



## **NPAS child safeguarding policy**

## **NPAS Child Safeguarding Policy:**

NPAS aims to provide a happy and safe environment where you can “Be Who You Want to be”, through Singing, Dancing and Acting, we aim to make that ethos true in your own life.

At NPAS we believe that you should come running into your class each week, excited to see what you can learn, and leave with the biggest smile on your face, counting the days till you are back with us.

The following Child Safeguarding policy sets out our commitment to strive to ensure that all children who attend NPAS have the right to be safe and secure and free from threat, regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs. NPAS Code of Conduct is commitment to Students and Parents, will ensure that students will receive professional tuition from a qualified teacher with appropriate facilities following safe practice.

NPAS Child Safeguarding Policy will provide assistances, awareness and education to help any child who appears to be at risk or appears to be the victim of abuse. We will provide help and support if any child tells us they are affected by these issues. NPAS will act with integrity, treating children with respect, listening to their concerns and acting upon them to promote a safe and caring environment.

NPAS follows the guidelines set out in the Children First Document. These guidelines promote the protection of children from abuse and neglect. It states what organisations like ours need to do to keep children safe, and what different bodies, and the general public should do if they are concerned about a child’s safety and welfare. Minister Fitzgerald has acknowledged and commended all those who work so hard to make sure that every child they interact with is cared for, cherished, supported and protected. She said in a recent speech “These are the practitioners in the professional and voluntary sectors, medical professionals, Gardai, youth workers, teachers, and coaches all over Ireland who already passionately employ best practice in child protection. These people already implement Children First in full, understand their duties and do not need legislation to keep children safe.”

Particular to an organization like ours, we follow the following guidelines:

Every member of staff must be alert to the possibility that children with whom they are in contact may be suffering from abuse or neglect. This responsibility is particularly relevant for professionals such as teachers, child care workers, health professionals and those working with adults with serious parenting difficulties. It is also an important responsibility for staff and people involved in sports clubs, community activities, youth clubs, religious/faith sector and other organizations catering for children.

Garda vetting is part of our recruitment practice. While Garda vetting is currently not statutory, it is intended to place it on a statutory basis. The GCVU does not decide on the suitability of any person to work with children and vulnerable adults. Rather, in response to a written request for vetting, the GCVU releases criminal history information on the person to be vetted to the prospective recruiting organisation. Decisions on suitability for recruitment rest at all times with the recruiting organisation and the results of vetting should form only one component of the recruitment decision.

As Employers when staff or volunteers have access to children we at all times implement safe recruitment practices, including vetting of applicants and staff, rigorous checking of

references, interview procedures and monitoring of good professional practice and formulating guidelines to guide and educate in responding and keeping up to date with legislation and best practice.

### **Introduction:**

The following child safeguarding policy was drafted using the Children First National Guidelines for the protection and welfare of Children 2011, Our Duty to Care, and Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children's Sport.

The national Children's First Guidelines point out that it is the duty of the government and society to protect children and keep them safe from harm and that 'this begins by ensuring that children are safe and protected in all aspects of their life, where they live, learn, play and pray' Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2011:ix)

### **Introduction and policy statement:**

- NPAS sees itself as a place where young people get to shine, where their individuality is promoted and where their confidence grows and they can "Be Who they want to be" The National performing Arts School (NPAS) ethos is to provide a safe environment that values children's safety in line with 'Duty of Care'. NPAS aims to ensure that our activities are centred on participation enjoyment and comfort for all children who attend NPAS.
- In line with the Children First Guidelines (2012) The NPAS will take all reasonable steps in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- The protection of children is important to the NPAS. The aim of the NPAS Policy on Safeguarding Children is to ensure that children with whom NPAS comes into contact are well protected and that there is a system in place to protect their welfare.
- NPAS believes that; the welfare of the child is paramount, that all children regardless of age, disability, gender, race, sexual orientation or identity, or religious belief have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.

### **The purpose of this policies and procedures are:**

- To facilitate protection for children under the age of 18.
- To provide staff with procedures to follow in the event that they suspect a child may be experiencing abuse; or be at risk of abuse or harm or where there is concern about the behaviour of an adult that might harm a child.
- Promote good practice by adopting child protection procedures that understands the principles of sharing information about child protection.

