



## **Ballet Ireland Child Protection Policy**

Ballet Ireland (BI) has an extensive outreach programme that includes workshops, an annual summer school and various schools' projects in which children participate. In all our work, the children and young people involved are our primary focus and we endeavour to provide a safe, supportive and creative environment for all taking part.

We will adhere to the recommendations of Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 and Children First Act 2015. Our Child Protection Policy and the series of Good Practice Guidelines that support it are reviewed annually by a group of BI staff to ensure they remain in line with current legislation and best practice.

Our Policy and Guidelines apply to all artists and staff who work for Ballet Ireland.

In all our work with children and young people, we abide by the following principles:

- The safety and wellbeing of each child is our primary concern.
- Each child and young adult is unique. We treat all participants in our programmes equally and with respect.
- We encourage a positive working atmosphere in which participants can feel free to ask questions and offer ideas and in which all criticism will be positive in tone.
- Any worry or concern of a child or parent/carer will be listened to and acted upon.
- All BI artists and staff have a responsibility to prevent the physical, emotional or sexual abuse of any child with whom they come into contact. Any suspicions or allegations of abuse are taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- Training in child protection will be sought from the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) where available for staff whose work brings them into close contact with children.
- All staff working with children are required to consent to Garda clearance (National Vetting Bureau) which will be sought.

We have implemented guidelines and procedures covering:

- Children First: National Guidance and Children First Act 2015
- Confidentiality
- Recruitment and the selection of Staff
- Managing and supervising Staff
- Code of behaviour for Staff
- Code of behaviour for Participants
- Reporting of suspected or disclosed abuse
- Allegations of Misconduct or Abuse by Staff
- Involvement of primary carers

- Health and Safety
- Complaints and comments
- Child and Family (Tusla) and An Garda Síochána Contacts

## **CHILDREN FIRST**

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017

This is a national policy document, based on legislation, to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm and abuse.

### **Children First Act 2015**

This Act places a number of statutory obligations on specific groups of professionals and on particular organisations providing services to children.

Some people have specific legal responsibilities under the Children First Act 2015. These include people who are Mandated Persons and/or work in an organisation which is a 'Relevant Service'.

### **Mandated Person**

Children First Act 2015; SCHEDULE 2, Section 2

The following classes of persons are specified as mandated persons for the purposes of this Act:

15. Person employed in any of the following capacities:

- (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.

### **Relevant Services**

Children First Act 2015; SCHEDULE 1, Section 2

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

- (b) a school or centre of education, both within the meaning of the Education Act 1998.

5. Any work or activity which consists the provision of-

- (a) education, research, training, cultural, recreational, leisure, social or physical activities to children.

## **DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON**

The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is appointed by the Board of Directors.

The priority of the DLP is in maintaining the best interests of the children with whom Ballet Ireland dancers and staff come into contact and to ensure that everyone is always focused on their welfare and safety.

The DLP needs to make sure that Ballet Ireland's Child Safeguarding Statement and child safeguarding policies and procedures are followed and that everybody knows about them; workers, volunteers, parents and children. Our Child Safeguarding Statement is displayed on our website.

The DLP is there to provide support and advice should Ballet Ireland workers or volunteers have a concern about a child protection or welfare matter. There is an appointed deputy DLP available should the DLP be absent.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Ballet Ireland is committed to ensuring peoples' rights to confidentiality. However, in relation to child protection and welfare we undertake that:

- Information will only be forwarded on a 'need to know' basis in order to safeguard the child/young person.
- Giving such information to others for the protection of a child or young person is not a breach of confidentiality.
- We cannot guarantee total confidentiality where the best interests of the child or young person are at risk.
- Primary carers, children and young people have a right to know if personal information is being shared and/or a report is being made to the Tusla, unless doing so could put the child/young person at further risk.
- Images of a child/young person will not be used for any reason without the consent of the parent/carer (however, we cannot guarantee that cameras/videos will not be used at public performances).
- Procedures are in place in relation to the use of images of children/ young people.
- Procedures are in place for the recording and storing of information in line with our confidentiality policy.

## **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Before a child can participate in any workshop programmes, BI seeks the written consent of a parent/carer. This is usually achieved through our own application/consent form.

This form asks for several pieces of information:

- The Child's name, gender and date of birth
- The Parent/Carer's name (and consenting signature)
- The address and telephone number(s) of parent/carer
- Any medical history of child pertinent to dance activity; earlier injuries or allergies, asthma etc.
- Any previous experience of dance training/BI workshops.

Ballet Ireland will also compile a separate list of participants for each workshop, comprising child's name, age and adult contact telephone number.

All information is held in the strictest confidence and is never passed on to a third party. Any information concerning a child's medical history/ongoing condition is disseminated on a need to know basis; namely BI tutors and if necessary, any local first-aiders. If indicated on a consent form, an adult's name and address may be added to Ballet Ireland's mailing list.

Maintaining confidentiality, some information may be used to compile research/statistical data so that we can further develop our outreach work and audience development.

Upon completion of a workshop programme, consent forms are stored in a secure location at Ballet Ireland's headquarters for a period of not less than two years. After this time, the information is shredded.

