



**Taking Flight: education & performance Ltd**

**Child Safeguarding Policy & Procedures**

**Updated: April 2025**

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## **Section 1: Statement and Guiding Principles**

### **1.1 Child Protection Statement**

Taking Flight:Education & Performance Ltd (TF) believes that the protection and welfare of children and young people are of paramount importance in our work. Taking Flight's guiding principles aim to reassure workers, volunteers, families, children, young people and the wider community that Taking Flight is dedicated to safeguarding children and young people and that the welfare and protection of children and young people in our care is always the priority.

Taking Flight is committed to a young-person centred approach in our work. It is the policy of the organisation that all adults we engage to work with children and young people take all reasonable care to ensure that all young participants involved in its services are protected from abuse of any kind. TF recognises the right of every child/young person to be protected, treated with respect, listened to and to have their own views taken into consideration in all decisions affecting them.

TF seeks to ensure that no child or young person is disadvantaged or treated differently because of gender, social or ethnic background, family status, sexual orientation, religion or disability. We undertake to provide a safe environment and positive experience, where the welfare of the young person is paramount.

This Child Safeguarding Policy and procedures are aligned with all other policies within the organisation relating to HR, Health and Safety and Privacy. In particular, the Code of Conduct and Company Handbook go hand in hand with this Child Protection Policy.

The organisation commits to reviewing this Child Protection Policy, procedures and approaches relating to the wellbeing of young participants every two years.

### **Taking Flight Child Safeguarding Contacts**

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### **1.2 Guiding Principles**

This policy and procedures are produced in response to making paramount the protection of the participating children/youth within the organisation and workers need to be able to deal effectively with matters relating to child protection and child welfare which they may encounter in their role. It is important to note that this policy and procedures are in place to serve as a tool to dealing with matters of child protection, if there is any doubt of necessary steps to take, workers must always speak

with the Designated Person in the organisation. Seeking the help and support of these designated people is key in responding effectively to the child protection concern.

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

This policy is derived from and consistent with *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children; Children First Act 2015; A Guide for the Reporting of Child Protection and Welfare Concerns*. It has been drafted in line with Tusla's *Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice* (2nd Edition, May 2024).

Taking Flight's guiding principles comply with national policy, current legislation and guidance. Copies of all legislation can be accessed at [www.irishstatutebook.ie](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie).

### **Declaration of Guiding Principles**

At Taking Flight: education & performance Ltd we provide weekly classes, workshops, and other activities for children and young people.

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

Our guiding principles apply to all individuals the company engages to work with children/ young people, volunteers, Directors of the company and any students on work placement within our organisation. Everyone whose work with us involves children/young people must sign up to and abide by these guiding principles and our child safeguarding procedures.

We commit to the following:

1. Our priority to ensure the wellbeing and safety of every child and young person who accesses our services is paramount.
2. Our guiding principles and procedures to safeguard children and young people reflect national policy and legislation and we will review our guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures every two years.
3. All children and young people have an equal right to access services and activities during which they are respected as individuals and encouraged to reach their potential.
4. We are committed to upholding the rights of every child and young person who

accesses our services, including the rights to be kept safe and protected from harm, listened to and heard.

5. Our guiding principles apply to everyone in our organisation.

6. Workers/volunteers must conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles of our organisation.

### **1.3 Activities and Services Provided to Children and Young People**

Taking Flight is dedicated to the development of circus arts through 3 strands: education, performance and community.

We provide services to a range of participants, practitioners and artists including classes, development programmes and community projects. Classes include silks, rope, trapeze, cocoon, wall running, hoop, straps, and acrobatics, as well as a variety of workshops and bespoke courses.

Specifically the activities we provide to children and young people are classes in the above- named disciplines, seasonal camps, ongoing programmes such as a youth theatre, performance opportunities such as showcases of work. We also work with partners such as schools and youth groups to deliver bespoke projects. Our activities for children and young people are open to those aged 7-17.

Activities are open to all those within this age group with an interest in circus and aerial. Occasionally we design programmes open to specific target groups such as young people with disabilities or groups that have been traditionally underrepresented in our artform.

The vast majority of the organisation's activities are delivered at our studio: Unit 4 Cross Guns Business Park, Royal Canal Bank, Phibsborough, Dublin 3. We may also deliver activities to children and young people in other suitable venues, particularly when working in partnership with other organisations and groups.

Taking Flight is a company limited by guarantee. It is managed by the Company Director with the assistance of an Operations Manager. We do not currently employ staff but we do engage the services of aerial and circus practitioners to deliver our activities.

### **1.4 Purpose of this policy**

This policy and procedures is for use by individuals Taking Flight engages to deliver activities to children/young people. They are also aimed at parents and participants so there is a shared understanding of Taking Flight's approach to working with children

and young people.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- a) Provide workers with the basic information on the nature of child abuse and child welfare concerns
- b) Inform workers on the procedures they should follow, in their roles when they have a concern relating to a child or young person.
- c) Ensure consistent best practice within TF in responding to and recording of child protection or welfare concerns.
- d) Provide Participants and Parents with essential information regarding Taking Flight's approach to safeguarding the wellbeing of children/young people involved.
- e) Provide clear procedures for Participants and Parents should they have any concerns relating to their experience with Taking Flight.

### **1.5 Review, Monitoring and Implementation**

We constantly monitor the implementation and effectiveness of our policy and procedures.

We will review our guiding principles, child safeguarding policy and procedures every two years or sooner if necessary due to service issues or changes in legislation or national policy. **The next review is due in April 2026**

## **Section 2: Responsibility for Child Safeguarding**

### **2.1 Who is responsible for child safeguarding**

Every adult whom Taking Flight engages has a responsibility when it comes to safeguarding the children and young people who access our services and activities.

As per statutory requirements, we have appointed named persons to take a lead on various aspects of safeguarding.

Our Operations Manager, Katie Martin, is responsible for updating, reviewing and the implementation of child safeguarding policies and procedures. She also functions as the Relevant Person as stated on TF's Child Safeguarding Statement. She can be contacted on 085 2617279 or [katie.martin@takingflight.ie](mailto:katie.martin@takingflight.ie)

Our Designated Liaison Person is Shane Holohan (also mandated person). Phone: 087 9596520 Email: [admin@takingflight.ie](mailto:admin@takingflight.ie)

Our Deputy Designated Liaison Person is Katie Martin. She can be contacted on 085 2617279 or [katie.martin@takingflight.ie](mailto:katie.martin@takingflight.ie)

### **2.2 Roles and responsibilities of DLP/Deputy DLP**

The responsibilities of the Designated Liaison Person and Deputy Designated Liaison Person are described as follows:

- Be fully familiar with your organisation's responsibilities in relation to the safeguarding of children.
- Have good knowledge of your organisation's guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures.
- Ensure that the organisation's reporting procedure is followed, so that child protection and welfare concerns are referred promptly to Tusla.
- Receive child protection and welfare concerns from workers and consider if reasonable grounds for reporting to Tusla exist.
- Consult informally with a Tusla Duty Social Worker through the Dedicated Contact Point, if necessary.
- Where appropriate, make a formal report of a child protection or welfare concern to Tusla on behalf of their organisation, using the Tusla Web Portal or the Tusla Child Protection and Welfare Report Form.
- Inform the child's parents/guardians that a report is to be submitted to Tusla or



The Garda Síochána, unless: informing the parents/guardians is likely to endanger the child or young person or informing the parents/guardians may place you as the reporter at risk of harm from the family; or the family's knowledge of the report could impair Tusla's ability to carry out an assessment.

- Record all child protection or welfare concerns, or allegations of child abuse, brought to your attention as well as any action taken in response to these concerns.
- Provide feedback to the referrer, as appropriate.
- Ensure that a secure system is in place to manage and store confidential records.
- Act as a liaison with Tusla and The Garda Síochána, as appropriate
- Where appropriate, jointly report with a mandated person.

### **2.3 Mandated persons**

Under the Children First Act 2015 mandated persons have a statutory obligation to report concerns which reach or exceed the legally defined threshold of harm (see the Children First Act 2015) and to cooperate with Tusla in the assessment of mandated reports, when requested to do so.

The Children First Act 2015 requires all providers of relevant services to have a procedure in place to maintain a list of any mandated persons in their organisation. Workers who are mandated persons should be made aware of their responsibilities under the legislation at commencement of their employment. Mandated persons may make joint reports with the DLP in their organisation, however, a mandated person cannot discharge their statutory responsibility to report by reporting to another person (e.g. by reporting to their DLP).

Shane Holohan, Taking Flight's Director, is a Mandated Person.

### **2.4 Relevant Services**

We recognise that Taking Flight Education and Performance Ltd is a provider of a *relevant service*, as defined by the Children First Act 2015, as we provide:

*educational, research, training, cultural, recreational, leisure, social or physical activities to children (Children First Act 2015)*

As a provider of a relevant service, we are aware of our responsibility to:

- Undertake an assessment of any potential for harm to a child while

availing of the service; (See Appendix 1 - TF Safeguarding Statement)

- Prepare a written child safeguarding statement specifying the service being provided and the principles and procedures to be observed to ensure as far as practicable, that a child, while availing of the service, is safe from harm; (See Appendix 1 - TF Safeguarding Statement)

- Appoint a relevant person; (Katie Martin is our relevant person)
- Display the Child Safeguarding Statement in a prominent place where the relevant service concerned relates or is provided, or both, as may be appropriate.
- You must review your Child Safeguarding Statement within 24 months or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

## **Section 3: Child Abuse and Neglect**

### **3.1 Responsibility to Report Child Abuse or Neglect**

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

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

Good Practice in relation to child protection and also in relation to how we go about our day to day work and interaction with young people in TF will help minimise the risk of children and young people experiencing any form of child abuse within TF itself. Therefore, the organisation's Code of Conduct (See Section 4.7) supports this policy and procedures, providing a description of the required approach and procedures for workers and volunteers in their preparation and planning for all interactions with young people.

All TF workers receive mandatory training appropriate to their roles in relation to good practice in child welfare and protection and in the implementation of the organisation's child protection policy and procedures.

