

## **Child Protection Policy Statement**

We, who work in Megan Wynne's school of Creative Writing, are committed to a child-centered approach to our work with children and young people. We undertake to provide a safe environment and experience, where the welfare of the child-young person is paramount. We will adhere to the recommendations of "Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children", published by the Department of Health and Children and the "Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Young People in the Arts Sector" published by the Arts Council, and the "Codes for Professional Conduct for Teachers" published by the Teaching Council.

We have implemented procedures covering:

- ❖ Code of behavior for all staff
- ❖ Reporting of suspected or disclosed abuse
- ❖ Confidentiality
- ❖ Recruitment and selecting staff
- ❖ Managing and supervising staff
- ❖ Involvement of primary carers
- ❖ Allegations of misconduct of abuse by staff
- ❖ Complaints and comments
- ❖ Incidents and accidents
- ❖ Fire and emergency situations

This Policy will be reviewed again on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2015

Signed: Megan Wynne

Date: 26 June 2014

## SECTION 1: Code of Behaviour for Staff

The code of behaviour at Megan Wynne's school of creative writing can be categorised under the following headings:

- ❖ Child-centred approach;
- ❖ Lead by Example;
- ❖ Good practice;
- ❖ Inappropriate behaviour;
- ❖ Physical contact;
- ❖ Health and safety.

### **Child-centred approach**

- ❖ Treat all children and young people equally;
- ❖ Listen to and respect children and young people;
- ❖ Involve children and young people in decision-making, as appropriate;
- ❖ Provide encouragement, support and praise (regardless of ability);
- ❖ Use appropriate language (physical and verbal);
- ❖ Have fun and encourage a positive atmosphere;
- ❖ Offer constructive criticism when needed;
- ❖ Treat all children and young people as individuals;
- ❖ Respect a child's or young person's personal space;
- ❖ Discuss boundaries on behaviour and related sanctions, as appropriate, with children and young people and their primary carers;
- ❖ Agree group 'contract' before beginning session;
- ❖ Encourage feedback from group;
- ❖ Use age-appropriate teaching aids and materials;

### **Lead by example**

- ❖ Be aware of a child's or young person's other commitments when scheduling rehearsals or activities, e.g., school or exams;
- ❖ Be cognisant of a child's or young person's limitations, due to a medical condition for example;
- ❖ Create an atmosphere of trust;
- ❖ Respect differences of ability, culture, religion, race and sexual orientation.

### **Good practice**

- ❖ Register each child/young person (name, address, phone, special requirements, attendance, emergency contact);
- ❖ Make primary carers, children/young people, visitors and facilitators aware of the Child Protection Policy and procedures;
- ❖ Have emergency procedures in place and make all staff aware of these procedures;
- ❖ Be inclusive of children and young people with special needs;
- ❖ Plan and be sufficiently prepared, both mentally and physically;
- ❖ Report any concerns to the Designated Person and follow reporting procedures;
- ❖ Encourage children and young people to report any bullying, concerns or worries and to be aware of anti-bullying policy.
- ❖ Observe appropriate dress and behaviour;
- ❖ Evaluate work practices on a regular basis;
- ❖ Provide appropriate training for staff and volunteers;
- ❖ Report and record any incidents and accidents;
- ❖ Update and review policies and procedures regularly;
- ❖ Keep primary carers informed of any issues that concern their children;
- ❖ Ensure proper supervision based on adequate ratios according to age, abilities and activities involved;
- ❖ Ensure clear communication between artist and organisations; have guidelines and a prompt sheet for artists;
- ❖ Have a written agreement with any external organisation that an artist is working with;
- ❖ Don't be passive in relation to concerns, i.e., don't 'do nothing';
- ❖ Don't let a problem get out of control;
- ❖ Sessions take place in an open environment with the full knowledge and consent of primary carers;
- ❖ Avoid if at all possible giving a lift to a child/young person and if you do then make sure that primary carers are informed;
- ❖ Maintain awareness around language and comments made. If you think that something you said may have caused offence or upset, then try to address it in a sensitive manner.

## **Inappropriate behaviour**

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

## **Physical contact**

- ❖ Seek consent of child/young person in relation to physical contact (except in an emergency or a dangerous situation);
- ❖ Avoid horseplay or inappropriate touch;
- ❖ Check with children/young people about their level of comfort when doing touch exercises.