- NPAS will seek to safeguard children by valuing them, listening to and respecting them.
- Ensuring safe recruitment, selection and vetting of staff (staff at NPAS all hold valid Garda Vetting Cert.
- Providing effective management through supervision, appraisal, support, training and development.
- This Policy works in conjunction with other NPAS regulations, policies and implementing a code of conduct and policy procedures.
- The Policy is designed to assist all individuals in NPAS to meet their duty of care to safeguard all children who take part in the activities provided by NPAS. And, to ensure that where NPAS employees, students, trainees or visitors have concerns about the welfare of children, they are in a position to take appropriate steps to address them.
- All NPAS employees will be made aware of this through, training and staff mentioning and supervision.
- All policies will be reviewed annually or sooner if there are changes in legislation, guidance or in the event of an incident.
- In line with 'Children's First' appoint a 'Designate Lesion Person' (Child Protection Officer). The roles and responsibilities of the DLO: to act as the liaison person with outside agencies. To be a recourse to all staff and volunteers of the NPAS. To ensure that stranded reporting procedures are followed. Will have knowledge of child protection and keep up to date with new development in the field.

### **Background and Guidance for staff**

- There are four recognised categories of child abuse: physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and emotional abuse, in addition NPAS are aware of other areas such as self-harm and bullying that affect children and young people. Further information on the categories' can be accessed in the Children First document [www.childrenfirst.ie](http://www.childrenfirst.ie) additionally please refer to the staff copy located in .....
- These procedures aim to strike a balance between the need to protect children from abuse and the need to protect NPAS employees, students, trainees, students, visitors and NPAS members from false allegations
- It is not the responsibility of anyone working at NPAS in a paid or voluntary capacity to decide whether a child is being abused or might be abused, but there is a responsibility to act on their concerns in order that appropriate agencies can then make enquiries and take any necessary action to protect them.
- It is the remit of the appropriate authority and not anyone connected with the NPAS to investigate the incident.

- If an incident, allegation or suspicion of abuse (hereinafter referred to as incident) is seen, heard or suspected, the person receiving the information, whether an NPAS employee, student/trainee, student, a member of another organisation with which the NPAS is working or a visitor to the NPAS, should follow the procedure below:
- Stop other activity and focus on what they are being told or seeing. Responding to the incident being reported should take immediate priority
- Where an incident is being reported, reacts in calm and considered way but show concern. Listen compassionately and take what the child is saying seriously
- It is very difficult for a child to tell understand that the child has chosen to tell and has taken a risk in doing so. Offer reassurance to the child. Tell the child that it is right for them to have shared this information.
- Don't make judgment statement about the person who the child has identified.
- Keep questions to an absolute minimum necessary to ascertain a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said but do not interrogate the child.
- Listen to the child, and do not interrupt if they are recounting significant events.
- Do not give assurances of confidentiality but explain you will need to pass on this information to those that need to know. Be aware that this may cause upset to the child and can be distressing for you also.
- Do pass on the information to the DLO, who will review the information and if there is reasonable grounds for believing that a child is at risk or has being abused will make contact with Tusla Child and Family Agency tasked with the responsibility to investigate that matter further.
- The family should be informed that where contact has being made to Tusla Child and Family Agency. Support will be provided by the management and the DLO to do this. Remember that the information is confidential and should only be discussed further on a need to know basis with will be decided by the DLO and the management.

### **Recording and Reporting.**

- Do remember that the DLO will assist you to complete the report if needed.
- Make a comprehensive record of what is said or seen and actions taken at the earliest possible opportunity. Where possible this should always be reported using the Incident Report Form (see Children First for copy) and within the timescales stated. Keep all original notes as they may be needed as evidence. The comprehensive and confidential record should include the following:
  - a) A detailed record of the incident in the child's own words or the words of the third party reporting it. You should note this record may be used later in a criminal trial and therefore needs to be as full and accurate as possible.

- b) Details of the nature of the incident.
- c) A description of any injury. Please note that you must not remove the clothing of a child to inspect any injuries.
- d) Dates, times or places and any other information that may be useful.
- e) Written records including emails and letters.
- The incident should be reported in writing immediately to management or the DLO for appropriate action to be taken.
- Additionally incidents from should be completed in conjunction with other policies and procedures. These will be identified by the management.

