

# **Child Protection Policy**

## **Athenry Arts & Heritage Centre**

### **Child Protection Policy Statement**

It is the policy of the Athenry Arts & Heritage Centre to safeguard the welfare of all children by protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional harm. The Athenry Arts & Heritage Centre is committed to a child-centred approach when working with children and young people. We will adhere to the recommendations of the *Children's First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children*, published by the Department of Health and Children.

Our policy is available to all members of the public and agencies who use the services of the Athenry Arts & Heritage Centre.

The policy will be reviewed at the Athenry Arts & Heritage Centre AGM 2013.

[Signed by designated person] \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Introduction.**

In devising the **Child Protection Policy** the Athenry Heritage Centre will implement procedures covering:

- Code of behaviour for all employees.
- Reporting of suspected or disclosed abuse.
- Confidentiality.
- Managing and supervising employees .
- Involvement of primary carers.
- Allegations of misconduct or abuse by employees.
- Complaints and comments.
- Incidents and accidents.

#### **Code of Behaviour (Employees).**

Child-centred approach.

- Treat all children and young people equally.
- Listen and respect children and young people.
- Involve children and young people in decision-making, as appropriate.
- Provide encouragement, support and praise (regardless of ability).
- Use appropriate language (physical and verbal).
- Have fun and encourage a positive atmosphere.
- Offer constructive criticism when needed.
- Treat all children and young people as individuals.
- Respect a child's or young person's personal space.
- Discuss boundaries on behaviour and related sanctions, as appropriate, with children and young people and their primary carers.

- Lead by example.
- Be cognisant of a child's or young person's limitations (for example) due to a medical condition.
- Create an atmosphere of trust.
- Respect differences of ability, culture, race, religion and sexual orientation.

### **Good Practice**

- Make primary carers, children/young people, visitors and facilitators aware of the **Child Protection Policy** of the centre and the procedures of the policy.
- Be inclusive of children and young people with special needs.
- Have emergency procedures in place and make all staff aware of these procedures.
- Report any concerns to the Designated person and follow reporting procedures.
- Encourage children and young people to report any bullying, concerns or worries.
- Observe appropriate dress and behaviour.
- Provide appropriate training for employees and volunteers.
- Report and record any incidents and accidents.
- Update and review policies and procedures regularly.
- Keep primary carers informed of any issues that concern their children.
- Ensure proper supervision based on adequate ratios according to age, abilities and activities involved.
- Don't be passive in relation to concerns i.e. don't do nothing .
- Don't let a problem get out of control.
- **Do Not take tours or provide have-a-go archery on your own. Primary carers should be present at all times.**
- Maintain awareness around language and comments made. If you think that something you said may have caused offence or upset, then try to address it in a sensitive manner.
- Ensure clear communication between employees who interact with children and the Athenry Arts & Heritage Centre.
- Have a written agreement with any external organisation that is working with children through the Athenry Arts & Heritage Centre to state that they have read and agree to adhere to our **Child Protection Policy**.

### **Inappropriate Behaviour.**

- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with children/young people.
- Don't use or allow offensive or sexually suggestive physical and/or verbal language.
- Don't single out a particular child/young person for unfair favouritism, criticism, ridicule or unwelcome focus or attention.
- Don't allow/engage in inappropriate touching of any form.
- Don't hit or physically chastise children/young people.
- Don't socialise inappropriately with children/young people e.g. outside of structured organisational activities.

### **Physical Contact.**

- Seek consent of child/young person in relation to physical contact (except in an emergency or a dangerous situation). Explain to the child or primary carer for health and safety in archery.

- Avoid horseplay or inappropriate touch.

### **Health & Safety.**

- Don't leave children unattended or unsupervised;
- Manage any dangerous materials;
- Provide a safe environment;
- Be aware of accident procedures and follow accordingly.

### **Reporting Procedure.**

#### **Who to contact about issues related to child protection and welfare.**

Alan Burgess has been designated as 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 Alan Burgess who will 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 Alan Burgess to liaise with the Health Service Executive or Gardaí where appropriate.

Alan Burgess can be contacted at the Athenry Arts & Heritage Centre, 091 844661 or 086 8677624.

Mary O'Gorman has been designated as deputy to Alan Burgess and can be contacted at 091 844661, 087 7458233.

