Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Policy Category	Safeguarding
Policy Reference Number	DMTC-CP-SG
Date Effective From	November 2026
Last review completed	March 2026
Applicable to	All committee members, volunteers, members and individuals acting on behalf of the Company
Policy Owner	Committee Board Members
Policy Author	Catherine Finn - Committee Librarian
Approved by	Committee Board Members
Next review of policy due	**November 2027**
Distribution	**Internal:** All committee members, volunteers and members. Communicated via email, rehearsals and/or shared online platforms (e.g. Google Drive, WhatsApp groups, DMTC web page or equivalent) **External:** Policies available on request where appropriate
Key search terms	Data Protection; GDPR; Membership; Committee; Auditions; Casting; Confidentiality; Safeguarding; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Complaints

- Please avoid relying on printed or stored copies of this policy. The most up-to-date version will be held by the Committee.
- Members should contact the Committee for clarification or the latest version where required.

1.0 Policy Statement

Durham musical Theatre Company (hereinafter referred to as DMTC) recognises its duty of care under the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, the Child (Performances) Regulations 2014, the Protection of Children Act 1999 and the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000.

DMTC recognises that abuse can take many forms, whether it is physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect. DMTC is committed to practice which protects children from harm. All members of DMTC and volunteers working with the company accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm.

2.0 Our Safeguarding Principles

DMTC believes that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All members, employees and volunteers working with DMTC should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

3.0 Our Commitment to Safeguarding

DMTC will ensure that:

- All children will be treated equally and with respect and dignity.
- The duty of care to children will always be put first.
- A balanced relationship based on mutual trust will be built which empowers the children to share in the decision-making process.
- Enthusiastic and constructive feedback will be given rather than negative criticism.
- Bullying will not be accepted or condoned.
- All adult members and volunteers working with DMTC provide a positive role model for dealing with other people.
- Action will be taken to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour.
- It will keep up to date with relevant legislation.
- It will keep informed of changes in legislation and policies for the protection of children.
- It will undertake relevant development and training.
- It will hold a register of every child involved with DMTC and will retain a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies.
- Each child and young person will be formally registered within the group.

4.0 Safeguarding and Child Protection Officer

DMTC has a dedicated Safeguarding and Child Protection Officer, who is in charge of ensuring that the child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures are adhered to.

Name: Katy Haggart
Contact email: admin@dmtc.co.uk
DMTC Contact form: https://dmtc.co.uk/contact-us/

All parents of children within the show will be given direct telephone contact details for the current safeguarding and child protection officer.

5.0 Procedures

Procedure One: Responsibilities of DMTC

At the outset of any production involving children DMTC will:

- Undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout the production process.
- Identify at the outset the person(s) with designated responsibility for child protection and safeguarding.
- Engage in effective recruitment of chaperones and other individuals with responsibility for children, including appropriate vetting (if necessary, in consultation with the local education authority).
- Ensure that children are supervised at all times.
- Keep a register of attendance using a sign in and out sheet.
- Know how to get in touch with the local authority social services, in case it needs to report a concern.

Procedure Two: Parents and Carers

- DMTC believes it to be important that there is a partnership between parents and DMTC.
- Parents are encouraged to be involved in the activities of DMTC and to share responsibility for the care of children.
- All parents will be given a copy DMTC's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and procedures.
- All parents have the responsibility to collect (or arrange collection of) their children after rehearsals or performances. It is NOT the responsibility of DMTC to take children home.

Procedure Three: Supervision and Unsupervised Contact

- DMTC will attempt to ensure that no adult has unsupervised contact with children.
- If possible, there will always be two adults in the room when working with children.
- If unsupervised contact is unavoidable, steps will be taken to minimise risk. For example, work will be carried out in a public area, or in a designated room with a door open.

- Where a role may involve unsupervised contact with children, the individual will be required to complete the appropriate criminal record check before undertaking this activity.

Procedure Four: Physical Contact

- All adults will maintain a safe and appropriate distance from children.
- Adults will only touch children when it is absolutely necessary and in relation to the particular activity.
- Adults will seek the consent of the child prior to any physical contact, and the purpose of the contact shall be made clear.

Procedure Five: Managing sensitive information and Images

- DMTC has procedures for the taking, using and storage of photographs or images of children.
- Permission will be sought from the parents for use of photographic material featuring children for promotional or other purposes.
- DMTC's web-based materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use.
- DMTC will respect the confidentiality of its members and ensure that all sensitive information, including information relating to criminal record checks, is handled, stored and disposed of securely.

Procedure Six: Responding to Suspicions or Concerns

- If you see or suspect abuse of a child while in the care of DMTC, please make this known to the person with responsibility for child protection. If you suspect that the person with responsibility for child protection is the source of the problem, you should make your concerns known to the Chairman, Anthony Smith.
- Please make a note for your own records of what you witnessed as well as your response, in case there is follow-up in which you are involved.
- If a serious allegation is made against any member of DMTC, chaperones, venue staff etc., that individual will be suspended immediately until the investigation is concluded. The individual will be excluded from the theatre, rehearsal rooms etc. and will not have any unsupervised contact with any other children in the production.

