

Child & Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy 2021



Freshly Ground Theatre



1. Introduction

FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE is a company of four artists based in the Tallaght area making socially engaged theatre. As part of their work, **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** engages directly with children under the supervision or direction of **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE's** staff in a wide number of circumstances including for example

- children as participants in arts projects managed by **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE**
- children as performers alongside the **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** ensemble
- children brought onto the premises by parents / teachers to view theatre pieces or otherwise
- work experience placements under the age of eighteen (anyone under 18 is defined by the UN as a child).

2. Child & Vulnerable Adult Protection Statement

FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE is committed to safeguarding the rights of children, young people & Vulnerable Adults, particularly those with whom we work. **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE's** duty of care is to provide a safe space for children, young people & Vulnerable Adults, ensuring they are safeguarded from sexual, physical and emotional harm, in a healthy learning environment. The welfare of the child is paramount in decisions, activities and programmes involving children, young people & Vulnerable Adults, at **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE**. **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** have developed the following procedures to be followed in all matters relating to children and young people under the age of 18 years whilst involved in activities organized through **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE**:

- Code of Behaviour for Staff and Volunteers
- Confidentiality Statement
- Reporting Procedure
- Safe Recruitment Procedure
- Training, Supervision and Management of Staff and Volunteers
- Staff Allegations Procedure.
- Complaints Procedure
- Accidents Procedure

3. Aims

The aim of this policy is to promote best practice in Child Protection & Vulnerable Adult and to set out a practical framework to ensure that:

- **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** protects children under its care or management
- **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** staff are able to make informed and confident responses to specific Child Protection & Vulnerable Adult issues
- **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** takes proactive steps in recruitment, artist's recommendation and in other areas to reduce risk with regard to Child Protection & Vulnerable Adults.

4. Duties of Care

FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE are committed to ensure:

- All staff and artists chosen or recommended by **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** to work with children have sufficient clearance and **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** proactively advises all prospective employers to obtain required clearance prior to contract of employment
- Allegations made or concerns reported by children or others to **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** staff are dealt with correctly
- Investigations into reported concerns or allegations are carried out in a proper and timely manner
- The Garda, Social Services and other statutory agencies are kept informed where necessary.

5. Code of Behaviour:

for **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** staff and freelance arts practitioners employed by **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE**

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

- Child-centred approach
- Good practise
- Inappropriate behaviour
- Physical contact
- Health and safety

5.1 Child-centred approach:

- Treat all children, young people & Vulnerable Adults equally
- Listen to and respect children, young people & Vulnerable Adults.
- Involve children, young people & Vulnerable Adults in decision making, as appropriate
 - Provide encouragement, support and praise (regardless of ability)
- Use appropriate language (physical and verbal)
- Have fun and encourage a positive atmosphere
- Offer constructive criticism when needed
- Treat all children, young people & Vulnerable Adults as individuals
- Respect a child's, young person's or Vulnerable Adults personal space
 - Discuss boundaries for behaviour and related sanctions, as appropriate with children, young people, Vulnerable Adults and their primary carer
- Agree group 'contract' before beginning session
- Encourage feedback from the group
- Use age –appropriate teaching aids and materials
- Lead by example
- Be aware of a child's, young person's or Vulnerable Adults other commitments when scheduling rehearsals or activities e.g. school or exams
- Be cognisant of a child's, young person's or Vulnerable adults limitations, due to a medical condition for example
- Create an atmosphere of trust
- Respect differences of ability, culture, religion, race and sexual orientation.

5.2 Good practise:

- Register each child/young person/Vulnerable Adult (name, address, phone, special requirements, attendance, emergence contact)
- Make primary carers, children/ young people/ Vulnerable Adults, visitors and facilitators aware of the Child Protection & Vulnerable Adult policy and procedures • Have emergency procedures in place and make all staff aware of these procedures • Be inclusive of children, young people & Vulnerable Adults with special needs • Plan and be sufficiently prepared, both mentally and physically
- Report any concerns to the **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** Designated Person and follow reporting procedures
- Develop an anti-bullying policy. Encourage children, young people & Vulnerable Adults to report any bullying, concerns or worries and to be aware of the anti-bullying policy
- Observe appropriate dress and behaviour
- Evaluate work practice on a regular basis
- Provide appropriate training for staff and volunteers
- Report and record any incidents and accidents
- Update and review policies and procedures regularly
- Keep primary carers informed of any issues that concern their children, young people & Vulnerable Adults
- Ensure proper supervision on adequate ratios according to age, abilities and activities involved
- Ensure clear communication between artist and organisations; have guidelines and a prompt sheet for artists
- Have a written agreement with any external organisations that an artist is working with
- Don't be passive in relation to concerns, i.e. don't do nothing
- Don't let a problem get out of control
- 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
- Avoid if at all possible giving a lift to a children, young people & Vulnerable Adults and if you do then 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.