The Company's address is:

**Ballet Ireland  
The Paddocks  
Agher  
Summerhill  
Co. Meath  
A83 WK70**

## **PHOTOGRAPHY**

Ballet Ireland always seeks permission from parents/carers before cameras or video equipment are used to record work during the workshop programme. We cannot, however, guarantee that cameras or video equipment will not be used at public performance.

We will never publish any material which includes the image of a child without the express written consent of a parent or guardian.

On occasion, local newspapers, radio or television companies will be involved in reporting and publicising our work. Again, express written permission will be sought from parents/carers before any recording begins.

BI may record occasional performances. This is solely for archival purposes and will not be disseminated to the general public.

BI will never knowingly allow publication of images of children to the internet without the consent of parents/carers.

## **RECRUITING AND SELECTING STAFF**

Dancers are selected for employment by Ballet Ireland by audition(s) and interview.

A standard contract of employment is agreed and signed by both parties. This contract contains the clause:

*Ballet Ireland has an extensive outreach programme that includes work with children. The company has a Child Protection Policy supported by a series of Good Practice Guidelines. This policy and guidelines apply to all staff and artists who work for the company. Dancers who participate in the outreach programme must read and agree to abide by the policy and guidelines.*

Throughout the year, dancers are encouraged to observe or assist in the series of one-hour workshops that coexists with the performance schedule.

Dancers work initially in a demonstrative capacity and as part of a team.

Before inclusion at a tutorial level, the dancer will show understanding of the structure of the workshop and its goal, and will demonstrate, and express, confidence in working alongside young people.

Before participation in any long-term project (summer school programme, in-schools projects), a training session takes place wherein the roles each team member will undertake is laid out. Discussion of responsibilities and BI's child protection policies is included in this.

On each day during the long-term projects, time is set aside for assessment and reappraisal.

### **Statement**

Ballet Ireland will ensure that staff/dancers are carefully selected, trained and supervised to provide a safe environment for all children and young people, by observing the following principles:

- Roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined for every job.
- We will endeavour to select the most suitably qualified personnel.
- Staff will be selected by at least two representatives of the company.
- Candidates will be asked to sign a declaration form and will be subject to Garda Vetting.
- No person who would be deemed to constitute a 'risk' will be employed.
- Two written references are required of any staff member solely recruited to work with children. Verbal verification will be sought.
- Candidates recruited solely for work within the educational unit will undergo a probationary period of employment of up to three months. Work performance is assessed on a weekly basis.

BI acknowledges the many years of training the artists in its employment have undergone. An innate and wide knowledge of dance and music is built during training and this is what primarily contributes to a candidate's success at audition. In our outreach work, the dancers themselves are our greatest resource.

### **MANAGING AND SUPERVISING STAFF**

All dancers taking part in work with children and young people receive induction training and are made aware of BI's Child Protection Policies and Procedures. A copy of the policies, procedures and guidelines to best practice is always kept with the company whilst on tour and is on hand for anyone to read.

All dancers with the company are required to read BI's policy statement and to sign a document stating they have read it and agree to abide by it.

During long-term projects, dancers work as a team that comprises a minimum of three members and sometimes as many as eight. Time is set-aside daily to discuss subject matter, preparation and responsibilities. After each day's session, further time is allocated for assessment and appraisal.

If the project at hand is a collaboration (between BI and a school, for example), assessment and appraisal will be sought from any observers.

## **Staff management procedures**

To protect both our employees and children/young people, members of the BI Educational Team will:

- Take part in a mandatory induction training session.
- Be made aware of the organisation's code of conduct and child protection procedures.
- Be expected to have read and signed our Child Protection Policy Statement and be cognisant with our procedures and guidelines for best practice.
- Be made aware of identity and role of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP).
- Be provided with Child Protection and Safeguarding training with Tusla, when available.
- Receive an adequate level of supervision and review of their work practices.

## **CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR STAFF**

### Child Centred Approach

Ballet Ireland's Educational Unit endeavours to provide a safe, supportive and creative environment during its work with children and young people. Before the commencement of every project, the team involved meet to discuss appropriate behaviour when in the company of young people. In all our work, the children and young people involved are our primary focus.

Each child and young person is unique. We treat all participants in our workshops, summer school programme, associate programme and schools' projects equally and with respect. We encourage a positive working atmosphere in which participants can feel free to ask questions and offer ideas and in which all criticism will be positive in tone.

Dance tuition and performance demands complex skills of coordination. All physical instruction will be demonstrated. Physical contact may be made with students in order to further understanding of posture, position or movement. Tutors will deal with this area sensitively and explanation will always be made as to the purpose of the physical contact.

Verbal language used during workshops and tuition sessions will be appropriate to the age, ability and experience of the young people involved. Description of movement and shape will exploit the ordinary experience of the student; for example, the 'stretch of the cat' or the 'plunge of the digger'. Technical terminology and the 'balletic' French vocabulary will be utilised solely with groups of students cognisant with ballet training. We recognise the pitch and tone of the voice as an implicit factor in description and instruction.

Often Ballet is perceived as an elitist activity. A primary ethos behind Ballet Ireland's work is that ballet should be accessible to all and Ballet Ireland strives to be all-inclusive in its outreach programme. We work with children and young people from a diversity of social and economic backgrounds. Differences in race, culture and religion are always considered with sensitivity and respect. Students with physical disability and additional learning needs are included in the programme where possible and with the concurrence of parents and carers.

