



Improvised Music
Company Child
Protection Policy and
Procedures

2018

IMPROVISED MUSIC COMPANY'S CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES 2016

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SECTION 1 - CHILD PROTECTION POLICY STATEMENT

Improvised Music Company are committed to a child-centred approach to our work with children and young people.

We undertake to provide a safe environment and experience, where the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.

We will adhere to the recommendations of *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children*, published by the Department of Health and Children. We have implemented procedures covering:

- Code of Behaviour
- Reporting Procedures and responsibilities
- Confidentiality
- Safe recruitment & selection procedures
- Safe management of all staff (paid or unpaid)
- Parental/guardian involvement and sharing of information
- Incidences of poor practice and allegations against staff
- Complaints and comments procedure
- Accidents procedure

This policy will be reviewed in 2019 by the Artistic Director.



Kenneth Killeen
Director

For any information on Improvised Music Company's Child Protection Policy & Procedures, please contact Kenneth Killeen, Director (Designated Liaison Officer) at ken@improvisedmusic.ie or 01 6703885. We are also happy to provide parents/guardian or teachers with a copy of our policy on request.

SECTION 2 - CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

In order to ensure mutual protection, staff/volunteers/artists and other organisations working with Improvised Music Company need to be familiar with the following code:

Code of behaviour: Child Centred Approach

- Treat all children and young people equally and as individuals. Give every child the right to participate in an arts activity regardless of ability.
- Listen to and respect children and young people
- Involve children/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
- Respect a child's/young person's personal space. (i.e. going to the toilet or dressing). Tasks of a personal nature should only be carried out for very young children or children with disabilities with the full understanding and consent of parent/guardians or in an emergency situation – parents/guardians should be fully informed and tasks should be carried out with the utmost discretion. When accompanying a child to the bathroom, ensure that you are in full view of another staff member.
- Ensure it is acceptable to a distressed or hurt child if offering physical comfort. Allow teachers/guardians to do this where possible. Use crayons and paper at reception to reassure children, for example.
- Boundaries on behaviour and related sanctions will be discussed with children/young people and parents/carers.
- Respect children's safety at all times. Be sensitive to the potential risks involved in participating in an arts activity.
- Inform parents/guardians/teachers at all times of any issues or incidents that occur.
- Have contracts/agreements with group
- Encourage feedback from group
- Lead by example
- Be aware of a child/young person's time limitations (e.g. school/exams) when scheduling rehearsals/activities
- Be cognisant of a child's or young person's limitations, due to a medical condition for example; ☒
- Create an atmosphere of trust
- Respect differences of ability, culture, religion, race and sexual orientation

Code of Behaviour: Good Practice

- Make parents/carers, children/young people, visitors and facilitators aware of Child Protection Policy and Procedures
- Register each child/young person (name, address, phone, special requirements, attendance, emergency contact)
- Do not give any medication to a child under any circumstances, unless approved by parent or guardian in writing.
- Have emergency procedures in place and make sure all staff are aware of these
- Be inclusive of children and young people with special needs
- Plan and be sufficiently prepared both mentally and physically
- Report any concerns to designated liaison officer and follow reporting procedures
- Encourage children and young people to report any bullying, concerns and worries and be aware of anti-bullying policy
- Report/record any incidents and accidents
- Keep parents/guardians/teachers informed of any issues that concern their children
- Ensure proper supervision including adequate ratios depending on age, abilities and activities involved
- Ensure clear communication between artist and organisations
- Don't 'not do anything' in relation to concerns
- Don't let a problem get out of control
- Avoid taking a session on your own. If this is not possible then it should be in an open environment with the full knowledge and consent of parents/guardians/teachers.
- Provide appropriate training for staff, interns, artists (workshops) and volunteers
- Update policies and procedures regularly
- Avoid smoking in the presence or within the sight of children who are attending the Improvised Music Company's activities.
- Avoid giving a lift to a child/young person and in the event you do then make sure that parent/guardian/teacher is informed.
- Maintain awareness around language and comments made, if you think that something you said may have caused offence or upset, then try to address in a sensitive manner.

