

## **Cruit Éireann, Harp Ireland Child Welfare Policy**

### Introduction

Company name: Cruit Éireann Harp Ireland

Aim: At all times, Cruit Éireann believes that the welfare of children and young people in their care is paramount.

Glossary: Child & children: as per the Child Care Act 1991 a child is defined as a 'person under the age of 18 years other than a person who has been married'.

In the case of Cruit Éireann, a child is a member of any of our workshops, concerts or projects under the age of 18.

Young Person: any member of Cruit Éireann under the age of 18 or any participant in Cruit Éireann activities under the age of 18.

Primary Carer: parent(s) or legal guardian(s). Staff: full-time or part-time employees/volunteers/committee members who work with Cruit Éireann but who do not necessarily perform in concerts, lead workshops or projects.

Teachers & Performers: Adults who work with the participants of any activities either as teachers, or as performers.

### 2 Section 1: Child Protection Policy Statement

We Cruit Éireann are committed to a child-centred approach to our work with children and young people. We undertake to provide a safe environment and experience, where the welfare of the child/young person is paramount. We will adhere to the recommendations of Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, published by the Department of Health and Children.

We have implemented policies and procedures covering:

1. Codes of behaviour
2. Reporting of suspected or disclosed abuse
3. Confidentiality
4. Recruitment and selecting staff
5. Managing and supervising staff
6. Involvement of primary carers
7. Allegations of misconduct or abuse by staff
8. Complaints and comments
9. Incidents and accidents Designated Persons

The designated liaison person (DLP) with responsibility for all child welfare issues is: The Chair, Aibhlín McCrann

During Cruit Éireann activities the Director may be assisted by the following deputies:

Cruit Éireann secretary Teresa O Donnell

Nominated Cruit Éireann committee members: Aileen Kennedy, Deirdre Granville

This policy will be reviewed at the annual AGM



Signed by \_\_\_\_\_ Chair \_\_\_\_\_ Signed by \_\_\_\_\_ Date:  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Section 2: Codes of Behaviour

This section covers the following areas:

1. Child-centred approach
2. Good practice
3. Inappropriate behaviour
4. Bullying
5. Physical contact
6. Communications
7. Health and Safety
8. Staff code of behaviour
9. Member code of behaviour

### 2.1 Child-centred approach

- Treat all children and young people equally and as individuals
  - Listen to and respect children and young people
  - Involve children and young people in decision-making as appropriate
  - Provide encouragement, support and praise (regardless of ability)
  - Use appropriate language to communicate with different age groups and use age appropriate teaching methods
  - Encourage a positive atmosphere offering constructive criticism when needed
  - Respect a child or young person's personal space
  - Discuss boundaries on behaviour and related sanctions, as appropriate, with children and young people and their primary carers
  - Agree group 'contract' before beginning session
  - Encourage feedback from the group
  - Lead by example
  - Be cognisant of a child's or young person's limitations, due to a medical condition, for example
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- Create an atmosphere of trust
  - Respect differences of ability, culture, religion, race and sexual orientation

## 2.2 Good practice

- Register each child/young person (name, address, phone, special requirements, attendance, emergency contact)
- Make primary carers, children/young people, and staff aware of the Child Welfare Policy and procedures
- Have emergency procedures in place and make all staff aware of these procedures
- Avoid too much contact with members while on your own
- Avoid if at all possible giving a lift to a child/young person and if unavoidable make sure that primary carers are informed
- Maintain awareness around language and comments made. If you think that something you said may have caused offence or upset, then try to address it in a sensitive manner
- Be inclusive of children and young people with special needs • Plan and be sufficiently prepared, both mentally and physically
- Report any concerns to the Designated Person and follow reporting procedures
- Report and record incidents and accidents and be aware of the accident and emergency procedures
- Provide appropriate training for staff and volunteers, where possible
- Update and review policies and procedures regularly • Keep primary carers informed of any issues that concern their children
- Ensure proper supervision based on adequate ratios according to age, abilities and activities involved in workshops.
- Don't be passive in relation to concerns, i.e. don't 'do nothing' and don't let problems get out of control
- Adhere to CRUIT ÉIREANN anti-bullying policy. Encourage children and young people to report bullying, concerns or worries and to be aware of anti-bullying policy. (For further information on anti-bullying policy see section called Bullying and how to respond below)
- Avoid if at all possible giving a lift to a child/young person and if unavoidable make sure that primary carers are informed

