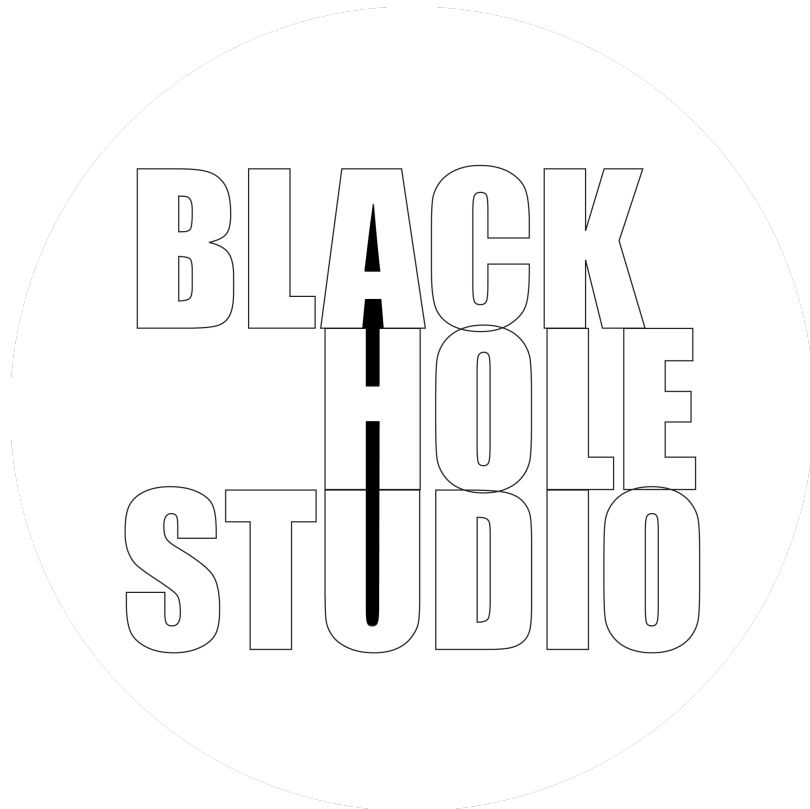


## CHILDCARE PROTECTION POLICY



**BLACK HOLE STUDIO**

CODE OF PRACTICE, January 2019

# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY STATEMENT

We at Black Hole Studio 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 procedures covering:

**Code of Behaviour for All Staff**

**Reporting of Suspected or Disclosed Abuse**

**Confidentiality**

**Recruitment & Selecting Staff**

**Managing & Supervising Staff**

**Involvement of Primary Carers**

**Allegations of Misconduct or Abuse by Staff**

**Complaints & Comments**

**Incidents & Accidents**

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David Pierce, Designated Person

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Date

This policy will be next reviewed in January 2020

## **CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR STAFF**

We have a code of behaviour for our staff, both permanent and free-lance, to help create a supportive environment for staff and subsequently for the children partaking in any of our activities. A separate code will be drawn up for each of our individual groups with the involvement of the group members. The code will revolve around the following headings:

### **Child-Centred Approach**

We will treat all children and young people equally, listen to and respect their opinions, involve them in the decision making whenever possible, and provide encouragement, support and praise regardless of their ability. We will use appropriate language, both verbal and physical, encourage a positive atmosphere and fun, and offer constructive criticism when needed. We will treat all children and young people as individuals and respect their personal space. We will discuss the boundaries on behaviour (for children, staff and carers) and their related sanctions. Before each activity we will agree a group 'contract' with the participation of all involved. We will create an atmosphere of trust within which the differences of ability, culture, religion, race and sexual orientation will be respected. We will be cognisant of each child/young person's limitations, use age appropriate aids & materials, and be aware of other commitments when scheduling activities. We will encourage feedback from the group and lead by example in all aspects of time spent with the child or young person.

### **Good Practice**

We will register each child/young person (name, address, phone, special requirements, attendance, emergency contact), have emergency procedures in place and make primary carers, children/young persons, visitors and facilitators aware of our Child Protection Policy and procedures. We will plan our activities and be sufficiently prepared both physically and mentally and be inclusive of all taking part. We will not tolerate any bullying and encourage any child to report any concerns or worries which will be dealt with following our reporting procedures. We will record any incidents or accidents and report these as appropriate and keep primary carers informed of any issues that concern their children. We will ensure proper supervision based on adequate ratios according to age, abilities & activities involved, observe appropriate dress and behaviour. We will evaluate work practices and update & review policies and procedures on a regular basis. We will have a written agreement with any outside organisation, artist or sole practitioner and ensure clear communication between ourselves and them.

