in line with the youth theatre data protection policy, as this is classified as data processing.
- Make yourself familiar with the features of the chosen app in advance, and provide clear guidance for young people on safe use of the app prior to working online.
- Time-limit meetings. As you would with a drama workshop be clear on the planned duration of the online interaction in advance. It is likely that the concentration span possible will be less than that in a regular workshop. Consider sessions of between 30 minutes and a maximum of one hour. If longer include a break.
- Be clear on the code of conduct for participants. Set expectations for dressing appropriately, participating fully and working together etc. Work with members to adapt the group contract to cover working online.
- Check with members that they are comfortable with using the app and whether they are experiencing any barriers to participation (e.g. no broadband access or access to equipment; a disability that impacts their ability to interact via screen such as visual impairment etc.) Make accommodations as appropriate.
- Reconsider working online if it leads to the significant exclusion of members.

Case Study: Zoom

It is important to get familiar with the functions of the application you are using and set appropriate controls as host. The popular app, Zoom, provides the following functions that can help you to manage meetings safely:

In Meeting Security and Controls

The meeting host has a variety of controls they can use to secure their meeting. For more information, visit <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362603-Host-and-Co-Host-Controls-in-a-Meeting>

Managing Participants in a Meeting

The meeting host can manage the participants. For more information, visit https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/115005759423-Managing-participants-in-a-meeting#h_135deff0-a391-4162-861b-204c020febb3

Disable Private Chat

To ensure a spirit of openness and group transparency, the host can disable private chat between participants. For instructions, please see: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/115004809306-Controlling-and-Disabling-In-Meeting-Chat>

Other Ways to Support Young People During COVID-19 Outbreak

As this can be a difficult time for young people cut off from their usual activities and routines, it's useful to become familiar with websites such as Jigsaw, SpunOut, BeLong To, Bodywhys, Childline which you can direct young people or their parents towards for extra support. The youth theatre is often a safe haven for young people, you may be a trusted person in their world and they could come to you for advice.

Resources

Online Safety

- **Webwise.ie** offers a lot of good advice and information for workers, parents and young people alike on internet and social media usage and best practice for online safety
<https://www.webwise.ie/category/parents/explainers/>
<https://www.webwise.ie/parents/explained-image-sharing-app-instagram/>
- <https://www.youth.ie/programmes/projects-initiatives/web-safety-in-youth-work/>
- [Be Safe Online: Ireland's Official Online Safety Hub \[Government of Ireland\]](#)

Child Protection

www.tusla.ie

- Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children [DCYA2017]
- Guidance on Developing a Child Safeguarding Statement [Tusla 2017]
- Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice [Tusla 2017]
-

Other Useful Websites

<https://www.digitalyouthwork.eu/tips-for-online-youth-work-when-youth-centres-are-closed/>

www.hotline.ie

www.watchyourspace.ie

www.mentalhealthireland.ie

www.jigsaw.ie

<https://jigsawonline.ie>

www.belongto.org

www.bodywhys.ie

www.hse.ie/CAMHS/HSE

Child Protection and Welfare Report Form

MANDATED PERSONS AND NON MANDATED PERSONS
(Children First Act 2015 & Children First National Guidance)

Use block letters when filling out this form.

Fields marked with an * are mandatory.

1. Tusla Area (this is where the child resides)*	
---	--

2. Date of Report*	
---------------------------	--

3. Details of Child

First Name*		Surname*	
Male*	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female*	<input type="checkbox"/>
Address*		Date of Birth*	
		Estimated Age*	
		School Name	
		School Address	
Eircode			

4. Details of Concerns*

Please complete the following section with as much detail about the specific child protection or welfare concern or allegation as possible. Include dates, times, incident details and names of anyone who observed any incident. Please include the parents and child's view, if known. Please attach additional sheets, if necessary

Please see '*Tusla Children First – A Guide for the Reporting of Child Protection and Welfare Concerns*' for additional assistance on the steps to consider in making a report to Tusla

5. Type of Concern

Child Welfare Concern	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Emotional Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	Physical Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neglect	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sexual Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Details of Reporter

First Name		Surname	
Address If reporting in a professional capacity, please use your professional address		Organisation	
		Position Held	
		Mobile No.	
		Telephone No.	
Eircode		Email Address	

Child Protection and Welfare Report Form

MANDATED PERSONS AND NON MANDATED PERSONS
(Children First Act 2015 & Children First National Guidance)

Is this a Mandated Report made under Sec 14, Children First Act 2015?*	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mandated Person's Type				

