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# CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT. BUDDY BENCH IRELAND.

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## 1.

Buddy Bench Ireland CLG is a primary early intervention mental health program. Buddy Bench™ Ireland CLG offers school-based, child friendly, group-led positive mental health programs that promote, kindness, emotional resilience and mental wellbeing through supporting the core competencies of empathy, creativity, self-awareness and communication.

## 2.

Online programs are delivered around a physical Buddy Bench™ installed in schools. Three age appropriate workshops are delivered around: 1. Little Buddies ages 4-6, 2. Kindness Buddies ages 6-9 and 3. Kindness Ambassadors ages 9-12. Programs are downloadable, interactive and promote positive mental health.

In accordance with the requirements of the Children First Act 2015, Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017, the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017 and Tusla Guidance on the preparation of Child Safeguarding Statements, Buddy Bench Ireland CLG have agreed the Child Safeguarding Statement set out in this document.

## 3.

Buddy Bench™ Ireland have adopted and will implement fully and without modification all Child Protection Procedures as set out in the children's first act 2015 as part of this overall Child Safeguarding Statement. The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) for Buddy Bench Ireland is: **Michelle O'Brien.**

- Buddy Bench™ Ireland recognises that child protection and welfare considerations are paramount in all aspects of our program and must be reflected in all of the policies, procedures, practices and activities.
- In its policies, procedures, practices and activities Buddy Bench™ Ireland will adhere to the following principles of best practice in relation to child protection and welfare. Buddy Bench™ Ireland will:
  - Recognise that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance.
  - Fully comply with its statutory obligations under the Children First Act 2015 and other relevant legislation relating to the protection and welfare of children;



- Fully co-operate with the all relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters as they arise.
- Adopt safe practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children and protect staff and facilitators from the necessity to take unnecessary risks that may leave themselves open to accusations.
- Develop a practice of openness with each schools personnel and the wider school community and encourage teacher involvement in the delivery of the online programs.
- Fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters as set out under data protection law.

#### 4.

In accordance with the Children First Act 2015, Buddy Bench™ Ireland has carried out an assessment of any potential for harm to a child while learning the Buddy Bench Program. A written assessment setting out the areas of risk identified and Buddy Bench Ireland's procedures for managing those risks will be provided on request. The following procedures/measures are in place to manage the identified challenges:

- a. Buddy Bench where necessary will take appropriate action in relation to disciplinary procedures for Buddy Bench staff / facilitators in line with the Buddy Bench Employment Policy and Child Protection.
- b. In relation to the selection or recruitment of staff and facilitators and their suitability to work with children, Buddy Bench adheres to the statutory vetting requirements of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016 and to the wider duty of care guidance set out in relevant Garda vetting and recruitment circulars.
- c. In relation to the provision of information and, where necessary, instruction and training of staff / facilitators in respect of the identification of the occurrence of harm (as defined in the Children's first act 2015 Act) Buddy Bench Ireland:
  - Has provided each member with a copy of the Child Safeguarding Statement.
  - Ensures all new members are provided with a copy of the Child Safeguarding Statement
  - Encourages member to avail of relevant training.
  - Encourages all members to avail of relevant training.



- d. All Buddy Bench™ Irelands members will follow Buddy Bench™ Ireland's Policy in line with Children's First 2015 relation to incident reporting in line with Children's First 2017.
- e. Buddy Bench has appointed the above named DLP as the "relevant person" (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) to be the first point of contact in respect of the child safeguarding statement.

## **5.**

Buddy Bench™ Ireland is committed to the full implementation of this safe guarding statement and all procedures that support and promote the safety and wellbeing of children engaging with the program. A copy of this statement will be made available to all appropriate parties as requested. This statement has been provided to all Buddy Bench™ Ireland CLG members. It is readily accessible to schools on request.

This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed annually (September 2020) or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this statement refers.

This Child Safeguarding Statement was adopted by Buddy Bench™ Ireland on September 2020.