

Emer Dunne School of Performing Arts Child Protection Policy



EMER DUNNE
School of Performing Arts

Purpose and Aim of our Policy Statement:

The Emer Dunne School of Performing Arts (<http://schoolofperformingarts.ie>) is committed to protecting all of the young people in our care.

We are committed to promoting the rights of the child to be protected, be listened to and have their own views taken into consideration.

The purpose of this policy statement is: to protect children and young people attending the Emer Dunne School of Performing Arts and receiving our classes or tuition with us from any harm to their well-being. This policy will provide staff and volunteers, as well as children and young people and their families, with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection.

This policy applies to all employees and students who have contact with children and young people within the classes of the Emer Dunne School of Performing Arts (<https://schoolofperformingarts.ie>) or through their work on our behalf. It is of high importance to ensure all employees/students have an ability to recognise abuse as it can be defined in many ways.

Scope of our policy:

All teachers are garda vetted and we are committed to safeguarding children in our organisation under the Children's First guidelines. All staff will be required to complete online training courses with Tusla, Ireland's Child protection agency.

"We believe everyone has a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, to keep them safe and to practise in a way that protects them".

Everyone the child comes into contact with during our classes will be made aware of our child protection policy.

We will give equal priority to keeping all children and young people safe regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

Our policy and beliefs recognises the additional needs of children from minority ethnic groups and disabled children and the barriers they may face, for example with communication or the impact of discrimination. We will endeavour to keep children safe and let their voices be heard.

In our broad terms we commit to keeping children safe by:

- Listening to children and respecting them.
- It is our understanding that our classes (live and online) are conducted in a professional and safe manner. Children will be given a code of conduct to keep all students and staff safe and taught in a safe and welcoming environment and allow for the professional running of the school.
- We have a Child protection officer (DLP) who will take the lead responsibility for safeguarding at the highest level in the organisation and acts as a point of contact for staff and parents should any concerns arise.
- Our school will engage with ongoing child protection training for all staff and work on upgrading this training with Tusla.
- We have written detailed safeguarding and child protection procedures to help protect the children in our care, while in our care.
- We endeavour to make sure all staff and volunteers understand and follow the safeguarding and child protection procedures.
- We aim to make sure parents are aware we have a duty of care to the children and are following the Children's First Guidelines.
- We also try to ensure children, young people and their families know about the organisation's safeguarding and child protection policies and what to do if they have a concern.
- Our school will try to build a safeguarding culture where staff, volunteers and children know how they are expected to behave and feel comfortable about sharing concerns.

Policies and Procedures to keep children safe:

It can be very hard for children and young people to speak out about abuse.

Often they fear there may be negative consequences if they tell anyone what's happening to them.

Some children may delay telling someone about abuse for a long time, while others never tell anyone, even if they want to. Our staff have been made aware of this from training with Tusla and will understand that any concerns raised can be brought to the Designated Officer within

the organisation. They will be made aware that no concern is too little and that they have a duty of care to inform the officer of anything they feel worried or are informed about.

It's vital that children and young people are able to speak out and that whoever they tell takes them seriously and acts on what they've been told. Parents/Guardians of the children attending classes with the Emer Dunne School of Performing Arts have been made aware of this.

Even if a child doesn't tell someone verbally about what's happened to them, there may be other indicators that something is wrong. People who work with children need to be able to recognise the signs and know how to respond appropriately.

This page outlines our practice for recognising and responding to abuse and some of the issues which may arise when working with children who have been abused.

Children and young people may disclose abuse in a variety of ways, including:

- Directly– making specific verbal statements about what's happened to them.
- Indirectly – making ambiguous verbal statements which suggest something is wrong.
- Behaviourally – displaying behaviour that signals something is wrong. (this may or may not be deliberate)
- Non-verbally – writing letters, drawing pictures or trying to communicate in other ways.

Children and young people may not always be aware that they are disclosing abuse through their actions and behaviour. Sometimes children and young people make partial disclosures of abuse. This means they give some details about what they've experienced, but not the whole picture. They may withhold some information because they:

- Are afraid they will get in trouble with or upset their family.
- Want to deflect blame in case of family difficulties as a result of the disclosure.
- Feel ashamed and/or guilty.
- Need to protect themselves from having to relive traumatic events.

