

**Dublin Book Festival
Guidelines for the Protection and
Welfare of Children and Young People**



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1. Child Protection Policy Statement

The Dublin Book Festival is committed to a child-centred approach to our work with children and young people. We undertake to provide a safe environment and experience, where the welfare of the child/young person is paramount. We adhere to the Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children by having and implementing procedures covering:

- Safe recruitment, training and management/supervision of staff
- Code of behaviour for staff
- Incidents and accidents
- Complaints
- Reporting of suspected or disclosed abuse
- Confidentiality
- Circulation of information to staff, writers, teachers and schools – where festival is dealing with school directly, on what we do and what they should expect from us, including information on policies and procedures
- Allegations of misconduct or abuse by staff and/or participating artists

2. Code of behaviour for staff

Child-centred approach

- Treat all children and young people equally
- Use appropriate language (physical and verbal)
- Treat all children and young people as individuals
- Boundaries on behaviour and related sanctions, as appropriate, to be discussed with teachers/responsible adults
- Have contracts/agreements with school/library/host organisation
- Be aware of a child/young person's time limitations e.g. school/exams when scheduling events
- Respect differences of ability, culture, religion, race and sexual orientation
- No author or volunteer should be left alone with a child. All children should be supervised by a teacher, guardian or parent throughout the duration of the event at the festival

Inappropriate behaviour

- Do not use/allow offensive or sexually suggestive physical and/or verbal language
- Do not single out a particular child/young person (for unfair favouritism, criticism, ridicule, or unwelcome focus or attention)
- Do not allow/engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- Do not hit or physically chastise children/young people
- Do not socialise inappropriately with children/young people e.g. outside of structured organisational activities

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Physical Contact

- Seek consent of child/young person in relation to physical contact to support/help a child (except in an emergency if a child is in danger)
- Avoid horseplay and inappropriate touching
- Check with children/young people about their level of comfort when doing touch exercises

Health and Safety

- Don't leave children unattended or unsupervised
- Manage any dangerous materials
- Provide a safe environment
- In the case of an accident school/library accident procedures should be followed accordingly

3. Reporting procedures

Role and responsibility of Designated Officer

The Designated Officer is the main point of contact where there is an issue or concern about any aspect of a child's or young person's safety and welfare. It is their responsibility to advise staff about policy and procedures in relation to child protection and to ensure that procedures are followed.

The Designated Officer and Deputy Officer will support and advise staff in the event of a concern regarding child protection and welfare. It is also their responsibility to liaise with the Tusla or Gardaí where appropriate.

The Designated Officer for the Dublin Book Festival is Ivan O'Brien – 086 386 3893 and the Deputy Officer is Julianne Siron – 086 852 6314

The following would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

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

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neglect

What a writer should do

If the concern is about a child you meet while working in a school/library/Event you do the following:

- You must speak to the teacher/librarian or responsible adult
- Make a written record of the concern
- If a report is made to the Designated Officer in the school/library you must then contact Dublin Book Festivals Designated Officer and give a general outline of the procedures completed in the school/library
- Although other staff in the local organisation pass concern onto Tusla, you should be aware that the Tusla social worker may want to talk to you to hear your direct observations or what the child said to you

General Tusla guidelines

- Record the concern, including the date, time and people involved in the concern/disclosure (for example in an incident book). Information recorded should be factual. Any opinions recorded should be supported by facts
- Inform the Designated Officer or, if unavailable, their deputy
- The most appropriate person should discuss the concern/consult with parents/carers/responsible adults.
- Parents/carers/responsible adults should be told of a report to Tusla unless it is likely to put the child/young person at further risk
- The Designated Officer may contact the Tusla Social Work Department for an informal consultation prior to making a report
- Information will be shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis (see Confidentiality Statement)
- If there are reasonable grounds for concern as outlined above, the Designated Officer will contact the duty social worker in Tusla area using the standard reporting form (available from Tusla)
- Reports to the duty social worker can be made verbally initially and then followed by the standard reporting form. Reports should be made to Tusla without delay.
- If the Designated Officer/deputy is not available then contact the local Tusla Social Worker directly
- In emergencies which are out of Tusla Social Work hours then contact the Gardaí. There may be situations which threaten the immediate safety of a child/young person where it may be necessary to contact the Gardaí

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Rules to guide use of photography and video

Any recording or photography at DBF events must be undertaken with the consent of both the young person and their parents. For events where children are attending as part of a school or other group, signed consent forms will be sought from all participants via their group leader. For example where a class are attending an event, consent forms will be sent in advance to the group leader for distribution to parents and guardians. For events where children are attending as individuals and where places are booked in advance, parental consent forms will be distributed to all participants in advance.

For events where children are attending as individuals but where places are not booked in advance, notices will be displayed at the event and at any information or ticketing stand, informing participants that photographs or video may be taken at the event.