### **3.2 Reasonable Grounds for Concern**

You should always inform Tusla when you have reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected. If you ignore what may be symptoms of abuse, it could result in ongoing harm to the child. It is not necessary for you to prove that abuse has occurred to report a concern to Tusla. All that is required is that you have reasonable grounds for concern. It is Tusla's role to assess concerns that are reported to it. If you report a concern, you can be assured that your information will be carefully considered with any other information available and a child protection assessment will be carried out where sufficient risk is identified.

Reasonable grounds for a child protection or welfare concern include:

- Evidence, for example an injury or behaviour, that is consistent with abuse and is unlikely to have been caused in any other way

- Any concern about possible sexual abuse
- Consistent signs that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect
- A child saying or indicating by other means that he or she has been abused
- Admission or indication by an adult or a child of an alleged abuse they committed
- An account from a person who saw the child being abused

**The guiding principles on reporting child abuse or neglect may be summarised as follows:**

1. The safety and well-being of the child must take priority over concerns about adults against whom an allegation may be made
2. Reports of concerns should be made without delay to Tusla

### **3.3 Types of Child Abuse and How They May be Recognised**

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time. Abuse and neglect can occur within the family, in the community or in an institutional setting. The abuser may be someone known to the child or a stranger, and can be an adult or another child. In a situation where abuse is alleged to have been carried out by another child, you should consider it a child welfare and protection issue for both children and you should follow child protection procedures for both the victim and the alleged abuser.

**The important factor in deciding whether the behaviour is abuse or neglect is the impact of that behaviour on the child rather than the intention of the parent/carer.**

The definitions of neglect and abuse presented in this section are not legal definitions. They are intended to describe ways in which a child might experience abuse and how this abuse may be recognised.

#### **NEGLECT**

Child neglect is the most frequently reported category of abuse, both in Ireland and internationally. Ongoing chronic neglect is recognised as being extremely harmful to the development and well-being of the child and may have serious long-term negative

consequences.

Neglect occurs when a child does not receive adequate care or supervision to the extent that the child is harmed physically or developmentally. It is generally defined in terms of an omission of care, where a child's health, development or welfare is impaired by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, medical care, intellectual stimulation or supervision and safety. Emotional neglect may also lead to the child having attachment difficulties. The extent of the damage to the child's health, development or welfare is influenced by a range of factors. These factors include the extent, if any, of positive influences in the child's life as well as the age of the child and the frequency and consistency of neglect.

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

A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when neglect becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer. This may become apparent where you see the child over a period of time, or the effects of neglect may be obvious based on having seen the child once.

The following are features of child neglect:

- Children being left alone without adequate care and supervision
- Malnourishment, lacking food, unsuitable food or erratic feeding
- Non-organic failure to thrive, i.e. a child not gaining weight due not only to malnutrition but also emotional deprivation
- Failure to provide adequate care for the child's medical and developmental needs, including intellectual stimulation
- Inadequate living conditions – unhygienic conditions, environmental issues, including lack of adequate heating and furniture
- Lack of adequate clothing
- Inattention to basic hygiene
- Lack of protection and exposure to danger, including moral danger, or lack of supervision appropriate to the child's age
- Persistent failure to attend school
- Abandonment or desertion

## **EMOTIONAL ABUSE**

Emotional abuse is the systematic emotional or psychological ill-treatment

of a child as part of the overall relationship between a caregiver and a child. Once-off and occasional difficulties between a parent/carer and child are not considered emotional abuse. Abuse occurs when a child's basic need for attention, affection, approval, consistency and security are not met, due to incapacity or indifference from their parent or caregiver. Emotional abuse can also occur when adults responsible for taking care of children are unaware of and unable (for a range of reasons) to meet their children's emotional and developmental needs. Emotional abuse is not easy to recognise because the effects are not easily seen.

A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when the behaviour becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer.

Emotional abuse may be seen in some of the following ways:

- Rejection
- Lack of comfort and love
- Lack of attachment
- Lack of proper stimulation (e.g. fun and play)
- Lack of continuity of care (e.g. frequent moves, particularly unplanned)
- Continuous lack of praise and encouragement
- Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming of the child
- Bullying
- Conditional parenting in which care or affection of a child depends on his or her behaviours or actions
- Extreme overprotectiveness
- Inappropriate non-physical punishment (e.g. locking child in bedroom)
- Ongoing family conflicts and family violence
- Seriously inappropriate expectations of a child relative to his/her age and stage of development

There may be no physical signs of emotional abuse unless it occurs with another type of abuse. A child may show signs of emotional abuse through their actions or emotions in several ways. These include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, risk taking and aggressive behaviour.

It should be noted that no one indicator is conclusive evidence of emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is more likely to impact negatively on a child where it is persistent over time and where there is a lack of other protective factors.

## **PHYSICAL ABUSE**

Physical abuse is when someone deliberately hurts a child physically or puts them at risk of being physically hurt. It may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents. A reasonable concern exists where the child's health and/or development is, may be, or has been damaged as a result of suspected physical abuse.

Physical abuse can include the following:

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

The Children First Act 2015 includes a provision that abolishes the common law defence of reasonable chastisement in court proceedings. This defence could previously be invoked by a parent or other person in authority who physically disciplined a child. The change in the legislation now means that in prosecutions relating to assault or physical cruelty, a person who administers such punishment to a child cannot rely on the defence of reasonable chastisement in the legal proceedings. The result of this is that the protections in law relating to assault now apply to a child in the same way as they do to an adult.

## **SEXUAL ABUSE**

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or arousal, or for that of others. It includes the child being involved in sexual acts (masturbation, fondling, oral or penetrative sex) or exposing the child to sexual activity directly or through pornography.

Child sexual abuse may cover a wide spectrum of abusive activities. It rarely involves just a single incident and in some instances occurs over a number of years. Child sexual abuse most commonly happens within the family, including

older siblings and extended family members.

Cases of sexual abuse mainly come to light through disclosure by the child or his or her siblings/friends, from the suspicions of an adult, and/or by physical symptoms

**It should be remembered that sexual activity involving a young person may be sexual abuse even if the young person concerned does not themselves recognise it as abusive.**

Examples of child sexual abuse include the following:

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

An Garda Síochána will deal with any criminal aspects of a sexual abuse case under the relevant criminal justice legislation. The prosecution of a sexual offence against a child will be considered within the wider objective of child welfare and protection. The safety of the child is paramount and at no stage should a child's safety be compromised because of concern for the integrity of a criminal investigation.

In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that in criminal law the age of



consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years for both boys and girls. Any sexual relationship where one or both parties are under the age of 17 is illegal. However, it may not necessarily be regarded as child sexual abuse. Details on exemptions for mandated reporting of certain cases of underage consensual sexual activity can be found in Chapter 3 of [Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children](#).

### **3.4 Circumstances which may make children more vulnerable to harm**

If you are dealing with children, you need to be alert to the possibility that a welfare or protection concern may arise in relation to children you come in contact with. A child needs to have someone they can trust in order to feel able to disclose abuse they may be experiencing. They need to know that they will be believed and will get the help they need. Without these things, they may be vulnerable to continuing abuse.

Some children may be more vulnerable to abuse than others. Also, there may be particular times or circumstances when a child may be more vulnerable to abuse in their lives. In particular, children with disabilities, children with communication difficulties, children in care or living away from home, or children with a parent or parents with problems in their own lives may be more susceptible to harm.

The following list is intended to help you identify the range of issues in a child's life that may place them at greater risk of abuse or neglect. It is important for you to remember that the presence of any of these factors does not necessarily mean that a child in those circumstances or settings is being abused.

#### **Parent or carer factors:**

- Drug and alcohol misuse
- Addiction, including gambling
- Mental health issues
- Parental disability issues, including learning or intellectual disability
- Conflictual relationships
- Domestic violence
- Adolescent parents

#### **Child factors:**

- Age

- Gender
- Sexuality
- Disability
- Mental health issues, including self-harm and suicide
- Communication difficulties
- Trafficked/Exploited
- Previous abuse
- Young carer

**Community factors:**

- Cultural, ethnic, religious or faith-based norms in the family or community which may not meet the standards of child welfare or protection required in this jurisdiction
- Culture-specific practices, including female genital mutilation, forced marriage, honour-based violence, radicalisation

**Environmental factors:**

- Housing issues
- Children who are out of home and not living with their parents, whether temporarily or permanently
- Poverty/Begging
- Bullying
- Internet and social media-related concerns

**Poor motivation or willingness of parents/guardians to engage:**

- Non-attendance at appointments
- Lack of insight or understanding of how the child is being affected
- Lack of understanding about what needs to happen to bring about change
- Avoidance of contact and reluctance to work with services
- Inability or unwillingness to comply with agreed plans

**You should consider these factors as part of being alert to the possibility that a child may be at risk of suffering abuse and in bringing reasonable concerns to the attention of Tusla.**

### **3.5 Bullying**

It is recognised that bullying affects the lives of an increasing number of children and can be the cause of genuine concerns about a child's welfare.

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression – whether it is verbal, psychological or physical – that is conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating, and occurs mainly among children in

social environments such as schools. It includes behaviours such as physical aggression, cyberbullying, damage to property, intimidation, isolation/exclusion, name calling, malicious gossip and extortion. Bullying can also take the form of abuse based on gender identity, sexual preference, race, ethnicity and religious factors. With developments in modern technology, children can also be the victims of non-contact bullying, via mobile phones, the internet and other personal devices.

While bullying can happen to any child, some may be more vulnerable. These include: children with disabilities or special educational needs; those from ethnic minority and migrant groups; from the Traveller community; lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) children and those perceived to be LGBT; and children of minority religious faiths.

There can be an increased vulnerability to bullying among children with special educational needs. This is particularly so among those who do not understand social cues and/or have difficulty communicating. Some children with complex needs may lack understanding of social situations and therefore trust everyone implicitly. Such children may be more vulnerable because they do not have the same social skills or capacity as others to recognise and defend themselves against bullying behaviour.

Bullying in schools is a particular problem due to the fact that children spend a significant portion of their time there and are in large social groups. In the first instance, the school authorities are responsible for dealing with such bullying. School management boards must have a code of behaviour and an antibullying policy in place. If you are a staff member of a school, you should also be aware of your school's anti-bullying policy and of the relevant guidelines on how it is handled.