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- Maintain awareness around language and comments made. If you think that something you said may have caused offence or upset, then try to address it in a sensitive manner
- Avoid taking a session on your own. If this is not possible then it should be in an open environment with the full knowledge and consent of primary carers
- Report and record any incidents and accidents

- Keep primary carers informed of any issues that concern their children

### 2.3 Inappropriate Behaviour

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

### 2.4 Bullying

Bullying has no place in any of the activities of CRUIT ÉIREANN. Staff should promote a positive anti-bullying ethos during workshops and projects and raise awareness amongst other Staff and workshop members that bullying should not be tolerated. By emphasising the Members Code of Behaviour, Staff should create an environment in which all members are valued as individuals with rights and are encouraged and affirmed.

What is bullying?

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating and occurs mainly in social environments such as schools, clubs or residential courses. It includes behaviours such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting and extortion by one or more members against a victim or victims. The effects of bullying can last for some time and can significantly affect an individual's wellbeing, causing poor social development and depression. The outcomes of bullying can include:

- Physical injury, headaches, stomach aches.
- Stress symptoms such as sleep or eating disorders and panic attacks.
- Loss of confidence and self-esteem
- Reluctance to take part in the workshops anymore
- Lowered academic achievement
- Exclusion and isolation
- Consideration of suicide

It is important for CRUIT ÉIREANN staff to take a pro-active role in investigating whether bullying is occurring because many young people will not tell. However, a young person may confide in anyone so everyone should be aware of how to handle such a confidence. What can you do if a member tells you he/she is being bullied?

- Listen calmly and accept what it said. If possible there should be two staff present (but this should be determined by the needs of the child), if not leave the door open so passers by can see the staff member but not the player.
- Take notes following the conversation and keep these on file as this forms the basis of the bullying report. Notes should include nature of incident, date, time, location, names of those involved, witnesses, relevant history and staff member's response.
- Reassure the player that help is available, action will be taken, the member was right to tell, it is not his/her fault and it could happen to anyone.
- Negotiate confidentiality and be clear you'll only tell those who need to know.
- Ensure the member's safety. This is paramount and can be maintained through appropriate supervision. Liaise with the parents/legal guardians in relation to a solution and possible actions.
- Tell the player that you'll keep him/her informed as to how you intend to proceed.
- Make an intervention and ensure that all your actions will be guided by the needs of the child

. The following is a list possible actions:

- Inform the Chair or designated nominee if available, of your concerns
- Decide who to consult with: Tutor/facilitator, general manager, Designated Person, Parents, Legal Guardians.
- Decide who to interview: witnesses, alleged bullies and uninvolved members.
- Find out: what, when, where, who, why, how.
- Act in a non-confrontational manner
- Resolve the problem: make bullying the responsibility of all players taking part in CRUIT ÉIREANN activities.

Alternatively, approach the victim and the bully (explain why the bully's behaviour is wrong, how it makes the victim feel and request an apology.

Refer on in difficult cases. If it remains unresolved during CRUIT ÉIREANN activities, a report should be fully written up and referred on.

The CRUIT ÉIREANN incident form can be used for this but may require additional sheets to be added.

The report should include any of the notes taken during the incident (see point 2 above).

- Make a record of facts rather than opinions. Include details from the bullying report (that is nature of incident, date, time, location, names of those involved, witnesses, relevant history, and Staff members response), details recounted by others involved, any agreements made, an account of action taken and suggestion for follow up and monitoring.
- Use the official CRUIT ÉIREANN incident report form for any bullying report. Reassure the members that this report will be kept in confidence and its contents will only be revealed to those who need to know. This form must be returned to the CRUIT ÉIREANN office for safe-keeping and to be used in any subsequent actions or follow-ups to the incident.

## 2.5 Physical contact

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

## 2.6 Communication Procedures

When speaking with Cruit Éireann members and participants, staff will maintain the conversation at the appropriate level for the age of the member, and using both tone and emphasis let them know of our sincerity and respect for them and their views. Staff will always be respectful of players and not involve them in critical conversations of others.

We will maintain open and full communications with parents/legal guardians and try to develop a better understanding of the benefits of participation for their child/ward and what is expected of both their child/ward and themselves to improve the experience for all.

We will try to ensure that parents/legal guardians feel comfortable talking with all staff working for CRUIT ÉIREANN. We will be open to all concerns and queries that parents/legal guardians may have.

### 2.6.1 Communications with parents

The relationship with parents/legal guardians needs continuous attention.