### **Important note**

- Remember, safeguarding is everyone's business and if anyone tells you, or if you see mistreatment or abuse or have concerns about a child, being harmed or at risk, it is your role to respond sensitively and alert others who have a designated role within the NPAS.
- Anyone with concerns and unsure what to do, should contact the DLO who with link with GARDA, or Tusla Child and Family Agency (list of contact available in appendix of Children First).
- All children and should be treated with respect by NPAS employees, students/trainees, students and visitors.
- Respect should be given to a child's rights to personal privacy.

### **Physical Contact**

- Physical contact during activities in NPAS should always be intended to meet the child needs not the adults. Appropriate contact is to assist with the development of a skill or activity or for safety reason in order to prevent or treat an injury or treat. Physical contact should be determined by the age of the child, and the developmental stage.
- In all activities, NPAS employees, students/trainees, students, and visitors to NPAS should be aware that physical contact with a child or young person may be misinterpreted and should be avoided. Where any physical touching is required, it should be provided openly in front of other students. Parents, guardians and students

will be warned in advance that physical touching may be required for correctional purposes only.

- In activities, feedback should always be constructive rather than negative and be mindful of the language that you use so as not to be threatening or upsetting.
- Private or unobserved contact with a young person should be avoided wherever possible unless discussed by a parent or guardian and recorded, e.g. for a private lesson.
- Do not undertake personal activities (such as washing or dressing) for a child which they can do for themselves. If a child has a disability, such tasks should only be performed with the full understanding and consent of and, where appropriate, assistance from the parents or carers.

### **Safeguarding Guidelines:**

- Written parental or guardian consent should always be obtained for the use of any photographs, film or videos involving children.
- In all activities, NPAS employees, students/trainees, students, and visitors to the NPAS where appropriate, are required to challenge unacceptable behaviour in accordance with the provisions of this code of conduct and good practice.
- Any incidents, allegations or suspicions of abuse should be reported immediately to a DLO, as per the reporting guidelines.
- In all dealings with children, NPAS employees, students/trainees, students, and visitors to the NPAS where appropriate, should never:
  - Leave children who are in their care unsupervised on NPAS premises.
  - Play rough physical or sexually provocative games, involving or observed by children whether based on talking or touching.
  - Allow children to use inappropriate language e.g. language of a derogatory nature or sexually explicit without challenging.
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unrecorded or not acted upon in accordance with these or other NPAS procedures.
- Any incidents which cause concern in respect of a child are required to be reported immediately to the management or appointed DLO. Below are examples of incidents which are to be reported. When
  - A child has been left unsupervised in NPAS.
  - A child is hurt accidentally.
  - You think a child has misunderstood or misinterprets something you have done.
  - You see any suspicious marks on a child or vulnerable adult.

- Any visitors, such as external hirers or contractors must adhere to NPAS Code of behaviour and good practice as part of their contractual arrangement.

### **A quick guide to reporting procedures**

- If you see, hear of or suspect abuse, are aware of serious poor practice or have concerns about a breach of NAPS code of behaviour in relation to child abuse.
- If concerned about a child or – report your concern to the management or DLO within 24 hours. If this is not possible and if there is an immediate risk, report it to the appropriate authority, e.g. Gardai or Tusla Child and Family Agency.
- Record the details of the abuse/allegation/suspicion.
- Record accurately what the child/young person has said or what has been seen or reported.
- Include information about how the child appeared (angry/upset).
- Recording any visible signs on the child e.g. burn on the hand. Do not ask the person to remove clothing. Do not ask leading questions or investigate.
- The management or DLO will make a decision regarding the concern/incident within 24 hours of receiving the information.

## **Appendix**

### **INFORMATION ON BULLYING AND SELFHARM.**

#### **Bullying:**

- The Anti-Bullying Alliance defines bullying as: Bullying behaviour deliberately causes hurt (either physically or emotionally)
- Bullying behaviour is repetitive (though one-off incidents such as the posting of an image, or the sending of a text which is then forwarded to a group, can quickly become repetitive and spiral into bullying behaviour)
- Bullying behaviour involves an imbalance of power (the person on the receiving end feels.
  - like they cannot defend themselves)

#### **Bullying is not:**

- Teasing and banter between friends without intention to cause hurt.
- Falling out between friends after a quarrel or disagreement.

