



**COMHDHÁIL NA MUINTEOIRÍ  
LE RINCÍ GAELACHA CUIDEACHTA FAOI THEORAINN  
RATHAIOCHTHA**

**An Chomhdháil**

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# **Child Protection Policy**

**Guidance for Dealing with & Reporting  
Allegations or Concerns of Abuse**

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## Section 1: Policy Statement

### ***Policy statement relating to the care and protection of children and young people under the age of 18 years and vulnerable adults***

An Chomhdháil is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children, young and vulnerable adults. An Chomhdháil recognises its responsibility to respond to harm as well as taking all reasonable steps to promote safe practice. An Chomhdháil shall be proactive in the prevention of any form of abuse, neglect and exploitation.

This Safeguarding Policy is a means of proactive prevention of any form of abuse or harm faced by children, young or vulnerable adults associated with An Chomhdháil and shall provide methods to respond to abuse or harm.

An Chomhdháil will ensure that all members have a shared responsibility to ensure the safety and protection of all children, young and vulnerable adults by working with children, families and members within An Chomhdháil together with external agencies to support and safeguard wellbeing.

An Chomhdháil shall:

- recognise that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance.
- fully comply with relevant legislation in each jurisdiction relating to the protection and welfare of children.
- fully co-operate with the relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters.
- adopt safe practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents to protect both children and members from dangers of unnecessary risks which may result in allegations of abuse or neglect.
- develop a practice of open communication with parents/legal guardians/legal carers.
- fully respect confidentiality requirements in relation to any child protection matters which may arise.
- Keep children safe from harm while they are within our organisation.
- Carry out ongoing risk assessments to identify whether a child or young person could be harmed while receiving your services.
- Develop and maintain a Child Safeguarding Statement that outlines the policies and procedures which are in place to manage any risks that have been identified
- The Main Child Protection Administrator, Ciara Moan-Wadsworth, shall be the relevant person to be the first point of contact in respect of the organisation's Child Safeguarding Statement.

In order to comply with specific child protection requirements, An Chomhdháil may contact external agencies and/or make referrals without consulting parents/legal guardian/legal carers. An Chomhdháil's primary responsibility, at all times, is towards the children, young people and vulnerable adults in our care.

Within the context of their role and responsibilities, all members shall:

- a) Establish open, positive, supporting relationships with the dancers in their classes to ensure that children, young people and vulnerable adults feel that they are listened to, and where they feel secure in their ability to discuss sensitive aspects of their lives.
- b) Promote a climate in which children, young people and vulnerable adults feel safe and secure.
- c) Model behaviour which promotes and encourages health and wellbeing.
- d) Be sensitive and responsive to the wellbeing of each child, young person or vulnerable adult.
- e) Take all reasonable steps to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect, and exploitation by adhering to child protection procedures.
- f) Be guided by the statutory guidance where there is a concern that a child, young person or vulnerable adult could be at risk of harm and/or abuse.
- g) Maintain open and positive relationships with parents, legal guardians and legal carers.
- h) Recognise the limits of their responsibilities within An Chomhdháil's child protection framework.
- i) Report child protection concerns to the Designated/Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrator.

- j) Actively participate in child protection training.

**Failure to do so will result in members not being allowed to renew their membership for the following calendar year.**

- k) Adhere to the guidance on information sharing and confidentiality and understand that, in relation to a concern that a child, young person or vulnerable adult could be at risk from harm and/or abuse, concerns should be reported to the Designated/Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Person.

***NB: An Chomhdháil Child Protection Policy should be followed where members are teaching dancing under the umbrella of An Chomhdháil and where a child protection disclosure is made. If a child protection disclosure occurs outside of the members involvement with An Chomhdháil, i.e. as part of a school curriculum, then the child protection policy for the local school should be followed.***

While this guidance primarily relates to dealing with and reporting allegations or concerns of abuse that may occur when children, young people and/or vulnerable adults are involved with An Chomhdháil as dancers, An Chomhdháil are fully aware of our moral and legal responsibilities to uphold best practice in all aspects of our work with children, young people and vulnerable adults and have completed risk assessments to this effect.

This Guidance booklet works in tandem with our Codes of Conduct Policy and it also forms part of the rules of An Chomhdháil. An Chomhdháil fully subscribes to and promotes the role of Child Protection Administrators at Executive, Regional and Branch level. An Chomhdháil's Child Protection Administrators, who receive specialist training for their roles, are available to our members and to others to assist in reporting, without delay, any concerns or allegations of harm, abuse and/or neglect.

## Section 2: Roles and Responsibilities

### Main and Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator

As part of their role, the Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator will:

- Oversee the implementation of good child protection and welfare practices within our organisation including the roll out of training for Regional Child Protection Administrators.
- Ensure a child protection policy is in place, and that all members implement this policy.
- Ensure relevant child protection training is up to date and a record kept of same (General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) policy).
- ***Practise confidentiality at all times as it is key in this role; information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.***
- ***Have an awareness that a breach of confidentiality could result in a punishable offence against the Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator.***
- Oversee the review of the An Chomhdháil Child Protection Policy every three years, at a minimum, or as necessitated by changes in relevant law.
- Oversee Procedures pertaining to child protection and welfare.
- Review the effectiveness of our child protection procedures on an ongoing basis.
- Oversee the review of the An Chomhdháil Codes of Conduct for Executive Delegates and Members every three years, at a minimum, or when otherwise necessary.
- Oversee the review of a Code of Conduct for Parents/Legal Guardians/Legal Carers, the Code of Conduct for Dancers revised every three years, at a minimum, or when otherwise required.
- Ensuring all allegations of abuse of children/young people/vulnerable adults are confidentially dealt with in accordance with revised Guidance for Dealing with & Reporting Allegations or Concerns of Abuse.
- Ensure An Chomhdháil is proactive and up to date with all legislative requirements in conjunction with advice sought from our legal advisors.
- **Liaise with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) personnel (Data Protection Administrator) to ensure collation of all data pertaining to child protection is kept securely and in accordance with GDPR legislation**
- Ensure non-disclosure is of paramount importance and be compliant with GDPR law when informing the Executive.
- Strategically oversee the roll out of systems and procedures to ensure child protection and welfare is a key priority for all members dealing with children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- Support each Regional Child Protection Administrator who will ensure our organisation keeps abreast of all child protection and welfare legislation in their specific region.
- Coordinate a meeting with appointed Regional Child Protection Administrators prior to each Executive meeting and record verbally the number of cases, if applicable.
- Keep up-to-date with training/qualifications pertaining to child protection annually.
- You may be asked to oversee cases in an acting capacity for Regional Child Protection Administrators/Designated Child Protection Branch Administrators/Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrators where there is a possible conflict of interest.

## Regional Child Protection Administrator

As part of their role, Regional Child Protection Administrators will:

- Oversee the implementation of exemplary child protection and welfare practices within their specific region, including the roll out of training for Designated and Deputy Designated Administrators.
- ***Practise confidentiality at all times as it is key in this role; information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.***
- ***Have an awareness that a breach of confidentiality could result in a punishable offence against the Regional Child Protection Administrator.***
- Adhere to An Chomhdháil procedures for dealing with issues pertaining to child protection and welfare.
- Revise, in conjunction with the Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator, Codes of Conduct for Executive Delegates and Members every three years, at a minimum, or as otherwise necessary.
- Revise, together with the Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator, the Code of Conduct for Parents/Legal Guardians/Legal Carers, the Code of Conduct for Dancers every three years, or as otherwise necessary.
- Ensure that all allegations of abuse of children/young people/vulnerable adults are confidentially dealt with in accordance with revised Guidance for Dealing with & Reporting Allegations or Concerns of Abuse.
- Be aware of the effectiveness of An Chomhdháil's child protection procedure and participate in on-going reviews of same.
- Support each Designated and Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrator in their region and, where necessary, submit a referral once consensus has been agreed with the Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator.
- Liaise with GDPR personnel to ensure collation of all data pertaining to child protection is kept securely and in accordance with GDPR legislation for their specific region.
- Collate and distribute certificates as evidence of completion of child protection training on an annual basis.
- Coordinate, within their region, the annual refresher training of all Designated and Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrators and provide an update re GDPR.
- Ensure, within their region, that the training of all new members of An Chomhdháil takes place as soon as possible by the relevant Designated/Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrator.
- Meet with the Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator and provide a synopsis of child protection for their region prior to each Executive meeting.
- You may be asked to oversee cases in an acting capacity for Designated Child Protection Branch Administrators/Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrators where there is a possible conflict of interest.

## Designated and Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrators

As part of their role, Designated/Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrators must:

- Be aware of all child protection and welfare practices within their specific region and/or jurisdiction, including the roll out of training for each member within their branch.
- ***Practise confidentiality at all times as it is key in this role; information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.***
- ***Have an awareness that a breach of confidentiality could result in a punishable offence against the Designated/Deputy Designated Child Protection Administrator.***
- Have knowledge of statutory guidelines and relevant legislation as they relate to child protection and welfare of young people in their jurisdiction.
- Formally report allegations or concerns of child abuse to relevant statutory authorities in the appropriate jurisdiction, if reasonable grounds for concern have been established. This may be done directly by the Branch Administrators or as a joint report with the Regional Child Protection Administrator and must be done without delay.
- Consult with statutory authorities, if deemed necessary.
- Refer reports and allegations of abuse to their Regional Child Protection Administrator and seek the advice of the Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator, if required.
- Have knowledge of definitions, categorisation, and indicators of abuse.
- Undertake child safeguarding training as provided by An Chomhdháil and any other training deemed relevant to their role.
- Be familiar with and able to carry out reporting procedures as outlined in the Guidance for Dealing with & Reporting Allegations or Concerns of Abuse.
- Communicate with parents/legal guardians/legal carers and external agencies as appropriate.
- Ensure all allegations of abuse of young people are **confidential**, in accordance with revised Guidance for Dealing with & Reporting Allegations or Concerns of Abuse (Refer Code of conduct).
- Adhere with GDPR personnel to ensure collation of all data pertaining to child protection is kept securely and in accordance with data protection requirements in their specific region/jurisdiction.
- Attend annual refresher training for their role as Designated and Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrators.
- Collate a register of members who attended training and issue certificates received from the Regional Child Protection Administrator for each member concerned.
- Liaise with their Regional Child Protection Administrator and maintain records of all child protection concerns.
- Report number of child protection cases, if relevant, at each branch meeting (report method advised at training should be used).
- Be aware of local contacts and support services that may assist in developing and delivering the role of the Designated and Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrators.
- Advise, as appropriate, members within their branch on issues of confidentiality, record keeping and data protection.
- Ensure that all individual case records are maintained and that all actions taken are recorded, and that such records are kept in a secure and confidential place.
- Make themselves known to the general membership of each dancing school within their branch. Names of all Child Protection Administrators will be displayed on the An Chomhdháil website and should be displayed annually on any branch social media pages in existence.