## **CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR STAFF**

### Good Practice

Ballet Ireland's Educational Unit has several procedures that it follows in its work with children and young people. These are essential for the welfare and safety of those taking part and provide a necessary structure for those taking a tutorial role. These procedures are reviewed regularly and are geared to suit each project. BI has also provided a list of guidelines for tutors to adhere to.

### **Summer School Programme and Shorter Workshops**

The summer school programme and a series of shorter workshops take place at theatres and art centres throughout Ireland. A contract is agreed between each venue and the company.

Each venue will compile a list of applicants requesting the following information:

- Name of student
- Date of birth
- Name of Parent/Guardian
- Telephone number(s) of Parent/Guardian
- Home address
- Experience of dance (if any)
- Allergies or Medical condition (pertinent to participation in dance activity)
- Any special requirements

Before the start of each workshop, a separate list is made (by BI) of the names of those taking part and the telephone number(s) of the parent/guardian. This will be left at an easily accessible point agreed upon by the tutors, in practice the 'incident diary' which is used to record any accidents or occurrences that could raise concern.

Participants are divided into groups according to age; subdivisions may be made within these groups (e.g. 6-8yrs., 9-11yrs., 12-15yrs and 16+).

The maximum number of participants taking part in any one session is 35. For groups of this size, the educational team will comprise of four tutors.

Tutors wear tracksuit bottoms and a t-shirt bearing the Ballet Ireland logo.

The material to be covered during each workshop is discussed and agreed upon prior to each session, though flexibility is maintained to allow for unseen developments. Ballet Ireland encourages creativity and the development of expression with all the children and young people with whom they work.

### **'Special Projects'- In Schools**

Ballet Ireland collaborates with schools around the country with special projects individual to the schools involved. This can involve months of preparation that is always made in close liaison with the school principal and regular teaching staff.

During the short series of workshops held on site in schools, classes of children work with one or more Ballet Ireland tutors in the presence of their regular teacher(s).

Appropriate subject matter is agreed with the teachers beforehand and will reflect the age, background and gender ratio of the class.

Music and a written explanation of the workshop can be given to teachers for follow-up work.

Ballet Ireland also undertake two and three-week special projects with schools akin to a 'residential', whereby a team of tutors work with an entire school with workshops held on and off the school's premises.

Longer-term projects demand special conduct; children and young adults are suddenly coming into daily contact with professional dancers on whom they could look as role models. Tutors need always be mindful of what is said and done in the presence of children.

### **Assessment**

Ballet Ireland endeavour to reflect the gender ratio of those taking part in all its educational work with the makeup of the educational team for each project. This is particularly so in our efforts to engage more young men with dance.

Our educational work undergoes frequent appraisal. Regular dialogue with partners (theatre managers, schoolteachers, arts officers), together with input from parents, audience members and participants, informs this process. We encourage outside practitioners to assess the work and frequently invite local dancing teachers as observers.

### **GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES**

(For BI staff and artists working with children)

It is essential that we protect the welfare and safety of all the children we work with. These guidelines have been developed to help all artists and staff ensure this.

They also are designed to help protect staff- false allegations of abuse are extremely rare, but they do occur, and it is important that staff do not put themselves in vulnerable situations.

BI is committed to a child-centred approach.

- Respect each child as a valuable individual.
- Offer encouragement and praise. Remember, correction can always be positive in tone.
- Take time to listen to and consider children's ideas and points of view
- Where possible take on board children's views in any relevant decision-making process.

### **Contact with Children**

- Avoid being on your own with a child. If it is unavoidable, make sure that you are within sight or hearing of others. BI will always appoint at least two tutors to every project.
- Work in schools should always take place in the presence of a teacher.
- Respect a young person's right to privacy.
- Do not do anything of a personal nature for a child if they can do it for themselves.

- Adults and children should not share changing and toilet facilities. When working in schools, make sure you use the staff toilets. In theatres, often there are not sufficient dressing room spaces/toilets for this to be possible. In such cases (as is usual during the summer school programme), children and adult performers will be allocated separate times for dressing rooms.

Do not have any unnecessary physical contact with children. There are times when physical correction is the most expedient route to further technical understanding. Always explain what you are doing and why and try to ascertain whether a child is comfortable being touched. Touch is dealt with in more detail under the section *Physical Contact*.

Keep your relationships with students on a professional level. The law says someone is a child until they are 18. Do not arrange to meet a student outside the work environment.

### **Inappropriate Behaviour**

The following are guidelines for Ballet Ireland's tutors. They should be regarded as tools rather than rules, an aid in contributing to a safe working environment both for the educational team member and the children and young people involved:

- Workshops are always led by a team of at least two people, usually more.
- Each tutor should avoid, as far as possible, situations in which they are left alone with a child. If it is unavoidable, make sure that you are within sight or hearing of others.
- Language used during sessions should be appropriate for the age group involved. Tutors will never use foul language or sexually suggestive language. Remember also the pitch and tone of your voice, shouting rarely produces good results. Dance is an activity that often involves physical contact; however, tutors should avoid unnecessary physical contact with children. The purpose of physical contact should always be made clear and with a child's consent.
- Tutors will not engage in inappropriate touching nor will permit inappropriate touching. Tutors will never hit or physically chastise a child in any way.
- More detailed advice can be found under *Physical Contact*.
- Praise where deserved should be given. Tutors, however, should be aware of bias towards a particular child. Conversely, a child should never be singled out for ridicule. Tutors should be sensitive to the needs of shy children and young people. All criticism should be positive in tone.
- Tutors should not socialise with children or young people inappropriately, for example, outside of structured organisational activities.

