



IDAC Child Protection Guidelines

The document '**How to use this CD**' explains how you can use various shortcuts to find your way around these guidelines.

IDAC Child Protection Guidelines

Contents

Important Notes	1
Introduction	2
Section One: Policy on Child Protection	3
Section Two: Six points of Behavioural Awareness	4
Section Three: IDAC Code of Behaviour	6
3.1. Child-centred approach	7
3.2. Principles of Good Practice	8
3.3. Inappropriate behaviour	9
3.4. Physical contact	10
3.5. Health and safety	10
3.6. Complaints and comments procedures	11
3.7. Dealing with allegations against staff	11
Section Four: Protecting Children in the age of Modern Technology	13
Section Five: Legal Issues	16
Section Six: Reporting Of Concerns	18
Section Seven: Developing Safe Recruitment Practices	22
Appendix 1: Defining and Recognising Child Abuse	25
Appendix 2: Sample Parental/Guardian Consent Form	28
Appendix 3a: Sample Policy Statement on the Involvement of parents/guardians	29
Appendix 3b: Sample Confidentiality Statement	30
Appendix 4: Sample Incident/Accident Report Form	33
Appendix 5: Sample Standard Form for Reporting Child Protection and/or Welfare Concerns to the Health Service Executive (HSE).....	32
Appendix 6: Designated Liaison Person	35
Appendix 7: Child Protection Conferences	36
Appendix 8: Sample IDAC Anti Bullying Policy	37
Appendix 9: Sample Recruitment and Selection Policy Statement	40
Appendix 10: Sample Volunteer Application Form	41
Appendix 11: Sample Reference Request Form	43
Appendix 12: Sample Declaration of Acceptance of IDAC Child Protection Guidelines	44
Appendix 13: Sample Staff Management Policy Statement	45
Appendix 14: HSE Child Protection and Welfare Services.....	46
Appendix 15: Other guidelines and resources	48

Please Note

This publication is intended as an information resource for IDAC members and other drama staff, employed or voluntary. It is not intended as, nor is it suitable to be used as, advice on how to teach drama. Child protection is essentially a legal issue, and it is therefore vital that all users of this document who wish to work with children should **obtain legal advice** before doing so.

In this document, the word '*drama teacher*' is used to refer to a 'speech, drama and communication teacher'. Where the context allows, references to 'drama teachers' should also be taken to include any assistants/staff employed on a paid or unpaid basis by the drama teacher.

Disclaimer

The issues discussed in this publication can be complex, and resolutions will vary from person to person and jurisdiction to jurisdiction. **This document should not be considered a substitute for professional legal advice. While care has been taken in the preparation of this material, the writer and IDAC as publisher do not accept responsibility for any errors or omissions, nor for the result of actions taken on the basis of this information.**

Introduction

This document is aimed at drama teachers who provide drama and communication services for children.

It offers guidance on

- the promotion of child welfare
- the development of safe practices in work with children
- how to recognise signs of child abuse
- the correct steps to take if abuse is suspected, witnessed or disclosed
- reporting suspected or actual child abuse to the statutory authorities
- recruitment and selecting staff/volunteers
- managing and supervising staff/volunteers
- dealing with incidents and accidents
- how to handle all these issues sensitively and confidentially.

Participation in drama and communication classes offers children the opportunity to benefit socially, educationally and recreationally. In some instances, it can compensate for deprivation, loss or stress being experienced by them and enhance the quality of their lives. Drama teachers who work in these settings are particularly well placed to support children who are going through bad times, or to identify children who have been or are at risk of being harmed. This document is designed to enable drama teachers to provide children with the highest possible quality of care, and to protect them, as far as possible, from all forms of harm.

This document should be read in conjunction with ***“Children First - National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children”*** (Department of Health and Children, 2004).

All drama teachers working with or providing services for children should be familiar with *“Children First”*. These guidelines are consistent with the aforementioned guidelines.

This document is not intended to be a practice manual, and does not claim to address all the complexities of child abuse. Rather, it offers a practical guide to drama teachers who work with children by outlining a number of fundamental principles of good practice, highlighting the key elements of each one and discussing the issues raised. This approach is based on the belief that any person who is involved with children has a moral obligation to provide them with child-centred, safe and high quality care.

Each section of this document offers practical advice on how drama teachers can put the general principles that have been outlined into practice, though of course, they may have to be adapted according to the nature of the service being provided by each drama teacher. The document is accompanied by factual information on this area which should prove useful for drama teachers as well as those using its services and the general public. The document also contains appendices with useful information and sample forms.

Section One: Policy on Child Protection

This policy acknowledges that

- child abuse exists and can present itself in any of its forms, physical, emotional, neglect or sexual, alone or in combination;
- children may be abused and/or neglected by their parents, carers, guardians or other trusted adults as well as by strangers;
- abuse may be perpetrated by individuals, groups or networks of individuals;
- children may also be abused by other children.

Children and young persons under the age of 18 of all races, religions and cultures, with or without disabilities, from any model of family life have an equal right to protection from abuse. The Child Care Act 1991 defines a child as a “*person under the age of 18 years other than a person who is or has been married*” (Section 2.1).

The Health Service Executive has a legal responsibility for the protection of children. Drama teachers have a responsibility to be aware of the specific child protection procedures of the HSE in the areas within which they work.

Record keeping is essential in relation to child protection issues. Records should be kept of all incidences relating to child abuse, including both allegations and concerns. These records should be kept in a separate file by the teacher and, in a school setting, copied to the school’s Designated Liaison Person.

It is good practice to ensure that all workers and volunteers who will work with children, as part of their studies/responsibilities, complete an application form similar to the one attached as **Appendix 10**. Garda vetting services may at some stage be made available to IDAC. If and when such services are provided the use of vetting will be discussed and added to these guidelines if deemed appropriate.

Drama teachers must undertake to observe principles of confidentiality in all procedures related to child protection.

Section Two: Six points of Behavioural Awareness

1. Act in an open and visible manner

When working with students, drama teachers should ensure that an open environment exists. If a situation arises where a certain amount of privacy is required (e.g. a disciplinary issue or treatment of an injury) always have someone with you or make sure that others are informed, are within vision and, preferably, within earshot.

Where possible, ensure that there is another adult present, for the safety of the pupils, as well as for the security and well being of the teacher/assistant.

2. Sometimes it's better not to join in

There are, and always have been, situations where drama teachers join in games 'to make up the numbers' or to encourage greater participation or to add to the novelty of a game or activity. While everyone is having fun and no harm is done, there is a certain element of risk associated with such an activity. All it takes is for a young person to be hurt, or suggest that they had been inappropriately touched for the 'fun' to be taken as 'serious'.

Drama teachers should organise, supervise and monitor activities, but never engage in horseplay with students.

So, the simple advice is – sometimes it is better not to join in, just enjoy, supervise and watch the fun!

3. Be positive in your conversation

The way you speak to young people about themselves or others can create a positive and supportive atmosphere. Improper comment, suggestion or inappropriate humour can result in creating hurt and confusion in a child. Avoid making suggestive or salacious remarks in the presence of young people.

Keeping your conversation at the appropriate level for the age of the child will help avoid causing hurt and misinterpretation of your intentions and will provide a positive example to all children.

4. Be alert to your own emotional feelings and the feelings of others

Young people can sometimes 'hero-worship' teachers or develop a 'crush' on them. This type of situation needs to be handled sensitively without causing a feeling of rejection or of encouragement. It is important to avoid any perception of encouragement on your part.

One's emotions can fluctuate due to trauma, stress, bereavement and many other causes. If support is required, talk things through with another trusted adult. Avoid involving students in your emotional problems.

5. Consider the situation

This may be the most important point of all: consider each situation.

While your intentions may be based on the most innocent and altruistic of motives, if in doubt about how your actions might be interpreted then adopt a safer course of action.

6. Protect your good name

While your good work as a drama teacher may have earned you respect this may provide little defence in the event of any allegation of improper conduct being made against you. It is therefore important that your motives are understood to be guided by the needs of the child and that your actions are open and positive.

Section Three: IDAC Code of Behaviour

Like all organisations IDAC believes that a code of behaviour between drama teachers and children is necessary to avoid the possibility of misunderstanding, or the potential for allegations of misconduct. **This code is for guidance purposes only and is not a legal document.**

You are responsible for establishing and maintaining appropriate boundaries and/or ensuring that meeting your own emotional needs is not dependent on your relationships with children and young people.