## Members of An Chomhdháil

As part of their role, Members of An Chomhdháil must:

- Be aware of all child protection and welfare practices within their specific region/jurisdiction, including their responsibility to attend training on an annual basis, or as otherwise required.
  - Failure to do so will result in members not being allowed to renew their membership for the following calendar year.
- Publish their certificate confirming attendance at child protection training on an annual basis to their class (relevant to practising teachers only).
- Ensure dancers and parents/legal guardians/legal carers sign and adhere to the Code of Conduct for Dancers and Code of Conduct for Parents/Legal Guardians/Legal Carers respectively and are aware of child protection procedures within An Chomhdháil (relevant to practising teachers only).

The following are guidelines for use by members should a child disclose concerns of a child protection nature:

Do:	Do not:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to what the child says without displaying shock or disbelief and support the child – stay calm</li> <li>• Accept what the child tells you</li> <li>• Reassure the child they are not at fault</li> <li>• Explain to the child that you cannot keep it a secret and must report it to the appropriate authorities</li> <li>• Remember not to promise the child confidentiality but assure them that the information will only be shared with necessary people</li> <li>• Explain what you are going to do</li> <li>• Make a concise, accurate written record of a child's disclosure using the actual words of the child using Incident Report Form.</li> <li>• Act promptly</li> <li>• Seek support for yourself</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start to Investigate</li> <li>• Give children a guarantee of total confidentiality and non-disclosure of any of the information within their disclosures</li> <li>• Ask leading questions</li> <li>• Put words into the child's mouth</li> <li>• Ignore the child's behaviour/body language</li> <li>• Remove any clothing</li> <li>• Panic</li> <li>• Promise to keep secrets</li> <li>• Make the child repeat the story unnecessarily</li> <li>• Delay</li> <li>• Do Nothing</li> </ul>

In addition, members should keep the Designated/Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrator informed about repetitive poor presentation, changed or unusual behaviour including self-harm, suicidal thoughts, discussions with parents about concerns relating to their child, concerns about pupil abuse or serious bullying, concerns about home conditions including disclosures of domestic violence.

### **Remember:**

An abused child is likely to be under severe emotional stress and the person chosen for the disclosure may be the only adult the child is prepared to talk to or trust. When information is offered in confidence the person concerned will need tact and sensitivity to respond to the disclosure.



## Role of Parents/Legal Guardians/Legal Carers

Parents/legal guardians/legal carers should play their part in child protection by:

- Informing the dancing teacher of their child's absence in the case where concerns may arise, or so as the dancing teacher is reassured as to the child's situation.
- Informing the dancing teacher whenever anyone, other than themselves, intends to collect the child after class.
- Informing the dancing teacher if there is someone who is not permitted to collect their child. If this person is a parent, the dance teacher must be furnished with legal documentation e.g. court order to confirm this (storage of this information must be compliant with the An Chomhdháil GDPR Policy).
- Ensuring they are adhering to procedures and are aware of the An Chomhdháil Child Protection Policy, GDPR Policy and Code of Conduct for Parents/Legal Guardians/Legal Carers.

## Section 3: Categories and Definition of Child Abuse

### 3.1 Definition of Abuse

Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with sufficient care. Children may be abused in many settings, including a familial, institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. There are different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one of them. The procedures outlined in this document are intended to safeguard children who are at risk of significant harm because of abuse or neglect by a parent, carer or other with a duty of care towards a child. Abuse is generally categorized into four categories:

- Neglect
- Emotional Abuse
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse

#### 3.1.1 Neglect

Neglect occurs where a child receives inadequate care or supervision up to and including physical or developmental harm. The inadequate care may include an omission of care where the child is deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, medical development, intellectual stimulation or supervision and safety. A child may also suffer from emotional neglect resulting in attachment difficulties. There are a number of factors which will influence the child which may include positive influences, age and frequency of the neglect. An Chomhdháil would consider a reasonable concern in circumstances where any neglect becomes the norm for the relationship between the child and their parent, guardian or carer. Tulsa considers the following to be features of child neglect:

- Children being left alone without adequate care and supervision
- Malnourishment, lacking food, unsuitable food or erratic feeding
- Non-organic failure to thrive, i.e. a child not gaining weight due not only to malnutrition but also emotional deprivation
- Failure to provide adequate care for the child's medical and developmental needs, including intellectual stimulation
- Inadequate living conditions – unhygienic conditions, environmental issues, including lack of adequate heating and furniture

#### 3.1.2 Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is systematic emotional or psychological ill-treatment of a child which has become a part of the relationship between a child and their carer. The abuse must be systematic i.e. once-off and/or occasional difficulties between a child and their carer are not considered to be emotional abuse. This abuse occurs when a child is denied or limited in their basic need for attention, affection, approval, consistency, and security, as a result of the incapacity or indifference from their parent or caregiver. The abuse can also arise if the caregiver is unaware of and unable (for a range of reasons) to meet the

children's emotional and/or developmental needs. Emotional abuse may be difficult to identify because the effects are not easily seen. Tulsa considers the following to be emotional abuse:

- 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
- Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming of the child
- Bullying
- Conditional parenting in which care or affection of a child depends on his or her behaviours or actions.
- Extreme overprotectiveness
- Inappropriate non-physical punishment (e.g. locking child in bedroom)
- Ongoing family conflicts and family violence
- Seriously inappropriate expectations of a child relative to his/her age and stage of development

### 3.1.3 Physical Abuse

Physical abuse occurs when someone deliberately hurts a child physically or puts them at risk of being physically hurt. It may occur as a once-off occurrence or repeatedly. A reasonable concern exists if the child's health and/or development is being, may be, or has been damaged as a result of physical abuse. Physical abuse may include:

- Physical punishment including beating, slapping, hitting or kicking
- Pushing, shaking or throwing
- Pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling
- Use of excessive force in handling
- Deliberate poisoning
- Suffocation
- Fabricated/induced illness
- Female genital mutilation

In Ireland, the Children First Act 2015 abolished the common law defence of reasonable chastisement, which was previously used by a parent or other person if they physically disciplined a child. This change means that in prosecutions for assault or physical cruelty, children have the same protections from the law as adults, because a person who administers such punishment to a child, does not have the defence of reasonable chastisement.

### 3.1.4 Sexual Abuse

Tulsa defines sexual abuse as "*when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or arousal, or for that of others*". The child may be involved in a number of sexual acts once-off or systematically, including masturbation, fondling, oral or penetrative sex, or the child may be exposed to sexual activity directly or through pornography. Sexual activity involving a young person may be sexual abuse even if the young person concerned does not consider it as abuse themselves. The following examples provided are intended to act as guidance for members only:

- Any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child
- An invitation to sexual touching or intentional touching or molesting of a child's body whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification
- Masturbation in the presence of a child or the involvement of a child in an act of masturbation
- Sexual intercourse with a child, whether oral, vaginal or anal Sexual exploitation of a child, which includes:
  - Inviting, inducing or coercing a child to engage in prostitution or the production of child pornography [for example, exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, videotape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of an image by computer or other means]
  - Inviting, coercing or inducing a child to participate in, or to observe, any sexual, indecent or obscene act
  - Showing sexually explicit material to children, which is often a feature of the grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse. Exposing a child to inappropriate or abusive material through information and communication technology Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person

## A) *Age of Consent*

- The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006 provides that the age of sexual consent is 17 years of age in the Republic of Ireland.
- The Sexual Offences NI Order 2008 stipulates that the legal age of sexual consent for the six counties of Antrim, Armagh, Derry, Down, Fermanagh and Tyrone is 16 years of age.

### 3.1.5 Other Forms of Abuse

There are other forms of behaviour, although not defined as abuse, that cause serious developmental and psychological harm to children. The range of abusive behaviour includes Bullying, Peer Abuse, Organisational Abuse, Cyber Bullying, E Bullying and various forms of abuse over the Internet. While they are not be generally included in the aforementioned categories, in extreme forms, they could be considered to be abuse.

## A) *Bullying*

Bullying in all age groups is a concern for most sports organisations. It can have a detrimental impact on those involved including victims, perpetrators, families, bystanders and the organisation overall. It is vital therefore that all branches are equipped to deal with bullying and proactively prevent such behaviour occurring or re-occurring.

Tusla defines Bullying as:

- Intentional; where the person who bullies, deliberately sets out to target someone.
- Repetitive; it often happens frequently and relentlessly
- Abuse of power; the person bullying has the upper hand or advantage over the other person. This can be as a result of a structure in place or simply, psychologically.

Bullying behaviours can include:

- Physically assaulting someone, messing in a rough way or threatening assault

- Taunting someone based on their race, culture, religious beliefs or sexual identity
- Spreading malicious rumours, emails or text messages
- Excluding someone from a group or activity
- Being insincere or fake with someone
- Forcing or daring someone to do something against their will
- Damaging or stealing property
- Being a bystander to bullying or laughing at bullying behaviours
- Pressuring someone to engage in sexual activity against their will

Bullying behaviour may take place in any setting and may be carried out by other children which may be younger or older, by children individually or as part of a group or by an adult or adults involved in the club. Indeed, a child may be suffering from Bullying outside of An Chomhdháil, but the actions suffered may still impact upon the child's participation with An Chomhdháil.

All forms of Bullying are unacceptable and all An Chomhdháil members must be aware of potential Bullying so that it can be reported as soon as possible - Bullying is a 'whole organisation matter' that requires a 'whole organisation' approach. An Chomhdháil aims to create a supportive environment where it is not acceptable to bully and where the ethos of the organisation is that it is 'ok to tell' or to report instances of bullying, in order to break cycles of silence in relation to bullying. In the first instance, it is the responsibility of the branch, whether through the Child Protection Administrators or members to deal with any instances of bullying. All branches must adopt the strategies outlined by An Chomhdháil to prevent and intervene in order to address bullying if it occurs.

Prevention strategies include:

- an anti-bullying policy
- awareness of members, parents and all students through training / conduct
- codes of behaviour
- peer mentoring
- health education programmes.

Intervention strategies include:

- mediation
- 'No Blame Approach'
- Parental/ Guardian involvement
- disciplinary measures, as a last resort.

## **B) Peer Abuse**

In some cases of abuse the alleged perpetrator will also be a child. Peer Abuse can be defined as the physical, mental, emotional, or sexual mistreatment of a person by somebody else of the same age group. Abusive behaviour perpetrated by children must be taken seriously and early intervention paramount. In these situations, the An Chomhdháil child welfare and protection procedures, including those outlined in the Code of Conduct for Dancers and in this Guidance for dealing with and reporting allegations or concerns of abuse should be followed for both the victim and the alleged abuser. Both the victim and the abuser should have proper support throughout any mediation and/or other measures which may be taken as required.

