

**Galway Community Circus**

# **Child Protection**

**Policies and Procedures**

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## **Introduction**

Underpinning all Child Protection procedures is a series of Child Safeguarding policies and procedures which guide the operation and lay out of how GCC protects the children utilising Galway Community Circus services.

GCC has Child Protection procedures in place to ensure good governance and internal controls, which will ensure the safety of all our members, staff and community who use our services. GCC has selected a number of policies and procedures that describes how we do this. They are reviewed and updated by the elected Board of Directors within the timeline stated on each policy.

**The policies** included here, set out the rules that the organisation and its employees follow in order to achieve complete transparency and compliance toward the company's Child Protection procedures.

The scope of GCC Child Protection Policies clarify the extent to which the organisation will set standards and commit to actions to ensure the safety of our most vulnerable stakeholders.

**The procedures** are the instructions on how a policy is followed. A policy defines a rule, and the procedure defines who is expected to do it and how they are expected to do it.

The management team in GCC are responsible for managing risks through maintaining an effective system of internal control and the board as a whole is responsible for reporting on it.

For effective governance within GCC our Child Protection policies and procedures are documented, communicated to all staff, reviewed regularly, and are embedded in our organisation.

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<b>Ref No:</b> CS 2025 - 01	<b>Title:</b> Child Safeguarding Statement	
<b>Date Issued:</b> 22/01/2026	<b>Review Date:</b> 2026	<b>Ref:</b> Children First Act 2015, Best Practice, Company Safeguarding policies. National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017)

**Name of service: Galway Community Circus**

**Nature of service and principles to safeguard children from harm:**

Galway Community Circus is Ireland's flagship organisation for youth and community partnership programmes (CPP) and has a local, national, and international remit. Our primary venue is located in Shantalla Galway City and another two satellite locations are in Galway East and Tuam County Galway.

Our aim is to advance the artistic, personal, and social development of young people through circus arts. We are committed to creating an innovative and imaginative learning experience where all young people can realize their full potential.

We work with young people aged 0-25 years. We are committed to working with all young people regardless of their social, economic, or geographical situation. We carry out a range of activities including weekly classes, workshops, performances, rehearsals, trips away and international exchanges.

**Objective:**

This Child Safeguarding Statement is a written statement that specifies the service being provided and the principles and procedures to be observed to ensure, as far as practicable, that a child availing of the service is safe from harm.

**Scope:**

The Safeguarding Statement applies to all of the following roles within Galway Community Circus;  
Staff, volunteers, students on placement and Board members. The Child Safeguarding Statement applies when working in Galway Community Circus locations / services / projects and while attending and working in other locations in the course of work for and/or on behalf of the organisation.

**Child Protection Statement**

The Board of Directors, C.E.O and all staff, contracted freelancers and volunteers of Galway Community Circus believe that the protection and welfare of children and young people are of paramount importance in our work as a youth arts organisation. Galway Community Circus' guiding principles aim to reassure workers, volunteers, families, children, young people and the wider community that Galway Community Circus is dedicated to safeguarding children and young people and that the welfare and protection of children and young people in our care is always the priority.

Galway Community Circus is committed to a youth-centered approach in our work. It is the policy of the organisation that all staff and volunteer leaders take all reasonable care to ensure that all children and young people involved in our services are protected from abuse of any kind. We undertake to provide a safe environment and positive experience, where the welfare of the young person is paramount. Such a policy is an invaluable tool in helping our staff involved in working with young people, to safeguard both the young person and themselves.

Galway Community Circus completed the Code of Practice for Good Governance of Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations in Ireland in 2017 and is in full compliance with the New Governance code. Our child protection policy and its guidelines are to be taken considering all other policies within the organisation relating to HR, Health and Safety, Welfare and Data Protection.

GCC’s policy is derived from and consistent with Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children; Children First Act 2015; A Guide for the Reporting of Child Protection and Welfare Concerns. Our fully trained designated liaison persons for child protection are:

Lynn Carroll DLP, 085 1117224, [lynn@galwaycircus.com](mailto:lynn@galwaycircus.com)  
 Anet Moore, Deputy DLP, [anet@galwaycircus.com](mailto:anet@galwaycircus.com)

**3. Risk Assessment**

Section 2 of the Children First Act 2015 defines harm as follows: ‘harm means in relation to a child– (a) assault, ill-treatment or neglect of the child in a manner that seriously affects, or is likely to seriously affect the child’s health, development or welfare, or (b) sexual abuse of the child.’

We have carried out an assessment of any potential harm to a child while availing of our services. Below is a list of the areas of risk identified and the list of procedures for managing these risks.

	<b>Risk identified</b>	<b>Procedure in place to manage identified risk</b>
1	Risk of harm not being recognised by youth Circus personnel (committee members, leaders, staff or volunteers)	Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm
2	Risk of harm not being reported properly and promptly by youth Circus personnel	All personnel are provided with procedures for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla. Including information on the role and responsibilities of the Designated Liaison Persons. These can be found in the Child Protection Policy.
3	Risk of young person being harmed by youth Circus personnel	Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers to work with children including procedure for Garda Vetting. Policy for the Supervision/ training and support of staff Code of conduct for Employees /volunteers

4	Risk of harm due to bullying of a young person	Anti-bullying policy Group Contract for Members
5	Risk of harm due to inadequate supervision of young people	Complying with Adult/Young People Ratios as outlined in the Child Care Act 1991, Schedule 6 ELC,SAC, Regulations 2016, 9 & 2018 Code of Conduct for staff/volunteers
6	Risk of harm due to inappropriate relationship/ communications between youth Circus personnel and a young person	Policy on Communications with young people - Child Protections policies / Tech Internet acceptable use policy Code of Conduct for Tutors / Volunteers/Employees
7	Risk of harm caused by youth Circus personnel communicating with young people in an inappropriate manner via social media, texting, digital device or other manner.	Policy on Communications with young people Tech Internet acceptable use policy
8	Risk of harm due to inappropriate use of images of young people	Policy on Use of Images – Child Protection Policy  To ensure the privacy and safeguarding of all children, parents, guardians & peers are asked not to take photographs or make recordings during circus classes
9	Risk of harm due to inappropriate use of young people’s personal data.	Confidentiality Policy Data Protection Policy

#### 4. Procedures

Our Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015 and in line with Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017). In addition to the procedures listed in our risk assessment, the following procedures support our intention to safeguard children and young people while they are availing of our service:

- Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child/ young person availing of our service
- Procedure for DLP (Designated Liaison Person) person. The relevant DLP for GCC is Lynn Carroll and Deputy Anet Moore.
- Complaints Policy/Procedures
- Disciplinary/Grievance Procedures
- Procedures for Trips Away
- Health and Safety Policy and Procedures
- Procedures on communication with parents / guardians regarding child safety issues.
- Guidelines on Dealing with Disruptive Behaviour

All procedures listed are available upon request

#### 5. Implementation


We recognise that implementation is an on-going process. Our service is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while availing of our service.

This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed in September 2026, or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

**Board Approval Date:**

22/01/2026

**Signature Chair of Board:**



<b>Ref No:</b> CS 2025 - 02	<b>Title:</b> <b>Child Protection Policy</b>	
<b>Date Issued:</b> 22/01/2026	<b>Review Date:</b> <b>2027</b>	<b>Ref #:</b> Best Practice, Tulsa, child and family Agency, The Arts Council of Ireland, Department of Children, Disability and Equality, European Commission.

**Scope:**

This policy applies to all Galway Community Circus Staff, Board, Participants, Parents, contractors, workers as defined under the Health and Safety Act and anyone visiting the Galway Community Centre on Circus business.

The Board of Directors, the C.E.O. and all staff and volunteers of Galway Community Circus believes that the protection and welfare of children and young people are of paramount importance in our work as a youth arts organisation. Galway Community Circus' guiding principles aim to reassure workers, volunteers, families, children, young people and the wider community that Galway Community Circus is dedicated to safeguarding children and young people and that the welfare and protection of children and young people in our care is always the priority.

Galway Community Circus is committed to a young-person centred approach in our work. It is the policy of the organisation that all staff and volunteer leaders take all reasonable care to ensure that all children and young people involved in its services are protected from abuse of any kind. GCC recognises the child's/youths right to be protected, treated with respect, listened to and to have their own views taken into consideration in all decisions affecting them. GCC seeks to ensure that no child or young person is disadvantaged or treated differently because of gender, social or ethnic background, family status, sexual orientation, religion or disability. We undertake to provide a safe environment and positive experience, where the welfare of the young person is paramount. Such a policy is an invaluable tool in helping our staff involved in working with young people, to safeguard both the young person and themselves.

Galway Community Circus has completed the Code of Practice for Good Governance of Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations in Ireland in 2017 and this child protection policy and its guidelines is to be taken, considering all other policies within the organisation relating to HR, Health and Safety, Welfare and Data Protection.

The Board of Directors commits to reviewing this Child Protection Policy and the Guidelines for Staff/Volunteers regarding Child Protection and Welfare every two years.

**SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION**

This policy and its guidelines are produced to prioritise the protection of the participating children/youth within the Circus and to support the staff in being able to deal effectively with matters relating to child protection and child welfare which they may encounter in their role. It is important to note that these guidelines are in place to serve as a tool for dealing with matters of child protection, if there is any doubt of necessary steps to take, staff must always speak with the Child Protection Designated Liaison Person (DLP) in the organisation. Seeking the help and support of these designated people is key in responding effectively to a child protection concern.

*This policy is derived from and consistent with Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017; Children First Act 2015; A Guide for the Reporting of Child Protection and Welfare Concerns.*

**Commitment to compliance with national legislation and policy**

Galway Community Circus' guiding principles intend to comply with national policy, current legislation and guidance. Copies of all legislation can be accessed at [www.irishstatutebook.ie](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie).

**Declaration of Guiding Principles**

At Galway Community Circus we provide weekly classes, workshops, performances, rehearsals, trips away and international exchanges for children and young people.

Our organisation believes that the safeguarding and protection of children and young people attending our services is paramount. Our guiding principles are underpinned by Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and current legislation such as the Children First Act 2015, Child Care Act 1991, Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 and the National Vetting Bureau Act 2012.

Our guiding principles apply to all paid staff, volunteers, committee/board members and students on work placement within our organisation. All committee/board members, staff, volunteers and students must sign up to and abide by these guiding principles and our child safeguarding procedures. We will review our guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures every two years or sooner if necessary due to service issues or changes in legislation or national policy.

Our Designated Liaison Person is Lynn Carroll [lynn@galwaycircus.com](mailto:lynn@galwaycircus.com)  
+353 85 111 7224

Our Deputy Designated Liaison Person is Anet Moore [anet@galwaycircus.com](mailto:anet@galwaycircus.com)

**Responsibility to Report Child Abuse or Neglect**

**1.1** Everyone must be alert to the possibility that children and young people with whom they are in contact with, may be suffering from abuse or neglect. It is an important responsibility. The Tusla Child and Family Agency should always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child/young person may have been or are at risk of being abused or neglected.

**1.2** Any reasonable concern or suspicion of abuse or neglect must elicit a response. Ignoring the signals or failing to intervene may result in ongoing or further harm to the child. Section 176 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006 introduced the criminal charge of reckless endangerment of children.

**Purpose of these Guidelines**

**2.1** These guidelines are for use by GCC staff in their role within the organisation. They are also for members/participants and parents to understand and have the information regarding Galway Community Circuses policies and procedures for Child Protection.

**2.2** The purpose of these guidelines is to:

- a)** Provide GCC staff with the basic information on the nature of child abuse and child welfare concerns
- b)** Inform staff on the procedures they should follow, in their roles when they are told that a case of child protection or welfare concern is occurring or has occurred, or they themselves witness it or are suspicious that it is occurring.
- c)** Ensure consistent best practice within GCC in responding to and recording of child protection or welfare concerns.
- d)** Provide Members/ Participants and Parents with essential information regarding Child Protection and the procedures they should follow if they are told that a case of child protection or welfare concern is occurring or has occurred, or they themselves witness it or are suspicious that it is occurring.

**2.3** All GCC staff/volunteers are garda vetted and receive mandatory training appropriate to their roles in relation to good practice in child welfare and protection and in the implementation of the organisations child protection policy and guidelines.

**2.4** Good Practice in relation to child protection and also in relation to how we go about our day to day work and interaction with young people in GCC will help minimise the risk of children and young people experiencing any form of child abuse within GCC itself. Therefore, the Code of Good Practice of GCC which supports these Guidelines provides the base for staff and volunteers in their preparation and planning for all interactions with young people.