### **Confidentiality Statement.**

The Athenry Arts & Heritage Centre 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; in other words 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 Health Service Executive, 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.
- Procedures will also be put in place for the recording and storing of information in line with our confidentiality policy.

### **Recruitment and selection policy statement.**

We will ensure that all employees are carefully selected, 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 (paid or voluntary).
- Posts will be advertised widely.
- We will endeavour to select the most suitably qualified personnel.

- Candidates will be asked to sign a declaration form.

At least two references that are recent, relevant, independent and verbally confirmed will be necessary.

- No person who would be deemed to constitute a 'risk' will be employed; some of the exclusions would include:
  - Any child-related convictions.
  - Refusal to sign declaration form.
  - Insufficient documentary evidence of identification.
  - Concealing information on one's suitability to working with children.
  - In cases of long term employment there will be a relevant probationary period.
- All employees will be required to consent to Garda clearance.

### **Employee Management Policy Statement.**

To protect both employees (paid and voluntary) and children/young people, we undertake that:

New employees will:

- Be made aware of the organisation's code of conduct, child protection procedures and identify the role of who has been designated to deal with issues of concern.

New employees will:

- Undergo a probationary or trial period.
- Take part in a mandatory induction training session.

All employees will:

- Be expected to have read and signed the Child Protection Policy Statement.

All employees working directly with children will:

- Be advised to undertake child protection training.
- Receive an adequate level of supervision and review of their work practices.

### **Policy Statement on the involvement of primary carers.**

The Athenry Arts & Heritage Centre is committed to being open with all primary carers.

We undertake to:

- Advise primary carers of our child protection policy.
- Inform participating primary carers and schools of event content including all activities and potential activities.
- Comply with health and safety practices.
- 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 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 inform the 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 the local Health Service Executive and Gardaí where there is a child protection welfare concern.
- Encourage 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 contact person available for consultation with primary carers in the case of any concern, over a child or young person's welfare.

### **Dealing with an allegation against employees.**

Two separate procedures will be followed:

1. In respect of the child/young person, Alan Burgess will deal with issues related to the child/young person.
2. In respect of the person against whom the allegation is made, the chairperson will deal with issues relating to the employee.

- The first priority is to ensure that no child or young person is exposed to unnecessary risk.
- If allegations are made against the Designated Person, then Mary O’Gorman should be contacted. The Chairperson of the management board should also be contacted.
- The reporting procedures outlined in this policy will be followed. Both the primary carers and child/young person will be informed of actions planned and taken. The child/young person will be dealt with in an age-appropriate manner.

- The employee will be informed as soon as possible of:

1. The nature of the allegation.
2. The staff member will be given the opportunity to respond.
3. The chairperson/head of the organisation will be informed as soon as possible
4. Any action following an allegation of abuse against an employee will be taken in consultation with the Health Service Executive and Gardaí.
5. After consultation, the chairperson/head of organisation will advise the person accused and agreed procedures will be followed.

### **In the event of complaints or comments.**

- Complaints or comments will be responded to within 2 weeks.
- All complaints/comments will be directed to Alan Burgess.

- Those making verbal complaints will be requested to put them in writing and direct them to Alan Burgess and the Chairperson of the Management Committee.

### **Health and Safety: Accidents Procedure**

- The Athenry Arts & Heritage Centre will maintain an up-to-date register of the contact details of all children/young people participating in events at the Heritage Centre.
- External organisations with whom the Athenry Arts & Heritage Centre has dealings must provide proof that they have public liability insurance.
- First-aid boxes are available and regularly re-stocked.
- The location of the first-aid box(es) is made known to employees.
- The accident/incident books will be located at the front desk.
- Children and young people will be advised of risks of dangerous material.

### **ACCIDENT / INJURY / ILLNESS PROCEDURE.**

1. Assess injury and respond appropriately.
  - where first aid is required seek assistance from Alan Burgess or designated first aid officer.
  - Alan Burgess or designated first aid officer will consult with you to decide whether an ambulance will be required.
2. Inform the primary carer as soon as possible in the case of a serious injury or illness.
3. Record the incident or accident in the incident book.
4. Inform the primary carer of any minor incident/accident on collection of child.
5. Notify Alan Burgess of any entry in incident book.