## **C) E-Bullying/Cyber Bullying**

E-Bullying or Cyber Bullying is any form of bullying including tormenting, threatening, harassing, humiliating, embarrassing, or otherwise targeting of a person by another via the Internet, interactive and digital technologies or mobile phones.

## 3.2 Signs and Symptoms of Abuse - Possible Indicators

3.2.1 Physical Abuse	
Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unexplained bruises (in various stages of healing)</li> <li>• grip marks on arms</li> <li>• slap marks</li> <li>• human bite marks</li> <li>• welts</li> <li>• bald spots</li> <li>• unexplained/untreated burns especially cigarette burns (glove like)</li> <li>• unexplained fractures</li> <li>• lacerations or abrasions</li> <li>• untreated injuries</li> <li>• bruising on both sides of the ear (symmetrical bruising should be treated with suspicion)</li> <li>• injuries occurring in a time pattern e.g. every Monday</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• self-destructive tendencies</li> <li>• aggressive to other children</li> <li>• behavioural extremes (withdrawn or aggressive)</li> <li>• appears frightened or cowed in presence of adults</li> <li>• improbable excuses to explain injuries</li> <li>• chronic runaway</li> <li>• uncomfortable with physical contact</li> <li>• come to school early or stays last as if afraid to be at home</li> <li>• clothing inappropriate to weather – to hide part of body</li> <li>• violent themes in artwork or stories</li> </ul>

3.2.2 Emotional Abuse	
Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• well below average in height and weight</li> <li>• “failing to thrive”</li> <li>• poor hair and skin</li> <li>• alopecia</li> <li>• swollen extremities i.e. icy cold and swollen hands and feet</li> <li>• recurrent diarrhea, wetting and soiling</li> <li>• sudden speech disorders</li> <li>• signs of self-mutilation</li> <li>• signs of solvent abuse (e.g. mouth sores, smell of glue, drowsiness)</li> <li>• extremes of physical, mental and emotional development (e.g. anorexia, vomiting, stooping)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• apathy and dejection</li> <li>• inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations</li> <li>• rocking/head banging</li> <li>• inability to play</li> <li>• indifference to separation from family indiscriminate attachment</li> <li>• reluctance for parental liaison</li> <li>• fear of new situation</li> <li>• chronic runaway</li> <li>• attention seeking/needing behaviour</li> <li>• poor peer relationships</li> </ul>

### 3.2.3 Neglect

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• very thin, poorly and sad</li> <li>• constant hunger</li> <li>• lack of energy</li> <li>• untreated medical problems</li> <li>• special needs of child not being met</li> <li>• constant tiredness</li> <li>• inappropriate dress</li> <li>• poor hygiene</li> <li>• repeatedly unwashed, smelly</li> <li>• repeated accidents, especially burns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tired or listless (falls asleep in class)</li> <li>• steals food</li> <li>• compulsive eating</li> <li>• begging from class friends</li> <li>• withdrawn</li> <li>• lacks concentration</li> <li>• reports that no carer is at home</li> <li>• low self-esteem</li> <li>• persistent non-attendance at school</li> <li>• exposure to violence including unsuitable videos</li> </ul>

### 3.2.4 Sexual Abuse

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bruises, scratches, bite marks or other injuries to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen, or thighs</li> <li>• bruises or bleeding in genital or anal areas</li> <li>• torn, stained or bloody underclothes</li> <li>• chronic ailments such as recurrent abdominal pains or headaches</li> <li>• difficulty in walking or sitting</li> <li>• frequent urinary infections</li> <li>• avoidance of lessons, games, showers</li> <li>• anorexia/gross over-eating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• withdrawn</li> <li>• chronic depression</li> <li>• excessive sexual precociousness/promiscuity/ seductiveness</li> <li>• children having knowledge beyond their usual frame of reference e.g. young child who can describe details of adult sexuality</li> <li>• parent/child role reversal</li> <li>• over concerned for siblings</li> <li>• poor self-esteem, self-devaluation or lack of confidence</li> <li>• peer problems</li> <li>• lack of involvement</li> <li>• noticeable weight change</li> <li>• suicide attempts</li> <li>• lack of emotional control i.e. hysterical/angry outbursts</li> <li>• sudden deterioration in ability or behaviour</li> <li>• inappropriate sex play</li> <li>• repeated attempts to run away from home</li> <li>• unusual or bizarre sexual themes in children's behaviour or stories</li> <li>• vulnerability to sexual and emotional exploitation</li> </ul>

**NB: No single indicator would be confirmation of abuse.**

- It is **not** the responsibility of members to undertake investigations or to make enquiries of parents or guardians.
- Social Services will investigate cases of suspected abuse and will determine what action, if any, required.
- A child may suffer or be at risk of suffering from one or more types of abuse and abuse may take place on a single occasion or may occur repeatedly over time.

**Remember:** The welfare of the child is paramount. Confidentiality is subordinate to the need to protect child.

## 3.3 Procedures for concerns in relation to Child Abuse

### 3.3.1 How a parent can report a concern

An Chomhdháil aims to work with the parents, legal guardians or carers in supporting all aspects of the development and well-being of each child. Any concerns a parent, legal guardian or carer may have will be taken seriously and dealt with in a professional manner. If a parent/legal guardian/legal carer has a concern, they can speak to:

- the dance teacher
- Designated Child Protection Branch Administrator
- Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrator

If the parent/legal guardian/legal is still concerned, they may contact the Regional Child Protection Administrator who is assigned with the responsibility for child protection within that particular region. At any time, a parent/legal guardian/legal carer may speak to a social worker in the Statutory Authority within their jurisdiction.

### 3.3.2 How a member can report a concern

If a member becomes aware of concerns or is approached by a child, young person or vulnerable adult, they should **not** investigate. Any investigation is the responsibility of the relevant Statutory Authorities within the relevant jurisdiction. Members should report these concerns immediately to the Designated/Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrator and full notes should be made. The notes or records should be factual, objective and include what was seen, said, heard or reported and should include details of the place, time and who was present. The notes or records should be given to the Designated/Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrator. The person who reports the incident **must treat the matter in confidence**.



## **Section 4: Procedures for Dealing with Concerns or Suspicions of Abuse**

While all Child Protection Administrators in our organisation should be fully aware of the procedures for reporting allegations or concerns of abuse, the procedures prior to reporting for responding and recording are also a key aspect in identifying any cases of abuse or of poor practice.

An Chomhdháil promotes an environment that is safe, secure and supportive so that the members and indeed other parents may be seen to be part of a safe environment in which children, young people and vulnerable adults may wish to share concerns or divulge confidential information. All members of An Chomhdháil, including Child Protection Administrators, who may receive any reports or disclosures should respond in a supportive, sensitive and caring manner. It is important to remember, that a child, young person, vulnerable adult or any adult wishing to report, or outline concerns, may be reluctant, hesitant, and have feelings of guilt about reporting.

## 4.1 Procedure for Reporting Disclosures

**4.1.1** The Guidance herein provided is primarily concerned with instances of abuse that may occur when children, young people or vulnerable adults are engaged in Irish dance classes, activities and/or events with members from An Chomhdháil who act on behalf of An Chomhdháil. An Chomhdháil is responsible for ensuring such instances of abuse including instances where the abuse may be perpetrated by one child against another are appropriately and confidentially dealt with where they arise in connection with An Chomhdháil's activities.

Should a complaint or allegation of abuse be made that is deemed to be outside An Chomhdháil, this matter should be referred to the relevant Designated/ Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrator to enable them to bring such matters to the attention of the relevant Statutory Authority in that jurisdiction, or, where appropriate, to encourage the individual themselves to report the matter to the relevant Statutory Authority.

**4.1.2** Disclosures or allegations should follow this format:

- Person making the disclosure
- Member/parent to whom disclosure is made
- Designated/Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrator
- Regional Child Protection Administrator
- Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator
- Safeguarding Committee
- Appeal Panel

The Designated/Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrator will decide whether the matter needs to be referred to the Regional Child Protection Administrator who will then consult with the Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator. The Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator will determine whether Statutory Authorities should be formally notified and whether any measures restricting the person whom the allegation is made against are required.

**4.1.3** If there is a conflict of interest for a Designated/Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrator or Regional Child Protection Administrator in relation to the parties or the subject matter of an allegation or concern, they must notify the Regional Child Protection Administrator/Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator respectively and shall appoint an equivalent person to fulfil their duties and remove themselves from the case.

## 4.2 Recording Disclosures

**4.2.1** The accurate recording of allegations or disclosures immediately at or as soon as possible after same have been made is necessary to assist the Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator or Statutory Authorities with the background, nature and severity of the allegation or disclosure.

**4.2.2** The following guidelines should be adhered to in the event that any disclosure or allegation of abuse is made:

- Be sensitive and listen carefully to what is being reported to you, especially where the disclosure is made by a child, young adult or vulnerable person.
- Take what is said to you seriously
- React calmly when responding, avoid over-reacting as it may alarm the young person and compound feelings of anxiety and guilt
- Emphasise that the discussion, while confidential, may have to be shared with others so as to pursue the allegation correctly and keep the child safe
- Reassure the person that they have taken the correct action in making the disclosure
- Never make a judgmental statement or express an opinion about the allegation or the alleged abuser
- Do not make false promises, particularly regarding secrecy
- If asking any questions, do so for the purpose of clarification **only**
- Explain and ensure that the young person understands the procedures which will be followed
- Confirm with the person making the disclosure that what you have heard is correct in a calm manner
- Inform the relevant Designated/Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrator of the allegation received as per the procedures outlined in this guidance
- Make a written record of the conversation as soon as possible, with as much information as possible, using the wording shared by the young person or child
- Treat all information received in a **confidential** manner

## 4.3 Reasonable Grounds for Concern

Abuse may not be visible to all and while a child, young person or vulnerable adult may disclose that they are being abused we primarily rely on adults to be vigilant and to observe any possible forms of suspected abuse and to report all such matters to the relevant Child Protection Administrator. Occasional workers at An Chomhdháil classes/feisanna/events are not expected to be in a position to instantly recognise instances of abuse, particularly without any prior training or experience in these matters.

- The guidelines and examples provided earlier in this document would constitute reasonable grounds for concern and should be reported to the designated person.
- A suspicion that is not supported by any objective indicator of abuse or neglect would not constitute a reasonable suspicion or constitute reasonable grounds for concern. If an individual is unsure as to how to proceed with their concerns, they should consult with their relevant Designated Liaison Person.
- Where reasonable grounds for concern exist, the relevant Statutory Authority must be contacted unless the matter is previously known to them. However, any new allegations or concerns must be reported without delay.
- You can contact your Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator or Regional Child Protection Administrators using the contact details at <https://web.irishdancingorg.com/index.php/policies/child-welfare-protection>
- All dancing teachers are obliged to inform their dancers and parents, legal guardians or carers as to the existence and identification of their Child Protection Branch Administrators and their contact details.