## **Health and safety**

- ❖ Don't leave children unattended or unsupervised;
- ❖ Manage any dangerous materials;
- ❖ Provide a safe environment;

## **SECTION 2: Reporting procedures**

Megan Wynne has been designated as the person to contact if you have an issue or concern about any aspect of a child's or young person's safety and welfare. It is the responsibility of this person to support and advise staff about policy and procedures in relation to child protection and to ensure that procedures are followed. It is also the responsibility of Megan Wynne to liaise with the Health Service Executive or Gardaí where appropriate.

Megan Wynne can be contacted at: 4 Ballustree, Loughshinny, County Dublin.  
Mobile phone number: 0868048102

The following excerpt from Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children(4.3.2 - p.38) shows what would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

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

## **Recording procedures**

We have a system and mechanism for recording concerns about the protection of children and young people, e.g., an incident book. Records are stored securely by Megan Wynne and confidentiality is maintained (see Section 4: Confidentiality statement).

Staff record the following information in relation to children and young people:

- ❖ Suspicions;
- ❖ Concerns;
- ❖ Worrying observations;
- ❖ Behavioural changes;
- ❖ Actions and outcomes.

## **Policy for Dealing with a disclosure.**

Stay calm and listen to the child/young person, allow him or her enough time to say what s/he needs to say;

Don't use leading questions or prompt details;

Reassure the child/young person but do not promise to keep anything secret;

Don't make the child/young person repeat the details unnecessarily;

Explain to the child/young person what will happen next (explanation should be age-appropriate).

## **Reporting procedures**

Actions and outcomes should be noted;

- ❖ Record all details, including the date, time and people involved in the concern or disclosure and the facts (for example in an incident book). Information recorded should be factual. Any opinions should be supported by facts;
- ❖ Inform the Designated Person, Megan Wynne;
- ❖ The most appropriate person should discuss the concern or consult with primary carers.
- ❖ Parents, carers or responsible adults should be made aware of a report to the Health Service Executive unless it is likely to put the child/young person at further risk;
- ❖ Megan Wynne may contact the Health Service Executive Duty Social Work Department for an informal consultation prior to making a report;
- ❖ Information will be shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis (see: Confidentiality statement);
- ❖ If there are reasonable grounds for concern as outlined above, the designated person will contact the Duty Social Worker in the Health Service Executive area using the standard reporting form available from the Health Service Executive. Reports to the Duty Social Worker can be made

verbally initially and then followed by the standard reporting form. Reports should be made to the Health Service Executive without delay;

- ❖ If the Designated Person or Deputy Designated Person is not available, contact the local Duty Social Worker of the Health Service Executive directly;
- ❖ In case of emergencies outside of Health Service Executive Social Work Department hours, contact the Gardaí. In situations that threaten the immediate safety of a child/young person, it may be necessary to contact the Gardaí.

## Section 3- Confidentiality statement

We in Megan Wynne's School of Creative Writing are committed to ensuring peoples' rights to confidentiality. However, in relation to child protection and welfare we undertake that:

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

## Section 4 - recruiting and selecting staff

We will ensure that staff are carefully selected, trained and supervised to provide a safe environment for all children and young people, by observing the following principles:

- ❖ Roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined for every job (paid or voluntary);
- ❖ We will endeavour to select the most suitably qualified personnel;
- ❖ Candidates will be asked to sign a declaration form;
- ❖ At least two written references that are recent, relevant, independent and verbally confirmed will be necessary;
- ❖ Staff will be selected by a panel of at least two (or more) representatives through an interview process;

No person who would be deemed to constitute a 'risk' will be employed;  
Some of the exclusions would include:

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

There will be a relevant probationary period;

All staff will be required to consent to Garda clearance, and where available, this will be sought.

## Section 5- Managing and supervising staff

Staff management policy statement:

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

New staff will:

- ❖ Take part in a mandatory induction training session;
- ❖ Be made aware of the organisation's code of conduct, child protection procedures, and the identity and role of who has been designated to deal with issues of concern;
- ❖ Undergo a probationary or trial period.

All staff will:

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

## Section 6– Involvement of primary carers

Policy statement on the involvement of primary carers

We are committed to being open with all primary carers.