In our dealings with them we will:

- Appreciate the trust which parents place in CRUIT ÉIREANN
- Listen carefully to what parents say about their children
- Try to understand parents concerns from their perspective and seek to establish a common ground
- Inform parents of any accidents and how they happened. Parents are understanding and accept that bumps and scrapes occur.
- Introduce parents to the Codes of Behaviour and this document.
- Provide information to parents/legal guardians of new members.
- Ensure that anything distributed to parents/legal guardians in writing is accurate and clearly stated. We will try to be as accurate as possible on times, dates and locations, and avoid the use of technical jargon
- Use a form of reproduction that is easy to read for notes, consent forms, requests and explanations of our activities.
- Send our communications to parents/legal guardians far enough in advance if we expect a response.
- Keep a copy of written communications
- Share good news of CRUIT ÉIREANN activities

### 2.6.2 Sensible use of email and mobile phone.

Communications by email will only be used in case of necessity and where possible, the same information will also be sent by post. When communicating using modern methods such as mobile phone and email, we will ensure that they are used for their positive benefits and will minimise the potential negative or harmful uses for which they can be used.

However, if communicating by mobile phone or text messaging, we will be aware of the younger age of the recipient and hence the possible room for misinterpretations and therefore keep its use to a minimum. Mobile phones can be used to bully others by sending threatening and unpleasant text messages, and picture messages either directly to their victims or to spread malicious rumours. This is not harmless and will be treated in the same manner as any other form of bullying. Staff will advise members of the need to use mobile phones with care, not to be tempted to use the phones to bully others and not to allow others to do so.

Photographs and images of children: Photographs can be powerful tools to promote CRUIT ÉIREANN but we are aware that they can also be dangerous and promote the risk of inappropriate, unsolicited attention directed at a workshop member appearing in photographs.

The use of images of CRUIT ÉIREANN members and participants by us:

The use of images of members/participants on our website and publications can be very useful. We will, however, try to use non-personal imagery when promoting activities. There may be instances where we would like to use photographs of individual members or groups. To reduce the risk of inappropriate, unsolicited attention directed at members/participants appearing in such photographs we will follow these rules:

When a young person's photograph is used, their name will not be published without permission. For players over the age of 18, the person's permission will be requested. For players under the age of 18, the parents/legal guardian's permission will be requested. We will only use images of persons in appropriate dress. The content of the photographs will focus on the activity not on a particular child. Where we wish to use particular photographs on our website and want to caption the images with names, the permission of the persons (and parents/legal guardians for players under 18) will be specially requested.

## 2.7 Health and safety

- Provide a safe environment and don't leave children unattended or unsupervised
- Manage any dangerous equipment/materials
- Be aware of and follow CRUIT ÉIREANN accident procedure

## 2.8 Member Code of Behaviour

- I will accept rules concerning group discipline which are based on common sense, safety, consideration for others and the requirements of group activity
- I will switch my mobile phone off fully during workshops
- I or my parent/legal guardian will pay for any damage caused to property by me during Cruit Éireann events
- I will accept that all members and participants of CRUIT ÉIREANN will be treated equally
- I accept that it is my responsibility to help and encourage all other players to reach their potential

- I accept that bullying in any form is not acceptable behaviour by me or anyone else
- I will not bully any other member or participant of Cruit Éireann or take part in any bullying perpetrated by anyone else
- I will report any incidents of bullying I see or hear about to a member of staff as soon as possible
- I will not take photos of any other member with a mobile phone without their permission
- I will not distribute or forward any images of another member by mobile phone without their permission
- I will not leave workshops/concerts.activities without permission
- I will not purchase or consume alcohol at any time during Cruit Éireann activities/events • I will only smoke in legally designated areas

## 2.9 Staff Code of Behaviour

- Child-centred approach
- Treat all children and young people equally and as individuals
- Listen to and respect children and young people
- Use appropriate language to communicate with different age groups
- Respect a child/young person's personal space .

## 11 Section 3

### Reporting Procedures

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

Aibhlín McCrann can be contacted at 087 2800390 has designated as role of deputy to Teresa O'Donnell who can be contacted at ..087 2460014.....