In cases of serious instances of bullying where the behaviour is regarded as possibly abusive, you may need to make a referral to Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána.

Taking Flight has developed an Anti-Bullying policy, see Section 4.12.

### **3.6 Reporting A Concern about a child**

You should always inform Tusla if you have reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected. You can report your concern in person, by telephone or in writing — including by email — to the local social work duty service in the area where the child lives. You can find contact details for the Tusla social work teams on the Tusla website:

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

**For Taking Flight's Local Contact point see Section on Internal Reporting Procedures.**

Tusla has also created a dedicated online portal for the secure reporting of child protection concerns. Retrospective reports can also be made via the portal: <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/web-portal>

If you are concerned about a child but unsure whether you should report it to Tusla, you may find it useful to contact Tusla to informally discuss your concern. This provides an opportunity to discuss the query in general and to decide whether a formal report of the concern to Tusla is appropriate at this stage. If the concern is below the threshold for reporting, Tusla may be able to provide advice in terms of keeping an eye on the child and other services that may be more suitable to meeting the needs of the child and/or family.

### **What information to include**

To help Tusla staff assess your reasonable concern, they need as much information as possible. You should provide as much relevant information as you can about the child, his/her home circumstances and the grounds for concern. These could include:

- The child's name, address and age
- Names and addresses of parents or guardians
- Names, if known, of who is allegedly harming the child or not caring for them appropriately
- A detailed account of your grounds for concern (e.g. details of the allegation, dates of incidents, and description of injuries)
- Names of other children in the household
- Name of school the child attends
- Your name, contact details and relationship to the child

You should give as much information as possible to social workers at an early stage so that they can do a full check of their records. For instance, they can see if the child and/or a sibling have been the subject of a previous referral, or if an adult in the household had previous contact with the child protection services. It also helps social workers to prioritise cases for attention, as they are not in a position to respond immediately to all cases. However, they will always respond where a child is in immediate danger or at high risk of harm. It will also help Tusla to decide if another service would be more appropriate to help meet the needs of the child, i.e. a community or family support service rather than a social work service.

### **Can a report be made anonymously?**

While it is possible to report a concern without giving your name, it may make it difficult for Tusla to assess your concern. All information that you provide will be dealt with in a professional manner. While Tusla cannot guarantee confidentiality, in general it will not reveal the names of members of the public who report suspected child abuse without their permission. Remember, if you are a mandated person, you cannot

submit a report of a mandated concern anonymously, as to do so will mean you are not complying with your obligations under the Act.

### **What happens after a report is received by Tusla?**

Tusla has the statutory responsibility to assess all reports of child welfare and protection concerns. Assessments are carried out by Tusla social workers. If concerns are found after the initial checks, further evaluation involving a detailed examination of the child and family's circumstances will follow. If concerns about a child's welfare are found, but do not involve a child protection issue, then the family may be referred to community or family support services. If no concerns are found, then the information gathered is recorded and kept on a confidential file where it will be examined if further concerns or more information comes to light.

If you make a report about a child, Tusla will normally acknowledge it, and may contact you for further information, if necessary. It is understandable that you would like to be assured that the matter is being followed up. However, to protect the privacy of the child and family, it may not be possible for Tusla to inform you of the progress or outcome of Tusla's contact with the child or family, unless you are involved in discussions around family support or child protection plans. If you continue to have concerns about the child, or if additional information comes to light, you should contact Tusla.

### **Concerns about an adult who may pose a risk to children**

While in most cases concerns for the welfare or safety of a child develop from your own observation or knowledge of the child or their family, sometimes concerns arise about whether an adult may pose a risk to children, even if there is no specific child named in relation to the concern. For example, based on known or suspected past behaviour, a concern could exist about the risk an individual may pose to children with whom they may have contact. You should report any such reasonable concerns to Tusla, who will try to establish whether or not any child is currently at risk from the individual in question.

While Tusla will make every effort to examine such cases, it is a very complex area involving the accused's constitutional rights to their good name, privacy and the right to earn a living, as well as the requirements of natural justice. Tusla must work within the Constitution, the law, the legal system and the demands of natural justice to balance the conflicting rights of those involved. This may limit how much feedback Tusla can provide to you on the progress or outcome of the case. Tusla's examination can be greatly improved if the alleged victim feels able to cooperate with Tusla in its assessment or investigation.

### 3.7 Taking Flight's Internal Reporting Procedure

All workers and volunteers have a responsibility to safeguard children and young people and to report any concerns they may have for the protection or welfare of a child/young person.

Regardless of how a concern comes to a worker/volunteer's attention, the organisation's Internal Reporting Procedure should be followed.

Taking Flight has developed the following internal reporting procedure:

When any adult who works with Taking Flight is told or becomes otherwise aware or suspicious that a young person/child may have been, is being or is at risk of being abused or neglected, he/she should consider the situation calmly and be guided by the **paramountcy principle**, that the child/young person's protection and welfare must be the staff member's over-riding concern.

**Regardless of how a concern comes to a worker/volunteer's attention, it should be reported to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP). The DLP Person for Taking Flight is Shane Holohan and he can be contacted on 087 9596520. If you cannot reach the DLP, contact the Deputy DLP Katie Martin on 085 2617279**

#### Taking Flight Contacts for Reporting Child Protection Concerns

##### **Dedicated Contact Point for Reporting Child Protection Concerns**

Taking Flight is located in the Tusla's Dublin North City region and there is a dedicated contact point for child protection concerns. **Phone: 01-8567704**

##### **Tusla Dedicated Portal for Reporting Child Protection concerns**

<https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/web-portal>

##### **Emergency and Out of Hours**

If you have an immediate concern about a child/young person and feel they are in an immediate risk of harm, contact the Gardaí. Taking Flight's local Garda Station is Mountjoy, 399 North Circular Road. Dublin 7. **Phone: 01 666 8600**

The Designated Liaison Person, in consultation with the person who raised the concern, will decide if reasonable grounds for concern exist. If reasonable grounds for concern exist, the Designated Liaison Person will report to Tusla through either the Tusla Web Portal <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/web-portal/> or relevant Dedicated Contact Point. For Taking Flight the Dedicated Contact Point number is **01-8567704**.

If the DLP decides not to make a report, the worker/volunteer with a concern is still entitled to make a report to Tusla under Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, should they wish to do so. In reporting to Tusla, the individual worker has protections under the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998, should they report independently.

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children states that if a Designated Liaison Person decides not to report a concern to Tusla, the following steps should be taken:

- The reasons for not reporting are to be recorded;
- If any actions are taken as a result of the concern, these should be recorded;
- The worker or volunteer who raised the concern should be given a clear written explanation of the reasons why the concern is not being reported to Tusla;
- The worker or volunteer should be advised that if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free to make a report to Tusla or The Garda Síochána.

The worker or volunteer who raised the concern should also be reassured that if they do choose to report to Tusla, they are covered by the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998.

### **3.8 Mandated persons' responsibility to report**

It is important to note that the statutory obligation of mandated persons to report under the Children First Act 2015 must be discharged by the mandated person and cannot be discharged by the DLP on their behalf.

Mandated persons can make a joint mandated report with their DLP or another person, mandated or otherwise. If, however, your organisation, or your DLP, does not wish to report to Tusla, you, as a mandated person, should proceed with making a report. The Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 will apply in this instance.

Where a mandated person has a concern that they believe does not reach the threshold of harm for a mandated report, they should consider whether the concern meets reasonable grounds for concern. If the mandated person thinks the concern does meet reasonable grounds for concern, they should report the concern to their DLP. The mandated person retains their right to report independently, should the DLP

choose not to report the concern. The provisions of the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 would apply in this circumstance.

### **Out of Hours Social Work Service for Mandated Persons**

Mandated persons can access Tusla's emergency out-of-hours social work service. If you are a mandated person and wish to make a mandated report, contact the out-of-hours social work service on **0818 776 315** between 6pm and 6am every night and between 9am and 5pm on Saturdays, Sundays and bank holidays. For non-mandated persons, in an emergency, you should contact The Garda Síochána.

### **3.9 Informing Parents/Guardians that a report is being made**

The process for discussing a concern with parents/guardians before reporting and the circumstances in which this is not advised. It is best practice to inform parents/guardians that you are reporting a concern about a child, however, they do not need to be informed that a report is being made if by doing so the child will be placed at further risk or if the family's knowledge of the report could impair Tusla's ability to carry out an assessment. Also, it is not necessary to inform the family if the person making the report reasonably believes it may place them at risk of harm from the family. Consideration should be given to who is the most appropriate person to talk to parents/guardians.

A decision will be made by Taking Flight's DLP whether it is appropriate and/or safe to inform parent/guardians that a report is being made.

**Please note:** No Taking Flight worker should inform parents/guardians without consulting Taking Flight Designated Liaison Person in advance. An assessment needs to be made as to whether the child is being put at risk or whether the worker is putting themselves at risk.

### **3.10 Responding to a child/young person who discloses abuse**

A child or young person may disclose to a trusted worker or volunteer that they have been or are being harmed or abused. Children/young people will often have different ways of communicating that they are being abused. If a child or young person hints at or tells a worker or volunteer that he or she is being harmed by someone, be it a parent/carer, another adult or by another child/young person (peer abuse), it should be treated in a sensitive way. It is important that workers/volunteers are aware and



prepared for responding to a child/young person who may disclose abuse.

- Be as calm and natural as possible.
- Remember that you have been approached because you are trusted and possibly liked. Do not panic.
- Do not promise to keep secrets.
- Be aware that disclosures can be very difficult for the child/young person.
- Remember, the child or young person may initially be testing your reactions and may only fully open up over a period of time.
- Listen to what the child/young person has to say. Give them the time and opportunity to tell as much as they are able and wish to.
- Do not pressurise the child/young person. Allow him or her to disclose at their own pace and in their own language.
- Conceal any signs of disgust, anger or disbelief.
- Accept what the child or young person has to say – false disclosures are very rare.
- It is important to differentiate between the person who carried out the abuse and the act of abuse itself. The child/young person quite possibly may love or strongly like the alleged abuser while also disliking what was done to them. It is important therefore to avoid expressing any judgement of, or anger towards the alleged perpetrator while talking with the child/young person.
- It may be necessary to reassure the child/young person that your feelings towards him or her have not been affected in a negative way as a result of what they have disclosed.
- Reassure the child/young person that they have taken the right action in talking to you. Questions should be supportive and for the purpose of clarification only. Do not ask leading questions.
- Explain to the child/young person that this information will only be shared with people who can help.