Procedure Seven: Responding to a Disclosure

If a child confides in you that abuse has taken place:

- Remain calm and in control but do not delay taking action.
- Listen carefully to what has been said. Allow the child to tell you at their own pace and ask questions only for clarification. Don't ask questions that suggest a particular answer.
- Don't promise to keep it a secret. Speak immediately to the person with responsibility for child protection. It is that person's responsibility to liaise with the relevant authorities, usually social services or the police.

- Make it clear to the child that you will need to share this information with others. Make it clear that you will only tell the people who need to know and who should be able to help.
- Reassure the child that 'they did the right thing' in telling someone.
- Tell the child what you are going to do next.
- As soon as possible after the disclosing conversation, make a note of what was said, using the child's own words. Note the date, time, any names that were involved or mentioned, and who you gave the information to. Make sure you sign and date your record.

Procedure Eight: Recording Safeguarding Concerns

- In all situations, including those in which the cause of concern arises from a disclosure made in confidence, the details of an allegation or reported incident will be recorded, regardless of whether or not the concerns have been shared with a statutory child protection agency.
- An accurate note shall be made of the date and time of the incident or disclosure, the parties involved, what was said or done and by whom, any action taken to investigate the matter and any further action taken e.g. suspension of an individual, where relevant the reasons why the matter was not referred to a statutory agency, and the name of the persons reporting and to whom it was reported.
- The record will be stored securely and shared only with those who need to know about the incident or allegation.

Procedure Nine: Confidentiality and the Rights of Those Involved

- If a complaint is made against a member of DMTC, he/she/they will be made aware of their rights.
- No matter how you may feel about the accusation, both the alleged abuser and the child who is thought to have been abused have the right to confidentiality under the Data Protection Act 1998. Remember also that any possible criminal investigation could be compromised through inappropriate information being released.
- In criminal law the Crown, or other prosecuting authority, has to prove guilt and the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

Procedure Ten: Accidents and Injuries

- To avoid accidents, chaperones and children will be advised of "house rules" regarding health and safety and will be notified of areas that are out of bounds. Children will be advised of the clothing and footwear appropriate to the work that will be undertaken.
- If a child is injured while in the care of DMTC, the appointed person will oversee first aid arrangements. Where a suitably trained first aider is present, they will be asked to provide assistance within the scope of their training and competence. In the even of an injury or medical emergency, the appointed person will ensure that appropriate assistance is sought promptly, including contacting emergency services where required.
- If a child joins the production with an obvious physical injury a record of this will be made. This record can be useful if a formal allegation is made later and will also be a record that the child did not sustain the injury while participating in the production.

Procedure Eleven: Criminal Record Checks

- If DMTC believes it is in its best interests to obtain criminal record disclosures for chaperones or other personnel, it will inform the individual of the necessary procedures and the level of disclosure required. A Standard disclosure will apply for anyone with supervised access to children. An Enhanced disclosure will be required for anyone with unsupervised access.
- DMTC will ensure the appropriate handling of disclosure information.
- DMTC will ensure that information contained in the disclosure is not misused.

Procedure Twelve: Chaperones

- Chaperones will be appointed by DMTC for the care of children during the production process. By law the chaperone is acting in loco parentis and should exercise the care which a good parent might be reasonably expected to give to a child. The maximum number of children in the chaperone's care shall not exceed 12.
- Chaperones will hold a Chaperones License that has been granted by a Local Authority. The Local Authority will be dependent on where the Chaperone resides. The Local Authority will have applied for a DBS check prior to granting the license and the Chaperone will also have to prove to the Local Authority that they have an acceptable knowledge of Chaperoning and Safeguarding of children.
- Chaperones will be made aware of DMTC's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.
- Where chaperones are not satisfied with the conditions for the children, they should bring this to the attention of a member of the production team. If changes cannot be made satisfactorily, the chaperone should consider not allowing the child to continue.
- If a chaperone considers that a child is unwell or too tired to continue, the chaperone must inform the Production team and not allow the child to continue.
- Under the Dangerous Performances Act, no child of compulsory school age is permitted to do anything which may endanger life or limb. This could include working on wires or heavy lifting. Chaperones should tell the producer to cease using children in this way and should contact the local authority.
- During performances, chaperones will be responsible for meeting children at the stage door and signing them into the building.
- Children will be kept together at all times except when using separate dressing rooms.
- Chaperones will be aware of where the children are at all times.
- Children are not to leave the theatre unsupervised by chaperones unless in the company of their parents.
- Children will be adequately supervised while going to and from the toilets.
- Children will not be allowed to enter the adult dressing rooms.
- Chaperones should be aware of the safety arrangements and first aid procedures in the venue, including what to do in the event of a fire or other emergency, and will ensure that children in their care do not place themselves and others in danger.
- Chaperones should ensure that any accidents are reported to and recorded by DMTC.
- Chaperones should have clear arrangements for children after performances. If someone different is to collect the child, a telephone call should be made to the parent to confirm the arrangements.

- Children should be signed in and out by an adult when arriving and leaving the theatre or rehearsals.
- If a parent has not collected the child, it is the duty of the chaperone to stay with that child or make arrangements to take them home.

6.0 Policy Review

The policy will be reviewed annually, or in the following circumstances:

- Changes in legislation and/or government guidance
- As required by the Local Safeguarding Children Board
- As a result of any other significant change or event.