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

- specific indication from the child/young person that (s)he has been abused
- an account be a person who saw the child/young person being abused
- evidence, such as an injury or behaviour, which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be cause another way
- an injury or behaviour which is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse [an example of this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indications of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour]



• consistent indication, over a period of time, that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect  
Cruit Éireann staff should record the following information in relation to children and young people:

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

Dealing with a disclosure

- Stay calm and listen to the child/young person, allow him or her enough time to say what s/he needs to say
- Don't use leading questions or prompt details
- Reassure the child/young person but do not promise to keep anything secret
- Don't make the child/young person repeat any of the details unnecessarily
- Explain to the child/young person what will happen next (explanation should be age appropriate)

Reporting procedures

- The reporting procedure should be known and accessible to all staff
- The person who expresses the concern should be involved and kept informed
- Actions and outcomes should be noted
- Record all details: date, time and people involved in the concern of disclosure and the facts (for example in an incident book) information recorded should be factual. Any opinions should be supported by facts
- Inform the Designated Person of his or her deputy if unavailable
- The most appropriate person should discuss the concern or consult with primary careers.

Parents, carers or responsible adults should be made aware of a report to the Health Service Executive unless it is likely to put the child/young person at further risk

- The Designated Person may contact the Health Service Executive Duty Social Work Department for an informal consultation prior to making a report
- Information will be shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis (see section 4: Confidentiality statement)
- If there are reasonable grounds for concern as outlined above, the Designated Person will contact the Duty Social Worker in the Health Service Executive area using the standard reporting form available from the Health Service Executive. Reports to the Duty Social Worker can be made verbally initially and then followed by the standard reporting form.

Reports should be made to the Health Service Executive without delay.

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

#### Section 4: Confidentiality statement

We in CRUIT ÉIREANN are committed to ensuring peoples' rights to confidentiality.

However, in relation to child protection and welfare we undertake that:

- Information will only be forwarded on a 'need to know' basis in order to safeguard the child/young person.
- Giving such information to others for the protection of a child or young person is not a breach of confidentiality
- We cannot guarantee total confidentiality where the best interested of the child or young person are at risk
- Primary carers, children and young people have a right to know if personal information is being shared and/or a report is being made to the Health Service Executive, unless doing so could put the child/young person at further risk
- Images of a child/young person will not be used for any reason with out the consent of the parent/carer (however we cannot guarantee that cameras/videos will not be used at public performances)
- Procedures will be put in place in relation to the use of images of children/young people
- Procedures will be put in place for the confidential recording and storing of information. Personal information, such as addresses, email addresses, phone numbers, dates of birth will not be passed on to any third party for any purposes without the permission of an over 18 member, of the under 18 member and his/her parent/legal guardian

Section 5: Staff recruitment, selection and management Recruitment and selection policy statement for full-time and part-time employees We will ensure that employees are carefully selected, trained and supervised to provide a safe environment for all children and young people, by observing the following principles:

- Roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined for every job
- Posts will be advertised widely
- We will endeavour to select the most suitably qualified personnel
- Candidates will be required to complete an application form
- Candidates will be asked to sign a declaration form in relation to the CRUIT ÉIREANN Child Welfare Policy and Procedures

- At least two written references that are recent, relevant, independent and verbally confirmed will be necessary

- Staff will be selected by a panel of at least two (or more) representatives through an interview process

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

- Any child-related convictions

- Refusal to sign Application and Child Welfare Declaration forms

- Insufficient documentary evidence of identification

- Concealing information on one's suitability to working with children

- There will be a relevant probationary period

- All staff will be requested to consent to Garda clearance, and where available, this will be sought

Staff management policy statement: To protect both staff and children/young people, we undertake that new employees will:

- Take part in an induction training session as soon as possible

- Receive an adequate level of supervision and review of their work practices

- Be made aware of the organisation's code of conduct, child protection procedures, and the identity and role of who has been designated to deal with issues of concern

- Be provided with a copy of this document – the CRUIT ÉIREANN Child Welfare Policy and Procedures which they will be required to read, understand and adhere to.

- Sign the appropriate Declaration Form starting work

- Undergo a probationary or trial period

Section 6: Involvement of primary carers In the context of this document a primary carer is taken to be a member's parent(s) or legal guardian(s). We are committed to being open with all primary carers. To that end we undertake to:

- Advise primary carers of our Child Welfare Policy and Procedures

- Inform primary carers and schools of all activities and potential activities

- Issue contact/consent forms where relevant

- Comply with health and safety practices

- Operate child-centred policies in accordance with best practice

- Adhere to our Communications procedures – see section XX

- Adhere to our staff recruitment guidelines- see section XX

- Ensure as far as possible that the activities are appropriate for different ages and abilities

- Encourage and facilitate the involvement of parent(s), carer(s) or responsible adult(s), where appropriate. If we have concerns about the welfare of the child/young person we will:
  - Respond to the needs of the child/young person
  - Inform the primary carers on an on-going basis unless this action puts the child/young person at further risk
  - Be obliged to pass on any child protection and welfare concerns to the Duty Social Worker and, in an emergency, the Gardai
  - Ensure the safety of the child/young person and inform primary carers as appropriate in the event of a complaint against a member of staff.