We undertake to:

- ❖ Advise primary carers of our child protection policy;
- ❖ Inform primary carers and schools of all activities and potential activities;
- ❖ Issue contact/consent forms where relevant;
- ❖ Comply with health and safety practices;
- ❖ Operate child-centred policies in accordance with best practice;
- ❖ Adhere to our recruitment guidelines;

- ❖ Ensure as far as possible that the activities are age-appropriate;
- ❖ Encourage and facilitate the involvement of parent(s), carer(s) or responsible adult(s), where appropriate.

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

- ❖ Respond to the needs of the child or young person;
- ❖ Inform the primary carers on an on-going basis unless this action puts the child or young person at further risk;

Where there are child protection and welfare concerns we are obliged to pass these on to the Duty Social Worker and, in an emergency, the Gardaí;

In the event of a complaint against a member of staff, we will immediately ensure the safety of the child/young person and inform primary carers as appropriate.

As a child-centred organisation, we are committed to putting the interest of the child/young person first. To that end we will:

- ❖ Contact local Health Service Executive and Gardaí where there is a child protection welfare concern;
- ❖ Encourage primary carers to work in partnership with us under the guidelines set out by our organisation to ensure the safety of their children;
- ❖ Have a designated contact person available for consultation with primary carers in the case of any concern over a child or young person's welfare.

## Section 7 Dealing with allegations against staff

In the event of allegations being made against an employee (staff or voluntary), the protection of the child/young person is the first and paramount consideration.

The organisation has a dual responsibility in respect of both the child/young person and employee.

The same person must not have responsibility for dealing with the child/young person welfare issues and the staff employment issues.

An allegation against an employee should be assessed promptly and carefully. If reasonable grounds for concern exist, a formal report to the Health Service Executive should be made. The reporting procedures outlined in Section 3 of these guidelines should be followed. The organisation should maintain a close liaison with the Health Service Executive and the Gardaí. Employers should ensure that their actions do not undermine or frustrate any assessment or investigation by Health Service Executive and the Gardaí.

Agreed procedures should be followed in the context of the applicable employment contract and the rules of natural justice. The employer should take protective measures appropriate to the level of risk while not unreasonably penalising the worker.



– *unless necessary to protect the child/young person*. Protective measures might mean increased supervision, assignment to different duties, or suspension. Organisations may want to seek legal advice on procedures or protocol to deal with allegations against staff.

### **Dealing with an allegation against staff**

Two separate procedures must be followed:

1. In respect of the child/young person Megan Wynne will deal with issues related to the child/young person.
2. In respect of the person against whom the allegation is made Megan Wynne will deal with issues related to the staff member.

The first priority is to ensure that no child or young person is exposed to unnecessary risk;

**If allegations are made against the Designated person**, Megan Wynne, then the Health Service Executive will be contacted;

The reporting procedures outlined in Section 2 of these guidelines should be followed. Both the primary carers and child/young person should be informed of actions planned and taken. The child/young person should be dealt with in an age-appropriate manner;

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

## **Section 7 - Complaints and comments procedures**

In the event of complaints or comments:

- ❖ Complaints or comments will be responded to within two weeks;
- ❖ Megan Wynne has responsibility for directing complaints/comments to the appropriate person;
- ❖ Verbal complaints will be logged and responded to.

## Section 8 -Accidents procedures

### Accidents procedure

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

## SECTION 9: Emergency Evacuation Procedures.

- ❖ Teachers familiarize themselves with the evacuation procedure in every venue.
- ❖ At the beginning of every term / workshop/ or summer camp, teachers inform participants of the evacuation procedure for that venue.
- ❖ In the event of a fire/ bomb Teachers will keep their attendance class list, and PHONE with them.
- ❖ Teachers will breathe and maintain a focused and assuring demeanor. Line up single file at the exit door to the room. Confirm that all attending that day are currently in the classroom (no one is in the toilet). If a child is missing seek additional adult help from other instructors to check the toilet area and evaluate best way to proceed for the safety of all.
- ❖ When in a safe place, confirm presence of all students. If children are present begin to contact parents from emergency contact details. Seek assistance. When all students are safe contact Megan Wynne 0868048102 and complete incident report. Consult at a later date for post-emergency summary.