### **Physical Contact**

Dance, as a social activity and as a performance discipline frequently involves physical contact. During sessions of coaching and instruction, tutors often utilise physical contact as an economic route to furthering understanding of posture, position or movement. Children and young people have varying levels of comfort with touch, however, and tutors will need to deal with this issue sensitively.

Exercises involving physical contact will be appropriate for the age group involved. With very young children, an invitation to join hands in a circle, for example, is a good way to gear levels of comfort for individual participants. With older children, consent can be ascertained

in a similar fashion, contact with hands on shoulders or waists for example. Undue emphasis should not be made concerning touch and contact.

Explanation will be made for older children and young adults if physical contact is used for means of adjustment or technical correction. Permission will be ascertained, again without undue emphasis, from each individual concerned. Physical contact should only be made if it is deemed the most expeditious route to promoting physical understanding of position or movement.

There are some basic guidelines about touching children that should always be followed:

- Consider whether the correction or observation could be clarified in another way, e.g. you, or another student could demonstrate.
- Children and young people must always be treated with respect and dignity. If touch is necessary, it is important that it is done in an atmosphere of understanding and agreement. This approach could be explained at the start of each session (for one-off workshops) or at the start of a particular project. It is important that parents/carers understand the reason for physical contact as well as the children involved.
- A touch can be misconstrued, so it is important that a child understands the intention behind the action. Ensure that you touch in a firm, unambiguous manner. It is important that you are neither too rough nor too delicate, both of which can be misunderstood.
- Be sensitive to the individual. If a child states they are uncomfortable with touch, or if you sense that this is the case, respect that. There could be many reasons; bullying, abuse or adolescence.

## **CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR PARTICIPANTS**

The enjoyable, physical nature of dance is often conducive to creating an atmosphere of noise and excitement, particularly with young children and often more so with boys. Before work with a new group of children begins, time will be set aside to discuss a code of behaviour with the participants. An agreement will be met that acknowledges appropriate behaviour and ascertains boundaries. The purpose of this is to create a safe working atmosphere for all involved, children and adults alike, and one in which all participants have a chance to have their voices, concerns and ideas heard. Areas discussed will include the following:

- Appropriate clothing. Some clothing/footwear could be unsafe to work in and for this reason jewellery (including watches) should not be worn.
- Polite responses. Is it best to all shout at once to a question? How will we answer questions?
- Physical consideration. Dance is about teaching the individual to be in charge of him or herself. We must be careful when moving quickly that we don't inadvertently hurt others.
- Rest periods. These can be discussed before the session begins. Toilet breaks will be incorporated.
- Bullying, and indeed any violent behaviour, physical or verbal, will not be tolerated.

## **Bullying**

Bullying is unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time. The following types of bullying behaviour are included in the definition of bullying:

- Deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying.
- Cyber-bullying.
- Identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

Bullying behaviour can include:

- Physically pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching etc.
- Name calling, spreading rumours, persistent teasing and humiliation or the continual ignoring of others.
- Posting of derogatory or abusive comments, videos or images on social media.
- Racial, homophobic, transphobic or sexist comments, taunts or gestures.
- Sexual comments, suggestions or behaviour.
- Unwanted physical contact.

Bullying affects the lives of an increasing number of children and can be the cause of genuine concern about a child's welfare.

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

## **ABUSE**

In order to be able to safeguard the children and young people in our care, it is very important for all Ballet Ireland staff working with children and young people to be able to recognise abuse.

If you have any concerns that a child may have been, is being or is at risk of being abused or neglected, you must report it to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP).

Children First: National Guidance identifies four main types of abuse; Neglect, Emotional Abuse, Physical Abuse and Sexual Abuse.

### **Neglect**

Children First: National Guidance states that:

*"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, supervision and safety."*

Child neglect is the most frequently reported type of abuse to Tusla. It may become apparent over time or from a single event;

- Some features of neglect may include:
- Poor school attendance.

- Poor hygiene.
- A lack of suitable clothing.
- A child being left alone without adequate care or supervision.
- Malnourishment, lacking food, inappropriate food or erratic feeding.
- Lack of protection and exposure to danger.
- Abandonment or desertion
- Inadequate care for the child's medical and developmental needs.

The impact on the child is the same whether the child's needs are being neglected as a result of:

- An intentional act (wilful neglect), or
- Circumstances that a family finds itself in (circumstantial neglect).
- Ongoing chronic neglect can be very damaging to the child's health, development and welfare and can have serious long-term negative consequences.

### **Emotional Abuse**

Children First: National Guidance states that:

*“Emotional 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/caregiver. Once-off and occasional difficulties between a parent/carer and a child are not considered emotional abuse.*

*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 is not easy to recognise because the effects are often not obvious. There may be no physical signs of emotional abuse unless it occurs with another type of abuse.