### **DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE PROCEDURE.**

1. Stay calm and listen – give the child time to say what she or he wants.
2. Don't ask leading questions or details, or make suggestions.
3. Don't stop the child recalling significant events, but don't make him or her repeat the story unnecessarily.
4. Reassure the child, but don't promise to keep it a secret.
5. Explain what needs to be done next ("There's a special person at the Athenry Arts & Heritage Centre who looks after these things and I'm going to tell this to them. They'll know what the best thing to do is.")
6. Record the discussion as carefully as possible.
7. This information should then be passed on to Alan Burgess.

### **Anti-Bullying Policy.**

#### **The Athenry Arts & Heritage Centre: Anti Bullying Code.**

The Athenry Arts & Heritage Centre provides a place where

- Everyone can feel secure.
- It is known that bullying is not acceptable behaviour.
- Name calling is not tolerated.
- No one suffers abuse of any nature.
- No one is victimised.
- Each person who partakes in our activities is supported and listened to.
- It is each participant's responsibility to ensure that all are treated equally.

- Where solutions to problems are the concern of all.

**How the Athenry Arts & Heritage Centre deals with bullying.  
We implement the “no blame” approach as follows:**

**Step 1 – Interview the victim**

If you find out that there has been an incident of bullying, first talk to the victim. At this stage find out who was involved and what the victim is now feeling. Try asking the following questions:

1. Was it verbal, physical, intimidation.
2. How hurt is the victim.
3. Was it within his/her own peer group.
4. Ensure the victim that his/her name will not come out in the investigation.
5. Actively listen.

**Step 2 – Meet with all involved**

Arrange to meet with all those involved this should include some bystanders, those who may have colluded, those who joined in and those who initiated the bullying.

- Just have maximum of six to eight in the group – keep the number controllable
- Make a point of calling a “special” meeting.
- Ensure the severity of the topic is understood by all.
- Speak only of the hurt caused in general terms with no reference to the victim.
- Play on the conscience of all – ask questions like: How would you feel? Would you like it done to you?

**Step 3 – Explain the problem**

The distress being suffered as a result of the bullying incident is explained. At this stage the details of the incident or the allocation of the blame/initiators is not discussed. Explain the feelings of loneliness, feeling left out, rejected, laughed at.

Try asking these questions:

1. Would they like it if it happened to them?
2. “Someone here in this group was “bullied” by someone within the group what can we do to see it does not happen again”.
3. Listen, watch out for reactions, and pick up on any without isolating anyone.

**Step 4 – Share the responsibility.**

Explain what steps/controls may have to be introduced to prevent further incidents and how everyone will loose out as a result.

**Step 5 – Ask the group for their ideas.**

At this stage the group is encouraged to suggest ways which would make the victim feel happier. All positive responses are noted. Use phrases “if it were you” to encourage a response.

Listen to all suggestions and note them.

**Step 6 – Leave it to them.**

Now the problem has been identified, solutions suggested, the problem is now handed over to the group to solve. Arrange to meet again in a week’s time. Pass responsibility over to the group and give a time frame within which something must be done.

**Step 7 – Meet them again.**

Meet with each member of the group, including the bully, discuss how things are going, who is doing what and have there been other incidents. This allows for continual monitoring and also keeps all involved in the process. Again enforce the idea of the “team” looking after each other at regular intervals to ensure it is known the bullying or intimidating behaviour will not be tolerated.

### **Definitions of Abuse.**

There are four main categories of abuse as outlined in *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children*. The following is a synopsis of the information contained in that document. For the full definitions please refer to *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children 1993* (pp.32-34).

### **Neglect.**

“Neglect can be defined as being where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, medical care. The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child’s needs are neglected to the extent that his or her well-being and/or development are severely affected.” (*Children First* p.31)

### **Emotional abuse.**

Emotional abuse usually happens where there is a relationship between a carer and a child rather than as a specific incident or incidents.

“Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms.” (*Children First* p.31)

Rather, it can manifest in the child’s behaviour. or physical functioning. Examples of these include ‘anxious’ attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement and uncooperative or hostile behaviour.