By refusing to make a commitment to secrecy to the child/young person, you do run the risk that they may not tell you everything (or, indeed, anything) there and then. However, it is better to do this than to tell a lie and ruin the child/young person's confidence in yet another adult. By being honest, it is more likely that the child/young person will return to you at another time.

<b>Useful Tips on Responding to a Disclosure</b>	
<p><b>Things to say</b></p> <p>I want to listen to what you have to say</p> <p>I am going to do my best to help you</p> <p>You did the right thing by telling me, this is what I am going to do next...</p> <p>You are not to blame</p> <p>Is there anything else you want to share?</p>	<p><b>Things <u>not</u> to say</b></p> <p>Wait until I get my manager so you can tell him/her too?</p> <p>I can't do anything</p> <p>I can't believe it, I'm shocked</p> <p>This is your fault</p> <p>Don't tell me any more</p>

**At the earliest possible opportunity:**

- Record in writing, in a factual manner, what the child/young person has said, including, as far as possible, the exact words used by the child/young person.
- Inform the DLP immediately and agree measures to protect the child/young person, e.g. report the matter directly to Tusla.
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality.

**On-going support**

Following a disclosure by a child/young person, it is important that the organisation continues in a supportive relationship with the child/young person. Disclosure is a huge step for a child/young person. Workers/volunteers should continue to offer support, particularly by:

- Maintaining a positive relationship with the child/young person;
- Keeping lines of communication open by listening carefully to the child/young person;
- Continuing to include the child/young person in the usual activities.

Any further disclosure should be treated as a first disclosure and responded to as indicated above. Where necessary, immediate action should be taken to ensure the child/young person's safety.

### **3.11 Responding to adults who disclose childhood abuse**

There are an increasing number of adults disclosing abuse that took place during their childhood. Often such disclosures come to light when people attend counselling. They also sometimes arise in adult services and services which work with parents/guardians and families.

Where such a disclosure is made it is essential to establish whether there may be current risk to any child or young person who may be in contact with the person subject to an abuse allegation revealed in the disclosure. This is important even where the children/young people about whom there may be a concern are still to be identified.

If any risk is deemed to exist to a child/young person who may be in contact with an alleged abuser, follow your organisation's child protection and welfare reporting procedure; reports should be made to Tusla without delay.

Certain persons who work with adults are mandated persons and have a statutory obligation to report concerns which meet or exceed the threshold for 'harm' as defined in the Children First Act 2015. For mandated persons, the obligation to make a mandated report applies where you have knowledge or belief that a that a person who is currently a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being harmed . A child is as defined in the Child Care Act 1991 and cannot in any circumstances include persons over the age of 18 years.

The Tusla Web Portal is the preferred pathway to report disclosures of childhood abuse by adults. It can be accessed at: <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/web-portal/> Alternatively, the Retrospective Abuse Report Form (RARF) form is available on the Tusla website: [https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Retrospective\\_Abuse\\_Report\\_Form\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Retrospective_Abuse_Report_Form_FINAL.pdf)

### **3.12 Allegations Against Workers/Volunteers**

Taking Flight recognises that in cases where an allegation is made against an adult whose services the company engages, it has a dual responsibility in respect of both the child/young person and the individual against whom an allegation is made. Any allegations made will be treated seriously and investigated.

As with all aspects of Child Safeguarding, the interests of the child/young person will be of paramount importance. The company will take immediate action to ensure that no child/young person is exposed to unnecessary risk. Where there is an allegation of this nature, the adult concerned will be required to suspend any activities which

involve contact with children/young people.

The company commits to fair treatment of any adult against whom an allegation is made. We recognise the importance of adopting an approach where decisions are informed by natural justice and transparency and any action taken is reasonable and based on proper investigation.

Taking Flight will follow the following procedures in cases of alleged child abuse against any adult whose services the company engages. In the case of such an allegation, two procedures should be followed:

1. The reporting procedure in respect of suspected child abuse
2. The procedure for dealing with the Adult concerned.

In order to ensure immediate response on both procedures, separate responsibility will be allocated for each of these procedures. In most cases, the DLP will take responsibility for the reporting procedure while the Operations Manager will lead on the procedure for the adult against whom an allegation is made.

### **Reporting Procedure**

- The DLP will follow the standard reporting procedure as outlined above, including an assessment of whether there are reasonable grounds to make a report. As outlined in TF's Internal Reporting Procedure, no child or young person should be left at risk of immediate potential harm and if the situation is felt to be an emergency, the Gardaí will be contacted.

### **Procedure in relation to a worker/volunteer against whom an allegation is made**

- The Operations Manager will inform the person concerned that an allegation has been made and will be provided with details of the allegation. They will be informed about any report being made to Tusla.
- They will be informed of their right to respond and will be requested to do so in writing. If a report is made, this response will be shared with Tusla.
- They will be informed of any required change in duties i.e. suspension from work involving children/young people. It will be made clear that this is a precautionary measure pending an investigation and will not prejudice any disciplinary or legal proceedings.
- If not already aware, parents/guardians should be informed of any action

planned while having regard to the rights to confidentiality of others, such as the person against whom the allegation has been made.

- The organisation will be led by the Statutory Authorities (Tusla and/or the Gardaí Síochána). Any disciplinary procedures will not interfere with their investigation.
- Contact will be maintained with the Statutory Authorities throughout the process.
- As a person's reputation and livelihood is at stake, strict confidentiality will be adhered to, with information shared only on 'a need to know' basis.
- The organisation is aware of the possibility of untrue or erroneous allegations and no conclusion will be reached until the investigation by the Statutory Authorities is completed.
- The individual against whom the allegation is made will be informed of their right to representation.
- Consideration will be given to an outcome where the allegations are found to be untrue and how best to support the person against whom the allegation is made should this be the conclusion.
- At all stages of the investigation, a confidential detailed written record will be kept.

### **3.13 Child Safeguarding and Confidentiality**

Taking Flight has developed a Privacy and GDPR Policy. We are committed to managing personal information in line with legal requirements and best practice guidance. The information contained here is specifically in relation to child safeguarding. Please contact Katie Martin, Operations Manager, if you have any queries in relation to confidentiality, GDPR or privacy.

- Where child protection and welfare concerns arise, information must be shared on a 'need to know' basis in the best interest of the child/young person with the relevant statutory authorities and with parents/guardians.
- No undertakings regarding secrecy can be given. Those working with children/young people and families and in adult services should make this clear to parents/guardians and to the child/young person.
- The proportionate provision of information to the statutory agencies necessary for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality or data protection.
- Parents/guardians and children/young people have a right to know if personal information is being shared, unless doing so could put the child/young person at further risk or may put the reporter at risk.

## Record-Keeping

Taking Flight recognises the importance of responsible information gathering and record-keeping in relation to child protection concerns and will abide by the following:

- Records will be factual and include details of the grounds for concern and how the organisation managed the concern. Details of the personnel involved and any actions taken will be detailed.
- If a concern is reported to Tusla, details of any contacts or consultation made will be kept.
- If a decision is taken not to report, a record of the decision-making process and the rationale behind the decision will be retained including details of any contact with Tusla.
- We recognise that all agencies and organisations dealing with children must cooperate in the sharing of records with Tusla where a child protection or welfare issue arises.
- Any records on child protection concerns including allegations and disclosures will be kept securely in a locked filing cabinet or safe.
- Any records retained should only be used for the purpose for which they are intended.
- Records should only be shared on a need-to-know basis in the best interests of the child/young person.
- Only the Designated Person and Deputy Designated Person will have access to child protection concern records.
- There is currently no definitive guidance on how long to retain records relating to child protection concerns. Taking Flight will hold these records permanently.
- The DLP and Deputy DLP are aware of the requirement to update records as more information becomes available in relation to a particular young person or a particular incident or concern.
- Taking Flight will review and update its policy on record-keeping in line with national and/or sectoral regulation and best practice guidance.

## **Section 4: Working Safely with Young People**

Taking Flight is committed to creating a safe, enjoyable and positive experience for all children and young people who access our activities. In order to deliver on our guiding principles and our child-centred/young person-centred approach, we have developed a range of policies and procedures that dictate our approach to working with younger participants.

### **4.1 Safe Selection and Recruitment**

As required under Children First legislation, we have developed procedures for safe recruitment of workers and volunteers.

- The specialist nature of Taking Flight’s activities requires specific expertise. When new practitioners are sought, we will advertise through our own social media channels and through networks dedicated to Aerial and Circus.
- From time to time, we may identify practitioners whose approach and experience makes them a good fit for the organisation. Such individuals will be invited to submit a CV and will be interviewed in advance of any work with us. They may also be requested to submit a video of their work.
- Equality of opportunity governs the recruitment/selection process.
- A role description and person-specification will be created for any roles being advertised. Short-listing and interviews will be carried out.
- Interviews focus on both suitability for the specific role but also the broader suitability of the candidate to deliver activities to young people.
- References for successful candidates must be obtained and one of these must be either a current or immediate past employer. All referees will also be contacted and references checked.
- Successful candidates will be subject to garda vetting and all candidates will be informed of this requirement at the advertising stage.
- No person who would be deemed to constitute a ‘risk’ will be employed. Candidates with any child-related convictions and applicants who refuse to submit a garda vetting application will cease to be considered for a role.
- Where details of convictions /specified information are returned in relation to any applicant as part of the garda vetting process, the suitability of each applicant will be considered on a case-by-case basis following the decision-making procedures outlined below.

### **4.2 Garda Vetting**

Under the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to

2016, it is a requirement to vet *any person who is carrying out work or activity, a necessary and regular part of which consists mainly of the person having access to, or contact with, children or vulnerable adults*. The Act stipulates that a relevant organisation shall not permit any person to undertake relevant work or activities on behalf of the organisation, unless the organisation receives a vetting disclosure from the National Vetting Bureau in respect of that person.