- A child may show signs that they have experienced emotional abuse through their behaviours, such as:
- Persistent, extreme unhappiness.
- Low self-esteem.
- Educational and developmental underachievement.
- Risk taking.
- Aggressive behaviour.

There may also be concerns in relation to the interactions between a child and an adult, such as:

- A lack of attachment.
- Extreme over-protectiveness.
- Consistently rejecting or blaming the child.
- Exposure to domestic violence.

Some additional ways to recognise emotional abuse are:

- Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming of the child.
- Persistent lack of comfort, love, praise and encouragement.
- Seriously inappropriate expectations of a child relative to his/her age and stage of development.

Emotional abuse is more likely to impact negatively on a child where it is persistent over time.

## **Physical Abuse**

Children First: National Guidance states that:

*“Physical abuse is when someone deliberately physically hurts a child 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 happens when a child is physically harmed or is put at risk of being physically harmed. A child can also be physically harmed from a lack of interaction. There may be single or repeated incidents.

Evidence of physical abuse may be when the child has bruises, fractured bones, burns, bite marks or is shaken. A lack of interaction or poor supervision may result in a child being physically hurt.

Physical abuse can be recognised in some of these ways:

- Use of excessive force in handling.
- Pushing, shaking or throwing.
- Beating, slapping, hitting or kicking.

The following should significantly increase concern for the welfare of a child:

- Unsatisfactory or different explanations for injuries by the child or parents/carers.
- A frequency or clustering of worrying marks.

## **Sexual Abuse**

Children First: National Guidance states that:

*“Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or arousal or for that of others. It involves the child being involved in sexual acts or exposing the child to sexual activity directly or through pornography.”*

Child sexual abuse may cover many different abusive activities.

- Some examples of abusive activities are:
- Sexual touching.
- Engaging a child in sexual acts.
- Encouraging/forcing a child to observe sexual or indecent acts.

Sexual abuse can be recognised in some of these ways:

- Intentional performing of a sexual act in the presence of a child.
- Exposure to inappropriate or abusive material through technology.
- Sexual intercourse with a child.

Sexual activity involving a young person may be sexual abuse even if the young person does not recognise it as abuse.

Some children may be more vulnerable to abuse than others. There may be particular times or particular circumstances when a child may be more vulnerable to abuse. The circumstances when a child may be more vulnerable to abuse include:

- Parent and Carer factors:
- The child living with one or more parent/carers with an addition or mental health issue.
- The child experiencing domestic violence at home.

Child factors, such as:

- The child having a disability or a mental health issue.
- Being 'in care' or living away from home.

Community and environmental factors:

- The child living in poor housing.
- Experiencing poverty and begging.
- The child being bullied.

Besides recognising features of abuse, you might also be told of concerns about abuse. For example:

- A parent/carer tells you that they cannot cope, that their child is always hungry, and they do not have enough money to feed and clothe them.
- A child speaks to you about a person who is locking them in their room for hours at a time as punishment.
- An adult tells you they are concerned about a child who has unusual bruising on their body.
- An adult tells you about someone who abused them when they were a child and they are worried that this person could still be hurting children.

## **DEALING WITH A DISCLOSURE**

It is important that all dancers and staff are aware that the first person that has concerns or encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether abuse has occurred. However, we all have a duty of care to the child or young person to report any suspicions we may have.

Making a disclosure of abuse is a very difficult thing for a child or adult to do. Abused children will only tell people they trust and with whom they feel safe.

If a child lets you know, by whatever means, that s/he has been abused, or if someone else tells you that a child is being abused, or if you see something yourself that leads you to think a child may be being abused, you should take time and care:

- React calmly.
- Listen carefully and attentively.
- Take the child/adult seriously.
- Reassure the child/adult that they have taken the right step in talking to you.
- Do not ask leading questions.
- Do not promise to keep anything secret but advise the child/adult you will only speak to the people who know how to respond to this situation.
- Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser.
- Ensure that the child/adult understands the step that will follow.

Following your conversation:

- Make a written record, with as much detail as possible.
- Treat the information confidentially and only share the information with the DLP or with Tulsa.

If you receive a disclosure from an adult that they were abused as a child, you should report this information to Tusla, as the alleged abuser may pose a current or future risk to children.

### **Reporting concerns about a child**

Anyone can make a report to Tusla if they are worried about the safety or welfare of a child, whether a professional such as a teacher or public health nurse or a concerned parent or neighbour.

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.

It is not necessary for you to prove that abuse has occurred in order to report a concern to Tusla.

You can report your concern to the local social work service in the area where the child lives. You can report in person, by telephone or in writing, including by email.

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.
- An account from a person who saw the child being abused.
- Admission or indication by an adult or a child of an alleged abuse they committed.

### **Ballet Ireland's Reporting Procedure**

Usually, within Ballet Ireland, the person with responsibility to inform the Agency will be the Designated Liaison Person or their deputy.

This will involve talking to the DLP and recording your concerns. The DLP will:

- Ensure that Ballet Ireland's reporting procedure for child protection and welfare concerns is followed.
- Provide advice and support.
- Ensure a Tusla Child Protection and Welfare Form is submitted to Tusla, when appropriate.