## **SECTION 2: CHILD PROTECTION AND CHILD WELFARE CONCERNS**

Child abuse or neglect is unfortunately not a rare occurrence. Abusers can come from many different backgrounds and may be relations of the child or a young person's immediate family, strangers, people in positions of trust in relation to children or other young people themselves. Child abuse can occur in many different situations including in the home, in school, in youth activities and elsewhere.

This section outlines the principle type of child abuse and describes what might constitute a child welfare concern. It also looks at peer abuse and organised abuse.

### **1 Child Welfare Concerns & Child Protection Concerns**

#### ***Child Welfare Concerns***

**1.1** Often cases encountered are of a welfare nature and may not be recognised as obvious or deliberate, but the effect of the problem may have similarly negative consequences for the child and so needs to be responded to. It is equally important that we apply the same procedures to matters relating to the welfare of young people as well as that of abuse

Definition of Child Welfare Concern

*"A problem experienced directly by a child, or by the family of a child, that is seen to impact negatively on the child's welfare or development, which warrants assessment and support."* - HSE Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook

Examples may include:

- There may be a hygiene issue with the young person because of insufficient finances

of the parents/guardians to provide clean clothes for the young person.

- A series of concerns which when combined, creates an overall picture of the circumstance which the child may be living in.
- Young person has mental health issues and the parents/guardians are unable to meet their children's need and support is required.

### ***Child Protection Concerns***

**1.2** Child abuse occurs when a child is ill-treated in some manner and requires protection.

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect, physical abuse, sexual and emotional abuse. A child may be subject to one or more forms of abuse at any given time. More detail on each type of abuse is given below.

A staff member or volunteer could encounter a situation regarding child abuse in several ways including the following:

- A young person discloses to the staff/volunteer that he or she is being abused
- A young person discloses to a third party who in turn tells the staff/volunteer
- A staff member/volunteer leader overhears other young people discussing their concerns about a young person
- A staff member or volunteer leader witnesses the abuse
- A staff member becomes suspicious for some other significant reason such as unexplained injuries, especially if repeated, to a young person.
- A third party informs the staff member in confidence of his/her suspicions or concerns that a young person is being subjected to abuse.
- A staff member or volunteer leader witnesses signs of neglect over a period of time
- A person causing the abuse tells you.

## **2. Definitions of different types of Child Abuse**

### ***2.1 Definition of Neglect:***

Neglect can be defined in terms of an omission, where the child suffers significant harm and impairment of development by being deprived of such things as food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults and/or medical care.

Harm can be defined as the ill treatment or the impairment of the health and development of a child. Whether it is significant is determined by the child's health and development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a child of similar age.

Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period rather than at one specific point. For example, a child whose height or weight is significantly below average may be, being deprived of adequate nutrition.

The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that their wellbeing and/or development are severely affected.

### ***2.2 Definition of Physical Abuse***

Physical abuse of a child is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction, or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents.

Physical abuse can involve:

- Severe physical punishment
- Beating, slapping, hitting or kicking.
- Pushing, shaking or throwing.
- Pinching, biting, choking or hair pulling.
- Terrorising with threats
- Observing violence
- Use of excessive force in handling
- Deliberate poisoning
- Suffocation
- Fabricated/induced illness
- Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child.

### **2.3 Definition of Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another for their gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others. Examples of child abuse include:

- Exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of the 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 the involvement of the child in an act of masturbation.
- Sexual intercourse with the child, whether oral, vaginal or anal.
- Sexual exploitation of a child, which includes inciting, encouraging, propositioning, requiring or permitting a child to solicit for, or to engage in, prostitution or other sexual acts. Sexual exploitation also occurs when a child is involved in the exhibition, modelling or posing for the purposes of sexual arousal, gratification or a sexual act, including its recording (on film or other media), for the purposes of sexual gratification. This 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 underage person. In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that, for the purposes of the criminal law, the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years of age.

### **2.4 Definition of Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a parent/carer and child rather than in a specific pattern of events. It occurs when a child’s developmental need for affection, approval, consistency, and security are not met. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs/symptoms. It includes, for example, persistent criticism and sarcasm, unresponsiveness of the parent/carer, use of over harsh disciplinary measures and exposure to domestic violence. Other examples may include:

- The imposition of negative attributes on a child, expressed by persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming.
- Conditional parenting in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on his or her behaviour or actions.
- Premature imposition of responsibility on a child
- Under or over protection of a child

Emotional abuse can be manifested in terms of the child's behavioural, cognitive, affective or physical functioning. Examples of these include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement and oppositional behaviour. The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/carer.

### **2.5 Special Considerations**

There are a range of situations where abuse can occur, and it is imperative in the case of peer abuse or organised abuse as defined below that the response remains consistent and the procedures are adhered to.

### **2.6 Definition of Peer Abuse**

In some cases of child abuse the alleged perpetrator will also be a child. In a situation where child abuse is alleged to have been carried out by another young person, the child protection procedures must be adhered to for both the victim and the alleged abuser, that is, it should be considered a child care and protection issue for both children.

Abusive behaviour that is perpetrated by a young person must be acted upon. If there are any conflict of interest between the welfare of the alleged abuser and the victim, the victim's welfare is of paramount importance. It is known that some abusers begin abusing during childhood and adolescence, and that significant numbers will have suffered abuse themselves and that the abuse is likely to become progressively worse. Early referral and intervention are essential.

### **2.7 Definition of Organised Abuse**

Organised abuse occurs when either one person moves into an area or institution and systematically entraps children for abusive purposes or when two or more adults conspire to similarly abuse children, using inducements. Organised abuse can occur in different settings such as within an institution, the community, the family or extended family.

Wherever appropriate, any issues should be checked with the parents/guardians when considering whether a concern exists, unless doing so may further endanger the child or the person making the report.

Abuse is not always committed through personal contact with a child or young person, sometimes it is perpetrated through social media or the use of information and communication technology.

### **2.8: Members Over 18**

Galway Community Circus includes members aged over 18. We recognise and value the contribution made by senior members. Group rules apply to all members regardless of age. Consumption of alcohol/use of drugs is not permitted at Galway Community Circus by any member. We recognise our duty of care to members over 18 also. If a member over 18 has any concerns or issues, we will treat them as seriously and with the same sensitivity as we would those of younger members. We will follow the agreed internal reporting procedures with regard to any disclosure/suspicion of abuse involving a member over 18 but will first seek the consent of the victim. If it is felt that any child is still at risk from an alleged abuser, a report will be made to the HSE.

## **SECTION 3: RECOGNISING RISK OF CHILD PROTECTION OR WELFARE CONCERNS**

Child neglect or abuse can often be difficult to identify and may present in many forms. In some instances, a disclosure is made by an alleged victim of abuse or by a third party in relation to abuse. However, at other times a person may become suspicious of child neglect or abuse as a result of signs and symptoms they become aware of. A list of signs and symptoms as defined in *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 and the Children First Act 2015* can be referred to and it is important to note that no one indicator should be seen as conclusive in itself as abuse. All signs and symptoms must be examined in the context of the child's situation and family circumstances.

### **1. Guidelines for Recognition**

The ability to recognise child abuse can depend as much on a person's willingness to accept the possibility of its existence as it does on their knowledge and information. There are commonly three stages in the identification of child neglect or abuse:

- (a) Stage 1: Considering the possibility
- (b) Stage 2: Looking out for signs of neglect or abuse
- (c) Stage 3: Recording of information

#### ***Stage 1: Considering the possibility***

The possibility of child abuse should be considered if a child appears to have suffered a suspicious injury for which no reasonable explanation can be offered. It should also be considered if the child seems distressed without obvious reason or displays persistent or new behavioural problems. The possibility of child abuse should also be considered if the child displays unusual or fearful responses to parents/guardians/carers or older children. A pattern of ongoing neglect should also be considered even when there are short periods of improvement.

#### ***Stage 2: Looking out for signs of neglect or abuse***

Signs of neglect or abuse can be physical, behavioural or developmental. They can exist in the relationships between children and parents/carers or between children and other family members/other persons. A cluster or pattern of signs is more likely to be indicative of neglect or abuse. Children who are being abused may hint that they are being harmed and sometimes make direct disclosures. Disclosures should always be taken very seriously and should be acted upon.

#### ***Stage 3: Recording of information***

If neglect or abuse is suspected and to be acted upon it is important to establish the grounds for concern. Observations should be accurately recorded and should include dates, times, names and locations, context and any other information that may be relevant. All documentation relating to such information must be kept securely by the Designated Liaison Person (DLP).

***NOTE: GCC staff do not investigate child protection concerns or welfare concerns. We record what we see and hear and pass it on to the Tusla Child and Family Agency or to the Gardai in an emergency.***

### **2. Reasonable Grounds for Concern**

**2.1** The following extract from *Children's First* sets out examples, which are by no means an exhaustive list, of reasonable grounds for concern to report to the Tusla Child and Family Agency.

- (a) A specific indication from the young person that they were abused.
- (b) A specific indication from a third party that a young person was abused.
- (c) Evidence, such as an injury, of behaviour which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way.
- (d) Signs of injury which are consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way.
- (e) An injury or behaviour which is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but there are indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse. E.g. A pattern of injuries with an implausible explanation
- (f) Consistent indication, over a period, that a child is suffering from emotional and physical neglect.

### **2.2 Risk Factors for Consideration in Child Protection**

Alongside the signs and symptoms of abuse there may also be several known risk factors that need to be considered when responding to child protection concerns. Risk factors are features of a child's circumstances that are known to be associated with heightened risk to health, development and welfare. They can be grouped into four main domains: parent/caregiver factors, family factors, child factors, environmental factors. Other factors that need to be considered are:

- Age of the child
- Domestic violence/Sexual violence
- Parental mental health problems
- Parental substance misuse
- Parental intellectual disability
- Unknown partners
- Poverty and social exclusion

### **2.3 Considering whether there is a Welfare Concern**

Listed below are questions that may help staff when they are concerned about a child's or young person's welfare:

- Is the child or young person behaving normally for his or her age and stage of development?
- Does the child or young person present a change in behaviour?
- For how long has this behaviour been observed?
- How often does it occur? Where?
- Has something happened that explains the child's or young person's behaviour?
- Is the child or young person showing signs of distress?
- Does the behaviour restrict the child or young person socially?

## **SECTION 4: PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED BY STAFF IN RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION & WELFARE CONCERNS**

This section provides guidance to staff in Galway Community Circus who may be concerned about young people or children being at risk of abuse or neglect and how to appropriately respond.

In this instance, the term staff refers to paid staff members and full-time European Voluntary Service volunteers. All other volunteers who give their time on an occasional or one-off basis will follow the procedure set out in the Volunteer Policy of GCC.

**1. Procedures to be followed**

When a GCC staff member is told or becomes otherwise aware or suspicious that a young person/child may have been, is being or is at risk of being abused or neglected, they should consider the situation calmly and be guided by the paramountcy principle, that the young person’s protection and welfare must be the staff member’s over-riding concern. To abide by this principle staff must act confidentially and implement the following procedures:

- A.** Write down accurate notes as soon as possible.
- B.** Contact the designated liaison person in GCC
- C.** The designated person will decide, based on the information given by the staff member and on consultation with them:
  - Whether to make a report to the Child Protection Social Work Department and whether this will be a verbal and written report or just a written report.
- OR
- Whether the matter should be discussed informally with the Duty Social Worker.
- D.** Reporting (this step is to be carried out with the Designated Person or Deputy Designated Person in GCC)

If decision is to make a report:	If decision if not to report:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform parents, if appropriate</li> <li>• From your notes prepare the standard Tusla Reporting form even if a report has been submitted verbally</li> <li>• Submit the report to the local Tusla Child and Family Social Work Department</li> <li>• The designated child protection officer in GCC will keep a copy of the report on file securely.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note the reason for not reporting and keep securely alongside any other notes regarding protection and welfare concerns for the individual young person</li> <li>• Continue to record any additional worrying observations, suspicions or concerns in this file relating to Child Protection or child welfare matters. These notes could lead to a future report being made if necessary.</li> </ul>

**Note:** When Child protection concerns arise with a child/young person, the designated person will complete the internal reporting form for Child Protection/Child Welfare concerns in conjunction with the staff member and based on the written record of the matter. Any ongoing concerns, suspicions or disclosures should be recorded in this document. This document must be kept securely and only accessible by the designated child protection officer.