Taking Flight adheres to the following approach to Garda Vetting:

- Any individual whose work involves contact with children and/or young people is vetted.
- We recognise that the responsibility for vetting lies with the organisation and not the individual.
- As per legislation, no individual can carry out what is termed 'relevant' work until a Garda Vetting disclosure is received.
- Any contracts issued to individuals will state whether vetting is a requirement of the role.
- Where any individual subject to vetting does not complete the vetting process, their contract will be terminated immediately.
- The following information is required from an individual to complete the vetting process:
  - Your Name(s) and any other Name(s) you are known as or have been known as
  - Gender
  - Date of Birth
  - Place of Birth
  - Mother's Maiden Name
  - Passport Number where applicable
  - Job Role
  - Your current address and previous addresses (if any)
  - Particulars of any criminal record
- Each vetting applicant also signs a declaration giving permission to the organisation who is vetting them to receive information held by the Gardaí on them.
- The identity and current address of all individuals subject to vetting must be verified in line with the checklist provided by the National Vetting Bureau.
- Only registered organisations can submit vetting applications. Taking Flight uses Irish Vetting Services to process vetting applications.
- A vetting disclosure is issued for every vetting applicant. This disclosure will state whether there are any convictions, pending prosecutions, or specified information. (see note on specified information below). There are some categories of convictions that will not be disclosed including spent convictions. For more information see the National Vetting Bureau website: <https://vetting.garda.ie/VettingProcedure/WhatIsDisclosed>
- A copy of the disclosure will be sent to the applicant as soon as possible.



- As specified under the legislation, the disclosure of a conviction does not automatically mean that an individual will be excluded from carrying out work with children and young people. A decision must be made by the organisation whether the information received renders a person unsuitable to work with children or young people. (See Section on Decision-Making below).
- All individuals who work with children/young people are required to undergo re-vetting after 3 years. (While no time-frame for re-vetting is currently stated in law, it is expected that 3 years will be the required period for re-vetting).
- Under no circumstances will Taking Flight share a vetting disclosure with a third party.
- Where we are collaborating on a project with another group or organisation that involves work with children and/or young people, Taking Flight will ensure any workers involved on the project are vetted by Taking Flight and will require that the collaborating partner take responsibility for vetting its workers.
- Where workers have been residents of another country, we will request a copy of police clearance from this country. We are also aware that not every jurisdiction provides such clearance and this will not necessarily be a barrier to engagement of any individual.

### **Note on Specified Information**

Specified information in relation to a person who is the subject of an application for a vetting disclosure means information concerning a finding or allegation of harm to another person received by the Bureau from An Garda Síochána or a scheduled organisation pursuant to section 19 of the Act. It is information that is considered to give rise to a bona fide concern that the vetting subject may harm, attempt to harm or put at risk a child or vulnerable person or both. If such information is going to be disclosed to a relevant organisation relating to one of their applicants, the Chief Bureau Officer must, in advance, notify the vetting subject of the intention to disclose the information. Where specified information will be disclosed, the vetting applicant concerned will be contacted by the Vetting Bureau. They will have the right to appeal the disclosure of this information.

### **Decision-making where information relating to offences is returned**

- While the disclosure of a conviction, pending prosecution or specified information relating to an individual does not automatically mean a person cannot work with children or young people, there is certain information received through the vetting process that would render a person unsuitable for such work. These include convictions relating to child abuse, other types of harm to a child, young person or vulnerable adult or specified information relating to harm or abuse towards a child, young person or vulnerable adult. Taking Flight will not permit any person who constitutes a risk to engage in work with children or young people.

- However, where convictions/other information returned do not relate to abuse or harm, the organisation will initiate a decision-making process to conclude whether the information received has an impact on their suitability to work with children/young people.
- Information returned in a disclosure will be assessed on a case by case basis.
- Natural justice and fairness will be key considerations in making a decision. We recognise offences committed when a person was young may not be an indicator of their current behaviour or level of maturity.
- Where a disclosure contains information on criminal offences relating to a potential worker, decisions regarding a person's suitability to carry out a role with Taking Flight will be assessed by management.
- The person concerned will be given an opportunity to respond to the information on the disclosure including details of any extenuating circumstances. They will also be informed of their right to representation.
- A record will be kept of all meetings and discussions pertinent to the decision-making process.
- More information relating to the details of a conviction can be requested from the Vetting Bureau. The written permission of the person who is the subject of a disclosure must be provided to receive this information.
- Once a decision is made the potential worker will be informed of the decision as soon as possible. We aim to complete this process within 7 days of receiving the disclosure but it may take longer should further information be sought from the Gardaí.
- We commit to ensuring confidentiality is maintained throughout this process.

### **4.3 Child Safeguarding Training**

#### **Tusla Children First E-Learning Programme**

It is a requirement of Taking Flight that any person it engages to work with children and/or young people complete Tusla's Children First E-learning Programme. The programme can be accessed at:

<https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/children-first-e-learning-programme/>

Once completed, a copy of the certificate generated should be forwarded to the Operations Manager at [info@takingflight.ie](mailto:info@takingflight.ie)

#### **Child Welfare & Protection Basic Awareness Workshops**

Taking Flight will liaise with bodies such as Sports partnerships to organise Child Welfare & Protection Awareness training at least every two years or more frequently if a number of new workers/volunteers are recruited.

#### **Other Training**

Appropriate training will be identified for the Designated and Deputy Designated

Liaison person as required.

The organisation will keep records of all Child Safeguarding Training provided and/or undertaken by those it engages work with children/young people.

#### **4.4 Induction, Supervision and Management**

When Taking Flight engages new workers to deliver classes or activities to children and young people, an induction session will take place covering our Child Safeguarding policy and procedures, code of conduct, Health and Safety and any other relevant policies, procedures and/or approaches.

Supervision of workers/volunteers is carried out by the Director and Operations Manager. We aim to provide an open, supportive environment where any concerns or issues are communicated quickly and clearly.

Regular meetings take place to check in with Tutors and inform them of any updates in policies and procedures. We have developed a Company Handbook that outlines the approach and behaviour required of anyone who the organisation engages. It also encourages individuals to inform management if they have a concern relating to the behaviour or approach of any other worker engaged by Taking Flight.

A WhatsApp group has been created to facilitate easy and quick communications between the Company Director, Operations Manager and Tutors.

#### **4.5 Adult to Young Person Ratios**

Taking Flight follows best practice on adult to child/young person ratios:

*The minimum adult/young person ratio in any group should ideally be one adult per group of eight young people, plus one other adult, and allowing an additional adult for each group of eight thereafter. Local circumstances, the ages of the children, the relationship with the group and the experience of the leaders should be taken into consideration.*

Where possible we try to ensure the gender of adults supervising reflects the gender make-up of the group.

#### **4.6 Attendance and Registration**

A register of all children who attend each class and activity is maintained. Each participant must complete a Registration form before participating in a Taking Flight activity. Phone numbers for parents/guardians are kept in the office in the studio where Taking Flight's activities take place.

Parents/Guardians are informed when activities finish. Parents of children are

required to collect them from activities on time so that Tutors are not left in a position where they are responsible for supervising children after activities are finished.

## **4.7 Code of Conduct for Working with Children and Young People**

### **Taking Flight Code of Conduct for Working with Children and Young People**

Taking Flight Education and Performance Ltd is aware of the responsibility it has to ensure the children and young people who access its activities have a safe and enjoyable experience. The company takes a child/young person-centred approach in all aspects of its work with young participants. We have developed this Code of Conduct to ensure that all those who Taking Flight engages to work with children and young people do so in a safe, ethical and responsible manner.

Taking Flight requires the following of those who work with young people:

- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every young participant and treat everyone equitably regardless of age, gender, cultural identity, socio-economic background or ability.
- Never engage in any conduct or speak to any child or young person in a manner which threatens, disparages or insults them on the basis of their race, religion, national, cultural, ethnic or socio-economic background.
- Always act in a way that is professional and responsible.
- Be aware of how you behave around young people. Never behave in a way that could be interpreted as inappropriate. Be aware of the language you are using and its context. Avoid jokes or comments that could be interpreted as inappropriate.
- Be generous with praise and be positive during activities so that all young participants leave with a sense of achievement and an increased level of self-esteem and confidence.
- Help create a culture and environment that ensures all children and young people are listened to and respected.
- Tutors must not teach skills above their level of ability and/or experience.
- All activity being undertaken should be suitable for the age, experience and ability of the participant. Any goals set should be achievable and appropriate for the participant's age and experience.
- Avoid favoritism or overly focusing attention on any one participant.
- Participants should be warmed-up and prepared for the activity and made aware of their personal responsibilities in terms of safety.
- All Tutors should be punctual and properly prepared when delivering activities.

- Never consume alcohol or drugs before delivering classes and/or activities.
- Physical punishment or physical force must never be used.
- Never use foul language or provocative language/gestures to participants
- Adhere to Taking Flight guidelines on use of mobile phones and other means of electronic communication. Never take a picture of a child or young person with your personal mobile phone or other device.
- Ensure you have checked equipment and rigging in advance of all classes and activities.
- Set realistic but achievable participant goals ensuring a safe enjoyable environment.
- Avoid taking sessions on your own or avoid a situation where you are alone with a young participant.
- Avoid any inappropriate touching when assisting a participant during activities or when First Aid is being administered.
- Physical contact should only occur when necessary and in an open and appropriate way and always be used only when the activity and/or the needs of the participant require it. Any physical contact should be based on consent. For example, ask a participant if it is ok to support them by putting your hand on their back or whatever the exact nature of the contact required is.
- Ensure you know where First Aid supplies are kept. Keep a record of any incidents or accidents by providing details in the incident/accident report book and report any incidents to management.
- Ensure that should children or young people need to change clothes they do so in an appropriate area i.e. the toilets.
- Ensure confidentiality for all participants. You may be privy to information regarding medical conditions etc. Share information on a need to know basis only.
- Manage any instances of bullying in line with Taking Flight's policy and approach.
- If you have a concern about any child or young person you encounter through your work with Taking Flight, speak to Taking Flight's Designated Person.
- Ensure each participant (or their parent/guardian) has completed a Registration Form. Ensure attendance records are kept.
- Update parents/guardians in line with Taking Flight's approach to communicating with parents.
- Be aware of boundaries. Never develop a relationship with a participant that could be viewed as inappropriate. Be aware of your own limitations when it comes to supporting young people. Never offer therapy or other interventions to a child or young person. If you are unsure of what to do in any situation, contact Taking Flight's Designated Person.