### 4.3.1 Confidentiality

As previously discussed, confidentiality must be maintained in respect of all allegations involving cases of alleged abuse. Confidentiality is vital to protect both the child, young person or vulnerable adult and the person against whom the allegations or complaint has been made. However, confidentiality does not supersede the rights of the child, young person or vulnerable adult to be kept safe from abuse or harm. Remember:

- All information should be treated carefully and in a sensitive manner.
- Any information disclosed should be discussed on a need-to-know basis **only** with those who need to know, in accordance with An Chomhdháil's procedures.
- The sharing of information on a 'need-to-know' basis is not deemed to be a breach of confidentiality
- All information collated may only be used in a manner compatible with the purposes for which it was initially given i.e. relating to possible child abuse. The information cannot be dealt with as a 'secret' between the young person and the person to whom they have reported their concerns
- Information should be conveyed in a sensitive manner to the parents of the child unless to do so may further endanger the child.
- The sharing of information with all parties, should be done only following communications and discussions with Statutory Authorities so as to ensure that any such actions do not obstruct or hinder ongoing investigations
- All persons involved in a child protection and welfare process (the child, young person or vulnerable adult, the parents, legal guardians or carers, the alleged offender, the offender's family) should be afforded appropriate respect, fairness, support and confidentiality at all stages of the procedure

- Information should be stored in a secure place, with limited access only by the relevant Child Protection Administrator
- Breaches of confidentiality shall be deemed a serious matter and dealt with accordingly within An Chomhdháil
- The sharing of information or the passing on of information to relevant authorities is not deemed to be a breach of confidentiality

### 4.3.2 Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints can be difficult to deal with but must **not be ignored**. In all cases, the safety and welfare of the child, young person or vulnerable adult remains paramount and, as such, anonymous complaints should be followed up in a discreet manner. Any such complaints relating to possible abuse or other child protection concerns, that have reached the threshold for reasonable grounds for concern, should be referred to the relevant Child Protection Administrator.

**Note:** It is **NOT** the role of a Child Protection Administrator or anybody else in An Chomhdháil to commence an investigation surrounding the allegations of abuse or to interview the person against whom an allegation has been made or interview others that may have been subject to the allegation. This role shall be carried out by the Statutory Authorities in the relevant jurisdiction.

### 4.3.3 Reporting Allegations of Child Abuse

- A)** Any member of An Chomhdháil who is informed, knows, suspects or is concerned that a child, young person or vulnerable adult is, has been or may be the subject of child abuse, while engaged in activities with An Chomhdháil, whether through classes, feisanna or events, or who has received information regarding any such concerns involving persons who act on behalf of An Chomhdháil, has a duty to convey such concerns as a matter of urgency to an appropriate Child Protection Administrator in accordance with An Chomhdháil's procedures. Members are obliged to facilitate and co-operate with any review or consideration of a complaint, a report or allegation of abuse which may be carried out by Statutory Authorities or by the relevant Child Protection Administrator.
- B)** Members may themselves submit a report of alleged abuse to the relevant Statutory Authority regardless of any action taken by An Chomhdháil. Dedicated Contact Points can be found in [Appendix 3](#).
- C)** It should be noted from the outset, that when a report of abuse has been received, members of our organisation are obliged to consider the following:
- Each member in An Chomhdháil will ensure the safety and welfare of the child, young person or vulnerable adult is paramount at all times.
  - All reports made, whether internal or external to An Chomhdháil, shall note times, dates, locations etc. and should be signed by the person that raised the concern or made the allegation.
  - Child Protection Administrators can accept reports, allegations or concerns of abuse from members or non-members of An Chomhdháil including to parents, legal guardians or carers, other family members, observers, neighbours, etc of verbally or in writing, but must request a written or signed report in the event of reporting such matters to the Statutory Authorities. The absence of a written or signed report does not prohibit a report from being made to the Statutory Authorities, nor should it cause a delay in making a report to the Statutory Authorities.

- Any reports or concerns regarding allegations of abuse, once received by the Designated/Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrator shall be recorded, signed, dated and where reasonable grounds for concern have been established shall be reported by the Designated/Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrator to the statutory authorities and to the Regional/Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator.
- Responses to and the reporting of allegations/reports/concerns of abuse to the Statutory Authorities and to the Designated/Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrator should be carried out as soon as possible and without delay.
- Any steps deemed necessary to protect the child, young person or vulnerable adult should be implemented as a matter of urgency while also being careful that the person against whom the allegation has been made is not unreasonably penalised.
- The principle of natural justice must always be adhered to thus ensuring that the presumption of innocence applies until otherwise proven.
- All matters concerning any allegation of abuse must be dealt with in strict confidence.
- When an allegation has been made and where reasonable grounds for concern have been established, the matter shall be reported to the relevant authorities as a matter of urgency and to the Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator. Formal reporting may be made directly by the relevant Child Protection Administrator or jointly with the Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator.
- If an allegation of child abuse is received, protective measures proportionate to the level of risk, should be taken by the Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator.
- The need to invoke measures which may include the suspension of the person against whom an allegation has been made from all An Chomhdháil activities, shall be done in a confidential manner. All suspension measures shall be of a temporary nature and shall be considered proportionate to the acts carried out or alleged and must be made by the Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator and affirmed by the Safeguarding Committee.

#### **4.3.4 Reporting to the Statutory Authorities**

- A)** The Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator must, as a matter of policy, be informed of all reports submitted to Statutory Authorities on behalf of An Chomhdháil in all jurisdictions and of any decisions made not to report an allegation of abuse that failed to reach the threshold for reasonable grounds for concern.
- B)** If there are concerns that the child may be at risk, An Chomhdháil is obliged to make a referral.
- C)** Unless there are concerns that a parent, legal guardian or legal carer may be the possible abuser, the parent, legal guardian or legal carer should be informed immediately. If there are concerns in relation to notifying any relevant parties, informal advice should be obtained from the Statutory Authorities.
- D)** All members must note that even if parents do not wish to have an allegation pursued, all allegations must be recorded and reported in line with statutory obligations, for the purpose of protecting all children, young adults and vulnerable adults within An Chomhdháil.
- E)** If a disclosure is made by an adult in relation to something which occurred during their childhood, it should be established whether there is any ongoing risk to any children, young people or vulnerable adults which may necessitate carrying out a risk assessment. If a risk may exist to any children, young people or vulnerable adults then a report should be made in accordance with An Chomhdháil's reporting procedures to enable the Child Protection Administrator to report the allegation to the Statutory Authorities. A Retrospective Abuse Report Form should be used when reporting cases of adults disclosing childhood abuse to them.

- F)** During consultation with Statutory Authorities, the child's details will be shared. No decision to refer a case to the relevant Authorities will be made without full consideration and on appropriate advice. The safety of the child is the priority.
- G)** The Main/Regional Child Protection Administrator should use and complete the An Chomhdháil External Reporting Allegations of Abuse Form. It is the relevant Main/Regional Child Protection Administrator acting on behalf of An Chomhdháil who shall record specific information as part of the reporting procedures, and where a report is being submitted to the Statutory Authorities, it is the duty of the Child Protection Administrator to make the report using the Statutory Authority reporting forms appropriate, whether online or in hardcopy. The following must be considered to ensure accuracy of all information recorded and the protection of the child, young person or vulnerable adult:
- Be accurate and factual in the recording of disclosures or allegations
  - Record the conversation as soon as possible, and in as much detail as possible
  - Do not ask leading questions
  - Do not ask the person to repeat their story unnecessarily
  - Treat the information confidentially, sharing it only with persons who have a right to know
  - Sign and date the record

#### **4.3.5 Safeguarding Committee for An Chomhdháil**

- A)** This committee consists of our Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator and our Regional Child Protection Administrators to advise An Chomhdháil on all matters pertaining to child safeguarding matters. They shall oversee the implementation of the joint code of behaviour and the guidance for dealing with and reporting allegations or concerns of abuse.
- B)** The Safeguarding Committee will ensure effective policies are in place to maintain standards and procedures for the protection of children and young people. However, it is ultimately the duty of each member of An Chomhdháil to ensure they personally comply with the relevant statutory guidance, requirements, and guidelines.
- C)** Following a complaint, allegation, or report of abuse against members of An Chomhdháil, measures may be taken by the Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator, in consultation with the relevant Child Protection Administrator, to protect the children, young people and vulnerable adults in accordance with the severity of the allegations, which may include the removal, suspension or restriction of membership and/or other recommendations i.e. for supervision, where appropriate. The person(s) may be instructed to withdraw from all activities in our organisation pending the outcome of a full consideration and review of the allegation by the Statutory Authorities.
- D)** In most circumstances, the Regional Child Protection Administrator, in consultation with the Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator, inform the person against whom allegations have been made as to the nature of the allegations and the action to be taken by An Chomhdháil i.e. suspension or supervision, pending investigation by Statutory Authorities.
- E)** The Safeguarding Committee shall consider the contents of the report or disclosure and make recommendations to the Chairperson of the day who decides to remove or suspend membership or implement any other recommendations, subject to such conditions as the Safeguarding Committee shall consider appropriate, pending an investigation by the Statutory Authorities. A decision on whether any official report shall be made to the Statutory Authorities must be made within 21 days after the date of such disclosure or report.



**F)** The Safeguarding Committee's assessment of the report or disclosure and/or Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator's decision will depend on the nature of all the circumstances including the position held by the person whom the disclosure or allegation is against. Any disclosure or allegation shall not automatically bar an individual from membership but must be reviewed and determined on its own merits in accordance with the principles of Natural Justice and based upon the following criteria:

- a) The nature, number and gravity of the matters;
- b) Self-disclosure of matters;
- c) The length of time elapsed since the matters referred to occurred;
- d) The age of the subject when the offence was committed;
- e) Any pattern or series of offences or offending;
- f) Particular note shall be made of offences which have of a sexual, violent, dishonest/fraudulent or drug-related nature, which may be considered reasonable grounds on which refusal of Membership or work involving contact with children or vulnerable adults;
- g) Any mitigating factors;
- h) Any other criteria or information the Safeguarding Committee deems pertinent to the individual disclosure.

Any decision of the Safeguarding Committee shall be made available in writing as soon as reasonably possible thereafter.

**G)** Any engagement with either the person against whom allegations have been made or with the family of the child, who is the subject of the concern, must be strictly confidential and should only take place following consultation with the relevant Statutory Authority.

**H)** The Safeguarding Committee shall affirm, remove or take further measures, where appropriate, up to and including debarment from An Chomhdháil, following the completion of the Statutory Authority's investigation.