7. Details of Other Persons Where a Joint Report is Being Made

First Name		Surname	
Address If reporting in a professional capacity, please use your professional address		Organisation	
		Position Held	
		Mobile No.	
		Telephone No.	
Eircode		Email Address	

First Name		Surname	
Address If reporting in a professional capacity, please use your professional address		Organisation	
		Position Held	
		Mobile No.	
		Telephone No.	
Eircode		Email Address	

8. Parents Aware of Report

Are the child's parents/carers aware that this concern is being reported to Tusla?*	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
If the parent/carer does not know, please indicate reasons:				

9. Relationships

Details of Mother			
First Name		Surname	
Address		Mobile No.	
		Telephone No.	
		Email Address	
Eircode			

Is the Mother a Legal Guardian?*	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Details of Father			
First Name		Surname	
Address		Mobile No.	
		Telephone No.	
		Email Address	
Eircode			

Child Protection and Welfare Report Form

MANDATED PERSONS AND NON MANDATED PERSONS
(Children First Act 2015 & Children First National Guidance)

Is the Father a Legal Guardian?*	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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10. Household Composition

First Name	Surname	Relationship	Date of Birth	Estimated Age	Additional Information e.g. school, occupation, other

11. Details of Person(s) Allegedly Causing Harm

First Name*		Surname*	
Male*	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female*	<input type="checkbox"/>
Address		Date of Birth	
		Estimated Age	
		Mobile No.	
		Telephone No.	
Eircode		Email Address	
Occupation		Organisation	
Position Held			

Relationship to Child	
Address at time of alleged incident	
If name unknown please indicate reason	

First Name*		Surname*	
Male*	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female*	<input type="checkbox"/>
Address		Date of Birth	
		Estimated Age	
		Mobile No.	
		Telephone No.	
Eircode		Email Address	
Occupation		Organisation	
Position Held			

Relationship to Child	
Address at time of alleged incident	
If name unknown please indicate reason	

Child Protection and Welfare Report Form

MANDATED PERSONS AND NON MANDATED PERSONS
(Children First Act 2015 & Children First National Guidance)

12. Name and Address of Other Organisations, Personnel or Agencies Known to be Involved Currently or Previously with the Family

Profession	First Name	Surname	Address	Contact Number	Recent Contact e.g. 3/6/9 months ago
Social Worker					
Public Health Nurse					
GP					
Hospital					
School					
Gardaí					
Pre-school/ crèche					
Other					

13. Any Other Relevant Information, Including any Previous Contact with the Child or Family

Please ensure you have indicated if this is a mandated report in section 6.

Thank you for completing the report form.

In completing this report form you are providing details on yourself and on others. Details such as name, address and date of birth fall under the definition of 'Personal Data' in the Data Protection Acts, 1988 & 2003. Tusla has a responsibility under these Acts in its capacity as a Data Controller to, amongst other things, obtain and process this data fairly; keep it safe and secure; and to keep it for a specified lawful purpose. That purpose is to fulfil our statutory responsibility under the Child Care Act 1991 to promote the protection and welfare of children. Tusla may, during the course of the assessment of this report disclose such Personal Data to other agencies including An Garda Síochána. Further details about Tusla's responsibilities as a Data Controller and your rights as a Data Subject can be found on our website, www.tusla.ie. As you are providing Personal Data on others, you are a Data Processor. We ask that you only provide those details that are necessary for the report and that you keep this report and the Personal Data contained in it secure from unauthorised access, disclosure, destruction or accidental loss.

14. For Completion by Tusla Authorised Person on Receipt of Report

Report Received by

First Name	Surname	Date
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Mandated Report Acknowledgement by



An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

Child Protection and Welfare Report Form

MANDATED PERSONS AND NON MANDATED PERSONS
(Children First Act 2015 & Children First National Guidance)

First Name		Surname		Date Sent	
------------	--	---------	--	-----------	--

Authorised Person Signature*	
Date*	

Child Previously Known	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Allocated Case No				

Appendix 2: Welfare / Child Protection Reporting Form

Welfare / Child Protection Reporting Form

Your Name:	
Your Role	
Your Contact Phone No:	
Name of Young Person:	
Date when you had this concern:	
<p>Nature of the concern (Please provide as much factual detail as possible. If the young person or someone else has made a disclosure of abuse/spoken to you about the concern, please try to record his/her own words as accurately as possible.)</p>	

Any other relevant information (e.g. are you aware of any other person who has a concern?
have you observed anything relevant previously?)