Any photographer documenting events for DBF will be clearly identified to artists and event staff. Where a selection of participants are asked to participate in a photograph e.g. a media photocall, permission must be sought from the accompanying adult before a young person is moved to a different location. A member of the event team must accompany the young people and return them to the group as soon as photography is completed.

Children and young people should not be left unaccompanied with any one adult at a time e.g. DBF staff member, artist, photographer, videographer, volunteer or intern. To reduce the risk of inappropriate use, DBF will only use images of young people in suitable dress. The content of the photograph should focus on the activity, not on a particular child. The use of inappropriate images should be reported to DLP

Definition and Recognition of Child Abuse (as detailed in Children First, chapter 2)

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time.

In the Children First: National Guidance, 'a child' means a person under the age of 18 years, excluding a person who is or has been married.

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

Harm can be defined as the ill-treatment or the impairment of the health or 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.

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Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point. For example, a child who suffers a series of minor injuries may not be having his or her needs met in terms of necessary supervision and safety. A child whose height or weight is significantly below average may be being deprived of adequate nutrition. A child who consistently misses school may be being deprived of intellectual stimulation.

The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that his or her well-being and/or development are severely affected.

Definition of 'emotional abuse' - Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a parent/carer and a child rather than in a specific event or 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 or symptoms.

Examples may include:

- (i) the imposition of negative attributes on a child, expressed by persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming;
- (ii) conditional parenting in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on his or her behaviours or actions;
- (iii) emotional unavailability of the child's parent/carer;
- (iv) unresponsiveness of the parent/carer and/or inconsistent or inappropriate expectations of the child;
- (v) premature imposition of responsibility on the child;
- (vi) unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of the child's capacity to understand something or to behave and control himself or herself in a certain way;
- (vii) under- or over-protection of the child;
- (viii) failure to show interest in, or provide age-appropriate opportunities for, the child's cognitive and emotional development;
- (ix) use of unreasonable or over-harsh disciplinary measures;
- (x) exposure to domestic violence;
- (xi) exposure to inappropriate or abusive material through new technology.

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.

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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:

- (i) severe physical punishment;
- (ii) beating, slapping, hitting or kicking;
- (iii) pushing, shaking or throwing;
- (iv) pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling;
- (v) terrorising with threats;
- (vi) observing violence;
- (vii) use of excessive force in handling;
- (viii) deliberate poisoning;
- (ix) suffocation;
- (x) fabricated/induced illness
- (xi) allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child.

Definition of 'sexual abuse' - Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others.

Examples of child sexual abuse include:

- (i) exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of the child;
- (ii) intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification;
- (iii) masturbation in the presence of the child or the involvement of the child in an act of masturbation;
- (iv) sexual intercourse with the child, whether oral, vaginal or anal;
- (v) 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, modeling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, video tape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of the image by computer or other means. It 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 for both boys and girls.

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An Garda Síochána will deal with the criminal aspects of the case under the relevant legislation. It should be noted that the definition of child sexual abuse presented in this section is not a legal definition and is not intended to be a description of the criminal offence of sexual assault.

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4. Confidentiality statement

The Dublin Book Festival is committed to ensuring people's rights to confidentiality. However, in relation to child protection and welfare we undertake that:

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

5. Safe recruitment and selection procedures

We will ensure that our staff are carefully selected and supervised to provide a safe artistic environment for all children and young people.

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

- There are clearly defined roles and responsibilities for every job (paid or otherwise)
- Dublin Book Festival staff posts will be advertised widely
- We will endeavour to select the most suitably qualified personnel
- Dublin Book Festival staff will be required to go through an application process
- Dublin Book Festival staff and artists will be selected by a panel of at least two
- No person who would be deemed to constitute a 'risk' will be employed

Some of the exclusions would include:

- any child related conviction
- refusal to sign application form and declaration form
- insufficient documentary evidence of identification concealing information on one's suitability to working with children

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All relevant staff and volunteers will be required to consent to Gardaí disclosure, and where appropriate and available, this will be sought

6. Safe Management of Staff and Sharing of Information

To protect staff and young people all artists will:

- be made aware of the organisation's code of conduct, Designated Officer and their role, and the child protection procedures
- be expected to have read the Child Protection Policy

We undertake to:

- Advise teacher/librarian/responsible adults of our child protection policy
- Inform teachers/librarians/responsible adults and schools of all activities and potential activities
- Issue contact/consent forms where relevant
- Comply with health and safety practices
- Operate child-centred policies in accordance with best practice
- Ensure as far as possible that the activities are age appropriate
- Encourage and facilitate teacher/librarian/responsible adult involvement where appropriate