**I)** The person who is alleged to have abused or neglected a child can appeal the decision of the Safeguarding Committee in writing to Deputy/Designated Main Child Protection Administrator within 14 days of notification of the decision. The appeal can be either:

- a) Against the refusal, suspension or limitation of membership at which point the Appeal Panel will review;
- b) Where the Statutory Authority has yet to finalise its investigation, the person may appeal, against the nature or content of the disclosure. The Main Child Administrator shall submit all information received to the Statutory Authorities in order for a proper investigation to be carried out by the appropriate officials in the jurisdiction.

**J)** Until all disputes have been settled the individual will not be able to take any position within An Chomhdháil. If the dispute involves existing personnel, it is recommended that supervision or suspension is put in place until the dispute is resolved, depending on the severity of the allegations.

#### **4.3.6 Appeals Committee for An Chomhdháil**

**A)** The appeal shall be heard by the Appeals Committee set up by the Chairperson. It shall consist of 3 or 5 persons (one of whom may be a practising solicitor or barrister of upwards of five years standing) and shall be set up and chaired by the Chairperson, who shall remain independent, and shall exclude members who were on the Safeguarding Committee. The Appeals Committee should comprise of the Chairperson, the Secretary, the Treasurer and Vice-Chairperson of An Chomhdháil, where possible, unless exceptional circumstances require otherwise. The Appeals Committee shall undertake a complete review of the decision of Safeguarding Committee.



- B)** The Appeals Committee's decision shall be final. The parties shall agree to the Appeals Committee's decision being disclosed to the Chairperson of An Chomhdháil, and in the event of membership being revoked following the conclusion of the Statutory Authorities investigation, the Treasurer.
- C)** An Chomhdháil reserves the right to involve the Statutory Authorities any stage during this process and for any reason, where it is deemed necessary in the circumstances.

#### **4.3.7 Disclosure against a Member of An Chomhdháil or Occasional Worker**

- A)** Where any disclosure or allegation is made against a member of An Chomhdháil or occasional worker, the procedures set out above shall apply. The Designated/Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrator, Regional Child Protection Administrator and, the Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator, shall be informed of the allegation as soon as possible and shall take responsibility for processing the matter on behalf of An Chomhdháil including the involvement of external agencies, if necessary.
- B)** The Designated/Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrator will normally have responsibility for reporting any disclosures or allegations which are made against an occasional worker or young person. The Regional or Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator will have responsibility for handling allegations or disclosures made against members.
- C)** The member should be afforded the right to respond in accordance with established grievance procedure. The response should be noted and made available to the Statutory Authorities as part of any subsequent formal reporting procedure.
- D)** In some cases of abuse the alleged perpetrator will also be a child, young adult or vulnerable person. In these situations, An Chomhdháil's child welfare and protection procedures, including those outlined in the Code of Behaviour (Underage) and in this Guidance for Dealing with & Reporting Allegations or Concerns of Abuse should be adhered to for both the victim and the alleged abuser.
- E)** If an allegation is against the Main Child Protection person, or any member of the safeguarding team (Regional, Branch Designated and Deputy Designated Persons), the allegation should be referred to the Chairperson of the An Chomhdháil or an equivalent senior person.
- F)** The Safeguarding Committee must keep comprehensive records of any allegations made, details of how the allegations were managed and details of any action taken, and decisions reached. These records must be stored confidentially, and a copy given to the individual concerned. This information must be retained on file for the statutory period of time relevant in each jurisdiction, including information on those who may leave An Chomhdháil for possible future reference. Records should be confidentially maintained as they be required to be made available to the Statutory Authorities as part of any subsequent or on-going investigations.
- G)** In situations where the Designated Liaison Person or Main Child Protection Administration, following consultations (perhaps with the relevant statutory authority) subsequently decides that an allegation received or concerns relayed to them will not be formally reported to the relevant statutory authorities, as it has not met the threshold for reasonable grounds for concern, the individual who raised the concerns or made the allegations should be given a clear written statement of the reasons why the reported concerns are not being reported to the statutory authorities. The individual should be advised that, if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free to consult with, or report to, the statutory authorities themselves. Should the person who passed their concerns be a child then the child's parents should be informed of the decision not to formally report to the statutory authorities, unless there are extenuating reasons not to report this to the parents.

- H) Members and volunteers may be subject to erroneous or malicious allegations, and as such, any allegations of abuse should be dealt with sensitively. All relevant supports must be provided to all parties, within the resource capabilities of An Chomhdháil and following legal and Statutory Authority advice. However, the principal aim is for the protection of all children, young persons and vulnerable adults which must be balanced with fairness to all members, volunteers or young persons.
- I) The making of a false allegation by any member of An Chomhdháil shall be deemed to be a serious issue of misconduct and subsequent disciplinary action may follow. Any allegation made, which is subsequently found to be false or of a malicious nature, shall also be dealt with and recorded.
- J) The Chairperson and/or Treasurer of the day shall be informed if a debarment order is made against any member of the branch following the completion of an investigation by the Statutory Authorities. Such information shall be treated with the strictest of confidence and the branch shall be obliged to adhere to the terms of the debarment.

## Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms

### **Child:**

A person aged under 16.

### **Young Adult:**

A person aged between 16 and 18.

**Vulnerable Adult:** A person over the age of 18 who is unable to take care of themselves. It can also refer to one who is unable to take care of themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

### **Child Protection:**

Child protection is when a child requires protection from child abuse or neglect. For a child to require protection, it is not required that child abuse or neglect has taken place, but rather a risk assessment has identified a *likelihood* or *risk* of significant harm from abuse or neglect.

### **Child abuse:**

Abuse (and neglect) is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse a child by inflicting, or by failing to act to prevent, significant harm to the child. In a child protection context, there are three key different types of abuse that can be identified. Physical abuse is the causing of physical harm to a child or young person. Emotional abuse is persistent emotional neglect or ill treatment of a child causing severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. Sexual abuse is any act that involves the child in any activity for the sexual gratification of another whether or not it is claimed that the child either consented or assented.

### **Child neglect:**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide: adequate food, shelter and clothing; to protect a child from physical harm or danger; to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment or; to provide a child's basic emotional needs.

### **Parents/Legal Guardians/Legal Carers:**

A 'parent' is defined as someone who is the genetic or adoptive mother or father of the child. A 'guardian' or 'carer' is someone other than a parent who has rights/responsibilities for looking after a child.

**Gateway Teams:** The first point of contact if you have concerns about a child or family. They will treat all contacts as enquiries in the first instance. Enquiries can include requests for information, advice and concerns about a child or family. An enquiry is always completed first; it is an initial filtering system before a referral is taken. If you contact by phone, the Duty Worker will seek some general information about you, the child or family and the nature of your concern. On the basis of this information, they will be able to judge whether or not the enquiry should be progressed to referral.

**Statutory Authorities:** The authorities who promote the welfare and protection of children and who in cases of alleged abuse of children have the responsibility to investigate all such allegations i.e. in the Republic of Ireland the statutory authorities are An Garda Síochána and the Health Service Executive (HSE); In Northern Ireland the Statutory Authorities are the PSNI and Department of Health (DOH).

**Code of Conduct:** A set of standards for members of our organisation, dancers and parents to ensure mutual respect for one another is a key priority to ensure the safety of everyone associated with our organisation.

**Record of Concern (ROC):** See Appendix 2. These are the internal form for recording concerns in relation to the areas outlined as potential breaches of child protection matters.

**Child Safeguarding Committee:** This committee consists of our Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator and our Regional Child Protection Administrators.


**Appeals Panel:** The committee set up by the Chairperson to review the decision of the Safeguarding Committee if requested. It shall consist of 3 to 5 persons (one of whom may be a practising solicitor or barrister of upwards of 5 years standing) and shall be chaired by the Chairperson, who shall remain

independent, and shall exclude members who were on the Safeguarding Committee. The Committee should comprise of the Secretary, the Treasurer and the Vice Chairperson of An Chomhdháil, where possible, unless exceptional circumstances require otherwise.

**Significant Harm:**

Difficult as it may be to define what constitutes significant harm consideration needs to be given to the severity of ill-treatment and this may include the degree and the extent of physical harm, the duration and frequency of abuse and neglect, whether the abuse or neglect has become typical of the relationship, the extent to which the child's well-being or development has been affected and the extent of premeditation, degree of threat and coercion and sadism in child sexual abuse.

# Appendix 2: Record of Concern Reporting Form



**COMHDHÁIL NA MUINTEOIRÍ**  
**LE RINCÍ GAELACHA CUIDEACHTA FAOI THEORAINN**  
**RATHAIOCHTTA**  
**An Chomhdháil**

Email: [comhdhail@irishdancing.org](mailto:comhdhail@irishdancing.org)  
[www.irishdancing.org](http://www.irishdancing.org)

**Record of Concern Reporting Form**

While this document should be forwarded in the first instance to the Designated/Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrator and may be used for internal purposes, please be aware that the document may also be required by the relevant statutory authorities should they wish to investigate this matter further. The contents of this form should not be shared with any other person, except with the prior knowledge and permission of the Designated/Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrator.

Branch:	
Region:	
Designated/ Deputy Designated Child Protection Branch Administrator:	
Regional Child Protection Administrator:	
Child's name:	
Child's address:	
Child's date of birth:	
Parent/Legal Guardian/Legal Carer Name:	
Date and time of any incident:	
What was observed or reported and by whom:	

What was observed or reported and by whom:	
Exact details of what was reported to the relevant Child Protection Administrator:	
Action taken so far:	
Please state if Branch, Regional or Main/Deputy Main Child Protection Administrator has been informed	Branch / Regional/ Main (delete as appropriate)
Decision taken by above Child Protection Administrator and reasons for decision taken:	

Name of external agencies contacted:	
Date & time external agencies contacted:	
Details of advice received:	
This report has been forwarded to:	
Date and time:	
Signature _____	
Date _____	
<p><b>Remember to maintain confidentiality on a need-to-know basis, only if it will protect the child. Do not discuss this incident with anyone other than those who need to know.</b></p> <p><b>NB: A copy of this form may be sent to the Regional/Main Child Protection Administrator.</b></p>	

## Appendix 3: General Contact Details for Local Areas

Always contact emergency services to report a crime in progress or if a child or young person is in immediate danger.