When children do speak out it is often many years after the abuse has taken place.
(McElvaney, 2015)

Procedures:

At the Emer Dunne School of Performing Arts we will ensure all staff have training with Children First under the Tusla guidelines.

All staff will be aware they can share their thoughts and concerns with the DLP.

Records will be kept of all concerns risen but these will be strictly confidential. It is important that staff and children feel that they can raise their concerns and that anything arising will be dealt with in a safe and sensitive manner.

We will help to develop a safe, creative and fun environment where we hope the children will feel they can rely and trust us with anything they may wish to discuss.

Understanding that not all children feel they can talk - Staff will have engaged with Child protection training and this can help increase adults' confidence in recognising the indicators of abuse and understanding the different ways a child might try to share what they have experienced.

Staff will understand that not taking appropriate action quickly can also affect the child's mental health. They may feel despairing and hopeless and wonder why no-one is helping them. This may discourage them from seeking help in the future and make them distrust adults.

The Designated Liaison Person acts as a liaison with outside agencies and a resource person to any staff member or volunteer who has child protection concerns. The Designated Liaison Person is responsible for reporting allegations or suspicions to the Child and Family Agency Tusla or An Garda Siochana. (See Children First 3.3)

Reporting Procedure

The Emer Dunne School of Performing Arts has put in place a standard reporting procedure for dealing with disclosures.

1. The employee or volunteer who has received a disclosure of child abuse or who has concerns about a child should bring them to the attention of the Designated Liaison Person immediately.
2. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a situation that exposes him or her to harm or of risk to harm pending Tusla intervention. In the event of an emergency where it is thought a child is in immediate danger and we cannot get in contact with Tusla, we will contact the Gardaí. This may be done through any Garda station.

3. Where the Designated Liaison Person considers that a child protection or welfare concern meets the reasonable grounds for concern criteria outlined below, then the Designated Liaison Person can refer to Tusla.

Examples of reasonable grounds for concern are:

- Specific indication from the child that he/she was abused.
- An account by the person who saw the child being abused.
- Evidence, such as an injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused in another way.
- An injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse. An example of this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indications of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour.
- Consistent indication over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect. See Appendix 1 or also visit: FAQ on www.tusla.ie/services/child-protection-welfare/children-first/

Where the Designated Liaison Person remains uncertain he/she should contact the Child and Family Agency Tusla for informal advice relating to the allegation, concern or disclosure.

The Designated Liaison Person will ensure that the parents/ carers are informed that a report/referral had been made to Tusla. The Designated Liaison Person will make an appointment with parents to inform them that the report has been made to Tusla unless to do so would be likely to endanger the child.

After consultation with the Duty Social Worker the Designated Liaison Person will then take one of two options:

- a. Report the allegation, concern or disclosure to the relevant authority (e.g. Tusla, An Garda Síochána, etc.) using the standard reporting form from Children First and in the case of out of hours or immediate danger contact An Garda Síochána.
- b. In those cases where the school 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 childcare service 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, the 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' (see Paragraph 3.10.1 of Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children).

In making a report on suspected or actual child abuse, the Designated Liaison Person must ensure that the first priority is always for the safety and welfare of the child/ young person and that no child/ young person is ever left in a situation that could place a child/young person in immediate danger.

How to Make a Report If the report is in relation to the safety and welfare of children / young people, the report should be made to the Designated Liaison Person (in the Emer Dunne Performing Arts School) Guiding principles to reporting child abuse:

- The safety and well-being of the child or young person must take priority.
- Reports should be made without delay to the Child and Family Agency Tusla, Local Health Office area where child resides.
- A suspicion, which is not supported by an objective indication of abuse or neglect, would not constitute a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern. However, these suspicions should be recorded or noted internally by the Designated Liaison Person as future suspicions may lead to the decision to make a report and earlier suspicions may provide important information for the statutory child protection agency or An Garda Siochana.