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

- Respond to the needs of the child or young person
- Inform the teachers/librarians/responsible adults on an ongoing basis unless this action puts the child or young person at further risk
- Where there are child protection and welfare concerns we are obliged to pass these on to the Tusla duty social worker and, in an emergency, the Gardaí
- In the event of a complaint against a member of staff we will immediately ensure the safety of the child/young person and follow the procedures outlined in section 7: Incidences of poor practice and allegations against staff

7. Incidences of poor practice and allegations against staff

In the event of an allegation against staff

There are two separate procedures to be followed:

- a) The reporting procedure in respect of the child/young person
- b) The procedure for dealing with the worker

In the event that the allegation is being directly dealt with by Dublin Book Festival:

- a) The Designated Officer will deal with issues related to the child/young person
- b) The Designated Officer will deal with issues related to the worker in liaison with the Dublin Book

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Festival Board Members

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In the event that the allegation is being dealt with by the school/library:

- a) The school/library Designated Person will deal with issues related to the child/young person
- b) The Dublin Book Festival Designated Person will deal with issues related to the worker in liaison with the Dublin Book Festival Board Members

- The first priority is to ensure that no child or young person is exposed to unnecessary risk
- If allegations are made against the Designated Officer then contact the Deputy Designated Officer
- The reporting procedures such as outlined below will be followed. Parents/carers/responsible adults and child/young person (age appropriate) should be informed of actions planned and taken.
- The staff member will be informed as soon as possible that an allegation has been made against him/her, and of the nature of the allegation
- The staff member will be given the opportunity to respond
- The Chairperson will be informed as soon as possible
- Any action following an allegation of abuse against an employee will be taken in consultation with Tusla and Gardaí
- After consultation, chairperson/head of organisation will advise person accused and agreed procedures will be followed.
- Dublin Book Festival will also follow good practice and contact the Tusla team involved, and will ensure that the concern has been received.
- The Designated Officer will act in accordance with their role with the person against whom the allegation was received and advise the school/library that these procedures are being followed.

8. Complaints and Accidents Procedure

Complaints and comments procedures

- Complaints/comments will be responded to within three weeks
- Ivan O'Brien will have responsibility for directing complaints/comments to the appropriate person
- Verbal complaints will be logged and responded to

(This may not always be applicable, but in the event that it is, the following procedure will apply).

- Outside organisations will be required to provide proof that they have public liability insurance
- First aid boxes will be available, and regularly restocked
- Availability of first aid will be in accordance with the school/library/host organisations
- Incident books and first aid boxes will be clearly labelled and easily available
- Children and young people will be advised of risks of any dangerous materials
- Details of risky equipment used will be recorded and steps taken to minimize risk
- Where applicable responsibility for first-aid on off-site trips will be taken

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Note: All incidents/accidents regarding children should be recorded and reported to management as soon as possible.

9. Dealing with Lost Children

The following are some general guidelines for dealing with children who are lost. These apply both to events at the Dublin Book Festival venue or at external events:

- While it is recommended that an employee/volunteer or artist should not be alone with a child or young person, it is recognised that where a child is lost and wandering around, an employee must deal with that situation immediately.
- If a child is lost, the employee should ask the child where their parent or adult responsible for them is and ask that the child bring the employee to them.
- If the employee locates the parent/adult, they should be advised that while the child is on the premises, they must ensure that the child remains supervised.
- If the employee cannot locate the parent/adult, on the building, the employee should bring the lost child to the main reception desk.
- Under no circumstances should an employee bring any child into an empty office or room.
- If necessary, contact the Gardai and advise them of the situation. If alone with a child the employee should contact a colleague to remain with him/her until either the parent/guardian returns or the Gardai arrive.

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Incident Report Form CONFIDENTIAL

Your name:

Your position:

Child's name (Initials):

Child's date of birth: Parents'/guardians' names:

Child's home address (and phone number, if available):

What prompted your concerns (include date and time of any incident, also any physical and behavioural signs you have observed): Have you spoken to the child about this? As best you can, record exactly what the child said and what you said: (remember, do not lead the child – record actual details. Continue on separate sheet if necessary)

Action taken so far:

Have parents been contacted? What has been said?

External agencies contacted (date & time) Gardaí Yes/no If 'yes' Name, unit and contact number:

Details of advice received:

Tusla Yes/no If 'yes' Name and contact number:

Details of advice received:

Other (e.g. ISPCC, NSPCC) 24 hr helpline: 1800 66 66 66 (ROI) or 0808 800 5000 (NI)

Which:

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Name and contact number:

Details of advice received:

Signature:

Print name:

Date:

Remember to maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis (information about an incident should only be divulged if it is needed to remove the child from harm. Do not discuss this incident with anyone other than those who need to know. If unsure get advice from Tusla before contacting child's parents.)
NB: A copy of this form should be sent to the HSE after the telephone report, with the original going to the DBF Designated Liaison Person who will keep it in the incident book in a locked drawer.