*Procedures to be followed (in detail):*

- A.** Write down accurate notes as soon as possible, on everything that is relevant
  - Record all facts that support your concerns
  - Stick to the facts of what you have seen and heard, no opinions necessary.
  - Do not try to interpret the situation
  - Be as concrete and specific as possible in establishing the basis for your concern
  - Write down as accurately as possible what you were told

- Write specifically where, when and by whom you were told it.
- Write, if possible, the exact words used by the person.
- Write down as accurately and specifically as possible anything you observed and when and where you observed it.
- Submit any notes to the DP who will complete the internal reporting form and file it securely.

It is important to note that unlike a disclosure, a suspicion or concern may be arrived at over a period and this is why all worrying concerns or observations should be recorded.

**B.** Contact the designated Child Protection Officer in GCC as soon as possible. The matter should be discussed in confidence and it is to help the staff member clarify what they have seen or heard and to offer support to the staff member and in the steps in responding to the concern. The matter should not be discussed with any other persons any further.

If the designated person is unavailable, please contact the Deputy.

**C.** The designated person will decide, based on the information given by the staff member and on consultation with him/her, if a report is to be made or not

The designated person will decide if the matter will be reported to Tusla duty social worker, unless you both conclude that there is no definite knowledge or reasonable grounds for concern of child protection or a child welfare issue.

In conjunction with the designated person, the internal reporting form for child protection or welfare concerns is to be completed and stored in a secure location by the designated person.

If only one of you concludes that there is definite knowledge or reasonable grounds for concern of abuse of a child welfare issue, then the report should be made. A staff member should never be instructed not to make a report.

For the designated person, the process of deciding to report or not may involve an informal consultation with the duty social worker by the designated person. If this is necessary, phone the relevant contact number and make it clear that you want to have an informal consultation in confidence, describe what you have seen and heard. If the duty social worker believes there is reasonable grounds for concern, the DP will make a formal report. Make a record of the consultation and any decisions arising out of it.

It is important to remember here that the GCC designated Child protection officer or staff have no function in investigating child protection matters. If the duty social worker does not consider that the matter needs to be reported, but you still have concerns, you should record this in the individual files opened for that young person and the outcome of your discussions with the social worker.

If you still think a report should be made, then do so on the basis of the paramourncy principle and the overriding concern for the young person and the risk they are in or the potential risk that may be apparent.

**D. Making a decision**

If the decision is made not to report the matter to Tusla:

Note the reason for not making a report to Tusla in the internal reporting form. Continue to record any worrying observations, suspicions, concerns or behavioural changes in the internal reporting document. This may lead to a future report being made.

If the decision is made to report the matter:

The designated person will decide if it is appropriate to inform the parents/guardians and will take responsibility for this. If you suspect child abuse or neglect and are making a report to TUSLA, the parents/guardians of the child should be informed unless doing so is likely to endanger the child. The DP will take advice from the Duty Social Worker in deciding on whether to inform the parents or not.

**Guidance for the Designated Person in completing the standard reporting form for reporting Child protection and/or welfare concerns.**

- a. For any sections which you do not have the information, please indicate this by putting a line through the question
- b. Submit a cover letter with the report form marking both the cover letter and envelope private and confidential. The cover letter may note any comments you wish to make regarding the disclosure of the referral source.
- c. TUSLA should also be asked in writing to acknowledge receipt of the report.
- d. File a copy of the report in and store securely.
- e. The DP will inform the relevant staff member or volunteer if a report has been made to Tusla.

**E. After a report is submitted**

After a report has been submitted, leave the matter be, apart from:

- Any necessary contact with Tusla regarding the matter
- Being available to listen to and reassure the young person as appropriate
- Maintaining contact with the designated person to acquire support for yourself.
- Any additional and/or ongoing concern, in which case report the matter using the same procedures.

**3. Dealing with Emergency Situations**

An emergency is one in which a child or young person's immediate safety is deemed to be at risk. In circumstances where a child's or young person's immediate safety is deemed to be at risk, the staff member must make contact with the DLP and maintain regular contact.

Under no circumstances should a child be left in a situation that exposes them to harm or to risk of harm pending an intervention by the relevant authority. Therefore, follow the procedures outlined below if an immediate threat to safety is apparent.

It is important to note here that if an emergency situation arises out of office hours of the duty social work team, the An Garda Síochána should be contacted.

- **Procedure to be followed in an Emergency Situation**

Reassure the young person first and take necessary steps to make them feel safe and comfortable.

Immediately contact the DLP and tell them what has happened. Take steps to ensure that the young person does not overhear the conversation. The designated person will instruct or assist in dealing with the situation and will make any calls to the duty social worker or parents / guardians.

SAFE for the young person to go home	UNSAFE for the young person to go home
<p>-With the designated person, decide if it is appropriate to inform the parents about the matter. You may need to consult with the duty social worker or a Garda before making a decision</p> <p>- As soon as possible after the young person is safely home, the DP will prepare the standard TUSLA form, submit it and file a copy securely.</p>	<p>- Discuss a course of action with the duty social work or Garda</p> <p>- It is important to handle the situation as sensitively as possible by giving due consideration to the welfare of the young person</p> <p>- If a young person does have to be taken to a place of safety by someone they don't know, you should remain with them until they have had a chance to become more comfortable with the social worker or Garda. When you do have to leave, reassure the young person that you will continue to be available to listen to and reassure them where possible.</p> <p>- As soon as possible after the young person is safe the DP will prepare the standard TUSLA form, submit it and file a copy securely.</p>

- **Follow up with an Emergency Situation**

It may be appropriate to arrange to check in with the young person later that day or the next day either by phone or in person. The designated person will decide what is appropriate here for the staff member and in the best interest of the young person.

After completing the above and following the procedures, leave the matter be, apart from:

- (a) Any necessary contact with the Gardai or the Tusla Social work department
- (b) Being available to listen to and reassure the young person as appropriate
- (c) Maintaining contact with the designated person to acquire support for yourself.
- (d) Any additional and/or ongoing concern, in which case the matter should be reported using the same procedures as above.

**4. Dealing with an allegation against another GCC staff member or volunteer.**

All allegations against staff or volunteers who work with children and young people must be reported to the DLP. The same reporting procedures, as outlined above will be applied to these allegations.

**5. Dealing with Retrospective Disclosures**

An increasing number of adults are disclosing abuse that took place in their childhoods. The National Counselling Service is in place to listen to, value and understand those who have been abused in childhood. This service is professional, confidential and free of charge in all regions of the country and can be accessed by self-referral. (Freephone 1800477477).

If it was felt by a GCC staff member that, arising from a retrospective disclosure by an adult to the staff member, there is any risk to a child or young person who may be in contact with an alleged abuser, the allegation must be reported to Tusla Child and Family agency without delay following the same reporting procedures outlined above.

A concern about a potential risk to children posed by a specific person, even if the children are unidentifiable, should also be communicated to the TUSLA Child and Family agency.

## **6. Common Difficulties in dealing with Child Abuse**

Dealing with child abuse is rarely straightforward. Many complications can arise including the following:

- (a) Disclosure is made and then withdrawn
- (b) The child or young person makes a disclosure to a staff member and then attempts to swear them to secrecy.
- (c) The child and young person threatens self-harm if the staff/volunteer tells anyone else
- (d) The child or young person will often seek to protect and even express love and concern for his/her abuser.

Despite these complications and difficulties, the staff member must always follow the procedures set out in these guidelines.

## **7. Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is about managing sensitive information that arises in a trusting relationship and doing so in a manner that is respectful, professional and purposeful.

GCC is committed to ensuring people's rights to confidentiality. However in relation to child protection and welfare it is important that:

- Information will only be shared on a need to know basis in order to safeguard the young person.
- Giving such information to others for the protection of a child or young person is not a breach of confidentiality
- The provision of information to the statutory agencies for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality or data protection
- No guarantee of confidentiality is given where the best interests of the child or young person is at risk
- Parents and children have a right to know if personal information is being shared, unless doing so could put the child at further risk.

## **Summary of Do's and Don'ts regarding child abuse and child welfare concerns**

**DO** write down accurate notes based on what you have heard and observed

**DO** discuss the matter in confidence with the DLP  
**DO** report the matter to the TUSLA Child protection social work Department unless both you and the designated person conclude that reasonable grounds for concern do not exist.  
**DO** treat the matter in the strictest confidence  
**DON'T** make accusations or allegations against anyone  
**DON'T** investigate any alleged instances or suspected instances of child abuse or child welfare concerns  
**DON'T** attempt to diagnose cases of child abuse  
**DON'T** make promises that cannot be kept, for example, a promise not to tell anyone.

## **SECTION 5: RESPONDING TO AND SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE, VOLUNTEERS, PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND STAFF**

Galway Community Circus aims to provide a safe space for children and young people where they may feel more comfortable talking about any concerns and difficulties in their lives than in other settings.

### **1. Responding to a child or young person who discloses abuse**

A young person may disclose an abuse/abuses perpetrated against them. It is essential that they feel supported in what may be an extremely traumatic experience for them. The act of disclosing is a huge act of trust and must be treated with respect, sensitivity and care. A child or young person may allege or disclose abuse or a welfare concern to any adult leader during their work with them. For this reason, all adults involved in the organisation need to be aware of the possibility and familiar with these guidelines on handling a disclosure.

The following advice on handling a disclosure of abuse is adapted from ***Children First Act 2015***.

- React calmly, create an atmosphere of trust and openness with the young person.
- Be aware that disclosures can be very difficult for the child or young person. The child or young person may be under severe emotional distress and you are being approached because you are trusted.
- Listen carefully and attentively; take the young person seriously and give them time and opportunity to tell as much as they are able to. Allow them to disclose at their own pace and in their own language.
- Reassure the young person that they have taken the right action in telling. Accept what the child or young person has to say.
- Conceal all signs of disgust, anger or disbelief. It is important to avoid expressing any judgement on, or anger towards, the alleged perpetrator while talking with the child or young person.
- Do not make promises that cannot be kept, particularly regarding secrecy. Instead tell the child or young person that have being given the information you are obliged to pass on the information in your duty to care for them and to protect and support them.

When asking questions:

- Questions should be supportive and for the purpose of clarification only
- Do not ask the young person to repeat the story unnecessarily
- Be supportive, but do not ask leading questions or seek intimate details beyond those volunteered by the child. Check with the young person to ensure that what has been heard and understood by you is accurate.

NOTE: Important Points to Remember If you receive a disclosure of abuse or have a suspicion of abuse

1. The wellbeing of the young person is the most important consideration
2. The one thing you must not do is nothing.
3. Never attempt to confront an alleged abuser.
4. Do not investigate yourself. This is the job of the Child and Family Agency and/or Gardai.

## **2. Supporting the Child or Young Person after a disclosure**

It is important for staff to consider how to support a child or a young person after a disclosure or allegation of abuse or a welfare concern. Disclosure is a huge step for a child or young person. It is important that the staff member continues in an appropriate supportive relationship with the child or young person. This includes:

- Keeping in contact with the child or young person and maintaining a positive relationship with them
- Keeping in touch with the child or young person's family if appropriate
- Keeping lines of communication open by listening carefully to the child or young person while being sensitive to the vulnerability they may feel
- Continuing to include the child or young person in the usual activities.
- Being aware of support services which they could access, and to refer the young person to as necessary.

## **3. Supporting a volunteer in dealing with child protection or welfare concerns**

**3.1** In some instances a child or young person may make a disclosure of child abuse or a child welfare concern to a volunteer adult leader in GCC. Equally a suspicion or concern may arise over a period of time for a volunteer. In these instances, the volunteer will contact the DLP and procedures will be followed as set out.

**3.2** For the DLP, there are some guidelines here in assisting volunteers in making a report and dealing with a disclosure.

**(a)** The DLP should be mindful that the volunteer may have concerns regarding their own position in the situation. The alleged abuser may be known to the volunteer and the young person may be a neighbour's child or relative. This can lead to feelings of conflict about reporting for a volunteer.

**(b)** The DLP should listen to and empathise with the volunteer on all of this, checking how the volunteer is feeling about what he/she has heard and about the need to report it. Feeling of fear, shock and anger may be surfacing and the volunteer may need space and time to talk through this.

**(c)** The DLP should remind them gently but clearly that despite any reservations they may have, the protection of the young person comes first, and so the child protection policy must be followed which may or may not lead to a report.

**(d)** The DLP can offer to facilitate the volunteer to write their notes by asking questions to help them order and clarify their memories. Also, volunteers should be reassured that they do not have to deal with the matter alone.

