

MOUTH ON FIRE Child Protection & Welfare Policy 2018

Mouth on Fire is committed to working in a safe environment with children and young people. It is the policy of Mouth on Fire to promote the welfare of all children and young people involved in their productions. This policy will ensure a vetted workforce and an environment where children / young people and staff are protected and safe. Mouth on Fire adheres to the following by having and implementing child protection policies and procedures:

1. [Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011](#)
2. [Our Duty to Care - Department of Health 2002](#)
3. [Tusla Interim Guide for the Development of Child Protection and Welfare Policy, Procedures and Practices](#)

Procedures

Mouth on Fire works towards adhering to best practice in child welfare by:

- Including Garda vetting as part of recruitment.
- Defining good practice guidelines for working with children and young people.
- Providing anti – bullying procedures.
- Safe management of all staff.
- Parental/guardian involvement.

Mutual Protection

All staff and other organisations working with Mouth on Fire will be made aware of Mouth on Fire's Child Protection Policy and Procedures in relation to participation in children and young people's workshops, rehearsals or productions in order to ensure mutual protection.

Parents & Agents

Children and young people are usually in the care of a parent/chaperone when participating in a Mouth on Fire production. A Mouth on Fire staff member will be present at all times during workshops, rehearsals and performances.

Duty of Care

Children have the right to privacy and should not be exposed to unnecessary risk, so any taking or use of images in any medium must have parental/guardian (primary carer) consent. Staff under contract by Mouth on Fire cannot take images for personal or external use. Images may only be taken by designated Mouth on Fire staff or by the media (designated agencies) with the agreement of Mouth

on Fire and parental/guardian consent. Mouth on Fire uses images for promotional and archive purposes. Staff requesting use of images must seek permission from Mouth on Fire for any use. Permission is granted at the discretion of Mouth on Fire.

Definitions of Abuse

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.

Reasonable Grounds for Concern

Reporting an allegation of child abuse should be based on an opinion formed 'reasonably and in good faith'. A formal report will be made to the Health Services Executive Children and Family Services. This decision should be based on reasonable grounds for concern.

The following constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

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

Reporting Procedures & Practices

Mouth on Fire will implement the following procedures and practices:

- Register each child - name, address, phone, special requirements, emergency contact.
- Identify a Designated Person & Deputy Designated Person for reports.
- Make primary carers, children/young people and staff aware of the Child Protection Policy and procedures.
- Plan and be sufficiently prepared, mentally and physically.
- Report concerns to the Designated Person and follow the procedures detailed in this statement.

- Encourage children and young people to report bullying, concerns or worries.
- Evaluate work practices on a regular basis.
- Provide appropriate training for staff.
- Report and record incidents and accidents.
- Regularly update/review policies and procedures.
- Keep primary carers informed of issues that concern their children.
- Ensure proper supervision of children / young people.
- Observe appropriate gender balance.
- Ensure clear communication between all involved within Mouth on Fire.
- Be proactive in preventing a problem from escalating out of control.
- Where possible, Mouth on Fire will avoid sessions under the control of one person. Where this is not possible, sessions will be in an open environment with the full knowledge and consent of primary carers.
- Staff of Mouth on Fire will not transport children/young persons.
- Maintain awareness around language and comments made.

Dealing with a Disclosure

In the event of a disclosure by a child / young person staff should;

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

Retrospective Disclosure

If a disclosure is made by an adult of abuse suffered during their childhood and it comes to the attention of either the Health Services Executive or An Garda Síochána or other service, it is essential

to establish whether there is any current risk to any child who may be in contact with the alleged abuser revealed in the adult's disclosure. If any risk is deemed to exist, this information will be shared between agencies. All relevant information is carefully collated and each agency will inform the other of any such concerns during an investigation.

Recruiting Staff

'Staff' refers to persons contracted in a Mouth on Fire production, be that Performing Artists or Production Crew.

All persons involved with Mouth on Fire will be made fully aware of the policies and procedures relating to the welfare/safety of children/young persons with whom they will have contact in the context of a production. All staff under contract with Mouth on Fire will be required to consent to Garda Vetting for clearance.