### **Inappropriate Behaviour**

We will avoid spending any excessive amounts of time alone with children/young people and will have an open-door policy whenever possible, where the primary carer will be allowed access to view the activities without disruption. We will not use, or allow, offensive or sexually suggestive verbal or physical language, or allow/engage in inappropriate touching of any form. We will not hit or physically chastise children /young people or single them out for unfair favouritism, criticism, ridicule or unwelcome focus or attention. We will not socialise inappropriately with children / young people outside of structured organisational activities.

### **Physical Contact**

We will seek consent of the child /young person in relation to physical contact (except in an emergency or dangerous situation), avoid horseplay, inappropriate touch and will always check with children / young people about their level of comfort when doing touch exercises.

### **Health & Safety**

We will not leave children unattended or unsupervised and will provide a safe environment for them. We will manage any dangerous materials and be aware of the accident procedure and follow accordingly.

## REPORTING PROCEDURES

A Designated Person has been appointed to deal with issues relating to child protection and welfare within the organisation, Black Hole Studio, and will respond to any concerns that may be identified. A deputy has been appointed to cover this role when the Designated Person is unavailable, or he/she is directly involved in an incident, suspicion or accusation. It is the responsibility of the Designated Person to support and advise staff about policy and procedures and to make sure they are followed. It is the responsibility of the Designated Person to liaise with the Health Service Executive or Gardaí where appropriate.

Designated Person: David Pierce 086-3082645

Deputy Designated Person: Mary Duignan, 087-2441740

### Reasonable Grounds for Concern

- I. specific indication from a child / young person that he/she has been abused
- II. an account by a person who saw the child / young person being abused
- III. evidence, such as injury or behaviour, which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way
- IV. an injury or behaviour, which is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse
- V. consistent indication, over a period of time, that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect

### Recording Procedures

All staff, both internal and external or hired, will record the following information in relation to children and young people:

**Suspicion - Concerns - Worrying observations - Behavioural changes - Actions and outcomes**

### Dealing with a Disclosure

We will listen to the child/young person while remaining calm and allow him/her enough time to say what he/she needs to say. We will not use leading questions or prompt details. We will reassure the child/young person, but will not promise to keep anything secret. We will not make the child/young person repeat anything unnecessarily and explain to the child/young person what will happen next, the explanation being appropriate to their age.

### Reporting Procedures

All staff will know the reporting procedure and will be foremost for the child/young person's safety and welfare. The person who expresses the concern will be involved and kept informed, and all actions and outcomes will be noted. All details of any disclosure or reasonable grounds for concern will be recorded in the incident book including date, time, and people involved. All information should be factual and any opinions should be supported with facts. The Designated Person will be informed immediately (or Deputy if not available). The primary carer will be informed of the incident by the most appropriate person and should be discussed. Any report to the Health Service Executive should be made aware to the primary carer 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 and all information will be on a 'Need to Know' basis.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT**

The right to confidentiality to all will be upheld by all staff, both permanent and part-time, and volunteers of Black Hole Studio at all times except in relation to child protection and welfare in the following circumstances:

The passing on of information to protect a child/young person is not a breach of confidentiality and, therefore, we cannot guarantee total confidentiality where the best interest of the child/young person is at risk. Information will only be forwarded on a 'need to know' basis in order to safeguard the safety of the child/young person. Primary carers, children & young people are obliged 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 risk. Procedures will be put in place in relation to the use of images of children/young people and for the recording and storing of information in line with our confidentiality policy. Images of a child/young person will not be used for any reason without the prior consent of the parent/carer. However, we cannot guarantee that cameras, videos will not be used at public performances.

## **RECRUITING & SELECTING STAFF**

All staff who will have, or likely to have, contact with children/young people will undergo a recruitment process in line with our procedures. We will ensure that staff are carefully selected, trained and supervised to provide a safe environment for all children/young people and that the roles and responsibilities are clearly defined for every job (paid or voluntary). We will endeavour to select the most suitably qualified personnel. Candidates will be required to complete an application form, and asked to sign a declaration form. At least two written references that recent, relevant, independent and verbally confirmed will be necessary. The candidates will be selected through an interview process by a panel of two representatives. All staff will be required to consent to Garda clearance, and no one who is deemed to constitute a risk will be employed. These risks include anyone who has child related convictions, refuse to sign application and declaration forms, insufficient documentary evidence of identification, and /or concealing information on one's ability to work with children/young people.