**(e)** The DLP will decide whether to report the matter to the Duty Social Worker without delay, unless concluded that there is no definite knowledge or reasonable grounds for concern of child protection of a child welfare issue.

**(f)** In the case where a decision is made to report, the DLP will decide on whether it is appropriate to inform the parents/guardians of the child or young person that a report will be or has been made. If a decision is reached not to inform parents/guardians due to perceived risk to the child or young person or to the volunteer themselves, then this needs to be notified to TUSLA. If parents/guardians are to be informed the DLP will take responsibility for this.

**(g)** The DLP will take responsibility for completing the standard report form and will ensure the volunteer knows, understands and accepts the confidentiality involved in the situation.

**(h)** Staff will remind the volunteer not to ask more questions of the young person but to be available to listen to them if they wish.

**(i)** Staff will inform the volunteer that once the report is made to TUSLA that their part is largely over, and they must leave it to the statutory authorities to respond to the report. However, if they remain concerned or if other issues arise they should contact the DLP.

#### **4. Guidelines on Speaking to Parents/Guardians about a TUSLA report**

Children First Act 2015: Please note that in an emergency situation, where you believe the child is at risk of immediate harm, you should contact Tusla without delay before making a written report. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a situation that exposes them to harm or risk of harm, while waiting for Tusla to intervene. If you think the child is in immediate danger and you cannot contact Tusla, you should contact An Garda Síochána.

In such an emergency situation, The DLP must follow up with a mandated report to Tusla within three days.

**Note: Confidentiality should never be used as a reason not to report child abuse.**

The DLP takes responsibility for informing a parent about a child protection concern/report. The DLP must discuss the situation with the Welfare committee or Deputy Designated liaison Person (DDL) before they inform a parent about a child protection report, to ascertain whether they are putting themselves or a young person in any danger. The DLP will liaise with the Child and Family Agency before informing a parent. If a decision is taken to go ahead and inform the parents/primary carers, the duty social worker can advise the DLP on the best way to do so.

The DLP should keep in mind any knowledge they have of the family and the information the young person has provided regarding the family. They should consider some of the following:

- What is the existing relationship with the parents?
- What are the perceived possible responses from the parents?
- Are there likely to be any communication difficulties or conflict?

When informing parents, it is important to:

- Be clear, honest and constructive
- Explain that the decision to report is based on a genuine concern for the welfare of the child

- Express the hope that the child and the family will get the necessary help and support they need
- Continue to liaise with the Child and Family Agency.

### **5. Supporting Staff in dealing with child protection or welfare concern**

A child protection concern can be difficult for a staff member and it is important that the staff member is supported effectively and appropriately.

The DLP along with the welfare committee should provide the following support to a staff member making a Child Protection report:

- Being available to listen to the staff member and helping them talk through the disclosure
- Advising on the best course of action in an emergency situation.
- Reminding the staff member to make notes based on a factual account.
- The DLP should use all information from the staff member when deciding on informing parents/guardians about the matter and how best to do that.
- Reassurance that the staff member has followed the procedure correctly.
- support and supervision in relation to the disclosure and any consequences relating to it.

## **SECTION 6: THE LEGAL POSITION, LEGISLATION AND KEY AGENCIES**

### **1 The Legal Position**

**1.1** Should a GCC staff member or volunteer make a report or furnish information with regard to suspicions or an allegation of child abuse to the appropriate person, such communication is privileged. Privilege in this case means immunity from civil liability. This means that they will not be liable in damages in respect of that communication if they acted reasonably and in good faith in forming the opinion and communicating it to the appropriate person, namely the DLP.

**1.2** Those making a report should not accuse or bring a charge but merely pass on a report. They are expected to act in the best's interests of the young person.

**1.3** Privilege can be displaced where it is established that the person making the report acted maliciously or recklessly. The Protection of Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1988 also creates a new criminal offence of false reporting of child abuse where a person makes a report of child abuse to the appropriate authorities knowing that statement to be false.

**1.4** In very rare circumstances there is a possibility that parties reporting suspicions of child abuse under these guidelines would be required to attend court in the event of civil or criminal proceedings arising. The circumstances of a particular case may result in such a situation. In all cases, the DLP must consult with the welfare committee of the Board and where appropriate the Chairperson of the Board of Directors, for further guidance and advice in the event of being requested to give evidence in civil or criminal proceedings relating to abuse cases which affect or involve GCC.

**1.5** Please note that GCC, in providing guidelines on the legal position, does not attempt to give legal advice in relation to these issues. Parties with a legal query should seek appropriate legal advice on the issues concerned.

## **2 Relevant Legislation**

There is a range of guidance and legislation underpinning who should take action, what the action should be and when it should be taken in child protection and child welfare concerns. Some of the key legislation is outlined below in an extract from Children First 2015.

### **2.1 Protection for Persons reporting Child Abuse Act 1998**

The Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 makes provision for the protection from civil liability of persons who have communicated child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to designated officers of the Child and Family Services or to any member of An Garda Síochána. This protection applies to organisations as well as to individuals. This means that even if a communicated suspicion of child abuse proves unfounded, a plaintiff who took an action would have to prove that the person who communicated the concern had not acted reasonably and in good faith in making the report.

A person who makes a report in good faith and in the child's best interests may also be protected under common law by the defence of qualified privilege.

### **2.2 Freedom of information**

Notwithstanding the requirement of all professionals involved in child protection and welfare cases to share relevant information, records are nevertheless confidential. They do not belong to individuals (except for independent practitioners) and are the property of the organisations that keep them. Under The Freedom of Information Act 2014, members of the public have a right of access to records concerning them held by any public body and a right to have official information about themselves amended where it is incorrect, incomplete or misleading. Members of the public also have a right to be given reasons for decisions made concerning themselves. Requests to see records are processed in the first instance through the public body that holds the records. In the event of refusal of access, the decision may be appealed, and the ultimate arbiter is the Information Commissioner. At present, these Acts apply to the Child and Family Agency, but not to An Garda Síochána.

### **2.3 Data Protection Act 2018**

The Data Protection Act 2018, afford similar rights to individuals to access personal data held about them by any entity whether in the public or private sector. The right to access applies to records held by the Child and Family Agency and An Garda Síochána. However, the right to access does not apply in a range of circumstances that may be relevant in a child welfare context. Equally, the right of access does not extend to any information that identifies a third party where that third party had an expectation of confidence. Accordingly, it would not be necessary to provide any information that would identify a person making a child welfare report in response to a request under the Data Protection Acts.

### **2.4 Children Act 2001**

The Children Act 2001 replaced provisions of the Children Act 1908 and associated legislation with a modern comprehensive statute. The 2001 Act covers three main areas of the law. Firstly, it provides a framework for the development of the juvenile justice system. Secondly, it re-enacts and updates provisions in the 1908 Act protecting children against persons who have the custody, charge or care of them. Thirdly, it provides for family welfare conferences and other new provisions for dealing with children where there is a real and substantial risk to their life, health, safety, welfare and development.

### **2.5 Child Care Act 1991**

The purpose of the Child Care Act 1991 is to update the law in relation to the care of children who have been assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused or who are at risk.

The main provision of the Act are:

- (a)** The placing of a statutory duty on the HSE to promote the welfare of children who are not receiving adequate care and protection up to the age of 18.
- (b)** The strengthening of the powers of the HSE to provide childcare and family support service.
- (c)** The improvement of the procedures to facilitate immediate intervention by the HSE and An Garda Siochana where children are in danger
- (d)** The revision of the provisions to enable the Courts to place children who have been, are being or are likely to be assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused or the child's health, development or welfare has been, is being or is likely to be avoidably impaired or neglected, in the care of or under the supervision of the HSE
- (e)** The introduction of arrangements for the supervision and inspection of pre-school services
- (f)** The revision of provisions in relation to the registration and inspection of residential centres for children

## **2.6 CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT 2011 -REVISED- Updated to 1 October 2015**

Section 176 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006, CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT 2011- REVISED Updated to 1 October 2015, introduced the criminal charge of reckless endangerment of children. It states:

'A person, having authority or control over a child, who intentionally or recklessly endangers a child by -

- (a)** Causing or permitting any child to be placed or left in a situation which creates a substantial risk to the child of being a victim of serious harm or sexual abuse, or
- (b)** Failing to take reasonable steps to protect a child from such a risk while knowing that the child is in such a situation, is guilty of an offence.'

The penalty for a person found guilty of this is a fine (no upper limit) and/or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years.

## **3. Key Agencies**

TUSLA the Child and Family Agency. The Child Protection & Welfare Agency has a primary responsibility to promote the safety and well-being of children. The term "Children First" was originally used in relation to Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, first published in 1999 and reviewed and updated on a number of occasions since then, most recently in 2017. Since the enactment of the Children First Act 2015, the term is now a generic term used to encompass the guidance, the legislation and the implementation of both. Children First relates to the recognition of child abuse and neglect, the reporting of same to Tusla - Child and Family Agency, and the best practice which organisations should adhere to, to keep children safe while availing of their services. Non-statutory obligations for all persons coming into contact with children are set out in the Children First Guidance, and the Children First Act 2015 sets out additional statutory obligations for defined categories of persons and for organisations providing relevant services to children.

An Garda Siochana are another of the key agencies that are empowered by law to carry out assessments and investigations of suspected child abuse and neglect. Each agency manages

the responsibility within its brief and their joint efforts are designed to ensure that the protection of vulnerable children and young people receive priority attention.

#### **4. Designated Liaison Person (DLP) for Child protection**

In GCC for its staff and volunteers, if a child protection or child welfare concern arises the point of contact is the Designated Liaison Person (DLP).

The role of the DLP is to manage a child protection concern including:

- Receiving and considering a child protection concern from staff and volunteers
- Making a report directly to TUSLA
- Supporting implementation of GCC's child protection policies
- Maintaining confidential records and ensure adherence to best practice in keeping with record keeping guidelines
- Facilitating staff training opportunities
- Providing information and advice
- Keeping up to date on relevant policy and legislation

**Board Approval Date:**

22/01/2026

**Signature Chair of Board:**



## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Terminology and Definitions used**

#### **Designated Liaison Person (DLP)**

A Child Protection Designated Liaison Person has been appointed by the organisation. The Designated Liaison Person acts as a resource to any young person, staff member and volunteer who have Child Protection concerns. All dealings of a Child Protection nature go through the Designated Liaison Person who in turn may make a referral to the Child and Family Agency or Gardaí.

#### **Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLDP)**

Deputy Designated Liaison Person has also been nominated by the organisation in the event or occurrence of the Designated Liaison Person for Child Protection being unavailable. The Deputy is a member of the welfare committee with the Board of Directors.

#### **Welfare Committee**

Galway Community Circus has a welfare subcommittee with the board of directors which is comprised of Senior Management and two Board members. The Designated Liaison Person can come to this committee for support in dealing with child protection matters as they arise.

## APPENDIX 2

### Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse

#### 1. Signs and symptoms of neglect

Child neglect is the most common category of abuse. A distinction can be made between 'wilful' neglect and 'circumstantial' neglect. 'Wilful' neglect would generally incorporate a direct and deliberate deprivation by a parent/carer of a child's most basic needs, e.g. withdrawal of food, shelter, warmth, clothing, contact with others. 'Circumstantial' neglect more often may be due to stress/inability to cope by parents or carers.

Neglect is closely correlated with low socio-economic factors and corresponding physical deprivations. It is also related to parental incapacity due to learning disability, addictions or psychological disturbance.

The neglect of children is 'usually a passive form of abuse involving omission rather than acts of commission' (Skuse and Bentovim, 1994). It comprises 'both a lack of physical caretaking and supervision and a failure to fulfil the developmental needs of the child in terms of cognitive stimulation'.

Child neglect should be suspected in cases of:

- abandonment or desertion;
- children persistently being left alone without adequate care and supervision;
- malnourishment, lacking food, inappropriate food or erratic feeding;
- lack of warmth;
- lack of adequate clothing;
- inattention to basic hygiene;
- lack of protection and exposure to danger, including moral danger or lack of supervision appropriate to the child's age;
- persistent failure to attend school;
- non-organic failure to thrive, i.e. child not gaining weight due not only to malnutrition but also to emotional deprivation;
- failure to provide adequate care for the child's medical and developmental problems;
- exploited, overworked.

#### 2. Characteristics of neglect

Child neglect is the most frequent category of abuse, both in Ireland and internationally. In addition to being the most frequently reported type of abuse; neglect is also recognised as being the most harmful. Not only does neglect generally last throughout a childhood, it also has long-term consequences into adult life. Children are more likely to die from chronic neglect than from one instance of physical abuse. It is well established that severe neglect in infancy has a serious negative impact on brain development.