Code of Behaviour: Inappropriate behaviour

- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with children/young people
- Don't use/allow offensive or sexually suggestive physical and/or verbal language
- Don't single out a particular child/young person (for unfair favouritism, criticism or ridicule)
- 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)

Code of Behaviour: Physical Contact

- Seek consent of child/young person at all times in relation to physical contact
- Avoid horseplay, inappropriate touch
- Check with children/young people about their level of comfort when doing touch exercises

Code of Behaviour: Health and Safety

- Don't leave children unattended/unsupervised
- Manage any dangerous materials
- Provide a safe environment
- Be aware of accident procedure and follow accordingly

Our Duty Of Care To Children Attending Or Participating In An Improvised Music Company Event

Improvised Music Company reserves the right to contact parents/guardians and request that they take a child out of an activity if they are distressed or their behaviour is distracting [either temporarily or for remainder of an activity as appropriate to each individual situation] so that other children continue to engage in activities uninterrupted. In the first instance, however, if a child is not enjoying or participating in Improvised Music Company's activity, staff will endeavour to:

In the case of a theatre event:

- Make eye contact with the child/children to indicate that you would appreciate if they are quieter. Always be sensitive, approachable and diplomatic when you ask for cooperation!
- If the disruption continues, physically approach child/children and sit beside them and ask them to keep noise to minimum. Remember you also want to give them the freedom to respond to the work, so accept a level of reasonable response. A lot of performers are very good at managing responses and levels of feedback so it a good idea for the FOH Manager, the Theatre Programmer and the Artist to agree a plan of action in terms of managing the crowd during performances.
- If the disruption continues, approach the parent, guardian or teacher and request that they assist in asking the child/children to stop disrupting the performance.

- If the disruption continues, diplomatically ask the parent, guardian or teacher to take the child out of the auditorium to find if they child is ok. Often with a little time out of the space they return and are fine.

In the case of an observed incident of bullying:

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

Staff are required to be aware of potential bullying situations and how best to respond. Staff are asked to respond to bullying incidents as follows:

- Subtly separate the children the instant the bullying incident has been observed. It's important not to draw attention to either the victim or bully.
- The bully may be asked to explain his/her actions and to apologise as appropriate.
- Observe further interactions between children to ensure no further incidents occur.
- Notify director/programmer if they are not already aware of the problem.
- If it is a serious situation the bullying victim is given an opportunity to talk about the incident to a member of staff, parent/guardian/teacher if he/she wants to.
- Director records the incident in the confidential incident book and brings it to the attention of staff at the next management meeting.
- Director informs parents/teacher/guardian of the incident at the end of the workshop/show [if it has not already been brought to their attention].

For protection of all parties, and in all cases where a child's behaviour is described as singular or disruptive, ensure that:

- More than one staff is present when singular or out of the ordinary behaviour is being dealt with.
- A record is kept, describing the incident, the circumstances, the reasons, people involved, and any resolution. Ideally, all staffs who were present should sign this record or fill in their own perspective of the incident (there is an incident/complaints form at reception – this should be copied to the GM in hard copy or email).
- In all cases, if there is an event which is out of the ordinary, which may have a negative effect on a child, any guardian collecting the child will be informed of the event and any action/s taken.

SECTION 3 - REPORTING PROCEDURES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Role and responsibility of Designated Liaison Officer

The designated liaison person is the main point of contact where there is an issue or concern about any aspect of a child's or young person's safety and welfare. It is the responsibility of this person to advise staff about policy and procedures in relation to child protection and to ensure that procedures are followed. The designated liaison person will support and advise staff in the event of a concern regarding child protection and welfare. It is also the responsibility of the Designated Liaison Officer to liaise with the Health Service Executive or Gardai where appropriate.

The Designated Liaison Officer for the Improvised Music Company is Kenneth Killeen [Director] who can be contacted at 01 670 3885 or 087 986 2640. The Deputy Designated Liaison Officer for Improvised Music Company is Aoife Concannon [Marketing Manager] who can be contacted on 087 986 2638.