5.3 Inappropriate Behaviour:

FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE staff, and artists / facilitators working with children on any projects managed by **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** have a responsibility at all times to be aware of the following:

- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with children, young people & Vulnerable Adults
- Don't use or allow offensive or sexually suggestive physical and / or verbal language
- Don't single out a children, young people & Vulnerable Adults for unfair favouritism, criticism, ridicule or unwelcome focus or attention.

5.4 Physical contact:

- Seek consent of children, young people & Vulnerable Adults in relation to physical contact (except in an emergency or a dangerous situation)
- Avoid horseplay or inappropriate touch
- Check with children, young people & Vulnerable Adults about their level of comfort when carrying out exercises that require touch or physical contact.

5.5 Health and safety:

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

6. Definitions:

Both the terms '**abuse**' and '**harm**' are used regularly in the context of Child Protection & Vulnerable Adult. Harm is used to describe ill-treatment or impairment of a child's mental or physical health or development. The following categories of abuse in particular would constitute harm

- a. **Physical Abuse:** actual or likely injury to a child or young person under the age of eighteen or failure to prevent physical injury
- b. **Sexual Abuse:** actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child or adolescent. The child may be dependent and / or developmentally immature
- c. **Emotional Abuse:** severe or persistent emotional ill treatment or rejection likely to cause adverse effects on the emotional and behavioural development of a child

Concerns that a child has been harmed (or is at risk of being harmed) must be reported to the **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE Designated Person** even where the child is aged 16 years or older and irrespective of whether the child has been said to have given consent.

7. The FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE Designated Person

The **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE Designated Person** is:

Vlad Gurdis, Director, FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE

The **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE Designated Person** will have the primary responsibility for implementing this policy, advising staff on Child Protection & Vulnerable Adult guidelines and liaising with other agencies where appropriate.

Particular duties of the **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE Designated Person** include:

- Facilitating staff and work experience placements on Child Protection & Vulnerable Adult procedures
- Ensuring necessary risk assessments are carried out and appropriate safety measures taken where necessary
- Ensuring **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** is sufficiently insured for activities involving children
- Ensuring records pertaining to Child Protection & Vulnerable Adult are kept secure, up to date and compliant with Data protection and other legal requirements

The **Designated Person** duties are supported by:

Co-Director Martha Knight and **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** company member **Michelle Henry**

Vlad Gurdis can be contacted at:

vg4004@gmail.com / 0858233034

Martha Knight has been designated as **Deputy Designated Person** and can be contacted at:

mknight@tcd.ie / 0866608605

8. Reporting of a Disclosure:

FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE Designated Person, Vlad Gurdis has been designated as the person to contact if there is an issue or concern about any aspect of a child's, young person & vulnerable adults safety and welfare. It is the responsibility of this person to support and advise staff about policy and procedures in relation to Child Protection & Vulnerable Adult 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.

Duty Social Worker Tallaght Garda Station

H.S.E. Belgard Walk

Millbrook Lawns Tallaght

Tallaght Dublin 24

Dublin 24

Phone: 01 4520666 **Phone:** 01 6666000

FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE Staff (paid and voluntary) and FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE employed artists should record the following information in relation to children, young people & vulnerable adults

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

When dealing with a disclosure:

- Ensure that the child is in a space where they feel safe
- Stay calm and listen to the child /, allow them enough time to say what they need 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 the details unnecessarily
- Explain to the child / young person what will happen next (explanation should be age-appropriate).

When abuse is disclosed to a member of staff they must:

- I. Inform whoever has made the disclosure that the information cannot be kept completely confidential as it will have to be passed on to the appropriate authorities.
- II. Listen carefully to what is being said and record the details in writing as soon as possible ensuring that the record is kept safe and secure.
- III. Inform the **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE Designated Person** about the disclosure immediately (no more than 24 hours afterwards) who will treat the matter as an urgent priority. In the event that the **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE Designated Person** is absent report the incident immediately to the **Deputy Designated Person**. The member of staff should not take any further action or discuss the matter further with anyone else unless advised otherwise.