- Be aware that a child or young person may be experiencing abuse or harm. If you have a concern about any young participant, speak to the Designated Person.
- Familiarise yourself with guidance on dealing with a disclosure of abuse from a child or young person as contained in TF's Child Safeguarding Policy.
- Familiarise yourself with Taking Flights policy and procedures relating to suspected harm or abuse of a child as contained in our Child Safeguarding Policy.
- If you have to communicate with a young person in private, ensure you do so in view of others.
- Never let a situation get out of control. If you have a concern about any situation in relation to your work with children/young people, speak to the Designated Person.
- Do not offer a lift to a child/young person. If you are concerned about leaving a young person in a potentially unsafe situation, contact the Designated Person.
- If you have access to personal sensitive data regarding a child or young person, ensure you keep this confidential, sharing it only on 'a need to know basis' as in the case of a medical emergency.
- Never give your personal contact details to a child or young person.

#### **4.8 Disciplinary, Grievance Procedures and Appeals**

The Taking Flight Company Handbook outlines in full the Disciplinary, Grievance Procedures and Appeals process for any individual who the company engages.

Reference is made to the seriousness of any disciplinary actions related to child safeguarding issues and any conduct that may have a negative impact on the wellbeing of children/young people who access the organisation's services. A serious breach of our code of conduct can result in immediate termination of a contract.

The Company Handbook also makes reference to fairness, natural justice, the right to representation and the necessity of having an appeals process in place.

#### **4.9 Health and Safety**

Taking Flight recognises the responsibility it has to ensure all activities are safe and any risks are minimised. To this end, we have developed a full Health and Safety policy and procedures (available on request).

- We carry out regular risk assessments.
- All Tutors who deliver activities are trained in the safe rigging and set up of equipment.
- All activities are assessed for their safety and appropriateness for a particular age group.

- Participants are supervised at all times during Taking Flight activities.
- A fully-stocked first aid kit is available at all times in the kitchen area.
- Any incidents or accidents must be reported to management.
- Emergency procedures are in place in the case of a fire or other emergency.
- Tutors have access to parental contact details.
- Taking Flight requests details of any injuries or medical conditions that impact a child or young person's participation. This information is shared on a need to know basis only.

#### **4.10 Safe Use of Images, Social Media and Websites**

Taking Flight does not provide participants with access to the internet or use of devices as part of its activities. Our activities require focus and concentration so participants are not permitted to use devices. They do have access to their own phones during breaks. If any worker has any concerns about a young person's use of mobile phones or other devices, they should inform the Designated Person or Deputy Designated Person.

Taking Flight has a presence on a number of social media platforms including Facebook and Instagram. The company has its own website. Content on our website and our social media presence is monitored on an ongoing basis. The following approach is taken in relation to children and young people and our website/social media:

- Consideration is given to the safest and most appropriate settings on any platforms used.
- Only appropriate content related to TF activities is posted. Where any links are provided to third party websites or social media platforms, content will be checked for appropriateness.
- Consent is obtained from parents/guardians before using any images/footage of children and young people.
- Images of children and young people should only be taken on a company camera or mobile device.
- All individuals who Taking Flight engages are instructed not to connect with young participants via their own personal social media presence.
- Any inappropriate content or comments will be removed as soon as possible.
- Images/footage used will focus on a group of children or young people rather than any individual child or young person.
- No identifying details of children or young people will be provided.
- Those attending events or showings involving children or young people are informed it is not permissible to record or share images or footage of participants.
- Where TF has any concerns about child safeguarding in relation to internet or social media use, we will follow our reporting procedures and make a report to the statutory authorities if appropriate.
- Participants are informed not to take images of other participants, particularly in dressing rooms, toilets or other inappropriate contexts.
- Individuals engaged by TF should not show footage or images to children or young people unless it is directly related to activities.

- Taking Flight will take very seriously any instance of bullying, harassment or targeting that takes place on any platform where the company has a presence. Such incidents will be reported to the site administrators and the statutory authorities if appropriate.

#### **4.11 Communications with Children/Young People**

- Taking Flight predominantly communicates with parents/guardians regarding its activities.
- Should a young person require a contact number (as in the case of an away trip), they will only be given company phone numbers. They will not be provided with any worker's personal number.
- Should a young person contact us by mobile phone, a copy of any message will be retained for at least one year.
- Any emails received from or sent to a young person will be kept for at least one year.
- If sending an email to a young person, a copy should be forwarded to the organisation's Designated Person.
- Workers should contact the Designated Person without delay if they have any concern in relation to a communication with a young person.

#### **4.12 Anti-Bullying Policy**

Taking Flight has a no-tolerance approach to bullying. It is important that children/young people feel safe and comfortable during all activities. Bullying can not only destroy a young person's experience of participation but also have an impact on their physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing.

Taking Flight has a whole-organisation approach to the issue of bullying. Prevention of bullying is the role of everyone within the organisation from management to workers to participants.

Anyone can be affected by bullying be they workers, management, volunteers, children/young people. We also recognise that any of these individuals can also be a perpetrator of bullying. The Taking Flight Company Handbook outlines our approach to bullying when it involves workers/management

***Children First: National guidance for the protection and welfare of children*** (2017) defines bullying as follows:

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression – whether it is verbal, psychological or physical – that is conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating and occurs mainly among children in social environments such as schools. It includes behaviours such as physical aggression, cyberbullying, damage to property, intimidation, isolation/exclusion, name



calling, malicious gossip and extortion. Bullying can also take the form of abuse based on gender identity, sexual preference, race, ethnicity and religious factors. With developments in modern technology, children can also be the victims of non-contact bullying, via mobile phones, the internet and other personal devices.

### **Preventing Bullying**

Taking Flight has adopted the following strategy for preventing bullying and creating an anti-bullying environment:

1. Creating and implementing an Anti-Bullying Policy and procedures.
2. Encouraging an openness among management/workers/young people and fostering a culture of mutual respect and cooperation.
3. A discussion around bullying takes place during the drafting of group contracts with children/young people. Attention is also focused on the importance of how we behave to each other and the language we use.
5. Participants will be given a clear message about the importance of reporting bullying and details of how to report it.
6. Workers receive induction in TF's Anti-Bullying Policy.

### **Reporting Bullying**

We encourage everyone in Taking Flight to be open to the possibility that bullying is taking place. We recognise that it is a big step for a child/young person who is the target of bullying to bring it to the attention of others. We will treat anyone who comes forward to report bullying with sensitivity and respect. We will reassure them that what they tell us will be taken seriously and assess their comfort with our preferred approach to dealing with suspected bullying (as outlined below). It may be that some aspects of our approach may have to be adapted in line with the level of comfort of the specific child/young person. We will continue to support the child/young person throughout the process.

It may be that the instance of bullying is not reported by the target of the bullying but by another child/young person or group of children/young people who have witnessed it. In such circumstances, we will reassure whoever informs us that they have done the right thing in bringing it to our attention. An assessment will take place of the best way to approach the child/young person who is the target of bullying. Any approach will be sensitive, respectful and mindful of the wellbeing of the child/young person. We will provide them with an opportunity to share any incident/incidents of bullying with us. If they are reluctant to do so, we will inform them that we will investigate the alleged bullying and may have to take action anyway in line with our zero tolerance approach. We will also inform them that we have to share any concerns with their parent/guardian as outlined in our approach to communication with parents/guardians

### **How TF will deal with Suspected Bullying**

Taking Flight works with a wide age range of children/young people (ages 7-17) and therefore recognises the importance of having an approach that can be adapted

depending on the ages of those involved and on the specific circumstances of each situation. However we commit to the following guiding principles when dealing with any instance of suspected bullying:

- All suspected instances of bullying should be reported to the Designated Person or Deputy Designated Person.
- The DP will establish as many facts as we can by talking to everyone involved including the target of the bullying, the alleged perpetrator and any witnesses.
- A detailed confidential record will be kept by the DLP and/or Deputy DLP throughout the process.
- In line with our approach to communicating with parents/guardians, we will inform the parents/guardians of all children/young people involved. We will inform them of our policy and approach while also being open to receiving any relevant information from them. E.g. a child is behaving in a certain way due to experiencing challenges at home etc.
- We recognise the importance of supporting all young people involved including both the target and the alleged perpetrator of the bullying. It is important to separate the behaviour from the child/young person and see the bullying as a behaviour. Avoid the term 'bully' as this has the effect of labelling the child/young person. Be sensitive to the wellbeing of the person who is displaying the bullying behaviour. The behaviour may be a result of challenges they are experiencing in their own life.
- Be clear and open with everyone involved e.g. 'We are talking to you to establish what happened and then we will decide on the appropriate action'.
- When it is established that an instance of bullying has taken place, we will inform both the child/young person who was the target and the child/young person who was responsible for it. We may inform the parents/guardians initially in the case of younger participants. Parents/guardians will be informed regardless of the age of the children/young people involved.
- Where there is any conflict between the needs of the child/young person who is the target of the bullying and the child/young person who perpetrated it, we will prioritise the needs of the child/young person who has experienced the bullying. For example, if the child/young person who has been the target of the bullying doesn't want to participate in an activity where the other child/young person is present, we may suspend the child displaying the bullying behaviour from activities for a specified period of time.
- Depending on the specific circumstances, the severity of the bullying, the age of those involved we will decide on the appropriate action. Possible outcomes for the child/young person who is responsible for the bullying include:
  - Where a child/young person admits and takes responsibility for their behaviour, an apology to the child/young person targeted and a commitment not to display the bullying behaviour again may suffice.
  - Suspension from activities/classes for a stated period of time, requiring the display of a change in behaviour on return.
  - Exclusion from future activities and classes.