How we intend to Handle a Report of Abuse by a Child / Young Person

In the event of a child / young person disclosing an incident of abuse it is essential that this is dealt with sensitively and professionally by the employee / volunteer involved.

In such circumstances, the employee / volunteer with the Emer Dunne School of performing Arts should:

- React calmly.
- Listen carefully and attentively; take the young person seriously.
- Reassure the young person that they have taken the right action in talking to you.
- Do NOT promise to keep anything secret.
- Ask questions for clarification only. Do not ask leading questions, this is not an interview, but rather receiving a disclosure from a child.
- Check back with the child/young person that what you have heard is correct and understood.
- 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.
- Ensure that the child/young person understands the procedures which will follow.
- Pass the information to the Designated Liaison Person do not attempt to deal with the problem alone.
- Treat the information confidentially.

Retrospective Disclosures by Adults Parents and staff who are working with children and young adults or who attend child protection training may disclose abuse which took place during their own childhood.

A disclosure of abuse by an adult which took place during their childhood must be noted or recorded. In these cases it is essential that consideration is given to the current risk to any child who may be in contact.

The following has been taken from The Children First Guidelines:

If any risk is deemed to exist to any child who may be in contact with the alleged abuser, a report of the allegation should be made to the Child and Family Agency Tusla without delay.

Investigation of disclosures by adult victims of past abuse frequently uncovers current incidents of abuse and is therefore an effective means of stopping the cycle of abuse.

It is essential to establish whether there is any current risk to any child who may be in contact with the alleged abuser revealed if such disclosures. If any risk is deemed to exist to a child who may be in contact with an alleged abuser, the Designated Liaison Person should report the allegation to the Child and Family Agency Tusla without delay.

The 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 http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/Mental_Health_Services/National_Counselling_Service/).

The service can be accessed either through healthcare professionals or by way of self-referral. Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998* The Emer Dunne School of Performing Arts wish to draw the attention of the staff and volunteers to this Act Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse “reasonably and in good faith” to the HSE or An Garda Síochána.

Section 3(1) of the Act states: “A person who, apart from this section, would be so liable shall not be liable in damages in respect of the communication, whether in writing or otherwise, by him or her to an appropriate person of his or her opinion that:

- a child has been or is being assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused, or
- a child’s health, development or welfare has been or is being avoidably impaired or neglected, unless it is proved that he or she has not acted reasonably and in good faith in forming that opinion and communicating it to the appropriate person”.

This protection applies to childcare services and to individuals.

The Emer Dunne School of Performing Arts nominated Designated Liaison Person is our Director Emer Dunne, Graigue, Mountmellick, Co.Laois.

The DLP has the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the child protection and welfare policy is promoted and implemented. The role of the Designated Liaison Person involves the following duties:

- To be familiar with “Children First”, National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children and “Our Duty to Care”, the principles of good practice for the protection of children & young people and to have responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the child protection and welfare policy.
- Our Designated Liaison Person provides support to staff members who are dealing with/have dealt with a child protection concern or disclosure.
- will receive reports of alleged / suspected or actual child abuse and act on these in accordance with the guidelines;
- will ensure that training is provided for all new and existing staff in Insert Service Name here on the child protection policy;
- will build a working relationship with the Child and family Agency Tusla, An Garda Síochána and other agencies, as appropriate;
- will ensure that supports are put in place for the young person, employees or volunteers in cases of allegations being made;
- They will keep up to date and undertake relevant training on child protection policy and practice, in order to ensure the relevance and appropriateness of Insert Service Name here policy and procedures in this area;
- Review the Emer Dunne School of Performing Arts policy and procedures on child protection on an annual basis and amend as appropriate;
- will ensure that systems are in place for recording and retaining all relevant documentation in relation to child protection issues. It is essential in reporting any case of alleged / suspected abuse that the principle of confidentiality applies. The information should only be shared on a ‘need to know’ basis which means sharing information with persons who have a need to know in order to safeguard a child/young person and is not a breach of confidentiality and the number of people that need to be informed should be kept to a minimum.

If an employee has any doubt as to whether a report should be made, he / she should consult with the childcare service’s Designated Liaison Person.