Neglect is associated with, but not necessarily caused by, poverty. It is strongly correlated with parental substance misuse, domestic violence and parental mental illness and disability.

Neglect may be categorised into different types (adapted from Dubowitz, 1999):

- **Disorganised/chaotic neglect:** This is typically where parenting is inconsistent and is often found in disorganised and crises-prone families. The quality of parenting is inconsistent, with a lack of certainty and routine, often resulting in emergencies regarding accommodation, finances and food. This type of neglect results in attachment disorders, promotes anxiety in children and leads to disruptive and attention-seeking behaviour, with older children proving more difficult to control and discipline. The home may be unsafe from accidental harm, with a high incident of accidents occurring.
- **Depressed or passive neglect:** This type of neglect fits the common stereotype and is often characterised by bleak and bare accommodation, without material comfort, and with poor hygiene and little if any social and psychological stimulation. The household will have few toys and those that are there may be broken, dirty or inappropriate for age. Young children will spend long periods in cots, playpens or pushchairs. There is often a lack of food, inadequate bedding and no clean clothes. There can be a sense of hopelessness, coupled with ambivalence about improving the household situation. In such environments, children frequently are absent from school and have poor homework routines. Children subject to these circumstances are at risk of major developmental delay.
- **Chronic deprivation:** This is most likely to occur where there is the absence of a key attachment figure. It is most often found in large institutions where infants and children may be physically well cared for, but where there is no opportunity to form an attachment with an individual carer. In these situations, children are dealt with by a range of adults and their needs are seen as part of the demands of a group of children. This form of deprivation will also be associated with poor stimulation and can result in serious developmental delays

The following points illustrate the consequences of different types of neglect for children:

- inadequate food – failure to develop;
- household hazards – accidents;
- lack of hygiene – health and social problems;
- lack of attention to health – disease;
- inadequate mental health care – suicide or delinquency;
- inadequate emotional care – behaviour and educational;
- inadequate supervision – risk-taking behaviour;
- unstable relationship – attachment problems;
- unstable living conditions – behaviour and anxiety, risk of accidents;
- exposure to domestic violence – behaviour, physical and mental health;
- community violence – anti social behaviour.

### **3. Signs and symptoms of emotional neglect and abuse**

Emotional neglect and abuse is found typically in a home lacking in emotional warmth. It is not necessarily associated with physical deprivation. The emotional needs of the children are not

met; the parent's relationship to the child may be without empathy and devoid of emotional responsiveness.

Emotional neglect and abuse occurs when adults responsible for taking care of children are unaware of and unable (for a range of reasons) to meet their children's emotional and developmental needs. Emotional neglect and abuse is not easy to recognise because the effects are not easily observable. Skuse (1989) states that 'emotional abuse refers to the habitual verbal harassment of a child by disparagement, criticism, threat and ridicule, and the inversion of love, whereby verbal and non-verbal means of rejection and withdrawal are substituted'.

Emotional neglect and abuse can be identified with reference to the indices listed below. However, it should be noted that no one indicator is conclusive of emotional abuse. In the case of emotional abuse and neglect, it is more likely to impact negatively on a child where there is a cluster of indices, where these are persistent over time and where there is a lack of other protective factors.

- rejection;
- lack of comfort and love;
- lack of attachment;
- lack of proper stimulation (e.g. fun and play);
- lack of continuity of care (e.g. frequent moves, particularly unplanned);
- continuous lack of praise and encouragement;
- serious over-protectiveness;
- inappropriate non-physical punishment (e.g. locking in bedrooms);
- family conflicts and/or violence;
- every child who is abused sexually, physically or neglected is also emotionally abused;
- inappropriate expectations of a child relative to his/her age and stage of development.

Children who are physically and sexually abused and neglected also suffer from emotional abuse.

#### **4. Signs and symptoms of physical abuse**

Unsatisfactory explanations, varying explanations, frequency and clustering for the following events are high indices for concern regarding physical abuse:

- bruises (see below for more detail);
- fractures;
- swollen joints;
- burns/scalds (see below for more detail);
- abrasions/lacerations;
- haemorrhages (retinal, subdural);
- damage to body organs;
- poisonings – repeated (prescribed drugs, alcohol);
- failure to thrive;
- coma/unconsciousness;
- death.

There are many different forms of physical abuse, but skin, mouth and bone injuries are the most common.

## **Bruises**

### *Accidental*

Accidental bruises are common at places on the body where bone is fairly close to the skin. Bruises can also be found towards the front of the body, as the child usually will fall forwards.

Accidental bruises are common on the chin, nose, forehead, elbow, knees and shins. An accident-prone child can have frequent bruises in these areas. Such bruises will be diffuse, with no definite edges. Any bruising on a child before the age of mobility must be treated with concern.

### *Non-accidental*

Bruises caused by physical abuse are more likely to occur on soft tissues, e.g. cheek, buttocks, lower back, back, thighs, calves, neck, genitalia and mouth. Marks from slapping or grabbing may form a distinctive pattern. Slap marks might occur on buttocks/cheeks and the outlining of fingers may be seen on any part of the body. Bruises caused by direct blows with a fist have no definite pattern, but may occur in parts of the body that do not usually receive injuries by accident. A punch over the eye (black eye syndrome) or ear would be of concern. Black eyes cannot be caused by a fall on to a flat surface. Two black eyes require two injuries and must always be suspect. Other distinctive patterns of bruising may be left by the use of straps, belts, sticks and feet. The outline of the object may be left on the child in a bruise on areas such as the back or thighs (areas covered by clothing).

Bruises may be associated with shaking, which can cause serious hidden bleeding and bruising inside the skull. Any bruising around the neck is suspicious since it is very unlikely to be accidentally acquired. Other injuries may feature – ruptured eardrum/fractured skull. Mouth injury may be a cause of concern, e.g. torn mouth (frenulum) from forced bottlefeeding.

## **Bone injuries**

Children regularly have accidents that result in fractures. However, children's bones are more flexible than those of adults and the children themselves are lighter, so a fracture, particularly of the skull, usually signifies that considerable force has been applied.

### *Non-accidental*

A fracture of any sort should be regarded as suspicious in a child under 8 months of age. A fracture of the skull must be regarded as particularly suspicious in a child under 3 years. Either case requires careful investigation as to the circumstances in which the fracture occurred. Swelling in the head or drowsiness may also indicate injury.

## **Burns**

Children who have accidental burns usually have a hot liquid splashed on them by spilling or have come into contact with a hot object. The history that parents give is usually in keeping with the pattern of injury observed. However, repeated episodes may suggest inadequate care and attention to safety within the house.

### *Non-accidental*

Children who have received non-accidental burns may exhibit a pattern that is not adequately explained by parents. The child may have been immersed in a hot liquid. The burn may show a definite line, unlike the type seen in accidental splashing. The child may also have been held against a hot object, like a radiator or a ring of a cooker, leaving distinctive marks. Cigarette burns may result in multiple small lesions in places on the skin that would not generally be exposed to danger. There may be other skin conditions that can cause similar patterns and expert paediatric advice should be sought.

### **Bites**

Children can get bitten either by animals or humans. Animal bites (e.g. dogs) commonly puncture and tear the skin, and usually the history is definite. Small children can also bite other children.

#### *Non-accidental*

It is sometimes hard to differentiate between the bites of adults and children since measurements can be inaccurate. Any suspected adult bite mark must be taken very seriously. Consultant paediatricians may liaise with dental colleagues in order to identify marks correctly.

### **Poisoning**

Children may commonly take medicines or chemicals that are dangerous and potentially life-threatening. Aspects of care and safety within the home need to be considered with each event.

#### *Non-accidental*

Non-accidental poisoning can occur and may be difficult to identify, but should be suspected in bizarre or recurrent episodes and when more than one child is involved. Drowsiness or hyperventilation may be a symptom.

### **Shaking violently**

Shaking is a frequent cause of brain damage in very young children.

### **Fabricated/induced illness**

This occurs where parents, usually the mother (according to current research and case experience), fabricate stories of illness about their child or cause physical signs of illness. This can occur where the parent secretly administers dangerous drugs or other poisonous substances to the child or by smothering. The symptoms that alert to the possibility of fabricated/induced illness include:

- I. symptoms that cannot be explained by any medical tests; symptoms never observed by anyone other than the parent/carer; symptoms reported to occur only at home or when a parent/carer visits a child in hospital;
- II. high level of demand for investigation of symptoms without any documented physical signs;
- III. unexplained problems with medical treatment, such as drips coming out or lines being interfered with; presence of unprescribed medication or poisons in the blood or urine.

## **5. Signs and symptoms of sexual abuse**

Child sexual abuse often covers a wide spectrum of abusive activities. It rarely involves just a single incident and usually occurs over a number of years. Child sexual abuse most commonly happens within the family.

Cases of sexual abuse principally come to light through:

- (a) disclosure by the child or their siblings/friends;
- (b) the suspicions of an adult;
- (c) physical symptoms.

Colburn Faller (1989) provides a description of the wide spectrum of activities by adults, which can constitute child sexual abuse. These include:

#### *Non-contact sexual abuse*

- 'Offensive sexual remarks', including statements the offender makes to the child regarding the child's sexual attributes, what they would like to do to the child and other sexual comments.
- Obscene phone calls.
- Independent 'exposure' involving the offender showing the victim their private parts and/or masturbating in front of the victim.
- 'Voyeurism' involving instances when the offender observes the victim in a state of undress or in activities that provide the offender with sexual gratification. These may include activities that others do not regard as even remotely sexually stimulating.

#### *Sexual contact*

- Involving any touching of the intimate body parts. The offender may fondle or masturbate the victim, and/or get the victim to fondle and/or masturbate them. Fondling can be either outside or inside clothes. Also includes 'frottage', i.e. where the offender gains sexual gratification from rubbing their genitals against the victim's body or clothing.

#### *Oral-genital sexual abuse*

- Involving the offender licking, kissing, sucking or biting the child's genitals or inducing the child to do the same to them.

#### *Interfemoral sexual abuse*

- Sometimes referred to as 'dry sex' or 'vulvar intercourse', involving the offender placing his penis between the child's thighs.

#### *Penetrative sexual abuse, of which there are four types:*

- 'Digital penetration', involving putting fingers in the vagina or anus, or both. Usually the victim is penetrated by the offender, but sometimes the offender gets the child to penetrate them.
- 'Penetration with objects', involving penetration of the vagina, anus or occasionally mouth with an object.
- 'Genital penetration', involving the penis entering the vagina, sometimes partially.
- 'Anal penetration' involving the penis penetrating the anus.

### *Sexual exploitation*

- Involves situations of sexual victimisation where the person who is responsible for the exploitation may not have direct sexual contact with the child. Two types of this abuse are child pornography and child prostitution.
- 'Child pornography' includes still photography, videos and movies, and, more recently, computer-generated pornography.
- 'Child prostitution' for the most part involves children of latency age or in adolescence. However, children as young as 4 and 5 are known to be abused in this way.

The sexual abuses described above may be found in combination with other abuses, such as physical abuse and urination and defecation on the victim. In some cases, physical abuse is an integral part of the sexual abuse; in others, drugs and alcohol may be given to the victim.

It is important to note that physical signs may not be evident in cases of sexual abuse due to the nature of the abuse and/or the fact that the disclosure was made some time after the abuse took place.

Carers and professionals should be alert to the following physical and behavioural signs:

- bleeding from the vagina/anus;
- difficulty/pain in passing urine/faeces;
- an infection may occur secondary to sexual abuse, which may or may not be a definitive sexually transmitted disease. Professionals should be informed if a child has a persistent vaginal discharge or has warts/rash in genital area;
- noticeable and uncharacteristic change of behaviour;
- hints about sexual activity;
- age-inappropriate understanding of sexual behaviour;
- inappropriate seductive behaviour;
- sexually aggressive behaviour with others;
- uncharacteristic sexual play with peers/toys;
- unusual reluctance to join in normal activities that involve undressing, e.g. games/swimming.

Particular behavioural signs and emotional problems suggestive of child abuse in young children (aged 0-10 years) include:

- mood change where the child becomes withdrawn, fearful, acting out;
- lack of concentration, especially in an educational setting;
- bed wetting, soiling;
- pains, tummy aches, headaches with no evident physical cause;
- skin disorders;
- reluctance to go to bed, nightmares, changes in sleep patterns;
- school refusal;
- separation anxiety;
- loss of appetite, overeating, hiding food.