### Northern Ireland

Northern HSC Trust	0300 1234 333
Belfast HSC Trust	028 9050 7000
South Eastern HSC Trust	0300 1000 300
Southern HSC Trust	0800 7837 745
Western HSC Trust	028 7131 4090

Out of Hours Duty Social Worker – 028 9504 9999 (after 5pm weekdays, weekend and public holidays)

### Republic of Ireland

Dublin is divided into 5 Tusla Areas: Dublin North, Dublin North City, Dublin South Central, Dublin South East and Dublin South West. If you are unsure of which area you are in, please see the following link for maps of each area:

<https://www.tusla.ie/services/child-protection-welfare/contact-a-social-worker/dublin-north-duty/>

### South of Ireland

Area	Telephone Number	Address
Carlow	052 6177302	Tusla – Child and Family Agency Yellow House Wester Road Clonmel Co. Tipperary E91 PR83
Kilkenny		
Tipperary – South		
Wexford	053 9185680	Tusla – Child and Family Agency Ely House Ferrybank Co. Wexford
Waterford		
Cork	021 492 3493	Tusla – Child and Family Agency Block 36 St. Finbarr's Campus Douglas Road Cork
Kerry - South	066 7184501	Tusla – Child and Family Agency Rathass Tralee Co. Kerry V92 YA25

## Dublin North East

Area	Telephone Number	Address
Cavan	047 30475	Tusla – Child and Family Agency Support Services Building Rooskey Monaghan
Monaghan		
Dublin North	01 8708000	Tusla – Child and Family Agency 180-189 Lakeshore Drive Airsides Business Park Swords Co. Dublin
Dublin North City	01 8567704	Tusla – Child and Family Agency Wellmount Health Centre Wellmount Park Finglas Dublin 11
Louth	046 9098560	Tusla – Child and Family Agency Meath Enterprise Centre Trim Road Navan Co. Meath
Meath		

## West

Area	Telephone Number	Address
Clare	061 588688	Tusla – Child and Family Agency Unit 3 St. Camillus Hospital Shelbourne Road Limerick
Limerick		
Tipperary – North		
Donegal	074 9123672	Tusla – Child and Family Agency Millenium Court Pearse Road Letterkenny Co. Donegal
Galway	091 546235	Tusla – Child and Family Agency 25 Newcastle Road Galway
Roscommon		
Mayo	094 9049137	Tusla – Child and Family Agency 1st Floor Mill Lane Bridge Street Castlebar Mayo
Cavan West	071 9155133	Tusla – Child and Family Agency Markiewicz House Barrack St. Sligo
Leitrim		
Sligo		

## Dublin Mid Leinster

Area	Telephone Number	Address
Dublin South East	01 9213400	Tusla – Child and Family Agency Unit 9 Nutmeg Retail Park Churchtown Dublin 14
Wicklow		
Laois	044 9353997	Tusla – Child and Family Agency Primary Care Centre Harbour Road Mullingar Co. Westmeath
Longford		
Offaly		
Westmeath		
Dublin South Central	076 6955749	Tusla – Child and Family Agency Bridge House Cherry Orchard Hospital Dublin 10
Dublin South West	045 920000	Tusla – Building 2 Vista Primary Care Centre Ballymore Road Naas Kildare W91 HT2X
Kildare		
Wicklow West		

## Scotland

NSPCC	0808 800 5000
ChildLine	0800 1111
ParentLine Scotland	0800 028 2233
Victim Support Scotland	0800 160 1985

## England


NSPCC	0808 800 5000
ChildLine	0800 1111

## USA

ChildHelp	800-422-4453
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# Appendix 5: Child Protection and Welfare Report Form



**COMHDHÁIL NA MUINTEOIRÍ  
LE RINCÍ GAELACHA CUIDEACHTA FAOI THEORAINN  
RATHAIOCHTHA  
An Chomhdháil**

Email: [comhdhail@irishdancingorg.com](mailto:comhdhail@irishdancingorg.com)  
[www.irishdancingorg.com](http://www.irishdancingorg.com)

**Child Protection and Welfare Report Form**  
Use block capitals when filling out this form.  
Fields marked with an \* are mandatory.

**1.** Region (where child resides)\*:

**2.** Date of Report\*:

**3. Details of Child:**

Forename\*:

Surname\*:

Gender\*:

Date of Birth\* (if date of birth is unobtainable then give an approximate age):

Address\*:

Postcode:

Name of Dancing School (if applicable):

**4. Details of Concern\*:**  
Please complete the following section with as much detail about the specific child protection or welfare concern or allegation as possible. Include dates, times, incident details and names of anyone who observed any incident. Please include the parents and child's view, if known. Please attach additional sheets, if necessary.

**5. Type of Concern:**  
Tick as appropriate

Child Welfare Concern	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emotional Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neglect	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physical Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>

**6. Details of Reporter:**

Forename:

Surname:

Position Held in An Chomhdháil:	Main Child Protection Officer	Deputy Main Child Protection Officer
---------------------------------	-------------------------------	--------------------------------------

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone No.:

Mobile No.:

Email Address:

**7. Details of Other Persons Where a Joint Report is Being Made:**

Forename:

Surname:

Position Held in An Chomhdháil:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone No.:

Mobile No.:

Email Address:

Forename:

Surname:

Position Held in An Chomhdháil:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone No.:

Mobile No.:

Email Address:

**8. Parents Aware of Report:**

Are the child's parents/legal guardians/legal carers aware that this concern is being reported? Yes  No

Mandated Person's Type:

**9. Relationships:**

**Details of Mother:**

Forename:

Surname:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone No.:

Mobile No.:

Email Address:

Is the Mother a legal guardian?\* Yes  No

**Details of Father:**

Forename:

Surname:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone No.:

Mobile No.:

Email Address:

Is the Father a legal guardian?\* Yes  No

**10. Household Composition:**

Forename	Surname	Relationship	Date of Birth	Estimated Age	Additional Information eg school, occupation, other

**11. Details of Person(s) Allegedly Causing Harm:**

Forename\*:

Surname\*:

Gender\*:

Date of Birth\* (if date of birth is unobtainable then give an approximate age):

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone No.:

Mobile No.:

Email Address:

Is this person a member of An Chomhdháil? Yes  No

Relationship to Child:

Address at time of alleged incident:

If name unknown please indicate reason:

Forename\*:

Surname\*:

Gender\*:

Date of Birth\* (if date of birth is unobtainable then give an approximate age):

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone No.:

Mobile No.:

Email Address:

Is this person a member of An Chomhdháil? Yes  No

Relationship to Child:

Address at time of alleged incident:

If name unknown please indicate reason:

**12. Name and Address of Other Organisations, Personnel or Agencies Known to be Involved Currently or Previously with the Family:**

Profession	Forename	Surname	Address	Contact Number	Recent Contact eg, 3/6/9 months ago
Social Worker					
Public Health Nurse					
GP					
Hospital					
School					
Police					
Pre-school/crèche					
Other					

**13. Any Other Relevant Information, Including any Previous Contact with the Child or Family:**

In completing this report form you are providing details on yourself and on others. Details such as name, address and date of birth fall under the definition of 'Personal Data' in the GDPR Act 2018. An Chomhdháil has a responsibility under these Acts in its capacity as a Data Controller to, amongst other things, obtain and process this data fairly; keep it safe and secure; and to keep it for a specified lawful purpose. That purpose is to fulfil our statutory responsibility under the Child Care Act 1991 to promote the protection and welfare of children. An Chomhdháil may, during the course of the assessment of this report disclose such Personal Data to other agencies including police in relevant jurisdiction. Further details about An Chomhdháil's responsibilities as a Data Controller and your rights as a Data Subject can be found on our website, [www.irishdancing.org.com](http://www.irishdancing.org.com). As you are providing Personal Data on others, you are a Data Processor. We ask that you only provide those details that are necessary for the report and that you keep this report and the Personal Data contained in it secure from unauthorised access, disclosure, destruction or accidental loss.

**For Office Use Only on Receipt of Report**

Forename:

Surname:


Date:

Authorised Person Signature:

Child Previously Known: Yes  No

Allocated Case No.:

# Appendix 6: Retrospective Abuse Report Form



**COMHDHÁIL NA MUINTEOIRÍ  
LE RINCÍ GAELACHA CUIDEACHTA FAOI THEORAINN  
RATHAIOCHTHA  
An Chomhdháil**

Email: [comhdhail@irishdancingorg.com](mailto:comhdhail@irishdancingorg.com)  
[www.irishdancingorg.com](http://www.irishdancingorg.com)

**Retrospective Abuse Report Form**  
Use block capitals when filling out this form.  
Fields marked with an \* are mandatory.

**1.** Region (where the person subject to allegations of abuse resides)\*:

--	--

**2.** Date of Report\*:

--	--

**3.** Date information was received by reporter\*:

--	--

**4. Reporter details if third party\*:**

Forename:	
Surname:	
Position held within An Chomhdháil:	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Telephone No.:	
Mobile No.:	
Email address:	

Reporter's relationship to adult complainant:

--	--

**5. Details of other persons where a joint report is being made:**

Forename*:	
Surname*:	
Position held within An Chomhdháil:	
Address*:	
Postcode:	
Telephone No.:	
Mobile No.:	
Email address:	

Forename*:	
Surname*:	
Position held within An Chomhdháil:	
Address*:	
Postcode:	
Telephone No.:	
Mobile No.:	
Email address:	

**6. Details of person disclosing abuse (adult complainant)\*:**

Forename:	
Surname:	
Gender:	
Date of Birth* (if date of birth is unobtainable then give an approximate age):	
Address*:	
Postcode:	
Telephone No.:	
Previous address, if known:	

**7. Type of abuse being reported\*:**  
Tick as appropriate

Emotional Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neglect	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physical Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>

**8. Details and description of alleged abuse\*:**

Date of alleged abuse:	
Period of alleged abuse:	
Location of alleged abuse:	
Report for report at this time:	

**Further detail:**  
Include, if known, age of adult complainant at time of abuse, age of person subject to allegations of abuse at time of abuse. Please attach additional sheets if necessary.

--

**9. Details of person subject to allegations of abuse:**

Forename\*:

Surname\*:

Gender\*:

Date of Birth\* (if date of birth is unobtainable then give an approximate age):

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone No.:

Mobile No.:

Email Address:

Occupation:

**10. Details of social and employment status of person subject to allegations of abuse:**

**11. Household Composition of person subject to allegations of abuse:**

Forename	Surname	Relationship	Date of Birth	Estimated Age	Additional Information eg school, occupation, other

**12. Does the person subject to allegations of abuse have contact with children?:**

Yes  No

If yes, please complete information below. If no, proceed to section 13.

**Details of Child:**

Forename:	
Surname:	
Gender:	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Telephone No.:	
Mobile No.:	
Email Address:	
Date of Birth:	
Age:	
Parent/legal guardian/legal carers' names:	
Parent/legal guardian/legal carers' names:	
Relationship to adult complainant:	
Relationship to person subject to allegations of abuse:	
Frequency of contact, if known:	

Please attach additional sheets for additional children if necessary.