Staff under contract with Mouth on Fire will:

- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with children/young people.
- Not use or allow offensive or sexually suggestive physical and/or verbal language.
- Not single out a particular child for unfair favouritism, criticism, ridicule, or unwelcome focus or attention.
- Not allow/engage in inappropriate touching of any form.
- Not hit or physically chastise children/young people.
- Not socialise inappropriately with children/young people, e.g., outside of schedules.
- Seek consent of child in relation to physical contact (except in an emergency or a dangerous situation).
- Avoid horseplay or inappropriate touch.
- Not leave children unattended or unsupervised.
- Manage any dangerous materials.
- Provide a safe environment.
- Control, where possible, photography of children and young people to ensure that no images are taken without the agreement of the Primary Carer.
- Be aware of accident procedure and follow accordingly.

Involvement of Primary Carers

'Primary Carer' refers to parent(s), carer(s), or responsible adult(s) as appropriate.

Mouth on Fire undertakes to:

- Advise primary carers of our child protection policy.
- Inform primary carers of all schedules and potential schedules.
- Issue contact/consent forms where relevant.
- Comply with health and safety practices.
- Operate child-centred policies in accordance with best practice.
- Encourage and facilitate the involvement of parent(s), carer(s) or responsible adult(s), where appropriate.

Allegations of Misconduct or Abuse by Staff

If an allegation is made against any person associated with Mouth on Fire, two separate procedures will be followed:

1. In respect of the child, the Designated Person, Melissa Nolan will deal with issues related to the child.

2. In respect of the person against whom the allegation is made, the Deputy Designated Person, Cathal Quinn, will deal with issues related to the staff member.

- The first priority is to ensure that no child or young person is exposed to unnecessary risk.
- If allegations are made against the Designated Person, then the Deputy Designated Person should be contacted;
- The reporting procedures outlined in these guidelines should be followed. Both the primary carers and child should be informed of actions planned and taken. The child should be dealt with in an age-appropriate manner.
- The staff member will be informed as soon as possible of the nature of the allegation. The staff member should be given the opportunity to respond.
- Any action following an allegation of abuse against a staff member should be taken in consultation with Health Service Executive and Gardaí;
- After consultation, the Artistic Director (Cathal Quinn) will advise the person accused and agreed procedures will be followed.

Complaints Procedures

All complaints will be made to the company.

- Complaints or comments will be responded to within 1 week.

- Verbal complaints will be logged and responded to.

A report will then be made to the Health Service Executive and An Garda Síochána in person, by telephone or in writing.

Accidents Procedure

- Mouth on Fire will maintain an up-to-date register of the contact details of all children/young people involved in a production.
- Children/young people's details will be cross-referenced between the incident book and file.
- External organisations working with Mouth on Fire will be required to provide proof that they have public liability insurance.
- First-aid boxes should be available and regularly re-stocked.
- The location of the first-aid box(es) will be made known to staff.
- Availability of first-aid should be in accordance with the company's Health and Safety guidelines. The location of accident/incident books must be made known to staff.
- Children and young people will be advised of risks of dangerous materials and/or locations.

Confidentiality

The effective protection of a child often depends on the willingness of everyone in the company involved with children to share and exchange relevant information. All information regarding concern or assessment of child abuse should be shared on "a need to know" basis in the interests of the child.

No undertakings regarding secrecy can be given.

Ethical and statutory codes concerned with confidentiality and data protection provide general guidance. Giving information to others for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality.

It must be clearly understood that information which is gathered for one purpose must not be used for another without consulting the person who provided that information.

Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998

This ensures protection from civil liability of persons who have communicated child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to designated officers of the Health Service Executive and Gardaí. This protection applies to organisations as well as to individuals. This means that even if a communicated suspicion of child abuse proves unfounded, a plaintiff who took an action would have to prove that the person who communicated the concern had not acted reasonably and in good faith in making the report.

Record Keeping

The company will store all records in relation to child protection concerns. All records are confidentially protected.

Contact

Designated Person: Melissa Nolan

Deputy Designated Person: Cathal Quinn

Email: info@mouthonfire.ie

Mouth on Fire Child Protection Policy Declaration Form 2018

CONFIDENTIAL

All correct details must be declared.

Full Name:

Address:

Date of Birth:

Place of Birth:

Tel. No:

Mobile No:

Any other name(s) previously known as:

Is there any reason that you would be considered unsuitable to work with children and young people:

Yes _____ No _____ If yes, please outline the reason below:

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

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

Do you consent to Garda Clearance? Yes _____ No _____

Names and contact details for two referees:

1. _____

2. _____

Please enclose a copy of identification (photocopy of driver's license or passport).

I declare I have read Mouth on Fire's Child Protection Policy and agree to adhere to it.

Signed: _____

Date: _____