Particular behavioural signs and emotional problems suggestive of child abuse in older children (aged 10+ years) include:

- depression, isolation, anger;

- running away;
- drug, alcohol, solvent abuse;
- self-harm;
- suicide attempts;
- missing school or early school leaving;
- eating disorders.

All signs/indicators need careful assessment relative to the child's circumstances.

## APPENDIX 3

### Support & Advice Organisations/Services

#### **Youth Theatre Ireland**

Youth Theatre Ireland is the development organisation for youth theatre in Ireland. The organisation offers a range of supports, resources and advice to youth theatres. Youth Theatre Ireland's Designated Liaison Person can provide guidance on dealing with child protection/welfare issues.

Phone: 01-8781301 [www.youththeatre.ie](http://www.youththeatre.ie)

#### **National Youth Council of Ireland: Child Protection Programme**

This NYCI programme aims to build the capacity of youth organisations to safeguard and protect their children/young people. The programme offers training in child protection including training for Designated Persons. It has also developed a range of resources.

Phone: 01-4784122 [www.childprotection.ie](http://www.childprotection.ie)

#### **Foroige Galway**

Various supports for young people in Galway City and County, through youth development projects, Big Brother Big Sister and Garda Youth Diversion Projects. Foroige Galway provides young people aged 10 to 18 years with a safe social space to be empowered to participate actively and consciously in their own development and that of their communities.

#### **Youth Mental Health**

ReachOut.com is a service dedicated to taking the mystery out of mental health. They aim to provide quality assured mental health information and inspiring real life stories by young people to help other young people get through tough times.

Features include:

- Getting Help: Outlines the various options for a young person who is seeking help. Gives an easy to understand explanation of the various services available.
- Help a Friend
- Minding your Mental Health
- Inform Yourself: covers a range of topics such as Anxiety, Depression, Eating Disorders, Bullying, Sex and Relationships. Loss and Grief, Sexuality and Coming Out.
- Ask the Expert: videos of mental health experts talking about a range of topics. Also provides a forum where you can ask questions.

[www.reachout.com](http://www.reachout.com)

## **Headstrong**

The National Centre for Youth Mental Health – a non-profit organisation supporting young people’s mental health in Ireland. Headstrong works with communities and statutory services to empower young people to develop the skills, self-confidence and resilience to cope with mental health challenges. Their vision is to give every young person in Ireland somewhere to turn to and someone to talk to. They also work with the government, media and direct community outreach to change the way Ireland thinks about youth mental health. Headstrong is committed to the development of youth-friendly mental health services and includes young people in the development of their services.

Phone: 01-4727010 [www.headstrong.ie](http://www.headstrong.ie)

## **Jigsaw Galway**

Jigsaw Galway is part of a national network of Jigsaw Services supported by Jigsaw the National Centre for Youth Mental Health, all aiming to provide tailored community-based help for young people’s mental health needs. Jigsaw is a free and confidential service supporting the mental health and well-being of people aged 15 – 25 in Galway city and county. Jigsaw’s aim is to support young people in Galway who are struggling, to ensure they get the support they need, when and where they need it.

Phone: 091 549252

## **Teen-line Ireland**

A free-phone service open every day of the week from 7pm to 10pm (3pm – 10pm on Wednesday) Set up to provide a listening ear for young people who want to talk about anything that is on their mind.

Phone: 1800 833 634 [www.teenline.ie](http://www.teenline.ie)

## **Interactive**

Interactive website developed by the National Office for Suicide Prevention to help young people cope with a range of issues that may be getting them down such as bullying, appearance, self-harm etc.

[www.letsomeoneknow.ie](http://www.letsomeoneknow.ie)

## **Childline**

Childline is a service provided by the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Free and confidential for children/young people who are experiencing difficulties at home, school etc. Also provides an online bullying support service.

Phone: 1800 66 66 66 Text ‘Talk’ to 50101

## **Pieta House**

The centre for the prevention of self-harm and suicide. Has a number of outreach centres and provides direct support to those who are suicidal or self-harming. Free of charge. Offers advice to friends and family members on the best way to help their loved one who is experiencing difficulty.

Pieta House Phone: 01-601 0000      [www.pieta.ie](http://www.pieta.ie)

## **Youth Mental Health Resources**

Most of the websites detailed above have resource sections.

One very useful source of information for those who work with young people is A Mental Health Resource for Youth Workers and Volunteers. (Produced by Headstrong, in association with BelongTo, Foroige and ReachOut.com).

Among the areas covered are the

- development needs of young people,
- factors that affect young people's mental health,
- an explanation of terms associated with mental health,
- what to do if you have a concern about a young person,
- how best to support a young person experiencing mental health difficulties

## **You can download A Mental Health Resource for Youth Workers and Volunteers:**

<http://www.foroige.ie/sites/default/files/Youth%20Mental%20Health%20Resource.pdf>

## **National Youth Council of Ireland: Youth Health Programme.**

NYCI have a dedicated National Youth Health Programme. They offer training/resources on a range of youth health topics including youth mental health and bullying:

For more information on all these programmes go to <http://www.youthhealth.ie>

## **Eating Disorders**

### **Bodywhys**

Bodywhys is the national voluntary organisation supporting people affected by eating disorders. Their mission is to ensure support, awareness and understanding of eating disorders amongst the wider community as well as advocating for the rights and healthcare needs of those affected by eating disorders. Their website has advice on getting help and support.

Phone: 01-2834963      [www.bodywhys.ie](http://www.bodywhys.ie)

## **Supporting LGBTQ+ Young People**

### **BeLonGTo**

BeLonG To is an organisation for LGBTQ+ young people, aged between 14 and 23. Their aim is to provide safe and fun services to LGBTQ+ young people across Ireland. They have a number of groups for young people all around Ireland. Their website has a dedicated mental health section.

Phone: 01 670 6223 [www.belongto.org](http://www.belongto.org)

**APPENDIX 4**

**INTERNAL RECORDING FORM FOR CHILD PROTECTION/WELFARE RELATED ISSUES**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Child:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DOB:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Nature of Concern:**

- |                   |                          |                       |                          |
|-------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Unsupervised      | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other Neglect         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Domestic Violence | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other Emotional Abuse | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sexual Abuse      | <input type="checkbox"/> | Physical Abuse        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Missing           | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please state)  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Further information regarding the concern:**

--

**Any previous related incidents?:**

--

**Please outline steps taken: (tick as appropriate and state name of contact)**

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Contact No:</b>	<b>Spoken to (tick)</b>	<b>Written to (tick)</b>
Designated Person				
HSE				
Gardaí				
RIA				
Parent/Guardian				
Other				

**Other action?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**What was the outcome? e.g. action taken** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Contact Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 5

### Link to Report a concern to TUSLA

<https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/report-a-concern/>

### An Garda Síochána

Complaints of child abuse can be made over the phone and in a confidential manner 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to 1800 555 222 over 365 days a year.

You can also contact your local Garda station in person or by telephone.

Salthill Garda Station : (091) 514 720

Mill Street Garda Station : (091) 538 000

<b>Ref No:</b> CS 2025-03	<b>Title:</b> <b>ANTI-BULLYING</b>	
<b>Date Issued:</b> 22/01/2026	<b>Review Date:</b> 2028	<b>Source Ref:</b> Ref# Best Practice , Department of Education, Safe to Create

**Policy:**

This policy aims to create an ethos in which attending circus school is a positive experience for all members of the school community. Children are encouraged to report incidences of bullying behaviour. Reported incidents will be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated.

We aim to support and protect victims of bullying behaviour.

We aim to help counteract bullying behaviour and support those who bully to change their attitudes and to understand why it needs to change.

**Objective:**

To maintain and develop effective listening systems for children and staff within the Circus school

To involve all staff in dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour effectively and promptly

To equip all staff with the skills necessary to deal with bullying behaviour

To involve the wider Circus school community in dealing effectively with, and if necessary, referring, bullying behaviour incidents

To communicate with parents and the wider Circus school community effectively on the subject of bullying behaviour

To acknowledge the key role of the class teacher in dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour

To ensure that all incidents of bullying behaviour are recorded and appropriate use is made of the information and where appropriate shared with relevant organisations.

**Scope:**

Bullying behaviour will not be tolerated.

It is the responsibility of all members/staff/stakeholders of Galway Community Circus to speak out in suspected cases of bullying.

Members of the Circus school community have a right to a secure and caring environment. Galway Community Circus have a responsibility to contribute, in whatever way we can, to the protection and maintenance of such an environment.

**Bullying Behaviour**

Bullying behaviour is defined as a repeated act of hurtful behaviour and is intended to cause hurt, pain or discomfort. It can take a number of forms; emotional, verbal, physical, making gestures, extortion and exclusion. It is an abuse of power. It may be perpetrated by individuals or by groups.

### **Responsibilities of all Stakeholders**

#### **The Responsibilities of Young Members**

##### **We expect our young members to:**

- Refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying
- Report quickly to a member of staff any witnessed or suspected instances of bullying behaviour, to dispel any climate of secrecy and help to prevent further instances

##### ***Anyone who becomes the target of bullies should:***

Not suffer in silence, but have the courage to speak out

#### **The Responsibilities of Parents**

*We ask our parents to support their children and our school by:*

- Advising their child to report any bullying behaviour to their circus teacher.
- Watching for signs of distress or unusual behaviour in their child, which might be evidence of bullying.
- Being sympathetic and supportive towards their children, and reassuring them that appropriate action will be taken.
- Keeping a written record of any reported instances of bullying behaviour.
- Informing the circus school of any suspected bullying behaviour, even if their children are not involved.
- Co-operating with the circus school, if their children are accused of bullying behaviour, try to ascertain the truth, and point out the implications of bullying behaviour, both for the children who are bullied and for those accused of bullying.

##### **Parents are entitled to expect that:**

- Their child will be in an atmosphere which is safe and caring and free from violence and intimidation.
- They will be informed promptly of any bullying behaviour regarding their child and that this matter will be dealt with confidentially.
- The school will take reasonable steps to prevent bullying behaviour occurring.
- Any bullying behaviour incident which is reported will be investigated promptly.
- Any bullying behaviour incident that is found to have taken place will be dealt with in line with the guidelines laid down in the school's Discipline Policy

#### **The Responsibilities of Staff**

*Our staff will:*

- Foster in our young members self-esteem, self-respect and respect for others.

- Demonstrate by example the high standards of personal and social behaviour we expect of our young members.
- Discuss bullying behaviour with all classes, so that every child learns about the damage it causes to both the child who is bullied and to the child expressing bullying behaviour and the importance of telling a teacher about bullying behaviour when it happens.
- Be alert to signs of distress and other possible indications of bullying behaviour.
- Listen to children who have been the target of bullying behaviour, take what they say seriously and act to support and protect them.

### **The Responsibilities of All**

*Everyone should:*

- Work together to combat bullying behaviour.
- Speak up against Bullying behaviour.

### **Procedures for Dealing with Bullying Behaviour**

Each case of bullying behaviour will be dealt with individually. Follow-up action will be tailored to meet the needs of the individual children concerned. The following steps will be followed:

#### **1. The Reporting of an Incident**

When a bullying behaviour incident is reported to a circus teacher, they will record this in their Class Incident Book. The circus teacher will then forward this information to a member of the Safeguarding Team.

#### **2. Investigation of an Incident**

This will be carried out by a member of the Safeguarding Team in co-operation with the circus teacher/s concerned. The children involved will be interviewed and a record of their responses will be maintained using the school's Incident Report Form. The parents of the children involved will be informed of the circus school's actions to this point and will be kept informed of any subsequent action that is taken.

#### **3. Identification of Appropriate Level of Intervention**

Each bullying behaviour incident will be individually assessed and an intervention chosen which best meets the individual child needs.

Level 1 Intervention – Low Level Bullying Behaviour

Level 2 Interventions – Intermediate Level Bullying Behaviour

Level 3 Interventions – Complex Bullying Behaviour

Level 4 Interventions – High Risk Bullying Behaviour

The main aim of all intervention is to **RESPOND** to the bullying behaviour that is taking place, **RESOLVE** the concern and **RESTORE** the well-being of those involved. A member of the Safeguarding Team will record this information on a Bullying Incident Report Form.

#### **4. Agreeing a Plan for Resolution**

By working with the children concerned, a member of the Safeguarding Team will devise a plan to ensure that the conflict is resolved. This plan will include targets for

acceptable behaviour as set out in the school's Discipline Policy. The Consequences/Sanctions as listed in our Discipline Policy will be used appropriately.