Under the Data Protection Act every person has a right to establish the existence of personal data, to have access to any such data relating to him and to have inaccurate data rectified or erased.

The Named Service Data Controller will ensure that data that is collected fairly, is accurate and up to-date, is kept for lawful purposes and is not used or disclosed in any manner incompatible with those purposes.

All data in relation to child protection records collected must be stored in a safe and confidential manner in a secure locked cabinet.

Designated Liaison Person Confidentiality Record Keeping This will be kept in the office of the Designated Liaison Person.

Only the Designated Liaison Person will have access to this information.

All workers employed, contracted to work, or volunteering to work with children through the Emer Dunne School of Performing Arts (<https://schoolofperformingarts.ie>) will be required to sign a declaration form outlining any previous criminal convictions and granting permission for vetting from An Garda Síochána to be sought.

If an allegation is made against an employee, the Designated Liaison Person or the Deputy Designated Liaison Person in these situations there are two parts to the process,

i.e. dealing with the allegation of abuse and dealing with the employee/volunteer. Where possible these two pieces should be dealt with by two different people.

There are two different procedures that are followed:

1 The reporting procedure in respect of the child.

a) The safety of the child is the first priority of the Emer Dunne School of Performing Arts and all necessary measures will be taken to ensure that the child and other children/young people are safe.

b) The Designated Liaison Person will deal with the procedure involving the child/young person and the reporting to the Child and Family, Tusla.

2 The procedure for dealing with the worker .

a) The Designated Liaison Person and the Manager/Owner/Committee Chairperson will work in close co-operation with each other and with the HSE and An Garda Síochána.

b) If a formal report is being made, the Manager/Owner/Committee Chairperson), will notify the employee that an allegation has been made and what the nature of the allegation is.

The employee has a right to respond to this and this response should be documented and retained. Furthermore, our school will ensure that the principle of ‘natural justice’ will apply whereby a person is considered innocent until proven otherwise.

c) The Manager/Owner/Committee Chairperson, will suspend the employee / volunteer with pay (where appropriate). In the case where the worker is not suspended the level of supervision of the worker will be increased.

d) The Manager/Owner/Committee Chairperson, will liaise closely with the HSE Children and Family Services/An Garda Síochána to ensure that the actions taken by the childcare service will not undermine or frustrate any investigations.

e) The protective measures which can be taken to ensure the safety of children and young people can include the following:

- Suspension of duties of the person accused.
- Working under increased supervision during the period of the investigation or other measures as deemed appropriate.

- Recruitment and Child Protection Guidelines for Management of Staff Allegations Against an Employee/Volunteer.
- All employees and volunteers of our school must make themselves aware of the childcare service's good practice guidelines and must be familiar with the overall child protection policy of the childcare service and sign up to it; .
- Parents of children involved with our work must be informed of our policy and procedures.
- The Emer Dunne School of Performing Arts has appointed a Designated Liaison Person to deal with any complaints or issues arising which concern the safety or welfare of any child / young person (see above for identity of the Designated Liaison Person of the childcare service). This person is appropriately trained and familiar with the procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation, concern or disclosure of child abuse.
- Our school has put in place an anti-bullying policy.
Named Service will not tolerate any bullying behaviour by children/young people or adults and will deal with any incidents immediately in accordance with the DCYA anti-bullying policy when working with children and young people. Where bullying amounts to any form of abuse it will be treated as such and be recorded and reported as appropriate. (see appendix 3)
- Insert Service Name here Staff show respect and understanding for the rights, safety and welfare of the children and young people.
- The Emer Dunne School of Performing Arts will have a complaints Procedure.
- The Emer Dunne School of Performing Arts respects and promotes the principles of equality and diversity and works with all children in a culturally sensitive way within the context of the Irish Constitution and law and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child i.e. staff should never physically punish or be in anyway verbally abusive to a child, nor should they ever tell jokes of a sexual nature in the presence of children.
- Our school will review their Child Protection Policy on an annual basis.
- The next review will take place January 2022.

Notification of our policy and any changes devised will be displayed on the Insert Service Name here on the Staff and Parents Portal/ website.

Date: February 4th 2021_____

Signed by: Emer Dunne (Director)