#### **Bullying can take the following forms:**

- Emotional – being unfriendly, ignoring someone, not involving them in activities, sending hurtful or tormenting texts, humiliating or ridiculing someone
- Physical – pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or pinching or any use of violence.
- Racist – racial taunts, graffiti or gestures.
- Disability – bullying because of how somebody looks or presents related to their disabilities. Children with disabilities are more likely than their non- disabled peers to be excluded from activities.
- Sexual – unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments. Sexual bullying can also relate to gender and gender identity and includes those who do not fit with the gender role prescribed to them.
- Homophobic – because of, or focussing, on the issue of a young person’s actual or perceived sexual orientation.
- Verbal – in the case of children with disabilities this can take place in sign language – name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours or teasing.

**Adapted from ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’ (2013)). & Royal Academy of Dance - Policy and procedures on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults (2013)**

## **Self-Harm:**

- Self-harm is where a person hurts themselves intentionally and this can occur in a range of ways:
- Cutting themselves (usually with a knife or razor or other sharp object).
- Burning their body.
- Bang their heads (not to be confused in situations when working with a young person who may have additional (special) needs, but this could be an indicator).
- Throw their body against something hard.
- Punch themselves.
- Stick things in their body.
- Swallow inappropriate objects or tablets.
- Use of alcohol, drugs, or sex in an unhealthy and risky way

**(Adapted from 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2013)). & Royal Academy of Dance - Policy and procedures on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults (2013)**

## **Eating disorders:**

Please note that eating disorders may broadly fit with self harm however it is very important to note that like other issues of self harm there is a complex reason and issues that someone may present with self harm or a eating disorder that need very specialised skill, treatment and intervention.

- Eating disorders are not just about food, they are a way of coping with emotional distress. Eating disorders can affect both sexes, people of any background and any age. About 10% of people with eating disorders are male. 18% of anorexics will die.
- Eating disorders can be recognised by a persistent pattern of unhealthy eating or dieting behaviour that can cause health problems and/or emotional and social distress.
- There are three official categories of eating disorders:
- Anorexia nervosa.
- Bulimia nervosa.
- Eating disorder not otherwise specified (EDNOS).

- People with EDNOS do not have the full set of symptoms for either anorexia or bulimia but may have aspects of both. EDNOS is as serious as other eating disorders and as potentially damaging to health.

### **Anorexia Nervosa.**

- Even when underweight, individuals with anorexia continue to be fearful of weight gain. Their thoughts and feelings about their size and shape have a profound impact on their sense of self-esteem as well as their relationships.
- They often do not recognise or admit the seriousness of their weight loss and deny that.
- It may have permanent adverse health consequences

### **Bulimia Nervosa.**

Individuals with bulimia nervosa experience binge-eating episodes which are marked by eating an unusually large amount of food within a couple of hours, feeling compelled to eat and find it difficult if not 'impossible' to stop eating.

- Individuals are obsessed and preoccupied with their shape and weight and often feel their self-worth is dependent on their weight or shape.

**Adapted from 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2013)), & Royal Academy of Dance - Policy and procedures on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults (2013)**

[www.b-eat.co.uk](http://www.b-eat.co.uk)

**Glossary of terms:**

**NPAS Employees:** Permanent employees, temporary workers, Examiners, freelance tutors, teachers and pianists, mentors, practical teaching supervisors, chaperones, Examination Attendants (doorkeepers), volunteers or any other person working on a paid or voluntary Basis on behalf of the NPAS.

**The Policy:** The NPAS Safeguarding Policy and Procedures: Children.

**NPAS:** National performing Arts School.

**Visitors:** External hirers, contractors, delivery persons, general visitors, Parents/guardians attending an NPAS activity on or of f NPAS Premises.

**Child / Children:** Persons under the age of 18 years.

**DLO:** Designated Lasion Officer.

## References

Government.Uk (2013), Working Together to Safeguard Children : A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Department of Children and Family Affairs, (2011) Children First Guidelines: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children.

Department of Children and Family Affairs & Health Service Executive, (2011) Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook

Department of Health & Children: Our Duty of Care.

Department of Health & Children: Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children's Sport.

NPAS Child Safeguarding policy:

I confirm that I have received a copy of the above document and that I am familiar with its contents. I am in agreement with the principles contained therein.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (please Print name).

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

We at the NPAS endeavor to keep up to date with developments in the area of Child Safeguarding and will consult with Child Safeguarding professional to assist with updating policies or developing training. This is the commitment we guarantee to both our clients and our staff.

By signing and returning the above you are also showing your commitment to the NPAS as a staff member to make you self aware of our policy and developments to Child Safeguarding. We would be grateful if you could read the policy and sign the above and return to the management within the agree period of time.....