The last outcome will only be considered in cases of severe and consistent bullying

where no change in behaviour has been displayed and where there is an unwillingness on the part of the child/young person to take responsibility for their actions. We will give serious consideration to the possible impact of taking such action and discuss it with both the child/young person concerned and their parents/guardians. In such cases, we may decide to take advice from an external party who has particular expertise in supporting children/young people in such circumstances.

#### **4.13 Dealing with Challenging Behaviour**

It is our experience that Taking Flight participants are very cooperative, engaged and focused during our activities. However, there may be rare occasions when the behaviour of a participant causes disruption and impacts on the enjoyment of other participants. We recognise that some participants may have conditions that make it more difficult for them to regulate their behaviour, focus and energy levels. Therefore we will adapt our response to challenging behaviour according to our awareness and knowledge of any such considerations.

However, the safety of participants is of utmost importance during our activities. Therefore, behaviour which may have an impact on the safety of a participant or other participants will be addressed immediately.

Taking Flight adopts the following approach when it comes to ensuring challenging behaviour does not occur

- Cooperation, achievement and respectful behaviour is acknowledged and celebrated.
- Children/young people are supervised at all times during their time with us.
- Lower adult to child/young person ratios are in place where young people have additional needs and challenges.
- Clear instructions are given to participants regarding safe use of our studio, equipment and apparatus.
- Participants are reminded to respect the Tutors and to follow all instructions provided.
- Participants are reminded of the importance of treating each other with respect and that safety is everyone's responsibility.
- Participants are not allowed to engage in horseplay during activities.
- A group contract is created/updated at the beginning of each Term which facilitates discussion around expectations for the term which also serves as a reminder of our expectations of participants.

#### **Approach to Managing Challenging Behaviour**

- Our approach to managing challenging behaviour is predicated on the understanding that each participant is different and we are mindful that participants may find particular activities or experiences challenging and their

behaviour may be impacted by any such difficulty.

- It is important that any communication with children/young people regarding their behaviour is clear and doesn't stigmatise or label a child. If a child is displaying behaviour that may be unsafe, explain to the child why it is problematic in a manner that the child can understand and acknowledge any positive change in behaviour. It may be that a reminder of the group contract is sufficient to encourage the participant to cease the behaviour.
- Physical restraint or punishment will never be used. Physical contact will only be made if a child/young person is in danger of injury.
- Depending on the extent and nature of the challenging behaviour, parents/guardians may be contacted after a session so they are made aware of their child/young person's attitude or behaviour. This could be a case where a child/young person persists with a behaviour despite the Tutor communicating the behaviour is not safe.
- Any significant instances of disruptive, unsafe or inappropriate behaviour should be reported to the DLP or Deputy DLP as soon as possible.
- Any significant instances of disruptive/unsafe behaviour will be recorded by the DLP or Deputy DLP in conjunction with the Tutors who led activities. This record will be kept confidential. Any additional occurrences of problematic behaviour will be added to the record.
- More than one adult should be present when dealing with challenging behaviour i.e. if you need to talk to a child/young person about their behaviour, you should do so with another adult present.
- A participant may be asked to sit to the side, take some 'time out' if they are struggling to control their energy or persisting with disruptive behaviour.
- Repeated unsafe or inappropriate behaviour may lead to suspension from classes/activities. Parents/guardians will be informed of any suspensions.
- If a participant breaks or damages equipment or the belongings of another participant, depending on the circumstances, they may be required to cover the cost of repair or replacement. This will be discussed with their parents/guardians.
- In serious and/or repeated instances of inappropriate, disruptive or unsafe behaviour, we may have to permanently exclude a participant from our activities. This will only be considered as a last resort. Any discussion on this action will involve both the participant and their parents/guardians. Where we have any concern about a particular young person, we may consult an outside agency for advice.

#### **4.14 Trips Away/Residentials**

Participating in trips away and residentials are a valuable opportunity for children and young people. Safety and wellbeing of participants is the priority. The following approach and procedures will be followed by Taking Flight:

- Consent is sought from parents/guardians for all trips and residentials.

- Adequate supervision of participants is ensured by adhering to recommended adult/young person ratios.
- We will do our best to ensure the gender of supervising adults reflects the gender of the participant group.
- A clear description of the trip/residential is provided to participants and parents/guardians.
- Contact details for all parents/guardians will be provided to the adults supervising.
- Any adult supervising will have undergone the garda vetting process and will be inducted in TF's Code of Behaviour and Child Safeguarding Policy.
- TF will liaise with the organisers of any event that participants are travelling to, to ensure accommodation and other facilities are up to standard and that they have adequate policies and procedures in place to safeguard the wellbeing of participants.
- A group contract will be drawn up with participants outlining rules around conduct, respect and any practicalities including lights-out times etc.
- Safe transport arrangements will be made in line with Taking Flight's policies.
- Times for drop -off and collection will be clearly communicated to parents/guardians.
- We will ensure adequate insurance is in place for trips and residentials.
- A first-aid kit will be available on all trips/residentials.
- We will ensure that adults supervising have access to adequate cash or another method of payment to cover any trip expenses and any emergencies.

#### **4.15 Working with other Organisations/Groups**

Where activities involving children and/or young people involve collaboration with another organisation or group, we will adhere to the following:

- Taking Flight will only involve adults who have completed the garda vetting process and who we have deemed appropriate to work with children and young people.
- We will seek assurance from any other group/organisation that any workers they provide for the collaboration have completed the vetting process and are suitable for work with children and/or young people.
- Where there are young people involved from more than one organisation/group, agreement will be sought on child safeguarding policies and procedures and these will be communicated to all adults involved.
- We will work with any other organisation/group and any venues involved to ensure that the highest possible health and safety standard is achieved.

## **Section 5: Communicating with Parents/Guardians**

Taking Flight recognises the importance of maintaining good relations with the parents/guardians of the children and young people who access our services. Parents/Guardians facilitate the participation of children/young people in our activities and we welcome their interest and attendance at showcases etc. In most circumstances parents/guardians are responsible for booking classes and activities and this can necessitate phone calls and email communications. Hence, parents/guardians are aware of the practical details of their child/young person's participation.

We take seriously our duty of care towards our young participants during our contact time with them, yet we recognise we play a limited role in their lives. Therefore, it is essential that their parents/guardians are aware of any incidents or circumstances that occur during their time with us that may impact their child or young person.

We take the following approach to communicating with parents/guardians of participants:

- Parents/guardians are welcome to contact us to discuss any aspect of their child's/young person's involvement in Taking Flight.
- Management will inform parents/guardians of any accident or incident involving their child as soon as possible.
- Any concern in relation to a child/young person will be communicated to parents/guardians promptly. Concerns could relate to a child/young person's mental or physical wellbeing or capacity to participate in our activities. We will also contact parents/guardians should we have a concern about a young person's behaviour.
- Taking Flight welcomes children/young people with a range of additional needs to take part in our activities. We recognise that regular communications and dialogue may be required with the parents/guardians of young people who may experience challenges in participating.
- Parents/guardians may request a copy of our Child Safeguarding Policy.
- As outlined in the section on child protection in our Child Safeguarding Policy, parents/guardians will be informed of any child protection concerns relating to their child, unless doing so may put the child at risk. We will take advice from the statutory authorities in advance of informing parents in any circumstances where it is felt that there is any risk involved.
- As outlined in our anti-bullying policy, parents/guardians will be informed of an instance of bullying relating to their child/young person.
- Our Complaints procedure can be accessed by any parent/guardian who has a concern or issue relating to any aspect of their child/young person's involvement with the organisation.
- We welcome suggestions and feedback from both participants and their parents/guardians regarding how we can create the best possible experience during our activities and classes.

### **What we ask of parents/guardians**

- Please ensure we have up to date contact information for you.
- Inform us of any medical conditions, injuries or illnesses that may impact on your child's/young person's participation and provide us with updates when you have them.
- Please ensure your child/young person has a safe way of arriving to and returning home from Taking Flight activities.
- If they are to be collected, please ensure you are on time.
- Open communication - we welcome any feedback on our activities and anything that relates to your child's/young person's participation.
- We would love to see you at any showcases, shows and/or other events that celebrate your child's/young person's participation and achievements.
- **Photography/video footage:** due to child safeguarding guidelines, parents/guardians are not permitted to take photos or video footage during classes or other activities. At the end of each term, an opportunity will be created to allow parents/guardians to capture footage/photos of their child showcasing the skills they have learned during the term.

## **Section 6: Complaints Procedure**

Taking Flight is committed to providing participants with the best possible experience during their time with us. We welcome both positive and negative feedback on our activities and programmes. If a participant, parent/guardian, stakeholder or member of the public has any issue or concern relating to our work, we have a procedure in place they can access.

### **Approach to Complaints**

Taking Flight will adhere to the following approach:

- We will respond to complaints in an open, non-judgemental manner.
- We will explain the procedure for handling complaints to anyone who wishes to make a complaint.
- We will respect the confidentiality of the person who is making the complaint and any person about whom the complaint is being made
- We will make every effort to deal with the complaint in a fair, balanced and objective way.
- We will act on a complaint and follow the procedure outlined below.
- We view complaints as an opportunity to improve our services and activities.

### **Procedure for Complaints**

- We accept complaints in all forms - verbal, by letter, by email, by phone. Where complaints are received verbally we may ask for the complaint in writing.
- Any individual engaged by Taking Flight who receives a complaint must bring it to the attention of the Director or Operations Manager.
- We will acknowledge complaints on receipt and will issue a response within 5 working days.
- A record will be kept of all complaints received.
- Our aim is to resolve less serious complaints outside a formal process by providing an explanation of why the issue occurred, resolving the issue and extending an apology where this is appropriate. If the person making the complaint is dissatisfied with the outcome, we will initiate our formal complaints procedure.
- We acknowledge the possibility of more serious complaints where a formal process is appropriate including those that relate to Health and Safety or where there is suspected harm to a participant.
- For more serious complaints, we will request the person making the complaint outlines the reason for the complaint in writing. Any such complaint should be addressed to the Director.
- We will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing.
- A meeting will take place with the person making the complaint and Taking Flight management. A separate meeting will be organised with any person who is subject to a complaint. Both the person making the complaint and any subject of a complaint will have the right to representation.