A good quality drama/communication class is one that values children, and centres its activities around their safety, enjoyment and comfort. Such a class should strive to develop children's self esteem, encourage each child to contribute to and participate in activities, and reward their efforts as well as their achievements.

An atmosphere built on good relationships, mutual respect and support can counter the development of bullying and other abusive behaviours. Similarly, when children have trusting relationships with teachers, they are more likely to let them know about issues that are making them unhappy.

The code of behaviour can be categorised under the following headings:

- 3.1. Child-centred approach.*
- 3.2. Principles of good practice.*
- 3.3. Inappropriate behaviour.*
- 3.4. Physical contact.*
- 3.5. Health and safety.*
- 3.6. Complaints and comments procedures.*
- 3.7. Dealing with allegations against staff.*

3.1. Child-centred approach

A child-centred approach involves:

- recognising that the welfare of children must always come first, regardless of all other considerations;
- acknowledging the rights of children to be protected, treated with respect, listened to and have their own views taken into consideration;
- remembering that early intervention with children who are vulnerable or at risk may prevent serious harm from happening to them at a later stage;
- remembering that a child's age, gender and background affect the way they experience and understand what is happening to them;
- creating an environment in which children are valued, encouraged and affirmed, have their rights respected, and are treated as individuals;
- taking steps to ensure that children know their rights AND responsibilities;
- accepting that the welfare of the child is the most important consideration of any organisation providing services to children;
- eliminating as far as possible any threatening, violent or degrading behaviour.

These principles can be implemented by:

- treating students with dignity, sensitivity and respect;
- making time to listen, talk to and get to know the children;
- encouraging children to have an input into the class;
- encouraging feedback from the group;
- helping students to be safe and happy, having as much fun as possible and encouraging a positive atmosphere;
- providing encouragement, support and praise (regardless of ability);
- offering constructive criticism when needed;
- treating all children and young people as individuals and equally;
- respecting a child's or young person's personal space;
- enabling students to regard their bodies as their own property;
- leading by example;
- creating an atmosphere of trust;
- encouraging them to express feelings, fears and experiences openly;
- using appropriate language (physical and verbal);
- using age-appropriate teaching aids and materials;
- discussing boundaries on behaviour and related sanctions, as appropriate, with children and young people and their parents/guardians;
- making sure that students know the class rules about behaviour;
- agreeing a group 'contract' before beginning a session;
- being aware of a child's or young person's other commitments when scheduling rehearsals or activities, e.g., school or examinations;
- being cognisant of a child's or young person's limitations, due to a medical condition for example;
- respecting differences of ability, culture, religion, race and sexual orientation;
- never favouring one child or children over others;

- being sensitive to the fact that some children are more vulnerable and have special needs;
- giving written information about the organisation to children and their parents/guardians;
- adopting a child protection policy, sensitively ensuring that the children know about it, and informing all other stakeholders of its existence;
- the drama teacher and his/her assistants knowing about the principles and practices of child protection including their legal duties;
- always responding to complaints or allegations;
- helping children realise the difference between confidentiality and secrecy.

Drama teachers by their example should be a positive influence on the behaviour of young people in respecting themselves, other students and parents, and the property of themselves and others.

3.2. Principles of Good Practice

The following IDAC Principles of Good Practice will help to create an environment in which children are listened to, given a sense of belonging, and kept safe; parents/guardians are supported and encouraged; and staff who work with children and young people are supported and protected.

Drama teachers providing services for children should:

- implement a child protection policy that raises awareness about the possibility of child abuse occurring and outlines the steps to be taken if it is suspected;
- adopt the safest possible practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children and protect workers from the necessity to take risks and leave themselves open to accusations of abuse or neglect;
- adopt and consistently apply clearly defined methods of recruiting staff;
- provide both general training and child protection training for staff. This should clarify the responsibilities of both organisations and individuals, and clearly show the procedures to be followed if child abuse is suspected;
- develop procedures for recording and responding to any incidents, accidents and complaints;
- develop a policy of openness with parents/guardians that involves consulting them about everything that concerns their children, and encouraging them to get involved wherever appropriate and possible;
- make parents/guardians, children/young people, visitors and facilitators aware of the Child Protection Policy and procedures;
- register each child/young person (name, address, phone, special requirements, attendance, emergency contact);
- have emergency procedures in place and make all staff aware of these procedures;
- plan and be sufficiently prepared, both mentally and physically;
- have an anti-bullying policy which should encourage children and young people to report any bullying, concerns or worries. (For further information on anti-bullying policies see **Appendix 8** of this document, *“Our Duty to Care”* (Department of Health

and Children, 2002), and/or *“Let’s Beat Bullying”* (National Youth Council of Ireland, 2007).

- ensure proper supervision based on adequate ratios according to age, abilities and activities involved;
- observe appropriate gender balance for any residential events;
- ideally avoid taking classes on your own. Realistically most drama teachers do teach on their own. Therefore where possible keep everything public. Classes should be in an open environment, i.e. have an “Open Door”/“Glass Window” policy;
- if taking classes on your own, (and particularly when dealing with children on their own), ensure this is with the full knowledge and consent of parents/guardians and that you are if at all possible in view of another teacher/assistant at all times or that you leave the door of your class room open;
- avoid if at all possible giving a lift to a child/young person and if you do then make sure that parents/guardians are informed;
- be inclusive of children and young people with special needs;
- observe appropriate dress and behaviour;
- 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;
- evaluate work practices on a regular basis;
- update and review policies and procedures regularly;
- don’t be passive in relation to concerns, i.e., don’t ‘do nothing’;
- don’t let a problem get out of control;
- co-operate with any other child care and protection agencies and professionals by sharing information when necessary and working together towards the best possible outcome for the children concerned.

Remember that valuing children means valuing staff as well: insist on safe practices, eliminate the necessity for staff to take risks and provide them with the support they need to make for a healthier and safer class.

3.3. Inappropriate behaviour

- Be sensitive to the possibility of developing favouritism. Don’t single out a particular child/young person for unfair favouritism, criticism, ridicule, or unwelcome focus or attention and don’t become over involved or spend a great deal of time with any one child.
- 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. (This does not mean that work emanating from the artistic process and work of artistic content should be censored. However, use your common sense in relation to the age-appropriateness of themes and/or scripted material.)
- Never tell jokes of a sexual nature in the presence of children.
- Never engage in sexually provocative games or make suggestive comments, even in fun.
- Don’t allow/engage in inappropriate touching of any form.

- Don't hit or physically chastise children/young people or be in any way verbally abusive to a child.
- It is not recommended that you socialise with children/young people outside of structured organisational activities.

3.4. Physical contact

- Be aware that while physical contact is a valid way of comforting, reassuring and showing concern for children, it should only take place when it is acceptable to all persons concerned and should be in response to the child's needs and not yours.
- Be aware that a hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors.
- Be aware that touch should be age appropriate and generally be initiated by the child rather than you.
- Be sensitive to the risks involved in participating in contact games or other activities.
- Check with children/young people about their level of comfort when doing touch exercises.
- Avoid horseplay or inappropriate touch.
- Avoid any physical activity which is, or may be construed as, sexually stimulating the adult or child.
- Respect children's privacy in bathrooms or changing rooms and generally respect the personal space, safety and privacy of individuals.
- Encourage children to report cases of bullying.
- Do not give lifts to individual young people, especially for long journeys.
- Follow the reporting procedures as outlined in **Appendix 5** following suspicion, disclosure or allegation of child abuse as outlined in **Appendix 1**.

3.5. Health and safety

Each drama teacher should have a Health and Safety Statement that should include a risk assessment of each area of operation.

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

Accident procedures:

Procedures to follow in the event of an accident should be formulated. This should include information along the following lines:

- the drama teacher must maintain an up-to-date register of the contact details of all children/young people involved in speech, drama and communication classes;
- children/young people's details should be cross-referenced between the incident book and file;

- external organisations with whom your school/academy 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 others involved in the classes;
- 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 others involved in the classes;
- 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;
- ensure that at least one person with relevant first aid training is available and present at all times during classes or other activities.

3.6. Complaints and comments procedures

Drama teachers should have a complaints and comments procedure.

Parents/guardians, children/young people and any staff should all be made aware of these procedures.