If you and the DLP are unsure as to whether your concern is 'reasonable', you should speak to a Tusla Social Worker for advice.

Mandated Persons or staff operating on their own may need to contact or report directly to Tusla.

Here are some additional things you should know about reporting:

- Never delay.
- Keep a record of any actions taken.
- If you think a child is in immediate danger and you cannot contact Tusla, ring the Gardai.

### **Procedure**

The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is there to provide support and advice should Ballet Ireland (BI) workers or volunteers have a concern about a child protection or welfare matter.

BI workers and volunteers are given as much time as they need to discuss any concerns they have about children.

The DLP will go through the concern with the worker or volunteer, discussing what happened and deciding whether there are reasonable grounds to make a report to the Child and Family Agency (Tusla).

The DLP may at this stage call the Tusla Duty Social Worker to clarify whether there are grounds for reporting the concern. The Duty Social Worker will help in working out the details, providing advice and reaching a decision as to whether the concern being discussed does or does not need to be reported at this point in time.

If it is established that there are grounds for concern, the DLP will fill in the Child and Family Agency Report Form and submit it.

The DLP will also maintain a confidential record of the child protection and welfare concerns reported by BI to Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána.

If a decision is made not to report, a log of this is also kept.

If the DLP decides not to make a report to Tusla, they should advise you that, under the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998, if you remain concerned, you are free to report the concern to Tusla or An Garda Síochána and that you will not be penalised should you do so.

Children First: National Guidance recommends that the DLP gives you a clear, written explanation as to why they did not report to Tusla.

The confidentiality of all information held is respected and stored in a secure way.

As much as possible, we always try to keep parents informed of any actions we may need to take, where we become aware of a concern regarding their child.

When compiling a report, record all the details that you are aware of and what was said, using the child's own words, (or the informant's), as far as possible.

All suspicions and concerns should be recorded, along with observations of injury or behavioural changes that might be consistent with abuse.

Follow up action and any outcomes will also be recorded.

## **IMPORTANT**

If, for any reason, the Designated Liaison Person is not available, and you have concerns about a child's welfare, contact the local Duty Social Worker at Tusla directly. Local Tusla addresses and telephone numbers are included in this document.

### **Mandated Persons, Responsibilities**

Certain people have legal responsibilities under the Children First Act 2015. One group of people are called 'Mandated Persons'.

Mandated Persons have a legal responsibility to safeguard children. They are required by law to tell the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) whenever they are worried about the safety of a child.

According to the Children First Act, a Mandated Person must report their concerns to Tusla if:

- They know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is being harmed, has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed,
- A child discloses that they are, have been harmed or are at risk of being harmed.

If sending in a report to the Child and Family Agency, a Mandated Person must use the appropriate form and indicate that it is a mandated report.

It is good practice to inform parents if a report is being made to The Child and Family Agency about their child. However, if in so doing, this places the child at further risk, or, where the sharing of this information with the parents could impair the Child and Family Agencies' ability to carry out a risk assessment, it is not necessary to inform the parents.

A Mandated Person may also be asked to assist the Child and Family Agency in their assessment of a concern.

### **Recognising Abuse**

Neglect:

Threshold of harm for a Mandated Person

Under Section 2 of the Children First Act 2015, neglect is defined as "to deprive the child of adequate food, warmth, clothing, hygiene, supervision, safety or medical care".

If you are a Mandated Person you must report to Tusla when you know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child's needs have been neglected, are being neglected or are at risk of being neglected to the extent that the child's health, development and welfare have been, or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.

Emotional Abuse:

Threshold of harm for a Mandated Person

Under the Children First Act 2015 emotional abuse is encompassed in the definitions of harm, ill-treatment and neglect.

If you are a Mandated Person you must report to Tusla when you know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been, is being or is at risk of being ill-treated to the point where the child's health, development and welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.

#### Physical Abuse:

##### Threshold of harm for a Mandated Person

Physical abuse is encompassed by the definition of harm in the Section 2 of the Children First Act 2015.

If you are a Mandated Person you must report to Tusla when you know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been, is being or is at risk of being assaulted and that as a result the child's health, development and welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.

#### Sexual Abuse:

##### Threshold of harm for a Mandated Person

Sexual abuse is encompassed in the definition of harm in Section 2 of the Children First Act 2015. The Act states that sexual abuse means an offense against a child as listed in Schedule 3 of the Children First Act 2015 [as amended by the section 55 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017].

If you are a Mandated Person you must report to Tusla when you know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been, is being or is at risk of being sexually abused and that as a result the child's health, development and welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.

#### Mandated Persons

As part of assessing a mandated report of suspected child abuse, Tusla has the authority to share information with a Mandated Person who has been asked to provide assistance. This is in keeping with the principles of data protection, which recognise that in certain circumstances information can be shared in the interests of child protection, but that such sharing must be necessary and proportionate.

Section 17 of the Children First Act 2015 makes it an offence for you to disclose information to a third party which has been shared by Tusla during the course of an assessment, unless Tusla has given you written permission to do so.

If you fail to comply with this section, you may be liable to a fine or imprisonment for up to six months or both. This offence can also be applied to an organisation.

#### List of Ballet Ireland Employees who are Mandated Persons:

- Anne Maher, Artistic Director.