## **MANAGING & SUPERVISING STAFF**

All staff will abide by our Child Protection Policy Statement, including any free-lance staff, and will receive induction training and be made aware of our policies and procedures. To protect both staff (paid and voluntary) and children/young people, we undertake to that all staff will receive an adequate level of supervision and review of their work practices, be expected to have read and signed our Child Protection Policy Statement, and be provided with child protection training. They will be aware of the identity and role of the Designated Person and will undergo a probationary period.

## **INVOLVEMENT OF PRIMARY CARERS**

We are committed to be open with all primary carers and undertake to advise them of our Child Protection Policy. We will comply with health & safety practices, operate child-centred policies in accordance with best practice and adhere to our recruitment policies. We will ensure as far as possible that all activities are age-appropriate and issue contact/consent forms where necessary, and will encourage and facilitate the involvement of parents, carers, or responsible adults, where appropriate. If we have concerns about the welfare of the child/young person, we will respond to their needs and inform the primary carer on an on-going basis, unless that action puts the child/young person at further risk. Where there are child protection and welfare concerns, we are obliged to pass these on to the Duty Social Worker and, in an emergency, the Gardaí. We encourage primary carers to work in partnership with us under the guidelines set out by our organisation to ensure the safety of children/young persons. We have a Designated Person available for consultation in the case of any concern over a child/young person's welfare and in the event of a complaint against any member of staff, we will immediately ensure the safety of the child/young person and inform their primary carer as appropriate.

## ALLEGATIONS OF MISCONDUCT OR ABUSE BY STAFF

In the event of allegations being made against an employee (staff or voluntary), the protection of the child/young person is the first and paramount consideration. The organisation has a responsibility to both the child/young person and employee. All allegations against an employee will be assessed promptly and carefully. If reasonable grounds for concern exist, a formal report to the Health Service Executive will be made, and we will ensure that we will not undermine or frustrate any assessment or investigation by the Health Service Executive or Gardaí.

The following two procedures will be carried out:

1. In respect of the child/young person the Designated Person will deal with the related issues.
2. In respect of the person against whom the allegations were made the Deputy Designated Person will deal with the issues relating to the staff member.
  - The first priority is to ensure that no child/young person is exposed to unnecessary risk.
  - If allegations are made against the Designated Person, then the Deputy Designated Person should be contacted.
  - Both the primary carers and the child/young person should be informed of actions planned and taken.
  - The staff member will be informed as soon as possible of the nature of the allegation & be given the opportunity to respond.
  - Any action following an allegation of abuse against an employee will be taken in consultation with the Health Service Executive and Gardaí.
  - The accused will be advised and agreed procedures will be followed.

## COMPLAINTS & COMMENTS PROCEDURES

A complaints and comments procedure will be made aware to all primary carers, children/young people and staff in the event of it being needed. All complaints should be made to the Designated Person, or Deputy Designated Person and can be done so verbally or in written form and will be logged for reference. All complaints will be responded to within two weeks, or sooner when possible. The Designated Person has the responsibility for directing all complaints/comments to the appropriate person with consideration given to an appeals procedure.

## ACCIDENTS PROCEDURE

Black Hole Studio have an up-to-date Public Liability insurance and will maintain an up-to-date register of contact details of all children/young people involved in any of their activities. We have a first-aid box that is regularly re-stocked which includes an accident/incident book. We will advise all children/young people of the risks of any dangerous materials they may be using in their activities and will inform the primary carer of any accidents/incidents that may take place during the child/young person's time with us.

## CONTACTS

	<b>Health Service Executive</b>	<b>Frenchpark Garda Station</b>
<b>Black Hole Studio</b>	Boyle: (071) 9662087	Phone: (094) 9870002
Frenchpark	Castlerea: (094) 9621155	<b>Boyle Garda Station</b>
Co. Roscommon	Roscommon: (090) 6637528	Phone: (071) 9664620
<b>Designated Person:</b>	<b>Children First Information Officer</b>	<b>Emergency: 112 or 999</b>
David Pierce	sandra.claxton@hse.ie	