Consideration should be given to an appeals procedure.

Example of a simple complaints and comments procedure:

“In the event of complaints or comments:

- *complaints or comments will be responded to within [x] weeks;*
- *[Name of person] has responsibility for directing complaints/comments to the appropriate person;*
- *verbal complaints will be logged and responded to.”*

3.7. Dealing with allegations against staff

In the event of allegations being made against a staff member of yours, the protection of the child/young person is the first and paramount consideration.

The drama teacher has a dual responsibility in respect of both the child/young person and staff member. **Where possible** the same person should not have responsibility for dealing with the child/young person welfare issues and the staff employment issues (hence below, the use of the terms ‘**first person**’ and ‘**second person**’).

An allegation against a staff member 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 Six** of these guidelines should be followed. The drama teacher should maintain a close liaison with the Health Service Executive and An Garda Síochána. Drama teachers should ensure that their actions do not

undermine or frustrate any assessment or investigation by the Health Service Executive and An Garda Síochána.

Agreed procedures should be followed in the context of any employment contract (for either a paid or unpaid staff member) and in accordance with the principles of natural justice. The drama teacher should take protective measures appropriate to the level of risk while not unreasonably penalising the staff member – unless necessary to protect the child/young person. Protective measures might mean increased supervision, assignment to different duties, agreeing to absent themselves from all drama work and areas of responsibilities or suspension. Drama teachers may want to seek legal advice on procedures or protocols to deal with allegations against staff.

When dealing with an allegation against staff two separate procedures must be followed:

1. *In respect of the child/young person* the first person will deal with issues related to the child/young person.

2. *In respect of the person against whom the allegation is made* the second person 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.
- In a school setting, if allegations are made against the Designated Person, then the Deputy Designated Person (see p 16) should be contacted;
- The reporting procedures outlined in **Section 6** of these guidelines should be followed. Parents/guardians and the 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;
- Any action following an allegation of abuse against a staff member should be taken in consultation with Health Service Executive and An Garda Síochána;
- After consultation, the drama teacher should advise the person against whom an allegation has been made, and agreed procedures should be followed.

Section Four: Protecting Children in the age of Modern Technology

Continuing advances in technology, e.g. mobile phones, email, internet, have broadened the means and speed by which people can communicate and share information. These technologies have also brought the need to ensure that they are used for their positive benefits and to minimise the potential negative or harmful uses for which they can be used.

Sensible use of mobile phones

A mobile phone can be a great communication method and potentially a safety tool for everyone, including children.

In a classroom setting, there should be at least one phone available to make and receive calls. When a student is in class the primary point of communication between parents/guardians and the student should be the student's phone and not the drama teacher's. Contacting the drama teacher during class should be for emergencies only. For example, should a person wish to change arrangements for collecting a student, they should leave a text/voice message on the student's phone, not the teacher's. The student can access their phone at the end of the class.

All other phones should be switched off or switched to silent so as not to:

- be a distraction from a safe awareness of the environment;
- interfere with full participation in class activities.

Therefore the use of mobile phones by students during class, including text messaging or playing games, **SHOULD NEVER BE ALLOWED** for health and safety reasons and to ensure that **ALL** students obtain the full benefits of the class.

If communicating by mobile phone with students, particularly by text messaging, drama teachers should be aware of the younger age of the recipient and hence the possibility of misinterpretation.

Mobile phones are sometimes used by some people to bully others by sending threatening and unpleasant text messages and/or picture messages, either directly to their victims or to spread malicious rumours. This is harmful and should be treated in the same manner as any other form of bullying. Drama teachers should advise children of the need to use mobile phones with care, not to be tempted to use their phone to bully others and not to allow others to use their mobile phone.

Children should be advised to save any unpleasant messages or offensive pictures and to always tell a responsible adult (e.g. parent or teacher) immediately. If messages are stored, it is usually possible to trace the culprit so that they can be identified quickly.

Mobile phones can be a safety tool particularly when going to or from classes. However, it can happen in the event of an emergency that the mobile phone may not work due to bad

reception so the reliance on a phone should never replace the skill competencies required for specific activities.

Camera Phones

Camera phones should be used safely and responsibly, the principle governing their use being 'respect others'. Pictures can be very powerful and stir up strong emotions. Camera phone users should respect the private lives of others and must not take or distribute pictures of other people if so doing could invade their privacy.

Drama teachers should not send pictures that are obscene, indecent or menacing, and should be sensitive about other people's gender, colour, religion or personal background.

Children should be advised to avoid sending a picture or video to someone they don't know very well. Apart from not being sure what that person will do with it, a picture may contain something that could help them trace or find out more about the child. Clues in the picture may be in the background – number or front of a house, a street name, school uniform, and these snippets of information may help those who want to harm children.

Camera phones can be used to make children safer. Older children, for example using a taxi, can send a picture of the car's registration to a friend before they begin the trip, or can simply use the phone to show parents where they are. (*Source: O₂ Child Protection*).

Photographs and images of children

Guidelines in relation to the use of images of students on websites and publications are outlined below. Drama teachers should be aware of them, and apply them as and when necessary. Where possible try to use illustrations, when promoting an activity and avoid using the first name and surname of individuals in the photograph. This reduces the risk of inappropriate, unsolicited attention directed at students appearing in photographs.

Rules to guide use of photography

- If the student is named, avoid using their photograph.
- If a photograph is used, avoid naming the student.
- Ask for the student's permission to use their image.
- Ask the parent's/guardian's permission to use the student's image.
- Only use images of students in appropriate dress to reduce the risk of inappropriate use. The content of the photograph should focus on the activity not on a particular child.
- Where photographs are to be used on a website the permission of parents/guardians should be requested specifically. Avoid using names of pupils when posting photographs on a website.
- The inappropriate use of images should be reported to the drama teacher.

Amateur photographers and film or video operators (including pupils/students and parents/guardians) wishing to record an event or activity should seek permission/accreditation from the drama teacher. The drama teacher should also provide them with a clear brief on what is considered appropriate image content and the behaviour expected of them while taking images, and following their production.

When commissioning professional photographers or inviting the press to an activity the drama teacher should ensure the photographer is clear about the drama teacher's expectations of his/her in relation to child protection. The permission of parents/guardians is advisable in this regard.

Professional photographers and/or film/video operators wishing to record an activity should seek permission/accreditation from the drama teacher by producing their professional identification for the details to be recorded. The teacher should then:

- provide a clear brief about what is considered appropriate in terms of content and behaviour;
- issue the photographer with identification which should be worn at all times;
- keep a record of accreditations;
- inform students and parents/guardians that a photographer will be in attendance at the activity and check that they consent to both the taking and publication of films or photographs;
- not allow unsupervised access to students or one-to-one photo sessions;
- not approve/allow photo sessions outside the activity or at a student's home.

Anyone concerned about any photography taking place should discuss his or her concerns with the drama teacher.

Section Five: Legal Issues

We reprint below a number of relevant sections from ***“Child Protection: guidelines and procedures”*** (Department of Education and Science, 2001). Please note that this document was published prior to the establishment of the Health Services Executive (HSE). Reference in the document to Health Boards should be taken to refer to the HSE.

Note to drama teachers: If you are not in a school situation you should consider yourself to be the “Designated Liaison Person”. Please see **Appendix 6** for a description of the nature and role of the Designated Liaison Person in a school situation.

1.2 Confidentiality

1.2.1 All information regarding concerns of possible child abuse should only be shared on a need to know basis in the interests of the child. The test is whether or not the person has any legitimate involvement or role in dealing with the issue.

1.2.2 However, giving information to those who need to have that information, for the protection of a child who may have been, or has been abused, is not a breach of confidentiality.

1.2.3 Any Designated Liaison Person who is submitting a report to the health board or An Garda Síochána should inform a parent/guardian unless doing so is likely to endanger the child or place the child at further risk. A decision not to inform a parent/guardian should be briefly recorded together with the reasons for not doing so.

1.2.4 It is not the responsibility of school staff to make enquiries of parents or guardians, and in some cases it could be counter-productive for them to do so. It is a matter for the appropriate health board to investigate suspected abuse and determine what action to take, including informing An Garda Síochána.

1.2.5 In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk, and it is not possible to make contact with the appropriate health board, An Garda Síochána should be contacted immediately. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending health board intervention.