### **Children First**

#### KEY POINTS

- You may need to take immediate action to protect a child.
- You have responsibilities to report child protection or welfare concerns about children if you see features of abuse, or hear or are told about them.
- All workers and volunteers are responsible for reporting concerns about abuse.
- You cannot assume that someone else will make a report.
- Some people are mandated under the Children First Act 2015 and legally must report concerns which reach the thresholds specified in the Act.

- Always follow Ballet Ireland's Reporting Procedure referred to in the child safeguarding statement when you are concerned about the protection or welfare of a child.
- If you are concerned about the immediate safety of a child and cannot contact the Tusla Social Worker, you should contact your local Garda station.
- The best interests of the child should always come first.
- Keep alert to possible concerns relating to the protection and welfare of children.
- You have a supportive not an investigative role.
- The safety and welfare of children is everyone's responsibility.
- If you have a concern about a child or you have any queries about your responsibilities discuss these with the Designated Liaison Person (DLP).

## **DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS AGAINST BI STAFF**

If there are concerns or allegations regarding the behaviour of a worker or a volunteer towards a child, the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) or deputy DLP will ensure that this is followed up and that the correct procedures are followed:

- If an allegation is made against an employee of Ballet Ireland (BI), the protection and safety of the child/young person is our first consideration.
- Any concern or allegation against the BI employee will be assessed swiftly and carefully.
- We will consult Tusla to ascertain whether there is sufficient substance to warrant their investigation.
- All concerns will be addressed at Board level.
- Unless there is an objection by Tusla/An Garda Síochána, the DLP will inform the parents/carer of the child concerned.
- Any investigation by Tusla/Gardaí will take priority over an internal investigation by BI.

BI will make every effort to ensure confidentiality in the employee's interests. If it is considered that suspension from any or all an employee's duties is necessary, s/he will continue to receive full pay. This will be confirmed in writing, with the reasons for the suspension stated.

BI will monitor carefully who is informed of the suspension. In a situation where a matter becomes common knowledge or general gossip, an accurate statement may be provided for general information.

The employee will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation.

At the close of the investigation, a meeting will be arranged with the employee. If there is found to be no substance to the allegation, any suspension will be lifted immediately.

If the investigation has shown that abuse has taken place, BI will seek advice from Tusla and An Garda Síochána. It may result in the dismissal of the employee.

Anne Maher has been appointed Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and is the person to contact if you have an issue or concern about any aspect of a child's or young person's safety and welfare. It is the responsibility of the DLP to support and advise staff about policy and procedures in relation to child protection and to ensure that procedures are followed. It is also the responsibility of the DLP to liaise with Tusla or Gardaí where appropriate.

Anne Maher can be contacted at the BI office, tel: 046 955 7585, 086 826 1196 (mobile) or email: [anne@balletireland.ie](mailto:anne@balletireland.ie)

## **PARENTS AND PRIMARY CARERS**

Ballet Ireland is committed to being open with all parents/primary carers.

We undertake to:

- Advise parents/primary carers of our child protection policy.
- Inform parents/primary carers and schools of all activities and potential activities.
- Issue contact/consent forms where relevant.
- Comply with the health and safety practices of our host venues.
- Operate child-centred policies in accordance with best practice.
- Adhere to our recruitment guidelines.
- Ensure as far as possible that the activities are age appropriate.
- Encourage and facilitate the involvement of parent(s), carer(s) or responsible adult(s), where appropriate.

If we have concerns about the welfare of the child/young person, we will:

- Respond to the needs of the child or young person.
- Inform the parents/primary carers on an on-going basis unless this action puts the child or young person at further risk.
- Where there are child protection and welfare concerns, we are obliged to pass these on to the Tusla Duty Social Worker and, in an emergency, the Gardaí.
- In the event of a complaint against a member of staff, we will immediately ensure the safety of the child/young person and inform primary carers as appropriate.

As a child-centred organisation, we are committed to putting the interest of the child/young person first. To that end we will:

- Contact local Tusla services and/or An Garda Síochána where there is a child protection welfare concern.
- Encourage parents/primary carers to work in partnership with us under the guidelines set out by our organisation to ensure the safety of their children.
- Have a Designated Liaison Person available for consultation with primary carers in the case of any concern over a child or young person's welfare.

Ballet Ireland's Designated Liaison Person to contact if you have concerns over a child's safety and welfare is Anne Maher - Email: [anne@balletireland.ie](mailto:anne@balletireland.ie)

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Currently all BI's work and activities with children and young people take place at host venues around the country. BI closely liaises with these venues to ensure the safety of the workplace. We consider carefully all local procedures concerning health and safety and take cognisance of all areas of risk.

We always:

- Maintain an up-to-date register of the contact details of all children/young people involved in our activities.
- Record details of accidents and incidents causing concern. These are logged in our 'Incident Diary'.
- Ensure that organisations with whom we collaborate have public liability insurance.
- Identify who locally takes responsibility for first aid and the location of first-aid boxes.
- Advise the children/young people with whom we work of areas/materials of risk.
- Co-operate with local staff to ensure as safe a working environment as is possible.