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

To that end we will: • Contact local Health Service Executives and Gardaí where there is a child protection welfare concern

- Encourage primary carers to work in partnership with us to ensure the safety of their protection
- Have a designated contact person available for consultation with primary carers in the case of any concern over a child/young person's welfare

Section 7: Dealing with allegations against staff In the event of allegations being made against an employee (paid or voluntary), the protection of the child/young person is the first and paramount consideration.

Cruit Éireann has a dual responsibility in respect of both the child/young person and employee. The same person must not have responsibility for dealing with the child/young person welfare issues and the staff employment issues. An allegation against an employee should be assessed promptly and carefully. If reasonable grounds for concern exist, a formal report to the Health Service Executive should be made. The reporting procedures outlined in Section 3 of these guidelines should be followed.

Cruit Éireann will maintain a close liaison with the Health Service Executive and the Gardai. Employees will ensure that their actions do not undermine or frustrate any assessment by Health Service Executive and the Gardai. Cruit Éireann will take protective measures appropriate to the level of risk while not unreasonably penalising the worker - unless necessary to protect the child/young person. Protective measures might mean increased supervision, assignment to different duties, or suspension. Cruit Éireann may want to seek legal advice on procedures or protocol to deal with allegations against staff. Dealing with an allegation against staff.

There is a dual responsibility dealing with an allegation against a member of staff:

1. In respect of the child/young person (NAME) will deal with issues related to the child/young person. In respect of the person against whom the allegation has been made (NAME) will deal with issues related to the staff member.
2. The first priority is to ensure that no child or young person is exposed to unnecessary risk • If allegations are made against the Designated Person, then the Deputy Designated Person should be contacted.

3. • The reporting procedures outlined in Section 3 of these guidelines should be followed. Both primary carers and child/young person should be informed of actions planned and taken.
4. The child/young person should be dealt with in an age-appropriate manner
5. • The staff member will be informed as soon as possible (i) the nature of the allegation (ii) the staff members should be given the opportunity to respond
6. • The chairperson/head of organisation should be informed as soon as possible
7. • Any action following an allegation of abuse against an employee should be taken in consultation with Health Service Executive and Gardai
8. After consultation, the chairperson/head of organisation should advise the person accused and agreed procedures will be followed.

Section 8: Complaints and comments procedures In the event of complaints or comments we will:

- Direct complaints and comments to the appropriate person(s).
  - Respond to written or emailed complaints or comments within 8 weeks
  - Log and forward verbal complaints or comments to the appropriate person(s) as soon as possible. A complainant will be kept informed of what is happening to their complaint.
9. Section 9: Accidents procedure
  10. Cruit Éireann maintains an up to date register of the contact details of all children/young people involved in the organisation
  11. Children/young people's details are cross referenced between the incident book and file 17
  12. External organisations with whom Cruit Éireann has dealings must provide proof that they have public liability insurance
  13. First-aid boxes should be available and regularly re-stocked
  14. The location of the first-aid box(es) must be known to staff
  15. Availability of first-aid should be in accordance with Cruit Éireann's Health and Safety Guidelines. The location of accident/incident books must be made known to staff
  16. Children and young people must be advised of risks of dangerous material
  17. Record details of risky equipment used and take steps to minimise risk
  18. Take cognisance of responsibility for first-aid on off-site trips Legal Garda clearance checks must now be obtained from all people working with children and those under the age of 18.
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The following documents outline codes of best practice for working with young people. The CRUIT ÉIREANN Child Welfare Policy and Procedures draw from the content of these publications.

Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2004) Department of Health and Children.

ROI Child Protection Guidelines (2004)

National Youth Federation, ROI Choosing to Protect (2005)

Department of Health and Social Services (NI) [www.volunteering-ni.org](http://www.volunteering-ni.org) Code of Good Practice: Child Protection for the Youth Work Sector (2003) Department of Education and Science, ROI