1.3 Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998

1.3.1 The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 came into operation on 23rd January 1999. Its main provisions are:

- i) The provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse “reasonably and in good faith” to designated officers of health boards or any member of the Garda Síochána.
- ii) The provision of significant protections for employees who report child abuse. These protections cover all employees and all forms of discrimination up to, and including, dismissal.
- iii) The creation of a new offence of false reporting of child abuse where a person makes a report of child abuse to the appropriate authorities “knowing that statement to be false”. This is a new criminal offence designed to protect innocent persons from malicious reports.

1.4 Qualified privilege

1.4.1 While the legal protection outlined in 1.3 above only applies to reports made to the appropriate authorities (i.e. the health boards and An Garda Síochána), this legislation has not altered the situation in relation to common law qualified privilege which continues to apply as heretofore. Consequently, should a member of a Board of Management or school personnel furnish information with regard to

suspicions of child abuse to the Designated Liaison Person of the school, or to the Chairperson of the Board of Management, such communication would be regarded under common law as having qualified privilege.

1.4.2 Qualified privilege arises where the person making the communication has a duty to do so, or a right, or interest to protect the child and where the communication is made to a person with a similar duty, right or interest. The person making the report, acting in loco parentis, would be expected to act in the child's best interests and in making the report would be regarded as acting in such a manner. Privilege can be displaced only where it can be established that the person making the report acted maliciously.

1.4.3 Furthermore, those reporting a child's disclosure are not regarded as making an allegation as a matter of charge, but simply carrying out their duty in good faith. They are not accusing or bringing a charge.

1.5 Freedom of Information Act, 1997

1.5.1 Any reports which are made to health boards may be subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, 1997, which enables members of the public to obtain access to personal information relating to them which is in the possession of public bodies. However, the Freedom of Information Act also provides that public bodies may refuse access to information obtained by them in confidence.

2.5 Keeping track of records

2.5.1 When child abuse is suspected, it is essential to have a record of all the information available. Staff should note carefully what they have observed and when they observed it. Signs of physical injury should be described in detail and, if appropriate, sketched. Any comment by the child concerned, or by any other person, about how an injury occurred should be recorded, preferably quoting words actually used, as soon as possible after the comment has been made. All records so created should be regarded as highly confidential and retained in a secure location by the Designated Liaison Person.

2.5.2 It is possible that school personnel may subsequently be invited to attend a child protection conference by the appropriate health board.

Section Six: Reporting Of Concerns

Note to drama teachers: If not in a school situation the teacher should consider him/herself to be the “Designated Liaison Person”. Please see **Appendix 6** for a description of the nature and role of the Designated Liaison Person in a school situation

Reasonable Grounds for Concern

The statutory authorities should always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse. A suspicion that is not supported by any objective indicator of abuse or neglect would not constitute reasonable grounds for concern.

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

- i) specific indication from the child that he/she was abused;
- ii) an account by the person who saw the child being abused;
- iii) evidence such as injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused in any other 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, e.g. 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.

How should I respond to allegations/concerns regarding abuse?

1. You should report it immediately to the parent/guardian of the child unless doing so is likely to endanger the child or place the child at further risk. You should inform the person in the school/community setting designated to deal with matters of child protection and/or the HSE. You should not discuss your suspicions or allegations with anyone else.
2. Under no circumstances attempt to carry out any investigation into allegations or suspicions of abuse. It is the task of the HSE to investigate the matter.
3. Referrals may lead:
 - i) to no further action;
 - ii) directly to the provision of services or other help and/or;
 - iii) to a fuller assessment of the needs and circumstances of the child which may in turn lead to child protection inquiries;
 - iv) to emergency action to safeguard the child;
 - v) to child protection inquiries being undertaken.

General points where abuse is disclosed

- Keep calm - do not appear shocked or disgusted
- Accept what the child says without passing judgement (however unlikely the disclosure may sound).
- Look directly at the child.
- Be honest.
- Let the child know you will need to tell someone else.
- Be aware the child may have been threatened and fear reprisals for having spoken to you.
- Never push for information or question the child as this can undermine any subsequent criminal, investigation. If at any point a child decides not to continue, accept that and let them know that you are ready to listen should they wish to continue at any time.

Helpful things to say or show

- Show acceptance of what the child says.
- "I take what you are saying very seriously."
- "I am pleased that you have told me. Thank you for telling me."
- If appropriate, "it isn't your fault and you are not to blame at all", "I am sorry that this happened to you."
- "I will do my best."

Things not to say

- "Why didn't you say something before?"
- "I really can't believe it."
- "Are you sure this has happened?"
- "Why?" "Where?" "When?" "Who?" "What?" "How?"
- Don't make false promises to the child - like secrecy. Be honest. Any lies will constitute further abuse and betrayal.
- Never make statements such as "I am shocked!" or "Don't tell anyone else."

•

Concluding the conversation

- Reassure the child that he/she was right to tell you.
- Let the child know what you are going to do next, and tell that you will let them know what is happening at each stage.

What to do after the conversation

- Make notes about the conversation as soon as possible after the discussion. Record exactly what the child said, and when he or she said it, and what was happening

immediately beforehand, e.g. a description of the activity. Note the time, date and place of the conversation and the name of any other person present. If the initial note is handwritten, keep it even if it is subsequently typed up.

- Inform the parent/guardian of the child (where they are not suspected of the abuse) and/or the person in the school/community setting designated to deal with matters of child protection and/or the HSE, immediately.
- Do not be tempted to try to investigate the claims further. This could lead to contamination of the evidence and could jeopardize any Garda investigation and criminal prosecution activity.
- Sign, date and time your records.

For additional guidance in relation to the reporting of concerns, we reprint below further sections from “**Child Protection: guidelines and procedures**” (Department of Education and Science, 2001). Please note that this document was published prior to the establishment of the Health Services Executive (HSE). Reference in the document to Health Boards should be taken to refer to the HSE.

3.1 Action to be taken by school personnel

3.1.1 If a school employee receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a pupil is being abused the school employee should, in the first instance, report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person in that school. The need for confidentiality at all times, as previously referred to in Chapter 1 Paragraph 1.2 (page 5) of these guidelines, should be borne in mind.

3.2 Action to be taken by Designated Liaison Person

3.2.1 If the school employee and the Designated Liaison Person are satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation (see Chapter 2, Paragraphs 2.3.2 and 2.3.3, page 8 and page 9 of these guidelines) the Designated Liaison Person should report the matter to the relevant health board immediately. It may be useful to note:

- i) A report should be made to the health board in person, by phone or in writing. Each health board area has a social worker on duty for a certain number of hours each day. The duty social worker is available to meet with, or talk on the telephone, to persons wishing to report child protection concerns.
- ii) It is generally most helpful if persons wishing to report child abuse concerns make personal contact with the duty social worker. This will facilitate the social worker in gathering as much information as possible about the child and his or her parents/carers.
- iii) In the event of an emergency, or the non-availability of health board staff, the report should be made to An Garda Síochána. This may be done at any Garda Station.

It is recommended that all reports should include as much as possible of the information sought in the Standard Reporting Form as outlined in Appendix 1 of these guidelines. Since all information requested might not be available to the person making a report, the forms should be completed as comprehensively as possible. When such a report is being made to a health board, the Chairperson of the Board of Management of the school should be informed. A decision on whether or not parents/guardians of the child should also be informed should be taken in accordance with the information contained in Chapter 1 Paragraph 1.2.3 (page 5) of these guidelines.

3.2.2 In cases where school personnel have concerns about a child, but are not sure whether to report the matter to the appropriate health board, they should seek appropriate advice. To do so, the Designated Liaison Person should consult the appropriate health board staff. In consulting the appropriate health board staff, the Designated Liaison Person should be explicit that he/she is requesting advice and consultation and that he/she is not making a report. It would not be envisaged at

this informal stage that the Designated Liaison Person would have to give identifying details as are required when a report is being made. If a health board advises that a referral should be made, the Designated Liaison Person should act on that advice.

3.2.3 If following the discussion outlined in 3.2.2 above, the Designated Liaison Person decides that the concerns of the school employee should not be referred to the relevant health board, the school employee should be given a clear statement, in writing, as to the reasons why action is not being taken. The school employee should be advised that, if he/she remains concerned about the situation, he/she is free to consult with or report to the health board. Again, the Standard Reporting Form* at Appendix 1 of these guidelines should be used. Any such report would be covered by the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998.