Signed _____ Date _____

Appendix 3: Schedule Of Mandated Persons Under The Children First Act 2015

Schedule 2 of the Children First Act 2015 specifies the following classes of persons as Mandated Persons for the purposes of the Act:

1. Registered medical practitioner within the meaning of section 2 of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007.
2. Registered nurse or registered midwife within the meaning of section 2(1) of the Nurses and Midwives Act 2011.
3. Physiotherapist registered in the register of members of that profession.
4. Speech and language therapist registered in the register of members of that profession.
5. Occupational therapist registered in the register of members of that profession.
6. Registered dentist within the meaning of section 2 of the Dentists Act 1985.
7. Psychologist who practises as such and who is eligible for registration in the register (if any) of members of that profession.
8. Social care worker who practises as such and who is eligible for registration in accordance with Part 4 of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 in the register of that profession.
9. Social worker who practises as such and who is eligible for registration in accordance with Part 4 of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 in the register (if any) of that profession.
10. Emergency medical technician, paramedic and advanced paramedic registered with the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council under the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (Establishment) Order 2000 (S.I. No. 109 of 2000).
11. Probation officer within the meaning of section 1 of the Criminal Justice (Community Service) Act 1983.
12. Teacher registered with the Teaching Council.
13. Member of An Garda Síochána.
14. Guardian *ad litem* appointed in accordance with section 26 of the Child Care Act 1991.
15. Person employed in any of the following capacities:
 - a) manager of domestic violence shelter;
 - b) manager of homeless provision or emergency accommodation facility;
 - c) manager of asylum seeker accommodation (direct provision) centre;
 - d) addiction counsellor employed by a body funded, wholly or partly, out of moneys provided by the Oireachtas;
 - e) psychotherapist or a person providing counselling who is registered with one of the voluntary professional bodies;
 - f) manager of a language school or other recreational school where children reside away from home; (
 - g) member of the clergy (howsoever described) or pastoral care worker (howsoever described) of a church or other religious community;
 - h) director of any institution where a child is detained by an order of a court;
 - i) 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;
 - j) child care staff member employed in a pre-school service within the meaning of

Part VIIA of the Child Care Act 1991;

- k) person responsible for the care or management of a youth work service within the meaning of section 2 of the Youth Work Act 2001.

16. Youth worker who—

- a) holds a professional qualification that is recognised by the National Qualifications Authority in youth work within the meaning of section 3 of the Youth Work Act 2001 or a related discipline, and
- b) is employed in a youth work service within the meaning of section 2 of the Youth Work Act 2001.

17. Foster carer registered with the Agency.

18. A person carrying on a pre-school service within the meaning of Part VIIA of the Child Care Act 1991.

Appendix 4: Accident/Incident Reporting Form

Details of Accident/Incident	
Date occurred:	Time occurred:
What happened?	
Location:	
Workshop Space <input type="checkbox"/> Rehearsal Space <input type="checkbox"/> Performance Venue <input type="checkbox"/> Public space <input type="checkbox"/> Other	

Were there any witnesses?	
Name: _____	Tel: _____

Name: _____	Tel: _____

To whom was the incident/accident reported?	
Parent/Guardian <input type="checkbox"/> Local GP <input type="checkbox"/> Designated Welfare Person <input type="checkbox"/>	
Other _____	
Name: _____	
Address: _____	
Home tel: _____	Mobile : _____
Name: _____	
Address: _____	
Home tel: _____	Mobile : _____

To whom did the accident occur? Who did the Incident affect?
Youth Theatre Member <input type="checkbox"/> In-House leader <input type="checkbox"/> Outside Professional <input type="checkbox"/> Member of the Public <input type="checkbox"/>

Name: _____			
Mobile: _____			
Date of Birth: _____	Age: _____	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>
Did they agree to the suggested course of action?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

Did the incident/accident cause illness/injury?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Describe the nature of the injury (cut, third finger, left hand. etc.) <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>		

Treatment Details			
None <input type="checkbox"/>	First Aid <input type="checkbox"/>	Local GP/Clinic <input type="checkbox"/>	Accident and Emergency Department <input type="checkbox"/>
In the case of First Aid: Who administered First Aid: _____ Contact Number _____ What First Aid was administered: _____ <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>			

Did the accident occur during a workshop/rehearsal activity?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Explain <hr/> <hr/>	

Did the accident involve any props, sets or technical equipment? Yes ☐ No ☐

Specify and explain

Was a leader or responsible adult present at accident? Yes ☐ No ☐

If no, explain

Details of Person completing this Form

Name: _____ Role or relation to injured/ill party: _____

Tel: _____ Email: _____

Signature: _____ Today's Date: _____

Appendix 5: Support & Advice Organisations/Services

Youth Theatre Ireland

Youth Theatre Ireland is the development organisation for youth theatre in Ireland. The organisation offers a range of supports, resources and advice to youth theatres. Youth Theatre Ireland's Designated Liaison Person can provide guidance on dealing with child protection/welfare issues.