### **Code of Behaviour for Staff Health and Safety**

A safe working environment is of paramount importance in the execution of physical exercise and dance. This is particularly so when children and young adults are involved. Ballet Ireland's staff endeavour to be constantly vigilant during its work with young people and aims to maintain the highest standards of safety:

- Children are never left unsupervised.
- Individual arrangements for the dropping off and collection of participants in workshops by parents/carers are always ascertained.
- The 'incident diary', which contains contact numbers for all participants, is kept at hand and all accidents, complaints and concerns are recorded therein.
- All parents/carers are required to complete a consent form to state their acquiescence in the participation of their charges. There is room here for the particular needs of each child to be recorded.
- The identity and situation of all local qualified 'First Aiders' is always established, on a daily basis. All of BI's outreach projects take place at host venues, so this is especially important.

### **Theatre Safety**

BI's outreach projects often take place onstage in a theatre environment.

Before each session, tutors will ensure that any dangerous materials are beyond risk of accident. With the collaboration of local staff, all stage tools and equipment will be made secure:

- All wiring (sound/light equipment etc) will be thoroughly secured at floor level.
- A special floor covering, designed for dance, will always be laid, stretched and secured.
- If the workshop is held onstage tutors will ensure safe access to and from the stage.

- All areas posing a threat to safety will be identified and indicated to participants.
- Where possible, students will use toilet/changing facilities front of house for workshop days that do not involve performance. Children will always be supervised when in areas frequented by the general public.

During Performance:

- Participants will be allocated dressing room space, where possible, appropriate to age and gender.
- Young performers will be accompanied to and from the stage area.
- A 'holding area' will be identified, in which young performers will await their entrance. Children waiting in the wings will be kept to a minimum of number and time.
- No free- standing 'boom' lighting will be used in the wings. No lighting cable will hang within a three- metre reach of the stage.
- 'Rules' and boundaries will be established to ensure safety. The first rule backstage- "do not touch" will be instilled.
- All local theatre staff will be made aware of BI child protection policies and procedures.

### **Schools and community projects**

BI also collaborates with schools and local communities with special projects hosted throughout the year. Schools and community groups deal with many complex issues, often pertinent to local concerns, which no ballet company would consider. BI staff and artists will always follow any relevant procedures required by schools or community groups. We intend our Child Protection Policies to ally with those of our host schools and communities:

- We will always provide copy of our current policy and practice and seek the appraisal and advice of our collaborators. Our policies are under constant review.
- We always require the attendance of local teaching staff when working in a school environment. Teachers are in a unique position to appraise the work we undertake.
- Preparation for, and follow- up work, is an essential component of BI's work in schools. We aim to enhance the everyday learning experience laid out in the national curriculum.

### **COMPLAINTS OR COMMENTS**

Ballet Ireland aims to maintain the highest standards in its work with children and young people. We regularly review our policies and activities and welcome advice from all sources. We consider carefully all feedback, positive and negative, and where possible, will use this constructively to improve upon our working environment.

Ballet Ireland has a comprehensive complaints procedure which is detailed on our website: [www.balletireland.ie](http://www.balletireland.ie)

Anne Maher, Artistic Director of Ballet Ireland, has responsibility for directing all complaints and comments.

Anne Maher will forward all complaints/comments about our working practices to the board of Ballet Ireland.

**TUSLA Child and Family Agency  
Contact Details**

Summer School Principal Venues

COOKSTOWN, Co. Tyrone - Burnavon Arts Centre  
Cookstown Child Care Team  
Unit T2  
Derryloran Industrial estate  
Sandholes Road  
Cookstown  
BT80 9LU  
Tel: (028) 8675 8877

ENNIS, Co. Clare - Glór  
Caroline Cullen  
Child and Family Agency, Mid West  
Ballycummin Avenue  
Raheen Business Park  
Raheen  
Limerick  
Tel: 061 482 792  
areamanagermw@tusla.ie

LETTERKENNY, Co. Donegal - An Gríanan  
Gerry Hone  
Child and Family Agency Donegal  
Shiel House  
College Street  
Ballyshannon  
Co. Donegal  
Tel: 071 982 2776  
gerry.hone@tusla.ie

NAAS, Co. Kildare - Moat Theatre  
Audrey Warren  
Child and Family Agency Dublin South West  
Suite 7 & 8  
Vista Primary Care  
Naas  
Co. Kildare  
Tel: 087 928 7293/ 087 268 8213  
am.dswkww@tusla.ie

TALLAGHT, S. Dublin - Civic Theatre  
Audrey Warren  
Child and Family Agency Dublin South West  
Suite 7 & 8  
Vista Primary Care  
Naas  
Co. Kildare  
Tel: 087 928 7293/087 268 8213  
am.dswkww@tusla.ie

**An Garda Síochána Telephone Numbers:**

Ennis: (065) 684 8100  
Letterkenny: (074) 916 7100  
Naas: (045) 884 300  
Tallaght: (01) 666 6000

Cookstown Police Station: (028) 8676 6000 (Area code 048 from ROI)

Store Street Garda Station, Dublin 1 (Local to DanceHouse): (01) 666 8000

Childline, A National freephone listening service for children: 1800 666 666  
(24 hours)

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**This policy will be reviewed again on or before 27<sup>th</sup> January 2027.**



CEO's Signature  
Date: 27 January 2026



Chair's Signature  
Date: 27 January 2026