- As many facts as possible will be established. It may be necessary to speak to anyone who witnessed the situation which led to the complaint.
- Where the complaint relates to Taking Flight management, a third party will be responsible for handling the complaint but the procedure will be the same.
- A written record of all meetings will be created.
- If the complaint relates to a child safeguarding concern, TF's Child Safeguarding policy will be followed. Such a concern may require a report being made to the statutory authorities.
- If a complaint relates to any individual Taking Flight engages to carry out its activities, the Disciplinary procedure outlined in the Company Handbook will be followed.
- Any decisions and outcomes related to serious complaints will be communicated to the person who made the complaint in writing. They will be informed they can appeal the decision if they are dissatisfied.

### **Possible Outcomes of the Complaints Procedure**

Each complaint will be dealt with on its own merits and the outcome will be decided by the nature of the complaint and any subsequent investigation.

Possible outcomes include:

- An outline of the reason for the situation or incident that led to the complaint.
- A review of the situation or incident that led to the complaint.
- An assurance that there will be an examination of practice or approach that led to the situation or issue and, if this is deemed necessary, a change in practice or approach.
- A formal investigation. This could involve a report to statutory authorities where this is deemed appropriate.
- The enactment of disciplinary procedures as outlined in the Company Handbook.
- All complaints and any records relating to them will be treated as confidential with information shared only on a need-to-know basis.

### **Appeals**

If a person who makes a complaint is dissatisfied with the outcome of the procedure outlined above, they have the right to appeal and have 5 working days ( after the outcome of the complaints procedure is communicated) to inform us of their desire to appeal.

The appeal will be handled by a person who is not involved in the original procedure. This may have to be an external person nominated by Taking Flight. All records relating to the complaint will be provided to this person. They will have an additional meeting with the person who made the complaint and any person who was the subject of the complaint.

Any individual whose services are engaged by Taking Flight also has the right to appeal as outlined in the Company Handbook.

Any outcomes relating to the appeals process will be communicated in writing and all records kept confidential.

## Appendix One: Taking Flight's Safeguarding Statement



### Child Safeguarding Statement

#### Taking Flight Education and Performance Ltd

##### 1. Description of Activities

Taking Flight is dedicated to the development of circus arts through 3 strands: education, performance and community.

We provide services to a range of participants, practitioners and artists including classes, developmental programmes and community projects. Classes include silks, rope, trapeze, cocoon, wall running, hoop, straps, and acrobatics, as well as a variety of workshops and bespoke courses.

Specifically the activities we provide to children and young people are classes in the above- named disciplines, seasonal camps, ongoing programmes such as a youth theatre, performance opportunities such as showcases of work. We also work with partners such as schools and youth groups to deliver bespoke projects. Our activities for children and young people are open to those aged 7-17.

Our activities are open to all those within this age group with an interest in circus and aerial. Occasionally we design programmes open to specific target groups such as young people with disabilities or groups that have been traditionally underrepresented in our artform.

The vast majority of the organisation's activities are delivered at our studio: Unit 4 Cross Guns Business Park, Royal Canal Bank, Phibsborough, Dublin 3. We may also deliver activities to children and young people in other suitable venues, particularly when working in partnership with other organisations and groups.

Taking Flight is a company limited by guarantee. It is managed by the Company Director with the assistance of an Operations Manager. We do not currently employ

staff but we do engage the services of aerial and circus practitioners to deliver our activities.

## 2. Principles to Safeguard children from harm

Taking Flight is cognisant of the obligation it has to safeguard the children and young people who access its services from harm as required by the Children First Act 2015 and other relevant legislation. We have familiarised ourselves with Children First National Guidance 2017 and best practice guidance in relation to the safeguarding of children.

Our guiding principle in all matters is that the wellbeing and safety of the child/young person is of paramount importance. The company is committed not only to safeguarding children/young people from harm but to ensuring our ethos, approach and practice all serve the needs and safety of young people so they have a positive, safe, enjoyable and rewarding experience when availing of our activities. To this end, we have developed Child Safeguarding policies and procedures including a Code of Conduct for those who deliver our activities.

Taking Flight is also committed to the principle that children and young people have a right to be heard and consulted on matters that affect them.

We are also committed to ensuring all children and young people are valued and treated fairly and equitably regardless of ethnicity, cultural identity, religious persuasion, socio-economic background, gender identity, ability/disability.

## 3. Risk Assessment

<b>Risk Identified</b>	<b>Procedure in place to mitigate risk identified</b>
Risk of injury during activities	All Tutors engaged by Taking Flight to deliver activities have experience setting up apparatus safely.  All apparatus and other equipment are checked prior to activities.  All Tutors are instructed never to teach skills that are beyond their own experience and expertise.  Taking Flight has a detailed Health and

	<p>Safety Statement which includes guidance on safe practice.</p> <p>Participants are supervised at all times.</p> <p>A warm-up is conducted prior to all activities.</p> <p>Taking Flight requests details of any prior injuries and medical conditions before activities commence.</p> <p>All Taking Flight practitioners are familiar with our Code of Conduct which requires that all activities should be age appropriate and suitable for the needs and abilities of participants.</p> <p>Adequate insurance is in place.</p> <p>Annual Risk Assessments are carried out.</p>
<p>Risk of harm or abuse due to inappropriate behaviour by an adult engaged by Taking Flight.</p>	<p>Garda vetting carried out for all those who have access to children/young people.</p> <p>Safe recruitment procedure for all those who Taking Flight engages. (Included in our Child Safeguarding Policy)</p> <p>A clear Code of Conduct has been developed and all those we engage who have access to children and young people are inducted in the code. (Included in our Child Safeguarding Policy)</p> <p>All individuals engaged are familiar with our Child Safeguarding policy and procedures including reporting procedures and the requirement to report any inappropriate behaviour witnessed.</p> <p>All individuals engaged to deliver activities to young people must participate in child safeguarding training.</p> <p>A procedure is in place for managing any allegations against workers. (Included in our Child Safeguarding Policy)</p>

<p>Risk of inappropriate communications or inappropriate images of a child/young person being circulated.</p>	<p>Taking Flight has developed a policy on communications with young people, use of images and use of our website and social media platforms. (Included in our Child Safeguarding Policy)</p> <p>Young participants are supervised at all times.</p> <p>Taking Flight only captures images that are appropriate and related to activities.</p> <p>Consent is sought from parents/guardians and young people for use of images.</p> <p>Clear instructions are provided to parents/guardians regarding when they are permitted to capture photographs or video footage of participants.</p>
<p>Risk of harm being caused to a child or young person from misuse of their personal data.</p>	<p>Taking Flight has a GDPR and Privacy policy.</p> <p>The requirement to keep personal data confidential is included on contracts and in our Code of Conduct.</p> <p>The company has a complaints procedure in place should any individual (including parents and children/young people) have a concern with how their data is managed.</p> <p>All adults involved with Taking Flight are familiarised with the 'need to know' principle, i.e. personal information should only be shared in the interest of the child/young person as in the case of a medical emergency or a serious concern about a child/young person experiencing harm.</p>
<p>Risk of bullying</p>	<p>Taking Flight has developed an anti-bullying policy and procedures. (Included in our Child Safeguarding Policy)</p> <p>The requirement of treating everyone involved with respect is included in our Code of Conduct and communicated to all participants through group contracts.</p>

#### 4. Procedures

Our Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, the Children First: National Guidance, and Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice. In addition to the policies and procedures listed in our risk assessment, the following procedures support our intention to safeguard children while they are availing of our services:

- Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against the individuals we engage who work with children/young people.
- Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of individuals to work with children/young people
- Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the requirement to undertake child safeguarding training and familiarity with our Child Safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Procedure for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla
- Procedure for maintaining a list of the persons who are mandated persons

All procedures listed are available upon request.

#### 5. Implementation

Taking Flight recognises that implementation is an ongoing process. The organisation is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep children and young people safe from harm while availing of our service. This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed in April 2027, or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers. Risk Assessments are carried out annually.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

(Provider)

Name:

Address:

Email:

Phone:

#### 6. Relevant Person/Contact for queries

For queries, please contact Katie Martin, Operations Manager by email [katie.martin@takingflight.ie](mailto:katie.martin@takingflight.ie) and Relevant Person under the Children First Act 2015.

## **Appendix 2: Relevant legislation**

There are a number of key pieces of legislation that relate to child welfare and protection. The information here gives a brief overview of relevant legislation. It is not intended as legal opinion or advice and, if in doubt, you should consult the original legislation.

### **CHILD CARE ACT 1991**

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

### **PROTECTIONS FOR PERSONS REPORTING CHILD ABUSE ACT 1998**

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

### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT 2006**

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

1. Causing or permitting the child to be placed or left in a situation that creates a substantial risk to the child of being a victim of serious harm or sexual abuse; or
2. Failing to take reasonable steps to protect a child from such a risk while knowing that the child is in such a situation.

### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE (WITHHOLDING OF INFORMATION ON OFFENCES AGAINST CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE PERSONS) ACT 2012**

Under this Act, it is a criminal offence to withhold information about a serious offence, including a sexual offence, against a person under 18 years or a vulnerable person. The offence arises where a person knows or believes that



a specified offence has been committed against a child or vulnerable person and he or she has information which would help arrest, prosecute or convict another person for that offence, but fails without reasonable excuse to disclose that information, as soon as it is practicable to do so, to a member of An Garda Síochána.

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

### **NATIONAL VETTING BUREAU (CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE PERSONS) ACTS 2012–2016**

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

### **CHILDREN FIRST ACT 2015**

The Children First Act 2015 is an important addition to the child welfare and protection system as it will help to ensure that child protection concerns are brought to the attention of Tusla without delay. The Act provides for mandatory reporting of child welfare and protection concerns by key professionals; comprehensive risk assessment and planning for a strong organisational culture of safeguarding in all services provided to children; a provision for a register of non-compliance; and the statutory underpinning of the existing Children First Interdepartmental Implementation Group which promotes and oversees cross-sectoral implementation and compliance with Children First.

### **CRIMINAL LAW (SEXUAL OFFENCES) ACT 2017**

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