* A copy of this Standard Reporting Form can be found at **Appendix 5** of this IDAC document.

Section Seven: Developing Safe Recruitment Practices

All drama teachers should formulate recruitment and selection procedures that ensure, as far as possible, the safety and protection of children and young people. The recruitment and selection policy should operate in tandem with a Human Resources policy.

All staff (**whether paid or unpaid**) who will have or are likely to have contact with children and young people should undergo a recruitment process in line with these procedures and appropriate to their level of contact with children and young people. Garda vetting services may at some stage be made available to IDAC. If and when such services are provided the use of vetting will be discussed and added to these guidelines if deemed appropriate.

In formulating a policy the drama teacher should be aware of equality legislation.

Ultimately, common sense and sound judgment should be applied in the process of selecting and recruiting staff.

Safe practice starts with safe recruitment procedures and involves:

- always applying thorough selection procedures, no matter who the applicant happens to be;
- judging the suitability of applicants in relation to a broad range of matters;
- taking all reasonable steps to eliminate people who are not suitable for working with children;
- providing training.

Most people who apply to work in the speech, drama and communication field, on either a voluntary or paid basis, are interested, well motivated and suitable for the various tasks involved. However, it is very important that drama teachers take all reasonable steps to ensure that only suitable people are recruited. Unfortunately, people with a tendency to abuse children can be attracted to the type of work that gives them the opportunity to be with children, and this always has to be borne in mind when recruiting staff.

Recruiting workers

This section outlines an approach to safe recruitment and selection practices. The actual procedures may vary according to the requirements of different teachers or groups. Where the potential new staff member is already very well known to the teacher some of the following key processes may not be required, (e.g. a full interview and identification may not be needed). For external applicants, all the following key processes should be included:

- i) **Clear definition of the role of staff:** This means clarifying and agreeing expectations regarding the role of a new staff member, and involves identifying the minimum level of personal qualities and skills required to fill the post.
- ii) **Application Form:** An application form, with a clear job description and information about the organisation should be supplied. The form should be

designed, as far as possible, to collect all relevant information about the applicant, including past experience of working with children. (See sample Application Form in **Appendix 10**)

- iii) **Declaration:** All applicants should be required to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be unsuitable to work with young people, and declaring any past criminal convictions or cases pending against them. The organisation must have a clear policy regarding the type of factors that would exclude applicants. (See sample Declaration in **Appendix 12**)
- iv) **Interview:** Ideally all applicants should be interviewed by a panel comprising of at least two representatives of the organisation. Interviewers should explore the information stated on the application form and assess the applicant's suitability for the post. The information supplied by the applicant and any other information supplied on their behalf should only be seen by persons directly involved in the recruitment procedure.
- v) **References:** An applicant should be expected to supply the names of two referees (not family members) who will testify as to their character, their suitability to the role of staff member, or any other issues which may affect their ability to perform the tasks required of them. At least one referee should have first hand knowledge of the applicant's previous work or contact with children. An acceptable reference will indicate that the person is known to the referee and is considered suitable by them to work with young people. All references should be received in writing and later confirmed by telephone, letter or personal visit. Any additional information should be attached to the completed application form. *(It is advisable to seek references even from applicants who are personally known to you.)* (See Sample Reference Request Form in **Appendix 11.**)
- vi) **Identification:** The organisation should ensure that the identity of the applicant is confirmed against some documentation (ID card, driving licence or passport) which gives his or her full name and address together with a signature or photograph. This should be compared with the written application.

Although a very thorough selection procedure is one of the most sensible and effective ways of assessing a person's suitability to work with children and may itself act as a deterrent to potential abusers, even though it may be felt to be an unnecessary burden ...

"But sure he only comes in one morning a week."

"I couldn't ask them all those questions when they're not even getting paid."

"She wouldn't give up so much of her time if she didn't mean well."

"All our volunteers are from the area."

"It's so hard to get volunteers these days – I don't want to put people off."

Staff members are not less likely to abuse children because they are part-time or because they are not getting paid or because they have been giving their services for years, or even because they are a friend of a friend. You must apply the same procedure consistently with paid and unpaid staff, part-time and full-time workers alike.

Although being very thorough about assessment can seem like an unnecessary burden, the more it becomes routine throughout all organisations working with children, the less intimidating it will be to genuine and well-motivated applicants. Remember, it may act as a deterrent to potential abusers, as well as assisting in the choice of appropriate staff.

Induction and training

When an applicant has been accepted, the following processes should apply:

- i. **Induction:** If, following the application and interview process the applicant is accepted, he/she should then be required to undertake an induction course. Induction should be a planned programme that enables staff members to get to know the drama school, their colleagues, their job and other organisations doing the same type of work. It should also cover expectations, conditions and procedures for dealing with discipline, grievances and allegations, and the drama school's child protection policy.
- ii. **Trial period:** Appointment should be conditional on the successful completion of a trial period, the length of which should be decided at the outset. It gives an opportunity to assess the suitability of a new staff member to work with children and his or her commitment to the drama school's policies on safe practices.
- iii. **Records:** Details of selection and induction should be recorded, along with notes on any matters arising during any part of the process.
- iv. **Additional training:** To maintain quality standards and good practice, training should be provided for all staff members on a continuing basis.

Consider how your drama school could:

- adopt a clear and consistent procedure for taking on new staff;
- plan a programme for the induction of new staff and provision of ongoing training.

The responsible management of staff involves having procedures in place to cover training, induction, supervision and the review of work practices.

New staff should receive induction training and should be made aware of policies and procedures, ideally this will be supported by a staff handbook, (as a start, knowledge of the key areas in this document).

Freelance or contracted staff must also agree to abide by the IDAC Child Protection Guidelines. In the event that these contracted individuals operate their known child protection policy, they must ensure that it is consistent with the IDAC guidelines.

Appendix 1: Defining and Recognising Child Abuse

Definition and Possible Physical and Behavioural Indicators of Child Abuse

There are four main categories of abuse as outlined in “Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children” (Department of Health and Children, 2004). The following is a synopsis of the information contained in that document. For the full definitions please refer to “**Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children**” (Department of Health and Children, 2004, pp.32-34).

Neglect

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

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

Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point.” (Children First p.31)

Possible indicators of this type of abuse are:

- Frequent minor or serious injuries;
- Untreated illness and lack of medical care;
- Persistently being left alone without adequate supervision and care;
- Hunger, lack of nutrition;
- Tiredness;
- Inadequate and inappropriate clothing;
- Lack of supervision;
- Low self esteem;
- Lack of peer relationships.

Emotional Abuse

“Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a care-giver and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child’s need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. It is rarely manifested in terms of physical symptoms.”

“The threshold of significant harm is reached when interaction is predominantly abusive and becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/carer.” (Children First p.31-32)

Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms.

Rather, it can manifest in the child’s behaviour or physical functioning. Examples of these include ‘anxious’ attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement and uncooperative or hostile behaviour.

Examples of emotional abuse in children include:

- Imposition of negative attributes on children, expressed by persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming;
- Emotional unavailability by the child's parent/carer;
- Conditional parenting;
- Unresponsiveness, inconsistent or inappropriate expectations of the child;
- Premature imposition of responsibility on the child;
- Unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of the child's capacity to understand something or to behave and control him/herself in a certain way;
- Under or over-protection of the child;
- Use of unreasonably harsh discipline;
- Exposure to domestic violence.

Possible indicators of this type of abuse are:

- Aggression, withdrawal or an 'I don't care attitude';
- Lack of attachment;
- Low self esteem;
- Attention seeking;
- Depression or suicide attempts;
- A fear of adults or particular individuals e.g. family member, baby-sitter or indeed excessive clinginess to parents/carers;
- Panic attacks.

Physical Abuse

"Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child." (Children First p.32)

Examples of physical injury include the following:

- Shaking;
- Use of deliberate force in handling;
- Deliberate poisoning;
- Suffocation;
- Munchausen's syndrome by proxy;
- Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant physical harm to a child.

Possible indicators of this type of abuse are:

- Frequent bruising, fractures, cuts, burns and other injuries;
- Torn clothing;
- Bite marks burns or welts;
- Bruises in places difficult to mark e.g. behind ears, groin;
- Undue or unnecessary fear;
- Aggressiveness or withdrawn;
- Absconding frequently from home.