The person who made the original disclosure will be kept informed about the post-disclosure process so that they can be reassured about what to expect.

9. 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.

- All details, including the date, time and people involved in the concern or disclosure and the facts should be recorded in an incident book. Information recorded should be factual. Any opinions should be supported by facts.
- Actions and outcomes should also be noted.
- The **Designated Person** should be informed or his or her deputy, if unavailable. • The most appropriate person should discuss the concern or consult with primary carers. 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 **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE Designated Person** may contact the Health Service Executive Duty Social Work Department.
- Information will be shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis.
- If there are reasonable grounds for concern the **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE 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 **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE Designated Person** or **Deputy Designated Person** is not available, the local Duty Social Worker of the Health Service Executive should be contacted directly.
- In case of emergencies outside of Health Service Executive Social Work Department hours, the Gardaí should be contacted. In situations that threaten the immediate safety of a child/ young person, it may be necessary to contact the Gardaí.

10. Confidentiality statement:

FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE are committed to ensuring peoples' rights to confidentiality. However, in relation to Child Protection & Vulnerable Adult and welfare **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** undertakes 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
- Confidentiality can not be guaranteed where the best interests of the child or young person are at risk
- Information will be stored in a locked A-4 box and only the Designated Person and Deputy Designated Person will have access to this information
- 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 without the written consent of the parent / carer (however, **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** 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 also be put in place for the recording and storing of information in line with our confidentiality policy.

11. Children as Participants in Collaborative Arts Projects

Parental consent for children under than sixteen years of age must be obtained before any activity is conducted with them - unless it is an arts curriculum programme with **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** staff taking place in school.

Children of sixteen years or older can give their own consent.

On all projects involving children where **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** is either a project manager, producer or facilitator **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** will ensure that all artists working with children are made aware of **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE's** Child Protection & Vulnerable Adult Policy and that this policy is shared with the relevant community organisations and / or schools. In advance of a project **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** will agree the reporting structure with the community organisation / school and ensure that the artist is made aware of this.

12. Vulnerable Adults:

Where appropriate this policy will apply to vulnerable adults who attend **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE's** premises or who are participants in collaborative projects managed, facilitated or produced by **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE**.

13. Policy Implementation:

FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE will take the following steps to ensure this Policy is implemented correctly:

- Devise and publish a Child Protection & Vulnerable Adult Procedure Manual
- Review this policy, the Procedure Manual and related guidance regularly (quarterly with **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** staff including freelance project facilitators)
- Revise where necessary to facilitate effective implementation of this Child Protection & Vulnerable Adult Policy and to reflect changes in the law when they occur.

14. Recruitment and selection policy statement:

FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE will ensure that staff are carefully selected, trained and supervised to provide a safe environment for all children and young people, by observing the following principles:

- Roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined for every job (paid or voluntary)
- Posts will be advertised widely
- Candidates will be required to complete an application form
- Candidates will be asked to sign a declaration form to demonstrate that they understand and will adhere to **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE's** Child Protection & Vulnerable Adult Guidelines
- Two written references that are recent, relevant, independent and verbally confirmed will be sought
- No person who would be deemed to constitute a 'risk' will be employed. Some of the exclusions would include:
 - any child-related convictions
 - refusal to sign application form and declaration form
 - insufficient documentary evidence of identification
 - concealing information on one's suitability to working with children.
- There will be a relevant probationary period (normally an initial 3 month period for permanent staff and 1 month for freelance staff)
- All staff will be required to consent to Garda clearance, and where available, this will be sought.

15. Staff management policy statement

To protect both staff (paid and voluntary) and children / young people, **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** will undertake that:

New staff will:

- take part in a mandatory induction training session
- be made aware of **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE's** code of conduct, Child Protection & Vulnerable Adult procedures, and the identity and role of the person who has been designated to deal with issues of concern
- undergo a probationary or trial period.

All staff will:

- receive an adequate level of supervision and review of their work practices
- be expected to have read and signed the Child Protection & Vulnerable Adult Policy Statement
- be provided with Child Protection & Vulnerable Adult training.

16. Policy statement on the involvement of primary carers:

FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE are committed to being open with all primary carers and undertakes to:

- Advise primary carers of the Child Protection & Vulnerable Adult policy
- Encourage primary carers to work in partnership with **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** under the guidelines set out to ensure the safety of their children
- 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 recruitment guidelines
- Ensure as far as possible that the activities are age-appropriate
- Encourage and facilitate the involvement of parent(s), carer(s) or responsible adult(s), where appropriate.