The Safeguarding Team will have ultimate responsibility for any decision regarding these.

### **5. Reviewing the Situation**

The situation will be monitored and formally reviewed within one month of the initial report. This will be done by a member of the Safeguarding Team, in co-operation with the other teachers, children and parents concerned.

### **Signs of Bullying Behaviour**

The signs below may indicate that a child is a victim of bullying behaviour.

It is important to look for changes in behaviour patterns rather than jump to conclusions.

#### **Behavioural**

- Unwilling to attend classes;
- Frightened of walking to or from classes/changes routes
- Arrives late continuously
- Avoids friends and others
- Does not get involved in class activities
- Poor concentration
- Misplaces things
- Continually loses money
- Refuses to tell anyone what is wrong
- Becomes emotionally volatile
- Frequent Headaches/Stomach aches

#### **Physical**

- Has mystery illness
- Frequently feels sick in class
- Has possessions which go missing
- Has damaged clothes or belongings
- Socially isolated
- Has physical injuries which they are reluctant to explain

#### **Emotional**

- Becomes withdrawn
- Irritable and aggressive
- Loses confidence
- Bursts into tears in class
- Becomes depressed
- Has low self-esteem

## Alleged Bullying Incident Report Form

	Name	Gender Identity	Class
Complainant(s)			
Alleged child(s) who has been bullied (if different from above)			
Alleged child(s) who has displayed bullying behaviour			

**Date of Incident:**

**Location of Incident:**

- Circus hall     Lounge  
 Community Centre     Other (please state) \_\_\_\_\_

**Type of Incident:**

- Physical bullying (included jostling, physical intimidation, interfering with personal property, punching/kicking, any other physical contact which may include use of weapons)  
 Verbal bullying (includes name calling, insults, jokes, threats, spreading rumours)  
 Indirect bullying (includes isolation, refusal to work with/talk to/play with/help others)

Theme (if applicable)

- Cyber (through technology such as mobile phones and internet)  
 Disability (related to perceived or actual disability)  
 Homophobic (related to perceived or actual sexual orientation)  
 Racist (related to skin colour, culture and religion)  
 Sectarian (related to religious belief and/or political opinion)  
 Other: Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

**Details of Incident:**

**Type of action/support for child(s) who has been bullied (please tick all that apply)**

- Discussion of the incident with peers/class
- Defined ongoing support/monitoring from staff
- Parents involvement
- Counselling
- Referral to other agencies (please specify)
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Type of action/support for child(s) who has been displaying bullying behaviour (please tick all that apply)**

- Discussion of the incident with peers/class
- Defined ongoing support/monitoring from staff
- Parents involvement (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Counselling
- Referral to other agencies (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Fixed exclusion
- Permanent exclusion
- Sanction from Discipline Policy \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (please specify)

**This record is now:**

- Filed
- Passed to Circus Teacher
- Passed to Designated Person
- Passed to External Agency (please state) \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of the teacher completing this form:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Galway Community Circus' Anti-Bullying Code

- We provide a place where every member can feel secure.
- We provide a place where it is known that bullying is unacceptable behaviour.
- We provide a place where name calling is not tolerated.
- We provide a place where no one suffers abuse of any nature.
- We provide a place where no one is victimised.
- We provide a place where each member is supported and listened to.
- We provide a place where it is each member's responsibility to ensure that all are treated communiequally.
- We provide a place where solutions to problems are the concern of all.

**If you are being bullied or are aware of another member being bullied,  
please let your Tutor know or contact our Designated Liaison Person  
(DLP) Lynn Carroll or Deputy DLP Anet Moore on 085 1117 224**

**Board Approval Date:**

22/01/2026

**Signature Chair of Board:**



<b>Ref No:</b> CS 2025- 04	<b>Title:</b> <b>Managing Challenging Behaviour</b>	
<b>Date Issued:</b> 22/01/2026	<b>Review Date:</b> 2028	<b>Ref #: Best Practice, 'Social-Emotional/Behavioral RTI' Series © 2015 Jim Wright, Department of Education</b>

**Policy:**

Discipline in circus schools is an essential element in the socialization of children, in the formation of their characters and in the process of education. This requires the use of certain controls which, while not threatening children's independence, self-esteem and self-confidence, will enable them to appraise their behaviour rationally in terms of what is right and wrong or appropriate and inappropriate.

This policy sets out to outline these strategies and procedures to support the tutors and students in managing these situations effectively.

**Objective:**

The most effective methodology that teachers develop when attempting to manage challenging behaviour is to prevent it occurring in the first place. To this end, Galway Community Circus have developed strategies to promote positive behaviour.

**Scope:**

There are reasons why children are behaving in a challenging manner. Therefore, identifying why they do can be the key to finding a solution to the problems caused by the behaviour. This analysis must include a consideration of the behaviour and the context in which it occurs.

- Children with communication difficulties may engage in challenging behaviour.
- Environmental factors may contribute to the problem.
- Attention-seeking is often identified as a cause of challenging behaviour.
- Factors associated with socio-economic disadvantage also influence the prevalence of challenging behaviour.

Challenging behaviour may have an underlying medical cause or reason, such as pain, illness or sensory difficulties making the scope of this policy reaching across all Circus activities and in line with all other Child Safety policies and procedures.

**Procedures:**

**Strategies for Promoting Positive Behaviour**

Behaviour is defined as acceptable or not in a social context, and is also shaped by the broader environment in which people interact with each other.

In general terms, tutors accept that challenging behaviour in the circus school context encompasses behaviour that:

- interferes with the children's own and/or other children's learning;
- challenges the day to day functioning of the class;
- challenges the right of staff and children to a safe and orderly environment;

- has a duration, frequency, intensity or persistence that is beyond the normal range of what the circus school tolerates; and
- is less likely to be responsive to the usual range of interventions used by the school for children's misbehaviour.

Clear examples of different types of challenging behaviour which are displayed by children include:

- aggressive behaviour, which can include pushing, punching, kicking, biting, scratching and threatening behaviour;
- disruptive behaviour, which can include screaming, tantrums, verbal abuse, non co-operation, running away;
- destructive behaviour, which can include destruction of property and the environment;
- withdrawn behaviour, which can include failure to respond, or avoidance of people or activities;
- stereotypical behaviour, particularly in children with learning disabilities and on the autism spectrum, which can include rocking, repetitive vocalisations, ritualistic hand movements; and self-injurious behaviour, including head banging, scratching and poking.

### **Promoting Positive Behaviour in Circus Classes**

Tutors model positive behaviour, by treating children and adults with respect and building up a positive relationship with circus participants. In general, children react well to routines and boundaries. There is, of course, a natural tendency to initially push boundaries that are set and to test their limits.

- Maintaining rules and routines in Circus classes promotes positive behaviour.
- Clear and simple classroom rules in discussion with the children. *(Class Contracts developed by the participating children and young people and Lead Tutors)*
- Consequences for those who do not adhere to the class contract. *(As outlined by the children and young people in class contracts)* .
- All children respond to attention and, therefore, a focus on positive behaviour will reinforce positive behaviour.
- Giving clear instructions to children about what is required of them. Children and young people respond well to being part of the conversation and allowing them a space to question what is being asked of them. Clear age appropriate communication will allow for the space for a participant to question something asked from them should they desire to do so.

### **Managing Challenging Behaviour**

An analysis of the behaviour of the participant can help in attempting to prevent a reoccurrence of the behaviour. This analysis will be undertaken in Tutor meetings where class plans, child welfare and the overall health and happiness of the class is being reflected on weekly.

#### **Step 1: Define the Behaviour.**

The first step in analysing a behaviour is to simply put it into words. The tutor

defines the problem behaviour in observable, measurable terms writing a clear description of the problem behaviour avoiding vague problem identification statements. Also, as much as possible, the description depicts the observed behaviour in an objective manner--and does not attempt to interpret that behaviour. The tutor simply states what is observed.

### **Step 2: Expand the Behaviour Definition to a 3-Part Statement.**

A well-written problem definition includes 3 parts:

- **Conditions.** The condition(s) under which the problem is likely to occur
- **Problem Description.** A specific description of the problem behaviour
- **Contextual information.** Information about the frequency, intensity, duration, or other dimension(s) of the behaviour that provide a context for estimating the degree to which the behaviour presents a problem in the setting(s) in which it occurs.

### **Step 3: Develop Examples and Non-Examples.**

Writing both examples and non-examples of the problem behaviour helps to resolve uncertainty about when the student's conduct should be classified as a problem behaviour. Examples should include the most frequent or typical instances of the problem behaviour. Non examples should include any behaviours that are acceptable conduct but might possibly be confused with the problem behaviour.

An example of this is:

**Problem Behaviour:** When a tutor gives a verbal request, Saoirse fails to comply with that request.

#### **Examples:**

- Saoirse does not comply when directed by the tutor to spot her classmate while attempting a back flip.
- Saoirse is verbally defiant and uncooperative when requested by an adult to stop running in the hall.

#### **Non – Examples:**

- Saoirse does not comply with a tutor's request because she does not hear that request.
- Saoirse asks the tutor to explain directions that she does not understand.

### **Step 4: Antecedents (preceding events) : Identify Triggers to the Behaviour.**

Antecedents are events or conditions that can influence or even trigger the occurrence of problem behaviours (Kern, Choutka, & Sokol, 2002).

When the tutor can identify and eliminate triggers of negative conduct, such actions tend to work quickly and--by preventing disruptions--can result in more time available for instruction (Kern & Clemens, 2007). In analysing student behaviours, the tutor will want to consider what--if any--antecedent factors may contribute to the behaviour problem.

***Antecedents can be divided into two groups: remote and immediate.***

**Remote Antecedents.** Remote antecedents are those influencing events that precede the behaviour but are removed substantially in time and/or location from the setting(s) where the problem behaviour appears (Horner, Day, & Day, 1997). So, something that happened at school or at home prior to the participant attending their circus class. These can be addressed through 'neutralizing routines' (Horner, Day, & Day, 1997; Sprague & Thomas, 1997). These are plans that attempt to get the child or young person back to a normal level of functioning for the class.

**Example:**

**Antecedent:** Aoife appears unmotivated to participate on days when she is hungry.

**Neutralizing routines:** Aoife is allowed to get a snack when she is unmotivated due to hunger.  
*(these strategies are always considered in line with the Child Protection policy)*

**Immediate Antecedents.**

Those events or situations that precede problem behaviours, contribute to their appearance, and are in close proximity in time and location to them are called immediate antecedents.

**Examples:**

When seated next to his best friend, Sean engages in off-task conversations.

When publicly reprimanded, John stops participating in class.

**Neutralizing routines:** Sean and his best friend are not seated together. John is taken to the side to be spoken to away from peers when necessary.

**Step 5: Responding to Behaviour**

An appropriate response to challenging behaviour depends on the type of behaviour being exhibited by the child. Any response to challenging behaviour should be consistent, fair, and be the least disruptive response necessary to manage the behaviour.

One response to particular forms of general challenging behaviour is to ignore them. This strategy can be effective in dealing with behaviours such as whining, pouting, screaming and tantrums. These behaviours are generally aimed at getting something, such as an object or attention. By ignoring the behaviour consistently, the child will come to realise that the behaviour is not effective.

However, this approach must be combined with positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviour. Ignoring is not appropriate for behaviours which are abusive, or destructive, or behaviours such as lying, stealing or non-compliance. It is important that tutors do not ignore children who are completely off-task, or who are withdrawn as these could be signs or bigger issues.

Tutors need a range of strategies for redirecting such children, without drawing attention to the student's behaviour, or disrupting the work of the class. Tutors use strategies such as moving closer to a child, making eye contact, or using visual clues such as pictures or hand movements to remind children of appropriate behaviour. They also use firm, direct and specific statements to remind children of rules or the consequences of breaking them. If children comply with the direction, their behaviour can then be acknowledged positively.

More serious out bursts of misbehaviour, where the child chooses to act inappropriately must be met with consequences, which are clear and appropriate to the situation.

Another strategy which may be useful in the case of a serious incident of misbehaviour, or to prevent the escalation of an incident is providing for time out. In such circumstances a child

goes to a particular place in the circus hall, designated as the time out or cool down area. Time outs should be for designated misbehaviours only, and be part of a planned hierarchy of response. The time out area should be away from the other students , but in the view of the tutor. This approach should be for a limited, specified period, and it should be borne in mind that research has shown that five minutes is an optimal time frame. Children will test the limits of such an intervention but, if it is followed through consistently, it has proven to be an effective way to manage general misbehaviour.