Sexual Abuse

"Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others." (Children First p.33)

Examples of sexual abuse include:

- Exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child;
- Intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification;
- Masturbation in the presence of the child or involvement of the child in an act of masturbation;
- Sexual intercourse with a child whether oral, vaginal or anal;
- Sexual exploitation of a child ... may also include showing sexually explicit material to children which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse;
- Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an under-age person. It is an offence to engage in a sexual act, or attempt to engage in a sexual act with a child under the age of 17 years.

Possible indicators of this type of abuse are:

- Over affectionate or inappropriate sexual behaviour;
- Age inappropriate sexual knowledge, which is often demonstrated in language, play or drawings;
- Fondling or exposure of genital areas;
- Hints about sexual activity;
- Unusual reluctance to join in normal activities which involve undressing, e.g. games/swimming.

Indicators of Abuse are Not Facts

It is important to stress that no one indicator should be seen as conclusive in itself of abuse; it may indeed indicate conditions other than child abuse.

A cluster or pattern of signs is likely to be more indicative of abuse. Signs must also be considered in the child's social and family context as child abuse is not restricted to any socio economic group, gender or culture.

It is important to always be open to alternative explanations for possible physical or behavioural signs of abuse.

Appendix 2: Sample Parent/Guardian Consent Form

I give permission for my child (named below) to take part in the drama classes of *(insert name of drama school/ teacher here)* and know of no medical reason why s/he should not do so. I understand that these activities may take place in *(insert location here)*. I give permission for my child to attend any activities or outings away from *(insert location here)* under the leadership of *(insert name of drama teacher here)*.

(PLEASE COMPLETE IN PEN IN BLOCK CAPITALS)

Child's Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Parent's / Guardian's Name/s: _____

Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Other Contact Phone: _____

Please indicate below if the above child suffers from any medical condition/allergies (specifying any medication s/he may be taking) and/or has any special dietary requirements about which the drama teacher should be informed.

I give permission to my child (named above) to attend the classes of *(insert name of drama school/ teacher here)* and know of no medical reason why s/he should not do so (see above). I understand that I am also giving consent for my child to attend any outings or activities away from *(insert location here)* under the leadership of the drama teacher in charge.

In the event of my son/daughter being taken ill or injured so that medical attention becomes necessary, I hereby authorise the drama teacher in charge to sign on my behalf any written forms of consent required, provided that the delay necessitated to obtain my signature might endanger my son's/daughter's health or safety.

Parent's /Guardian's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 3a: Sample Policy Statement on the Involvement of Parents/Guardians

We are committed to being open with all parents/guardians. We undertake to:

- Advise parents/guardians of our child protection policy;
- Inform parents/guardians 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 parents/guardians where appropriate.

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

- Respond to the needs of the child or young person;
- Inform the parents/guardians 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 Health Service Executive and, in an emergency, An Garda Síochána;
- In the event of a complaint against a member of staff, we will immediately ensure the safety of the child/young person and inform parents/guardians as appropriate.

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

- Contact the Health Service Executive and An Garda Síochána where there is a child protection welfare concern;
- Encourage parents/guardians to work in partnership with us under the guidelines set out by IDAC to ensure the safety of their children;
- Have a designated contact person available for consultation with parents/guardians in the case of any concern over a child or young person's welfare.

Appendix 3b: Sample Confidentiality Statement

I/We in *(Insert name of drama teacher/name of drama school here)* 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;
- Parents/guardians, 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 be held responsible where cameras/videos or other recording or audio equipment may be used by others in breach of our guidelines).
- 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.

Appendix 4: Sample Accident/Incident Report

Name of Child: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Parent/Guardian's Name: _____

Event/meeting and location: _____

Date of event/meeting: _____

Details of accident/incident (please state in your own words what happened including details and status of those involved): _____

Names of witnesses: _____

Action taken (details of first-aid, medical or police involvement): _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Position: _____

Counter signed: _____ Date: _____

Signature of parent (if subject of report is a child): _____

Appendix 5: Sample Standard Form for Reporting Child Protection and/or Welfare Concerns to the Health Service Executive (HSE)

(Copies of official form available from the HSE)

Private and Confidential

In case of emergency or outside HSE hours, contact should be made with An Garda Síochána.

A. To Principal Social Worker / Designate: _____

1. Details of Child:

Name: _____

Male

Female

Address: _____

Age/D.O.B.: _____ / _____

School: _____

1a. Name of Mother: _____

Address of Mother if different to Child:

Telephone Number: _____

Name of Father: _____

Address of Father if different to Child:

Telephone Number: _____

1b. Care and custody arrangements regarding child, if known:

1c. Household Composition:

Name	Relationship to Child	Date of Birth	Additional Information e.g. School / Occupation

Note: A separate report form must be completed in respect of each child being reported.

2. Details of concern(s), allegation(s) or incident(s), dates, times, who was present, description of any observed injuries, parents'/guardians' view(s), child's view(s) (if known).

3. Details of person(s) allegedly causing concern in relation to the child:

Name: _____ Male Female Age: _____

Address: _____

Relationship to Child: _____

Occupation: _____

4. Name and Address of other personnel or agencies involved with this child:

Social Workers: _____

School: _____

Public Health Nurse: _____

Gardaí: _____

GP: _____

Pre-School / Crèche / Youth Club: _____

Hospital: _____

Other, Specify e.g. Youth Groups, After School Clubs: _____

5. Are Parents / Legal Guardians aware of this referral to the Social Work Department? Yes No

If yes, what is their attitude? _____

6. Details of Person Reporting Concerns:

Name: _____

Occupation: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Nature and extent of contact with Child / Family: _____

7. Details of Person completing form:

Name: _____

Date: _____

Occupation: _____

Signed: _____

Guidance Notes:

The HSE Administrative Areas have a statutory responsibility under the Child Care Act, 1991, to promote the welfare and protection of children in their area.

HSE Administrative Areas therefore have an obligation to receive information about any child who is not receiving adequate care and/or protection.

This reporting form is for use by:

- HSE Personnel
- Professionals and individuals in the provision of child care services in the community who have service contracts with the HSE
- Designated person in a voluntary or community agency
- Any professional, individual or group involved in services to children who becomes aware of a child protection or welfare concern, or to whom a child protection or child welfare concern is reported.

Please fill in as much information and detail as is known to you. (HSE personnel should do this in consultation with their line manager). This will assist the Social Work Department in assessing the level of risk to the child, or support services required. If the information requested is not known to you, please indicate by putting a line through the question. It is likely that a social worker will contact you to discuss your report. The HSE Area Boards aim to work in partnership with parents. If you are making this report in confidence you should note that the HSE cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality as:

- A Court could order that information be disclosed.
- Under the Freedom of Information Act, 1997, the Freedom of Information Commissioner may order that information be disclosed.

You should also note that in making a 'bona fide report' you are protected under the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998.

Appendix 6: Designated Liaison Person

The following is a description of a Designated Liaison Person from “**Child Protection: guidelines and procedures**” (Department of Education and Science, 2001). (Numbers in this section refer to that document). Please note that this extract refers to ‘health boards’. The functions of the health boards are now undertaken by the HSE.

2.2 Designated Liaison Person

2.2.1 All Boards of Management must designate a senior member of staff to have specific responsibility for child protection. This person will be the Designated Liaison Person for the school in all dealings with health boards (now HSE), An Garda Síochána and other parties, in connection with allegations of abuse. Those other parties should be advised that they should conduct all matters pertaining to the processing or investigation of alleged child abuse through the Designated Liaison Person. It is expected that the Designated Liaison Person will normally be the Principal Teacher.

2.2.2 Where the Designated Liaison Person is unavailable for whatever reason, arrangements should be in place for another nominated member of staff to assume his/her responsibilities.

2.2.3 The Designated Liaison Person, or his/her nominated replacement, should immediately inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management of the school that a report involving a pupil in the school has been submitted to the relevant health board.

Appendix 7: Child Protection Conferences

The following is a description of Child Protection Conferences from “*Child Protection: guidelines and procedures*” (Department of Education and Science, 2001). (Numbers in this section refer to that document). Please note that this extract refers to ‘health boards’. The functions of the health boards are now undertaken by the HSE.

3.4 Child protection conferences

3.4.1 The child protection conference is an essential mechanism for health boards in the effective operation of the child protection services under the Child Care Act, 1991. It is a forum for the co-ordination of information from all relevant sources, including where necessary, school employees. The child protection conference plays a pivotal role in making recommendations and planning for the welfare of children who may be at serious risk.