“The threshold of significant harm is reached when interaction is predominantly abusive and become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/ carer.” (*Children First* p.32)

Examples of emotional abuse in children include:

- Imposition of negative attributes on children, expressed by persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming.
- Emotional unavailability by the child’s parent/carer.
- Unresponsiveness, inconsistent or inappropriate expectations of the child.
- Premature imposition of responsibility on the child.
- Unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of the child’s capacity to understand something or to behave and control him/herself in a certain way,
- Under or over-protection of the child.
- Use of unreasonably harsh discipline.
- Exposure to domestic violence.

## **Physical abuse.**

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child. Examples of physical injury include the following:

- Shaking.
- Use of excessive force in handling.
- Deliberate poisoning.
- Suffocation.
- Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant physical harm to a child.

## **Sexual abuse.**

Sexual abuse involves the use of a child for gratification or sexual arousal by a person for themselves or others.

Examples of sexual abuse include:

- Exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child.
- Intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification.
- Masturbation in the presence of the child or involvement of the child in an act of masturbation.
- Sexual intercourse with a child whether oral, vaginal or anal.
- Sexual exploitation of a child... may also include showing sexually explicit material to children which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse.
- Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an under-age person.

## **What is Bullying?**

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others.

It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating and occurs mainly in social environments such as schools, clubs and other organisations working with children. It includes behaviours such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting and extortion behaviour by one or more children against a victim.

## **Is Bullying Harmful?**

Persistent bullying can have a devastating effect on a child's self esteem. They may feel it's somehow their fault, or that there's something wrong with them, they may become withdrawn and insecure, more cautious, and less willing to take any sort of risk.

Being victimised in this way can cause days of mental anguish and leave lifelong emotional scars. It has driven some young people to try to murder their tormentors and others to suicide. A child who has suffered bullying often needs professional counselling to let out their feelings and rebuild their self-confidence. Bullying also affects any child who witnesses it.

## **What do children get bullied about?**

- Some of the factors involved in bullying include:
- Puberty.
- Peer pressure.

- Gender differences.
- Stereotypes / prejudice.
- Structure of the group – hierarchy of dominance.
- Family background of victims and bullies.

*Bullying can be distinguished from bossiness and boisterous play. A boss child will boss whoever is around. So often it is due to a lack of self-control or skills of negotiation or compromise. Boisterous play can be dangerous but it does not involve young people wilfully setting out to hurt or victimise. Young people often grow out of this kind of behaviour as they grow older. What distinguishes bullying from bossiness or boisterousness is that the bully always picks on someone less powerful and more vulnerable. Persistent “slagging” which have the same devastating effects as bullying and shouldn’t be ignored.*

### **How would you know if a child is being bullied?**

All bullies operate using furtiveness, threats and fear. Bullying can therefore only survive in an environment where the victim does not feel empowered to tell someone who can help or in which it is not safe to do so.

The following indicators are warning signs that a young person might be getting bullied.

- Reluctance to come to a centre or take part in activities.
- Physical signs (unexplained bruises, scratches, or damage to belongings).
- Stress-caused illnesses – headaches, and stomach aches which seem unexplained.
- Fearful behaviour (fear of walking to activity, going different routes, asking to be Driven).
- Frequent loss of “subs” or shortage of money with vague explanations.
- Having few friends.
- Changes in behaviour (withdrawn, stammering, moody, irritable, upset, distressed).
- Not eating.
- Attempting suicide or hinting at suicide.
- Anxiety (shown by nail-biting, fearfulness, tics).

Of course, there are other possible reasons for many of the above.

### **What makes a person bully others?**

Bullies are often making a plea for help through their violent behaviour, which may reflect a sense of insignificance. Bullies whose activities go unaddressed often fail socially and academically later in life. They need to be taught all important negotiation and co-operative skills, working with others rather than competing.

**Athenry Arts & Heritage Centre's Declaration Form**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Tel. No: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile No: \_\_\_\_\_

Any other name(s) previously known as: \_\_\_\_\_

Is there any reason that you would be considered unsuitable to work with children and young people:

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please outline the reason below:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please state below the nature and date(s) of the offence(s):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you consent to Garda Clearance? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Names and contact details for two referees:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Please enclose a copy of identification (photocopy of driver's license or passport)

I declare I have read the Athenry Arts & Heritage Centre's Child Protection Policy and agree to adhere to it.

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Declaration of Acceptance

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_