Reasonable Grounds for Concern

- explicit indication from the child or young person that s/he has been abused
- an account by a person who saw the child/young person being abused
- evidence, such as an injury or behaviour, which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way
- an injury or behaviour, which is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse. For example a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indications of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour consistent indication, over a period of time, that a child or young person is suffering from emotional or physical neglect
- consistent indication, over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

Recording procedures

A recording system is in place in Improvised Music Company whereby an incident/accident/complaint book is filled in and kept in the Director's office, maintained by the Director with access available to the Director and Marketing Manager only. Any serious matters will be kept confidential in the Director's locked filing cabinet in their office.

Information that staff should record in relation to children and young people:

- suspicions
- concerns
- worrying observations
- behavioural changes

Dealing With A Disclosure

- Stay calm and listen to the child/young person, allow them enough time to say what he/she needs to say
- Don't use leading questions or prompt details
- Reassure the child/young person but do not promise to keep anything secret
- Don't make the child/young person repeat the details unnecessarily
- Explain to the child/young person what will happen next (explanation should be age appropriate)
- **The one thing you MUST NOT DO is NOTHING.**

Reporting procedure

- If you have a concern that is genuine report it to the DLP. That is everyone's responsibility no matter what. Doing or saying nothing could put a child in harm's way. Keep Safe – Tell the DLP.
- The DLP will work with the person reporting the concern to ensure that an accurate record of the concern is documented, including the date, time of and people involved in the concern/disclosure and the facts (email or give in hard copy only to DLP). Information recorded should be factual. Any opinions recorded should be supported by facts.
- The most appropriate person should discuss the concern/consult with parents/carers where necessary. Parents/carers should be told of a report to the Health Service Executive unless it is likely to put the child/young person at further risk.
- The Designated Liaison Officer may contact the Health Service Executive Social Work Department for an informal consultation prior to making a report and likely also get legal advice.
- Information will be shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis. If there are reasonable grounds for concern as outlined above, the DLP will contact the duty social staff in your Health Service Executive area using the standard reporting form (available from the Health Service Executive).
- Reports to the duty social staff can be made verbally initially and then followed by the standard reporting form.
- Reports will be made to the Health Service Executive without delay.

- In emergencies which are out of Health Service Executive Social Work hours, the DLP will contact the Gardai. There may be extreme situations, which threaten the immediate safety of a child/young person where it may be necessary to contact the Gardai.

SECTION 4 - CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

Improvised Music Company is committed to ensuring people's rights to confidentiality. However, in relation to child protection and welfare we undertake that:

- Information will only be passed on, 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
- Parents/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 (however, we cannot guarantee that cameras/videos will not be used at public performances).
- Procedures will be put in place around the use of images of children/young people
- Procedures will be put in place for the recording and storing of information in line with our confidentiality policy

SECTION 5 - SAFE RECRUITMENT & SELECTION PROCEDURES FOR ALL STAFF/VOLUNTEERS/ARTISTS

Improvised Music Company will ensure that our staff, artists and volunteers are carefully selected, trained and supervised to provide a safe artistic environment for all children and young people.

It is good practice that staff are recruited along the following lines:

- There are clearly defined roles and responsibilities for every job (paid or otherwise)
- Posts will be advertised widely or promoted from in-house where applicable
- We will endeavour to select the most suitably qualified personnel
- Candidates will be required to complete an application form or submission

- Candidates will be asked to sign a declaration form
- At least two if not three written references which are recent, relevant, independent and verbally confirmed will be necessary.
- Staff and volunteers should be selected by a panel of at least two (or more) representatives.
- No person who would be deemed to constitute a 'risk' will be employed (ref. Childcare Act 1991).
- Some of the exclusions would include:
 - any child related convictions
 - refusal to sign any forms including Garda Vetting or the Declaration forms
 - insufficient documentary evidence of identification
 - concealing information on one's suitability to working with children
- There will be a relevant probationary period.
- All applicants will be required to consent to Garda Vetting and fill in any forms.