Phone: 01-8781301

www.youththeatre.ie

National Youth Council of Ireland: Child Protection Programme

This NYCI programme aims to build the capacity of youth organisations to safeguard and protect their children/young people. The programme offers training in child protection including training for Designated Liaison Persons. It has also developed a range of resources.

Phone: 01-4784122

www.childProtection.ie

Youth Mental Health

www.reachout.com

ReachOut.com is a service dedicated to taking the mystery out of mental health. They aim to provide quality assured mental health information and inspiring real life stories by young people to help other young people get through tough times.

Features include:

- **Getting Help:** Outlines the various options for a young person who is seeking help. Gives an easy to understand explanation of the various services available.
- **Help a Friend**
- **Minding your Mental Health**
- **Inform Yourself:** covers a range of topics such as Anxiety, Depression, Eating Disorders, Bullying, Sex and Relationships. Loss and Grief, Sexuality and Coming Out.
- **Ask the Expert:** videos of mental health experts talking about a range of topics. Also provides a forum where you can ask questions.

Headstrong

Phone: 01-4727010

www.headstrong.ie

The National Centre for Youth Mental Health – a non-profit organisation supporting young people's mental health in Ireland. Headstrong works with communities and statutory services to empower young people to develop the **skills, self-confidence and resilience** to cope with mental health challenges. Their vision is to give every young person in Ireland *somewhere to*

turn to and someone to talk to. They also work with the government, media and direct community outreach to change the way Ireland thinks about youth mental health. Headstrong is committed to the development of youth-friendly mental health services and includes young people in the development of their services.

Jigsaw: Headstrong have developed a network of projects around Ireland, working with communities to better support young people's mental health and well being. These projects are developed in response to the particular needs of the community and young people are at the core of the development of the project. The projects provide local young people with somewhere to turn to and someone to talk to.

Teen-line Ireland

Phone: 1800 833 634

www.teenline.ie

A free-phone service open every day of the week from 7pm to 10pm (3pm – 10pm on Wednesday)

Set up to provide a listening ear for young people who want to talk about anything that is on their mind.

www.letsomeoneknow.ie

Interactive website developed by the National Office for Suicide Prevention to help young people cope with a range of issues that may be getting them down such as bullying, appearance, self-harm etc.

Childline

Phone: 1800 66 66 66

Text 'Talk' to 50101

Childline is a service provided by the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Free and confidential for children/young people who are experiencing difficulties at home, school etc. Also provides an online bullying support service.

Pieta House

Phone: 01-601 0000

www.pieta.ie

The centre for the prevention of self-harm and suicide. Has a number of outreach centres and provides direct support to those who are suicidal or self-harming. Free of charge. Offers advice to friends and family members on the best way to help their loved one who is experiencing difficulty.

Youth Mental Health Resources

Most of the websites detailed above have resource sections.

One very useful source of information for those who work with young people is ***A Mental Health Resource for Youth Workers and Volunteers***. (Produced by Headstrong, in association with BelongTo, Foroige and ReachOut.com).

Among the areas covered are the

- development needs of young people,
- factors that affect young people's mental health,

- an explanation of terms associated with mental health,
- what to do if you have a concern about a young person,
- how best to support a young person experiencing mental health difficulties.

You can download *A Mental Health Resource for Youth Workers and Volunteers*:

<http://www.foroige.ie/sites/default/files/Youth%20Mental%20Health%20Resource.pdf>

National Youth Council of Ireland: Youth Health Programme.

NYCI have a dedicated National Youth Health Programme. They offer training/resources on a range of youth health topics including youth mental health and bullying:

For more information on all these programmes go to <http://www.youthhealth.ie>

Eating Disorders

Bodywhys

www.bodywhys.ie

Phone: 01-2834963

Bodywhys is the national voluntary organisation supporting people affected by eating disorders. Their mission is to ensure support, awareness and understanding of eating disorders amongst the wider community as well as advocating for the rights and healthcare needs of those affected by eating disorders. Their website has advice on getting help and support.

Supporting LGBT Young People

BeLonGTo

www.belongto.org

Phone: 01 670 6223

BeLonG To is an organisation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT) young people, aged between 14 and 23.

Their aim is to provide safe and fun services to LGBT young people across Ireland. They have a number of groups for young people all around Ireland. Their website has a dedicated mental health section.