**13. Based on information known at this time, is the person subject to allegations of abuse known to the local Social Work Department?**

Yes  No

If yes, please provide detail:

**14. Based on information known at this time, is the adult complainant known to the local Social Work Department?**

Yes  No

If yes, please provide detail:

**15. Based on information known at this time, has a report been made to the local police service?**

Yes  No

If yes, please provide detail:

Police name:

Police area:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone No.:

Email Address:

Date notification made:

Date report made:

**16. Is the person subject to allegations of abuse aware of this report?:**

Yes  No

If yes, please provide detail:

**17. Any additional information:**

Yes  No

Please provide any further information which will assist in assessing at prioritising this report:

In completing this report form you are providing details on yourself and on others. Details such as name, address and date of birth fall under the definition of 'Personal Data' in the GDPR Act 2018. An Chomhbháil has a responsibility under these Acts in its capacity as a Data Controller to, amongst other things, obtain and process this data fairly; keep it safe and secure; and to keep it for a specified lawful purpose. That purpose is to fulfil our statutory responsibility under the Child Care Act 1991 to promote the protection and welfare of children. An Chomhbháil may, during the course of the assessment of this report disclose such Personal Data to other agencies including police in relevant jurisdiction. Further details about An Chomhbháil's responsibilities as a Data Controller and your rights as a Data Subject can be found on our website, [www.irishdancing.org.com](http://www.irishdancing.org.com). As you are providing Personal Data on others, you are a Data Processor. We ask that you only provide those details that are necessary for the report and that you keep this report and the Personal Data contained in it secure from unauthorised access, disclosure, destruction or accidental loss.

**For Office Use Only on Receipt of Report**

Forename:	
Surname:	
Date:	
Authorised Person Signature:	
Child Previously Known:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Allocated Case No.:	

## Appendix 7: Child Protection Legislation and Guidelines

Reference is made below to key Child Protection Legislation and Guidelines in Ireland and Northern Ireland which are deemed relevant to the role of Child Protection Administrators at Main, Regional and Branch levels.

Child Protection Administrators in other jurisdictions should make themselves familiar with the legislation and guidelines below so that they can understand the equivalent legislation and guidelines in their own jurisdiction and ensure that any and all laws and guidelines are available to members in their jurisdiction.

### **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The United National Convention on the Right of the Child is a set of minimum standards that promotes the rights of the child worldwide. It contains many key Articles that have influenced national childcare and welfare legislation including the definition of a child as a person under 18 years of age. It specifically outlines non-discrimination rights and the rights of the child to express their opinion and to be heard. The Convention is a binding international treaty and all signatories are subject to monitoring on how they implement the Convention in their own Country.

### **Safeguarding Guidance for Child & Young People in Sport (2019)**

Safeguarding Guidance published by Sport Ireland and Sport NI developed to assist National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) and clubs in meeting their child safeguarding and child protection responsibilities. It addresses issues relating to the roles and responsibilities of all involved in children's sport and underpins the importance of policies and procedures in providing quality leadership for children.

### **Child Care Act 1991**

This is the key piece of legislation which regulates childcare policy in Ireland. Under this Act, Tusla has a statutory responsibility to promote the welfare of children who are not receiving adequate care and protection. If it is found that a child is not receiving adequate care and protection, Tusla has a duty to take appropriate action to promote the welfare of the child. This may include supporting families in need of assistance in providing care and protection to their children. The Child Care Act also sets out the statutory framework for taking children into care, if necessary.

### **Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998**

This Act protects you if you make a report of suspected child abuse to designated officers of Tusla, the Health Service Executive (HSE) or to members of the Gardaí as long as the report is made in good faith and is not malicious. Designated officers also include persons authorised by the Chief Executive Officer of Tusla to receive and acknowledge reports of mandated concerns about a child from mandated persons under the Children First Act 2015. This legal protection means that even if you report a case of suspected child abuse and it proves unfounded, a plaintiff who took an action would have to prove that you had not acted reasonably and in good faith in making the report. If you make a report in good faith and in the child's best interests, you may also be protected under common law by the defence of qualified privilege. You can find the full list of persons in Tusla and the HSE who are designated officers under the 1998 Act, on the website of each agency ([www.tusla.ie](http://www.tusla.ie) and [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)).

### **Criminal Justice Act 2006**

Section 176 of this Act created an offence of reckless endangerment of children. This offence may be committed by a person who has authority or control over a child or abuser who intentionally or recklessly endangers a child by:

1. Causing or permitting the child to be placed or left in a situation that creates a substantial risk to the child of being a victim of serious harm or sexual abuse; or

2. Failing to take reasonable steps to protect a child from such a risk while knowing that the child is in such a situation.

### **Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences Against Children and Vulnerable Persons Act 2012)**

Under this Act, it is a criminal offence to withhold information about a serious offence, including a sexual offence, against a person under 18 years or a vulnerable person. The offence arises where a person knows or believes that a specified offence has been committed against a child or vulnerable person and he or she has information which would help arrest, prosecute or convict another person for that offence, but fails without reasonable excuse to disclose that information, as soon as it is practicable to do so, to a member of An Garda Síochána.

The provisions of the Withholding legislation are in addition to any reporting requirements under the Children First Act 2015.

### **National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons Act 2012-2016)**

Under these Acts, it is compulsory for employers to obtain vetting disclosures in relation to anyone who is carrying out relevant work with children or vulnerable adults. The Acts create offences and penalties for persons who fail to comply with their provisions. Statutory obligations on employers in relation to Garda vetting requirements for persons working with children and vulnerable adults are set out in the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012-2016.

### **Children First Act 2015 and Children First Guidance**

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 – the Child and Family Agency, and the best practice which organisations should adhere to so as to keep children who avail of their services safe from harm. 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 Chomhdháil and our activities come under the term ‘relevant services to children’ as outlined in the Act and our policies, guidance, training and practices seek to ensure that we abide by our legal obligations under the Children First Act. While the Act is not applicable in Northern Ireland our Associations by agreement that the provisions of the Act shall set the minimum standard of safeguarding practices in our Associations.

**Children First Act 2015** <https://www.gaa.ie/api/pdfs/image/upload/lxqxszmowfw8g6z1evvv.pdf>  
**Children First Guidance** <https://www.gaa.ie/api/pdfs/image/upload/y5ls1f1kepvbrtqsnh6h.pdf>

The Children First Act 2015 gave a statutory basis to the Children First guidelines which have existed since 1999. The Act places specific obligations on organisations which provide services to children and young people. It required organisations with contact with children to develop child safeguarding statements and introduced a system of **mandatory** reporting to the Child and Family Agency (CFA).

Schedule 1 of the Act outlines the relevant services as including “*any work or activity which consists of the provision of educational, research, training, cultural, recreational, leisure, social or physical activities to children*”. Schedule 2 specifies those who are under the category of “*mandated persons*”.

The 2015 Act does not itself impose criminal sanctions. However, as outlined in its later guidance, there are other consequences for non-compliance. As detailed in *Children First (2017)*, these include administrative sanctions should an investigation concludes that a mandated report was not made

which resulted in the subsequent harm or risk to a child. Tulsa may make complaints to a Fitness to Practice Committee of a regulatory body or pass information regarding the failure to report to the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána for disclosure to current or future employers for vetting.

The Child First Guidance issued by the Minister was put on a statutory footing pursuant to s. 6 of the 2015 Act, when that provision of the Children First Act 2015 was commenced on 11 December 2017. It includes the following requirements for organisations with contact with children:

- *Keep children safe from harm while they are using your service*
- *Carry out a risk assessment to identify whether a child or young person could be harmed while receiving your services*
- *Develop a Child Safeguarding Statement that outlines the policies and procedures which are in place to manage the risks that have been identified*
- *Appoint a relevant person to be the first point of contact in respect of the organisation's Child Safeguarding Statement*

In January 2019, the Guidance was amended by way of an addendum to ensure that online safety was specifically accounted for in child safeguarding statements.

### **Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017**

This Act addresses the sexual exploitation of children and targets those who engage in this criminal activity. It creates offences relating to the obtaining or providing of children for the purposes of sexual exploitation. It also creates offences of the types of activity which may occur during the early stages of the predatory process prior to the actual exploitation of a child, for example, using modern technology to prey on children and making arrangements to meet with a child where the intention is to sexually exploit the child. The Act also recognises the existence of underage, consensual peer relationships where any sexual activity falls within strictly defined age limits and the relationships is not intimidatory or exploitative.

### **The Sex Offenders Act 2001**

The main purpose of the Act is to impose a requirement on certain sex offenders to inform An Garda Síochána of their names and addresses and any changes to these details in order to ensure that this information is kept up to date. The Act provides for post release supervision of sex offenders by the Probation and Welfare Service and makes it an offence for those who seek or accept work involving unsupervised contact with children without informing the employer of their conviction. If a person is convicted of a sexual offence outside of Ireland, where that offence would constitute a sexual offence in Ireland, they are subject to the same Garda notification requirements if they subsequently come to live in Ireland. If they fail to notify the Gardaí of their details, then the Gardaí can prosecute them for non-compliance or failure to comply with the requirements.

### **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Irish Data Protection Acts 1988-2018 & UK Data Protection Act 2018**

The above data protection legislation is intended to control how personal data is used by organisations. The GDPR places direct data processing obligations on organisations at an EU-wide level.

### **Legal age of sexual consent**

The Sexual Offences NI Order 2008 stipulates that the legal age of sexual consent in the 6 counties is 16 years of age. The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006 states that the age of sexual consent is 17 years of age in the Republic of Ireland.

### **Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (2017)**

It provides the overarching policy framework for safeguarding children and young people in the statutory, private, independent, community, voluntary and faith sectors. It outlines how communities, organisation and individuals must work both individually and in partnership to ensure children and young people are safeguarded as effectively as possible.

### **Keeping Children Safe: Our Duty to Care 2017 (NI)**

Sets out the principles of best practice and how to promote the rights of children within the community and voluntary sector. It provides advice on developing safe recruitment practices and strategies on developing safe management practice and policies within organisation while clearly stating the principle that child safety is paramount. It also suggests ways that organisation could raise awareness among their staff and volunteers about child abuse and how staff should respond to accidents or complaints and alleged or suspected abuse.

### **The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007**

Amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 provides the legislative framework for the establishment of a Disclosure and Barring Service and requirements relating to individuals who work with children and vulnerable adults. This legislation defines 'regulated activity' with children and prevents person on barred lists from engaging in regulated activity.

### **Police Act (Known as Part 5 of the Police Act 1997)**

This piece of legislation has now been enacted this enabling the PSNI to disclose what is termed 'soft intelligence', i.e. non-conviction information, when they deem it appropriate. This coincided with the establishment of Access NI, the equivalent to the Criminal Records Bureau in England and Wales.

### **The Children (NI) Order 1995**

Defines a Child as a person under 18 years of age and aims to ensure that the child's best interests are the paramount consideration in all decisions affecting the child. The Order sets out the law in relation to the responsibilities of parents and also the statutory duty of the state to protect and provide services for children. The five good practice principles of this legislation are: Paramourncy, Parental Responsibility, Prevention, Partnership and Protection.