3.4.2 A request from a health board for a school employee to attend a child protection conference should be made to the Designated Liaison Person who should consult with the Chairperson of the Board of Management of the school. The Chairperson of the Board of Management may, through the Designated Liaison Person, request the appropriate authorities to clarify why the attendance of the school employee at the child protection conference is considered necessary and who else is going to be present. Substitute costs, where necessary will be met by the Department of Education and Science in respect of teachers required to attend a child protection conference during school hours. A letter, from the relevant health board, confirming the attendance of the teacher at the child protection conference should be submitted to the Department together with the application for payment of the substitute.

3.4.3 It would be normal for a person attending a child protection conference to provide a report to the conference. A sample pro-forma for a school employee’s report to a child protection conference is attached at Appendix 3. It should be noted that this is a sample form and different health boards may supply alternative type forms. However, it is expected that the type of information that is requested by this sample form will be similar to the type of information required by all health boards.

3.4.4 The *Children First* guidelines state that professionals should always be informed when children and / or parents/guardians are going to be present at child protection conferences. Accordingly, any school personnel who may have a concern about parent/guardian involvement should contact the chairperson of the child protection conference in advance for guidance.

3.4.5 The recommendations of the child protection conference are concerned with the future planning for the child and family. The conference may recommend that particular agencies provide resources and services to the family. Participants may provide undertakings regarding actions that they agree to take. The recommendations may include the health board seeking legal advice with respect to an application for a Court Order to protect the child. Further information on the protocol for child protection conferences is contained in Appendix 6 of “*Children First*” (Page 149).

3.4.6 The school employee may be requested to keep the child’s behaviour under closer observation, in a manner that is not inconsistent with the school employee’s existing duties to his class as a whole. This may include observing the child’s behaviour, peer interactions, school progress or informal conversations.

Appendix 8: Sample IDAC Anti Bullying Policy

(Drama teachers may wish to personalise this policy by replacing “IDAC”, “drama teacher” with the actual name of the drama school or the name of the teacher, as appropriate)

What is bullying?

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

Examples of bullying include teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting, extortion or exclusion.

IDAC Policy on Bullying when working with children / young people

Drama teachers should not tolerate any bullying behaviour by children/young people or adults. Drama teachers should deal with any incidents immediately in accordance with this policy. This policy covers:

- Children/young people bullying other children/young people;
- Adults bullying children/young people;
- Children/young people bullying adults.

The policy is as follows:

- All children/young people and adults who participate in activities run by drama teachers should be treated with dignity and respect by adults and by other children/young people and should not be subject to bullying.
- All children/young people and adults who participate in activities run by drama teachers have a responsibility to treat other children/young people and adults with dignity and respect and refrain from bullying behaviour.
- It will be made clear to all children/young people and adults participating in events/activities run by a drama teacher, that bullying is not acceptable and that other children/young people and adults should be treated with dignity and respect.
- There will be adequate supervision by the drama teacher or other staff/volunteers at all events/activities involving children/young people. This will help to prevent bullying.
- Drama teachers or other staff/volunteers will monitor all events/activities run involving children/young people to ensure that no bullying is taking place.
- If a drama teacher or other staff/volunteer witnesses bullying or suspects that bullying is taking place he/she will follow the procedure outlined below.
- If a child/young person witnesses bullying or suspects that bullying is taking place he/she should report it to the drama teacher or other staff/volunteer. Drama teachers or other staff/volunteer will follow the procedure outlined below.
- If a child/young person is the victim of bullying he/she should report it to the drama teacher or other staff/volunteers who will follow the procedure outlined below.

Procedure for dealing with bullying

- All reports of bullying will be recorded, investigated and dealt with by the drama teacher or other staff/volunteers.
- Other staff/volunteers who have received a complaint or witnessed the bullying will consult with the drama teacher, if present, or the most senior staff member present to decide on who is the most appropriate person to follow up on the complaint.
- The drama teacher/staff member dealing with the complaint will keep a record of the alleged bullying incident/s and the investigation and action taken.
- The drama teacher/staff member dealing with the complaint will speak separately to all involved in order to get all sides of the story. The drama teacher/staff member should also speak to others who may have witnessed the incident(s), if appropriate. The drama teacher/staff member will interview all involved in a calm manner and will seek answers to what, where, when, who and why.
- If the victim of the alleged bullying is a child their parent/guardian will be informed of the complaint and the outcome of the investigation.
- If the perpetrator of the alleged bullying is a child their parent/guardian will be informed of the complaint and the outcome of the investigation.
- If the perpetrator of the alleged bullying is an adult, the drama teacher will be informed of the complaint and the outcome of the investigation.
- If the drama teacher/staff member dealing with the complaint concludes that bullying has not taken place, the following action will be taken:
 - The complainant, alleged victim and alleged perpetrator(s) will be informed of the outcome of the investigation and the reasons why it was concluded that bullying did not take place;
 - Support will be given to the complainant, alleged victim and alleged perpetrator(s) if necessary;
 - A meeting will be arranged between the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator to discuss the issues involved if both are agreeable and it is deemed appropriate.
- If the drama teacher/staff member dealing with the complaint concludes that bullying has taken place, the following action will be taken:
 - The complainant, alleged victim and alleged perpetrator/s will be informed of the outcome of the investigation and the reasons why it was concluded that bullying took place;
 - Support will be given to the victim;
 - A meeting will be arranged between the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator to discuss the issues involved if both are agreeable and it is deemed appropriate;
 - A meeting will be held with the perpetrator to discuss the bullying behaviour. They will be informed of the disciplinary action, which will be taken as a result of this bullying behaviour.

Disciplinary action when bullying has occurred

When the inquiry into the alleged bullying incident has taken place and it has been concluded that bullying occurred, it will be necessary to take some disciplinary action against the perpetrator of the bullying. The disciplinary action should be appropriate to the seriousness of the incident(s). If the perpetrator of the bullying is a child/young person, the parent/guardian of the child/young person and the child/young person will be informed of the disciplinary action which will be taken. If the

perpetrator of the bullying is an adult the drama teacher will inform the perpetrator of the disciplinary action, which will be taken.

The options for disciplinary action include:

- For serious incidents involving children/young people, sending the child/young person home and not allowing them to participate in any further events/activities organised by the drama teacher;
- For less serious incidents involving children/young people, allowing the child/young person to continue to participate in the event/activity once they have apologised to the victim and stated that they would not engage in any further bullying behaviour. Their behaviour would then be closely monitored;
- Providing support to the child/young person to get them to understand that their behaviour is not acceptable and monitoring their behaviour;
- For serious incidents involving a member staff/volunteer of the drama teacher, prevent them from working with the drama teacher again. (All actions taken in relation to staff will be in accordance the relevant employment law).

Appendix 9: Sample Recruitment and Selection Policy Statement

We in *(Insert name of drama teacher/drama school here)* 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);
- Posts will be advertised widely;
- We will endeavour to select the most suitably qualified personnel;
- Candidates will be required to complete an application form;
- 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;
- Ideally staff will be selected by a panel of at least two 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 application form and declaration form;
 - insufficient documentary evidence of identification;
 - concealing information on one's suitability to working with children;
- There will be a relevant probationary period; *(the drama teacher needs to specify what the probationary period will be)*.
- All staff will be required to consent to Garda clearance, and where available, this will be sought.

It is advisable that the drama teacher seek legal advice when developing policy and procedures in relation to the safe recruitment and selection of staff.

Appendix 10: Sample Volunteer Application Form

Confidential

Surname: _____

Forename: _____

Address: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Tel. No: _____

How long have you been at this address? _____

If less than 2 years, then previous address: _____

Name of previous parish attended: _____

Name and Address of Incumbent _____

Are you: (Please tick)

Employed

Unemployed

Student

Homemaker

Retired

Other

Have you previously been involved in voluntary work? Yes No

If yes, please give details:

How much time can you commit to voluntary work? (Please tick)

	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							

Do you have any spare time hobbies, interests or activities?

Any other relevant information?

Please provide names and addresses of two people whom we could contact for reference (not relatives).

Name: _____ Name: _____

Address _____ Address: _____

Tel: _____ Tel: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Other information:

There is other information that you may like to ask for on the application form, or you may prefer to wait until the interview stage, e.g.