If there are concerns about the welfare of a child / young person, **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** will:

- Respond to the needs of the child or young person
- Inform the primary carers on an on-going basis unless this action puts the child or young person at further risk
- Where there are Child Protection & Vulnerable Adult and welfare concerns **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE's Designated Person** will pass these on to the Health Service Executive Duty Social Worker and, in an emergency, the Gardaí
- In the event of a complaint against a member of staff, **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE's Designated Person** will immediately ensure the safety of the child / young person and inform primary carers as appropriate.

Two separate procedures must be followed:

1. In respect of the child / young person **Designated Person, Vlad Gurdis** will deal with issues related to the child / young person.
 2. In respect of the person against whom the allegation is made **Deputy Designated Person / Director, Vlad Gurdis** 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
 - Reporting procedures outlined previously in these guidelines should be followed. Both the primary carers and child / young person should be informed of actions planned and taken. The child / young person should be dealt with in an age-appropriate manner
 - The staff member will be informed as soon as possible of the nature of the allegation. The staff member should be given the opportunity to respond
 - Any action following an allegation of abuse against an employee should be taken in consultation with Health Service Executive and Gardaí
 - After consultation, the Chairperson should advise the person accused and agreed procedures will be followed.

In the event of complaints or comments:

- Complaints or comments will be responded to within 10 working days
- **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE Director, Vlad Gurdis** has responsibility for directing complaints/comments to the appropriate person
- Verbal complaints will be logged and responded to.

18. Accidents procedure

Michelle Henry is the **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** member of staff trained in first aid.

FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE will maintain an up-to-date register of the contact details of all children / young people involved in the organisation

- Children / young people's details should be cross-referenced between the incident book and file
- External organisations with whom **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** has dealings must provide proof that they have public liability insurance
- First-aid boxes should be available and regularly re-stocked. The main First-aid box is in the cupboard in the kitchen with the First-aid sign on the door.
- The location of the first-aid box should be made known to all staff.
- Availability of first-aid should be in accordance **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE's** Health and Safety guidelines.
- The location of accident / incident books must be made known to staff
- Children and young people must be advised of risks of dangerous material
- Details of risky equipment used will be recorded and steps taken to minimise risk
- Take cognisance of responsibility for first-aid on off-site trips.

19. Procedure for the safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults in an online space

FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE is committed to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults in their work online. Central to **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE'S** online code of behaviour is the principle of maintaining the same standard of protection and care that you would offline. Our code of conduct for all staff in online spaces includes:

- Only using official social media and app accounts to communicate with participants and maintaining separation from their personal online presence.
- Covering the use of social media sites and apps within the participants' group contract and discussing safe use of those sites/apps that are used within Freshly Ground projects
- Developing an Acceptable Usage Policy (AUP) for each social media site which staff, participants, guardians and others may access and post it clearly in the 'About' section of the **FRESHLY GROUND** website
- Do not require any users of the company's social media sites to disclose personal information. Do not tag or provide contact details for members on social media sites.
- **FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE** designated person should moderate the content of all social media sites, monitoring posts, removing inappropriate content and liaising with the team on any instances of bullying or harassment.
- Choose the safest and most appropriate settings on each social media site / app to safeguard participants.

- Choose the safest and most appropriate settings for video conferencing apps such as Zoom.

The following policies are in place by FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults online:

- Communication with Young People including usage of third party sites
- Use of Images Policy
- Data Protection and Confidentiality

The following policies apply to work online as well as work offline in relation to staff and volunteers:

- Recruitment and Selection of Staff/ Volunteers (including the requirement re. Garda Vetting)
- Procedures for Supervision, Provision of Training and Support for Staff/Volunteers
- Policy on Adult/Young People Ratios
- Code of Behaviour for facilitators
- Parental permissions and up-to-date records
- If working with anyone online under the age of 16, permission will especially need to be sought from a parent/ guardian for use of each individual app / social media site. However, FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE will seek special permission from each participant under the age of 18.

20. Signed Child Protection & Vulnerable Adult Policy statement

FRESHLY GROUND THEATRE are committed to a child-centered approach to our work with children, vulnerable adults 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 and selecting staff
- Involvement of primary carers
- Allegations of misconduct or abuse by staff
- Complaints and comments
- Incidents and accidents

This policy will be reviewed on 28 January 2022

Signed by Company Director:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vlad Gurdis', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Vlad Gurdis

Date: 28/1/2021