### **The Criminal Law Act (NI) 1967**

A key 'reporting' piece of legislation which places the responsibility on everyone to report offences or to forward information to the police by emphasising the, 'duty of every other persons, who knows or believes,

- a) that the offence or some other arrestable offences has been committed: and
- b) that he has information, which is likely to secure, or to be material assistance in securing, the apprehension, prosecution or conviction of any person for that offence.'

### **Protection of Children Act 1978 (NI)**

An Act to prevent the exploitation of children by making indecent photographs of them; and to penalise the distribution, showing and advertisement of such indecent photographs. The Act stipulates that it is an offence for a person:

1. To take, or permit to be taken, any indecent photograph of a child.
2. To distribute or show such indecent photographs; or to have in his possession such indecent photographs with a view to their being distributed or shown by himself or others



3. To publish or cause to be published any advertisement likely to be understood as conveying that the advertiser distributes or shows such indecent photographs or intends to do so.

### **The Sex Offenders Act 1997**

This Act imposes a requirement on certain sex offenders to notify the police of their name(s) and address and any changes to these details in order to ensure that the information on sex offenders contained within the police national computer is kept fully up to date. The Act thereby implements a 'sex offenders register'.

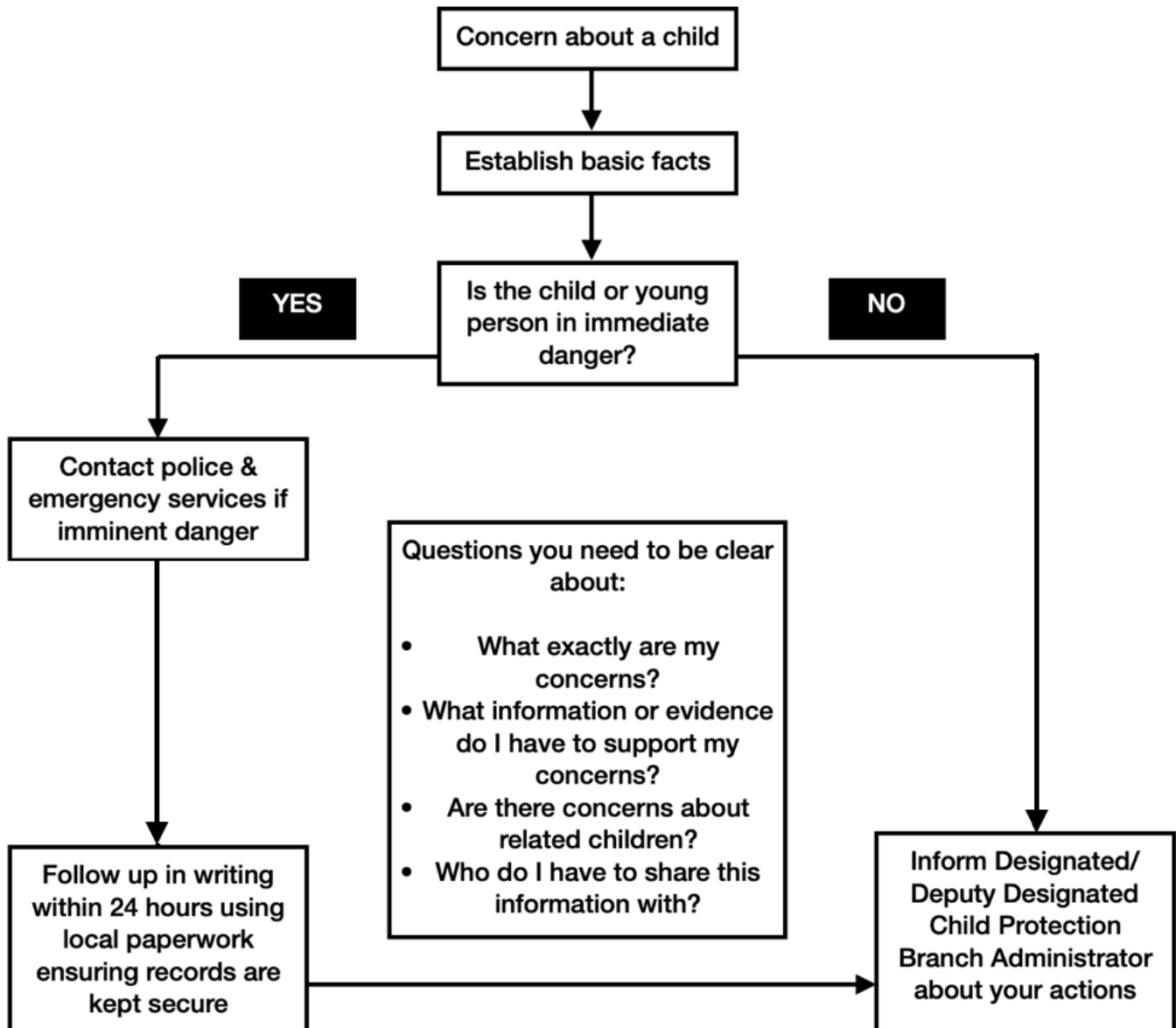
### **The Sexual Offence (NI) Order 2008**

The Order makes provision about sexual offences including the offences of rape, sexual assault and causing a person to engage in sexual activity without consent. It specifically makes provision relating to sexual offences against children and about sexual offences against a person with a mental disorder. The Sexual Offences Order sees the creation of new offences and increased tariffs for those who harm children. Part 2 of the act implemented in 2003 which focused on the registration of those convicted and their management. This Order modifies the Sex Offenders Act 1997 to provide for a court to have the power to make a restraining order when sentencing a sex offender.

### **The Sexual Offences Act 2003 (NI)**

This legislation means that people who have been cautioned or convicted for sexual offences on or after 1 September 1997, or who have been released from prison on or after that date, having been convicted for sexual offences must notify the police of certain details including name(s), address(es), date of birth, National Insurance Number etc. This process is sometimes referred to as 'signing the sex offender's register' and offenders are required to notify for periods which are determined by the sentence handed down by the Courts.

## Appendix 8: Safeguarding Child Protection Flowchart



## Appendix 9: Cause for Concern Checklist

### Cause for Concern about a Child or Young Person – Checklist for action

***Doing nothing is not an option!***

What is my concern?

Am I clear about my concerns?

What have I seen/heard/been told?

What potential/actual impact is this having on the child?

How safe is the child?

Have I considered the age and stage of development of the child?

Are there any other children I should be concerned about?

Does the child or any children involved have a disability?

Does this matter need to be shared with social work/police immediately?

Who do I need to share information with and do I need consent?

Do I need to fill in an inter-agency referral form?

Have I written down my concerns, or recorded what happened securely?

Have I contacted the Child Safeguarding Committee for support and advice?

## Appendix 10: Risk Assessment

Risk management is a system to forecast risks in advance and take proactive steps to deal with identified risks. Conducting volunteer role risk assessments will help promote and ensure the safety of volunteers, staff and service users within your organisation. Best practice suggests that risk assessments should be carried out for all volunteer roles. The idea behind any risk assessment is to identify the risks to the volunteer, decide on the measures you will take to minimise those risks, implement those measures and identify who is responsible for managing the risk for this role. You may also want to look at the probability of the risk occurring and what impact it might have if it does in fact occur. Carrying out a risk assessment requires a detailed knowledge of your organisation's activities and of each volunteer role. Therefore, in order to get an accurate picture of the risks and how they can be managed it is useful to include relevant staff and volunteers in the risk assessment process.

There are 3 basic steps to Risk Assessment:

### 1. Identify the Risks or Hazards

Identify the risks or hazards i.e. anything that has the potential to cause harm, in terms of human injury or ill-health. Don't over complicate the process. There is no need to consider every minor hazard or risk which we accept as part of our everyday lives. Common hazards might include tripping, incorrect lifting of heavy equipment, using unfamiliar or inappropriate tools, exposure to cold, heat, or sun in outdoor roles, possibility of boundaries being overstepped or of physical harm from service users.

### 2. Identify the Controls

Identify the controls, measures or improvements that need to be put in place to avoid or reduce the risk. Your controls are the most significant part of the risk assessment, as they set out the steps that must be followed to protect people and ensure safety. Controls may include providing relevant training, providing breaks, eliminating hazards, working in pairs, or providing regular support and supervision.

### 3. Identify the Level of Risk

Identify the level of risk for each hazard i.e. the chance or likelihood of harm occurring, coupled with how severe the harm or ill-health could be. Prioritise dealing with high risk hazards first.

#### You can reduce risks by:

- Reviewing your risk assessments annually to see if the practices have changed and if any new risks have arisen.
- Ensuring members are insured as per An Chomhdháil annual membership process.
- Having appropriate risk, health and safety and evacuation and emergency policies and procedures in place. And by ensuring all members and occasional workers are familiar with them.
- Ensuring members know how to report risks and injuries.
- Ensuring all occasional workers receive adequate support and supervision from members.

#### Other Key Principles & Considerations

- Preventative risk management is essential for all classes.
- Do not assume there are no risks attached to your occasional workers as there have been no problems to date.



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**Risk Assessment Template**

Class Name: \_\_\_\_\_

An Chomhdháil Member Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

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

It is suggested that you ensure that you have a risk assessment for each class venue and ensure all items of risk are identified and recorded in the risk assessment table below. A copy of this risk assessment should be made available upon request to class venues, parents and occasional workers.

Hazard/Risk Please assess for risks and record them in this column.	Controls Identify the controls to be put in place to reduce or minimise the risk and keep individuals or area safe.	Level of Risk Is Higher, Medium or Low risk? Consider eliminating or minimising the highest risks first.




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**Risk Assessment Template - EXAMPLE**

Class Name: \_\_\_\_\_

An Chomhdháil Member Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

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

It is suggested that you ensure that you have a risk assessment for each class venue and ensure all items of risk are identified and recorded in the risk assessment table below. A copy of this risk assessment should be made available upon request to class venues, parents and occasional workers.

Hazard/Risk Please assess for risks and record them in this column.	Controls Identify the controls to be put in place to reduce or minimise the risk and keep individuals or area safe.	Level of Risk Is Higher, Medium or Low risk? Consider eliminating or minimising the highest risks first.
Child Protection	All members will be police vetted every 3 years. Members will be undergo child protection training annually.	High
Fire	Members should be aware of fire evacuation procedures for all class venues.	High
Accidents	All members should carry a first aid box and make a record of any accidents in compliance	Medium

Injuries	with accident procedures for class venues. Class venues should be furnished with appropriate flooring/non-slip surfaces.	Medium
Toilet Procedures	Dancers wishing to go to the toilet must bring this to the attention of the member so the member is aware of where all children are at any given time.	Low
Cleaning	Cleaning regime to be strictly managed by the manager of the class venue and shared with members.	Low
Class Exit	Members must witness dancers being picked up by parent/legal guardian/legal carer unless informed that another responsible adult is permitted to take the child home.	Medium/High