SECTION 6 – MANAGING AND SUPERVISING STAFF

New staff, Artists and volunteers will have induction training and will be made aware of policies and procedures. Staff (permanent employees) will be provided with a copy of the staff handbook. Freelance, contract and part time/casual staff/artists must agree to abide by Improvised Music Company's Child Protection policy.

Safe management of staff policy

In order to protect both staff/volunteers/artists and children/young people

New staff will:

- be given a mandatory induction training session.
- be made aware of the organisation's code of conduct, child protection procedures and the identity and role of who has been designated to deal with issues of concern
- undergo a probationary or trial period

All Staff will:

- Receive an adequate level of supervision and review of their work practices; [?]
- Be expected to have read and signed the Child Protection Policy Statement; [?]
- Be provided with child protection training. [?]

SECTION 7 – PRIMARY CARER INVOLVEMENT AND SHARING OF INFORMATION

We are committed to being open with all primary carers.

We undertake to:

- Make parents/carers aware of our child protection policy
- Inform parents/carers and schools of all activities and potential activities
- Issue contact/consent forms where relevant
- 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 parental/carer involvement 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/carers on an ongoing 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 duty social worker and, in an emergency, the gardai
- In the event of a complaint against a member of staff we will immediately ensure the safety of the child/young person and inform parents/carers as appropriate

SECTION 8 - INCIDENCES OF POOR PRACTICE AND ALLEGATIONS AGAINST AN STAFF/VOLUNTEER/ARTIST

In the event of an allegation against an employee/volunteer/artist:

There are two separate procedures to be followed:

1. The reporting procedure in respect of the child/young person
2. The procedure for dealing with the worker

The Director (Designated Liaison Officer) will deal with issues related to the child/young person. The Director will also deal with issues related to the worker.

- The first priority is to ensure that no child or young person is exposed to unnecessary risk
- If allegations are made against the Designated Liaison Officer then contact the Deputy Designated Liaison Officer

- The reporting procedures should then be followed. Parents/carers and children (age appropriate) should be informed of actions planned and taken.
- The employee/volunteer/artist will be informed as soon as possible
 - that an allegation has been made against him/her
 - the nature of the allegation
- The employee/volunteer/student should be given the opportunity to respond
- Inform the Chairperson/Head of the Organisation as soon as possible
- Any action following an allegation of abuse against an employee should be taken in consultation with Health Service Executive and Gardai.
- After consultation, chairperson/head of organisation will advise person accused and agreed procedures will be followed.

SECTION 9 - COMPLAINTS AND COMMENTS PROCEDURE

- Complaints/comments will be responded to within one week.
- The Marketing Manager and Production Coordinator have responsibility for directing complaints/comments to the Director.
- Verbal complaints will be logged and responded to at the time.

SECTION 10 - ACCIDENTS PROCEDURE

- Improvised Music Company must maintain an up-to-date register of the contact details of all children/young people involved in the organisation; ☐
- Children/young people's details should be cross-referenced between the incident book and le; ☐
- External organisations with whom Improvised Music Company has dealings must provide proof that they have public liability insurance; ☐
- First-aid boxes should be available and regularly re-stocked; ☐
- The location of the first-aid box(es) must be made known to staff; ☐
- Availability of first-aid should be in accordance with the Improvised Music Company's Health and Safety guidelines. The location of accident/incident books must be made known to staff; ☐
- Children and young people must be advised of risks of dangerous material; ☐
- Record details of risky equipment used and take steps to minimise risk; ☐
- Take cognisance of responsibility for first-aid on off-site trips. ☐

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Further Reading & Reference

- Children First, National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Department of Health and Children 2011.
- Our Duty of Care The Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young people, Department of Health and Children 1999
- Child Protection Guidelines Arts Council
- Code of Ethics Good Practice for Children's Sport, Irish Sports Council
- Code of Good Practice Child Protection for the Youth Work Sector, Dept. Education and Science 2003

Legislation relating to child protection and welfare:

- Child Care Act, 1991
- Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1992