- *Can you drive? Do you have access to a car?*
- *How did you learn about this volunteering opportunity?*
- *Why do you want to do voluntary work?*
- *Have you any disability which would affect your voluntary work?*
- *Have you ever committed a criminal offence?*
- *Do you agree to consent to our seeking Garda clearance for you to work with children?*

Appendix 11: Sample Reference Request Form

Confidential

_____ has applied to work in (insert name of drama school) and has given your name as a referee.

This post involves substantial access to children and as an organisation committed to the welfare and protection of children, we are anxious to know if you have any reason at all to be concerned about this applicant being in contact with children and young people?

Yes No

If you have answered yes, we will contact you in confidence.

If you are happy to complete this reference, all information contained on the form will remain confidential, and will only be shared with the panel members, should they be offered a volunteer position. We would appreciate you being extremely candid in your evaluation of this person.

How long have you known this person? _____

In what capacity? _____

What attributes does this person have which you would consider makes them a suitable volunteer?

How would you describe their personality?

Please rate this person on the following (please tick)

	Poor	Average	Good	V/Good	Excellent
Responsibility					
Maturity					
Self-motivation					
Motivation of others					
Energy					
Trustworthiness					
Reliability					

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Occupation: _____

Appendix 12: Sample Declaration of Acceptance of IDAC Child Protection Guidelines

Confidential

Declaration from all staff and volunteers working with children and young people

Surname _____ Forename _____

Date of Birth _____ Address _____

Tel. Number _____ Mobile Number _____

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence? Yes No

If yes, please state below the nature and date(s) of the offence(s):

I have read the IDAC Child Protection Guidelines and code of behaviour and agree to abide by its contents.

Signature _____

Date _____

There is no reason why I would be considered unsuitable to work with children or young people.

Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix 13: Sample 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 Guidelines Declaration;
- Be provided with child protection training.

Appendix 14: HSE Child Protection and Welfare Services

Carlow	St. Dymphna's Hospital, Athy Road.	Tel: 059 913 6587
Cavan	Drumalee Cross.	Tel: 049 437 7305/306
Clare	River House, Gort Road, Ennis.	Tel: 065 686 3907
Cork City	Georges Quay.	Tel: 021 496 5511
Cork, North	Goulds Hill Hse, Mallow.	Tel: 022 21484
Cork, North Lee	Social Work Department, Blackpool.	Tel: 021 492 7000
Cork, South Lee	St. Finbarr's Hospital.	Tel: 021 492 3001
Cork, West Cork	Coolnagarrane, Skibbereen.	Tel: 028 40447
Donegal East	Links Business Centre, Bunrana.	Tel: 074 932 0420
Donegal West	Killybegs Road, Donegal Town.	Tel: 074 972 3540
Donegal	Pearse Road, Letterkenny.	Tel: 074 912 3672/3770
Dublin North Central	22 Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1.	Tel: 01 855 6871
Dublin North Central	Ballymun Health Centre.	Tel: 01 842 0011
Dublin North West	Rathdown Road.	Tel: 01 882 5000
Dublin North West	Wellmount Park, Finglas.	Tel: 01 856 7704
Dublin North	Cromcastle Road, Coolock.	Tel: 01 816 4200/44
Dublin South City	Carnegie Ctr, 21 Lord Edward St.	Tel: 01 648 6555
Dublin South East	Vergemount Hall, Clonskeagh.	Tel: 01 268 0320
Dublin South West	Millbrook Lawn.	Tel: 01 452 0666
Dublin West	Cherry Orchard Hospital, Ballyfermot.	Tel: 01 620 6387
Dun Laoghaire	102 Patrick Street.	Tel: 01 236 5120
Dun Laoghaire	Tivoli Road.	Tel: 01 284 3579
Galway City	25 Newcastle Road, Galway.	Tel: 091 546366/370/325369
Galway	Brackernagh, Ballinasloe.	Tel: 090 964 6200
Galway	Health Centre, Loughrea.	Tel: 091 847 820
Galway	Health Centre, Oughterard.	Tel: 091 552 200
Galway	Health Centre, Vicar Street, Tuam.	Tel: 093 24492
Kerry	28 Moyderwell, Tralee.	Tel: 066 718 4500
Kerry	St. Margaret's Road, Killarney.	Tel: 064 36030
Kildare West Wicklow	Fairgreen Street, Naas.	Tel: 045 882 400
Kilkenny	11 Patrick Street, Kilkenny.	Tel: 056 778 4782
Laois	Child and Family Centre, Portlaoise.	Tel: 057 869 2567
Leitri	Leitrim Road, Carrick-on-Shannon.	Tel: 071 965 0324
Limerick	Ballynanty Health Centre.	Tel: 061 457 100
Limerick	Kilmallock Health Centre.	Tel: 063 98192
Limerick	Newcastle West Health Centre.	Tel: 069 66653

Limerick	Roxtown Health Centre.	Tel: 061 48301
Limerick	South Hill Health Centre.	Tel: 061 209 985
Limerick	St. Camillus Hospital.	Tel: 061 483 711/996
Longford	Tivoli House, Dublin Road.	Tel: 043 50584
Louth	Wilton House, Stapleton Place, Dundalk.	Tel: 042 939 2200
Mayo	Aras Attracta, Swinford.	Tel: 094 905 0133
Mayo	Ballina Health Centre, Mercy Road, Ballina.	Tel: 096 21511
Mayo	Mountain View, Castlebar.	Tel: 094 904 2283
Meath	25 Bruce Hill, Navan.	Tel: 046 903 0616
Meath	Commons Road, Navan.	Tel: 046 907 3178
Meath	Dunshaughlin Health Care Unit.	Tel: 01 802 4102
Meath	Enterprise Centre, Navan.	Tel: 046 909 7817
Monaghan	Roosey.	Tel: 047 30426 or 30427
Offaly	O'Carroll Street, Tullamore.	Tel: 057 932 2488
Roscommon	Abbey Street, Roscommon.	Tel: 090 663 7014
Roscommon	Health Centre, Boyle.	Tel: 071 966 2087
Roscommon	Knockroe, Castlereagh.	Tel: 090 663 7843
Roscommon	Lanesboro Road, Roscommon.	Tel: 090 663 7528
Sligo	Markievicz House, Barrack Street, Sligo.	Tel: 071 915 5133
Sligo	Teach Laighne, Humbert Street, Tubbercurry.	Tel: 071 912 0062
Tipperary North	Annbrook, Nenagh.	Tel: 067 41934
Tipperary North	Parnell Street, Thurles.	Tel: 0504 23211
Tipperary South	Western Road, Clonmel.	Tel: 052 77303
Waterford	Cork Road, Waterford.	Tel: 051 842 827
Waterford	St. Joseph's Hospital, Dungarvan.	Tel: 058 20918/20/21
Westmeath	Athlone Health Centre, Coosan Road.	Tel: 09064 83106
Westmeath	St. Loman's, Mullingar.	Tel: 044 93 84450
Wexford	Ely House, Ferrybank.	Tel: 053 912 3522 Ext. 201
Wexford	Gorey Health Centre, Gorey.	Tel: 053 943 0100
Wexford	Hospital Grounds, New Ross.	Tel: 051 421 445
Wexford	Millpark Road, Enniscorthy.	Tel: 053 923 3465
Wicklow	Delgany Health Centre, Delgany.	Tel: 01 287 1482
Wicklow	Seafront, Wicklow Town.	Tel: 0404 68400
Wicklow	The Civic Centre, Bray.	Tel: 01 274 4100/4180
Wicklow, West Wicklow	Fairgreen Street, Naas.	Tel: 045 882 400

Appendix 15: Other guidelines and resources

Below is a list of useful documents for your reference. Some of these have already been referenced in these guidelines. However, we thought it would be useful also to include links to guidelines from some other bodies which cater for children and young people. Clicking on each title will open the document in a new window.

Children First (Department of Health and Children, 2004)

Our Duty to Care (Department of Health and Children, 2002)

Child Protection Guidelines & Procedures (Department of Education and Science, 2001)

Child Protection Guidelines (Leinster School of Music and Drama)

Child Protection Guidelines (The Arts Council)

Child Protection for the Youth Work Sector (Department of Education and Science, 2003)

Lets Beat Bullying (National Youth Council of Ireland, 2007)