### **Managing Aggressive or Violent Misbehaviour**

When faced with a potentially violent situation the following steps may prove useful in de-escalating the situation. A tutor can call for assistance if faced with a potentially dangerous situation.

- Where possible the child should be isolated. This may involve the child being removed from the classroom, perhaps with a special needs assistant, or with the assistance of another teacher. An alternative is that the rest of the class is removed from a potentially violent situation.
- The child should be spoken to calmly, assertively and respectfully.
- The tutor should stay at a safe distance.
- It should be made clear that you are listening to the child. In this way it may be possible to find out how the situation has developed, or how it may be resolved.
- The child should be asked to consider possible positive outcomes and behaviours.
- The child should be given space and time to cool off and to respond to requests.

It is important that any violent incident is recorded. Tutors will keep a written record of all instances of serious misbehaviour as well as a record of improvements in the behaviour of disruptive pupils. Communication with parents will be verbal or by email, depending on circumstances. The parents concerned will be invited to come to the Circus to discuss their child's behaviour with the lead tutor.

### **Conclusion**

The promotion of positive behaviour in the circus school is necessary. Meeting the needs of children who display challenging behaviour is a task which cannot be faced by tutors in isolation. The support of the wider school community in promoting positive behaviour and dealing with incidents of misbehaviour is essential. Preventing and managing challenging behaviour is a vital component in ensuring that tutors' and children's experience of the circus school is a happy one.

**Board Approval Date:**

22/01/2026

**Signature Chair of Board:**



<b>Ref No:</b> CS – 2025 - 05	<b>Title:</b> <b>Circus School members – Overnight trips away</b>	
<b>Date Issued:</b> 22/01/2026	<b>Review Date:</b> 2028	<b>Ref #: Best Practice</b>

<p><b>Policy:</b></p> <p>It is the policy of Galway Community Circus that the organisation’s staff and tutors take all reasonable care to ensure that all young people involved in services are protected from abuse of any kind.</p> <p>The following policy aims to provide guidelines to assist adult leaders of Galway Community Circus to facilitate the organisation of trips involving overnight stays away from home for Galway Community Circus activities. This policy supports the responsible adults in such a way that the trip provides for the maximum enjoyment, learning opportunities and safety of those involved.</p>
<p><b>Objective:</b></p> <p>A trip away from home can be a very exciting, worthwhile and positive experience for young people. It can provide opportunities for them to experience a different environment, get to know people of different cultures and lifestyles while also providing opportunities to develop important Circus and Life skills.</p> <p>This policy aims to support the responsible adults leading these trips to ensure the continued safety and protection of all children and young people participating.</p>
<p><b>Scope:</b></p> <p>Galway Community Circus’s Child Protection policy &amp; procedures and all other child safety policies along with Galway Community Circus’s Code of conduct all apply and are to be taken into account in the proper and full care of children and young people travelling for overnight visits while on Circus business.</p> <p>The procedures in this document are guidelines <b>not rules</b>. If some amendments are necessary to suit particular circumstances it must be clearly understood that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the guidelines operated must be fully in accordance with the Constitution, Bye-Laws, policies, purpose and philosophy of Galway Community Circus, and</li> <li>• all Circus activities undertaken must be covered by Galway Community Circuses Public Liability Insurance Policies.</li> <li>• All and any overnight trips for young people must be authorised by the children’s parents /guardians and the CEO and discussed and planed with the DLP.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Procedures: (Guidelines)</b></p> <p><b>The Purpose of a GCC Trip involving overnight stays away from home</b></p> <p>The primary reason for having a <b>GCC</b> trip involving an overnight stay away from home is to help promote the development of young people in accordance with the Organisation’s Constitution, philosophy and fundamental purpose.</p> <p>This can be achieved through the trip fulfilling a number of important functions which could include the provision of opportunities for young people to:</p>

- work in partnership with adult leaders in the advance planning and organisation of the trip and in the management and leadership of the trip for its duration;
- Create a personal/group code of behaviour for the trip and exercise leadership in leading out on this code;
- exercise personal responsibility while developing self-reliance and independence;
- develop personal and interpersonal skills including organising, planning, budgeting, problem solving, teamwork and communication;
- make friends and socialise in a safe, enjoyable and caring atmosphere;
- development of creative talents, Circus skills and networking opportunities;
- engage in and enjoy recreational and cultural events while developing healthy recreational attitudes and skills;
- evaluation and reflection of events

### **Guidelines for a GCC trip involving an overnight stay away from home**

#### **1. Planning**

The Lead Trainer/ Project lead & DPL is responsible for ensuring that proper planning is done in advance of the trip.

#### **Particular attention must be paid to the following:**

- The selection of a suitable/safe destination/venue/accommodation;
- The provision of comprehensive information on the programme, travel and accommodation arrangements to the parents/guardians;
- Receipt of parents/guardians written permission;
- Insurance;
- Safety;
- Health Care;
- Child Protection & Prevention of Abuse.

#### **2. Communication with parents/guardians**

Parents/guardians must be supplied in advance with all information/documentation relevant to the trip and should be advised to study the documentation carefully.

Parents/guardians will be informed by the Lead Tutor (DLP) of all relevant information regarding the trip away.

- Of the proposed programme, travel and accommodation arrangements including a 24 hour contact number and addresses and telephone numbers for all accommodation being used on the trip;
- That the project lead may alter arrangements if such alterations are considered essential, however they must inform parents/guardians of these alterations;
- That parents/guardians must complete and sign the Parent/Guardian Permission/Medical Consent Form, relevant to an overnight trip away. Young people will not be allowed to participate unless this form is completed and signed;
- That voluntary adult leaders/paid staff will respect and accommodate religious practices in as far as it is practicable.

### **3. Notification of Overnight Trips Away**

The CEO/ COO and DLP must be informed of the Circuses proposed overnight trip prior to the trip away. They must ensure that all the guidelines outlined by the organisation are adhered to.

### **4. Adult Supervision.**

Voluntary adult leader/s are required to complete *the Voluntary Adult Leader's Statement of Agreement* and return it to the lead tutor prior to the trip away.

Paid supervisors are required to complete *the Paid Supervisor's Statement of Agreement* and return it to the lead tutor prior to the trip away.

Occasional volunteers/parents/resource people who go on the trip will be met in advance by the volunteer leader or paid staff. During this meeting clear information should be given and agreement sought on:

The programme of events

Their own function on the trip

The role of the voluntary adult leader and/ or paid staff

A summary of Galway Community Circuses child protection guidelines

Procedures for dealing with particular situations that are likely to arise

**Note. It is required that occasional volunteers/parents/resource people must always be accompanied by a volunteer adult leaders/paid staff when with the young people. All Galway Community Circus staff who are responsible for the care of GCC members at any stage, must be garda vetted.**

Matters of discipline/ disruptive behaviour/ accidents/ emergencies and child protection must be dealt with by the project lead.

The Circus shall submit full details of the proposed programme to the CEO, travel and accommodation arrangements and all other relevant documents. The CEO shall have the right to withhold approval for the proposed trip or to require any necessary adjustments.

### **4. Insurance**

**All activities undertaken on the trip must be covered by Galway Community Circuses Public/Products Liability Insurance.**

### **5. Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco**

Under no circumstances are Drugs or Alcohol permitted by any person or persons (Young people and voluntary adult leader/paid staff) while travelling with young people under Galway Community Circus. Failure to comply to this rule will result in exclusion from the trip for a young person and disciplinary or legal procedures for voluntary adult leader/paid staff.

Tobacco is not permitted by any young person travelling for GCC purposes. Should an adult leader smoke they must never do so in or around the company of youth members.

## 6. **Provision of Health Care**

- Information should be provided on the Parent/Guardian Consent Form of each young person participating on the trip and should confirm that the participant is medically suitable for the proposed programme. It may be necessary, in certain cases, to obtain a certificate from a qualified medical practitioner.
- The project lead should have a first aid kit.
- An adult with relevant first aid qualifications is present with the group.
- All completed parent/guardian permission forms which contain all relevant health care information will be with the project lead. Parents must be informed if a young person requires medical attention or in the case of an emergency.
- Local emergency service numbers will be available from the project lead.
- If a participant becomes ill he/she should, if necessary, be referred to a doctor or hospital as soon as possible.
- For trips to other E.U. countries, each participant of the group should have a European Health Insurance Card (obtainable online) [www.ehic.ie](http://www.ehic.ie) to establish entitlement to health services in the host country.
- Participants should be made aware of likely variations in climate and be adequately equipped with protective clothing, sunscreen lotions etc.
- Arrangements should be put in place to cater for any special dietary requirements.
- Voluntary adult leaders/paid staff **should not administer** over the counter drugs unless under the instruction of qualified medical personnel or parents/guardians and then only in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

## 7. **Safety**

- A code of behaviour agreed by participants and adult leaders should, be put in place prior to going away. Agreement should be reached with participants on a reasonable time to go to bed.
- One adult person should be appointed Safety Officer for the duration of the trip away.
- All precautions should be taken to minimise possible accidents to persons and property.
- At least one adult present should have the required level of skill for the activities in the programme e.g. Circus Activities
- Participants are required to complete and sign *the Participant's Statement of Agreement* prior to the trip away.
- Adult leaders should have the use of a mobile phone throughout the trip.
- Transport should be readily available in the event of an emergency.
- Ratios of adult supervisors to young people should be strictly followed. Every group must be led by at least two adults, however small the group.
- Individual adults must never be alone with children or young people
- Children will be told to act responsibly whilst not taking any unnecessary risks and must also follow the instructions of any adults in a supervisory position
- An agreement should be reached between the organiser and parents / carers as to how much independence is appropriate for older children and young people, but the leadership should be clear that they will make decisions on site in any given situation.
- If a child is seen to cause any potential risk to themselves or others they must be withdrawn from the trip.

## **8. Child Protection & Prevention of Abuse**

- Suitable arrangements should be put in place for young people to contact home during the trip.
- Adult leaders should fully understand their role and have a clear understanding of the relationship between adults and young people as laid down in the Organisation's policies and procedures. In essence the relationship of the voluntary adult leaders to the young person is that of guide, tutor, facilitator and mentor.
- Adult leaders should at all times act in the best interests of the young person, and should not, by their own actions, leave themselves open to allegations of child abuse. This is a matter of using common sense and following the guidelines the Circus has developed to ensure everyone's safety.
- If the need arises, adult leaders should follow the procedures outlined in Galway Community Circuses Child Protection Policies, procedures and guidelines.
- Adult leaders should be aware of the possibility of bullying within the group and should take steps to prevent it occurring.
- Adult leaders should be aware of the potential misuse of digital and mobile phone technology and should take appropriate steps to prevent it occurring. Camera phones should not be used in any way, which is disrespectful to the dignity and privacy of any individual. Camera phones should not be used in toilets, dormitories or changing areas.
- Adult leaders should ensure they have the contact details of GCC CEO/COO with them while on the trip away.

## **9. Night-time Supervision and sleeping Arrangements**


Adult leaders should not retire to bed until they are satisfied that all the participants are in bed and settled.

When selecting venues for trips away, due consideration should be given to the practicality of implementing these guidelines. It is also important to check if other groups are using the particular venue and to consider the implications if this is the case.

Have you checked:

- If there is 24/7 access to the accommodation or if the floor the young people are staying on is key protected?
- If there are appropriate sleeping arrangements for young people, i.e. separate provision for young people that are safe and appropriate, separate provision for adult supervisors (relatively close to young people's rooms so that they may be available should there be an incident) The accommodations supervision, security and fire escapes are all up to code?
- That there is a clear plan between all adult supervisors and young people on what to do should they need assistance during the night.
- That there are no young people roomed with others who could potentially bully them.
- That everyone has agreed to a code of behaviour and conduct for the overnight stay.

<b>Checklist</b>	
Programme of events and group agenda, including accommodation address and contact information.	
Garda Vetting for all adult leaders	
Parent /Guardian permission slip including all contact and medical information and consent required.	
Insurance cover for overnight trip	
Health Care and emergency contacts for destination area.	
First Aid Kit adequate for size of group	
Voluntary Adult Leader statement of agreement	
GCC Staff statement of agreement	
Participants statement of agreement	
Appointed Safety Officer	
Appointed First Aider	
Volunteer adult leader role descriptions	
Names and contacts of all participants, next of kin and family doctors (Roll call list)	
Summary of child protection procedures	
European Health Insurance card where appropriate	

<b>Board Approval Date:</b>  22/01/2026	<b>Signature Chair of Board:</b>  
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