



Safeguarding Policy

Primary person responsible for implementation and monitoring of this policy:	Louis Ling Designated Safeguarding Officer (Production) Email: louis@bridgeyt.co.uk Phone: 07455 261043
Signature of Designated Person:	
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Contents

1. Definitions and Principles
2. Responsibilities
3. Code of Conduct
4. Management of projects and activities involving children or young people
5. Chaperones and Performance Licenses
6. Recruitment
7. Criminal Convictions and DBS
8. Communication
9. Photography, Videos, and Digital
10. Specific Safeguarding Issues
11. Reporting and Referring Procedures



1. Definitions and Principles

Bridge Youth Theatre acknowledges its responsibility to protect the best interests and safety of children and young people and has safeguards in place that ensure their welfare and keep them safe from harm.

This policy document specifically reflects our duty to protect children, as defined by the Children Act 2004 as someone who is under the age of 18. Throughout this policy, we use the term 'young people' to refer to all those under 18. In certain instances, those over 18 may come under the remit of this policy e.g. Further Education and Higher Education students.

The policy applies to anyone working on behalf of Bridge Youth Theatre, referred to throughout the document as 'staff'. This includes but is not limited to employees, volunteers, and freelance contractors.

Safeguarding and Child Protection is defined for this policy as:

- Protecting children and young people from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of children's health and development
- Contributing to ensuring that children and young people grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Taking action to enable children and young people to have the best outcome

We are committed to the following principles:

- The welfare of children and young people is paramount
- All children and young people have the right to a safe and positive working environment
- Children and young people, without exception, have the right to protection from abuse or harm regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, or beliefs

We recognise that some children and young people are additionally vulnerable, whether this be because of previous experience, dependency, protected characteristics, or other reasons.

Children and young people have the right to be respected, valued, and listened to
Allegations of abuse or harm towards children and young people are to be taken seriously in every instance

This policy seeks to uphold these principles by detailing code of conduct, guidelines, and procedures that protect children and young people and safeguard their welfare.



2. Responsibilities

Bridge Youth Theatre as a company and employer is responsible for:

- Implementing and strictly upholding a safeguarding policy to which all staff must acknowledge and adhere
- Enforcing compliance with this policy as necessary
- Ensuring this policy document is shared with all staff working on behalf and within Bridge Youth Theatre at any time
- Ensuring that safeguarding training and information is provided when appropriate
- Carefully following all reporting and referring procedures as detailed in this policy
- Providing effective management of staff through effective line management, support, and training
- Ensuring all projects undertaken adhere to the safeguarding policies before undertaking them
- Following the procedures for recruitment of staff who work with children and young people as detailed in this policy
- Ensuring that all staff working directly and closely with children and young people will undergo an enhanced DBS check, if not previously acquired
- Undertaking safeguarding risk assessments for projects and activities involving children and young people
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately

The Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) is responsible for:

- Developing and implementing this policy in conjunction with staff across the organization
- Carrying out or delegating to appropriate staff within the organisation the necessary action to ensure that Bridge Youth Theatre's employer responsibilities are upheld e.g. organising training, requesting DBS checks, completing licensing processes, liaising with the Company Manager on chaperone arrangements
- Collecting and managing safeguarding data and records for activities across the company and its work/projects
- Managing complaints and allegations in the format detailed in Procedures in this policy
- Being the first point of contact for all issues regarding Safeguarding and Child Protection for both staff, agencies, children, and parents or carers

The Designated Safeguarding Officer (Production) is Louis Ling (Producer)
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The Designated Safeguarding Officer (Organisation) is Josh Lewis (Producer) –
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All staff are responsible for:

- Read, respect, and adhere to this Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Act in accordance with the policy and acknowledge that failure to do so will be addressed through disciplinary action and procedure
- Specific staff will have responsibilities identified in the safeguarding risk assessment carried out for specific projects and activities
- Abide by the Code of Conduct

3. Code of Conduct

Staff will always:

- Treat everyone with dignity and respect
- Set an example you wish others to follow
- Treat all children and young people equally
- Build mutual trust and empower children and young people to contribute to decision making
- Follow NSPCC recommended ratios between adults and young people for meetings and activities (these are: 4-8 years, 1 adult to 6 children; 9-12 years, 1 adult to 8 children; 13-18 years, 1 adult to 10 children)
- Respect children and young people's right to personal privacy and confidentiality
- Avoid unacceptable situations within a relationship of trust
- Allow a working environment where children and young people can talk about any concerns they may have
- Remember someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well-intentioned
- Maintain an open-door policy on all activity involving children and young people (should a member of staff prefer a specific session not to be interrupted e.g. due to recording taking place, they must inform the DSO)
- Challenge inappropriate behaviour and language and encourage children and young people to do the same
- Take any allegations or concerns of abuse seriously and report to either the DSO as soon as is practicable

Staff will never:

- Form a relationship with a child or young person that is an abuse of trust
- Engage in inappropriate behaviour or contact – physical, verbal, sexual, digital, including social media
- Make suggestive remarks or threats to a young person
- Use inappropriate language – verbally, writing, phoning, email, or internet
- Let allegations, suspicions, or concerns about abuse go unreported
- Carry out tasks for which they are not trained (e.g. first aid, technical). This includes taking on the responsibilities of the DSO without communication.

Exceptionally, one-to-one contact will be unavoidable and in such cases staff will:

- Make sure it is for a short a time as possible
- Ensure you remain accessible to others
- Tell someone where you are going, what you are doing, and why
- Try to move with the child or young person to areas where there are more people
- Try to avoid unnecessary physical contact



The positive use of touch is part of normal human interaction and may be appropriate in a range of situations in theatre, such as:

- Giving guidance to a child or young person, such as how to perform a movement or action
- Providing emotional support, for example placing an arm around a distressed child
- Providing first aid
- Touch between young people in a scene

Staff will use appropriate care when touching young people and will be sensitive to those children for whom touch may not be appropriate. Staff will always ask permission before touching a child or young person and will provide alternatives where required.

4. Management of projects and activities involving children or young people

Risk Assessments

All projects and activities involving children or young people should be assessed for safeguarding risks and responsibilities. All those involved in delivering the activity should be familiar with these risk assessment actions. At the start of every new activity or new location, the DSO should work with those delivering the activity to ensure an appropriate risk assessment is in place.

The Safeguarding risk assessment does not replace or supersede any other Health and Safety risk assessment but should be considered in conjunction with it.

The Risk Assessment should cover:

- Maximum participant numbers and minimum ratios for staff supervision, taking into account the nature of the activity and the ages and needs of those involved
- Contingency arrangements should a member of staff be unavailable
- Medical emergencies and allergies, including access to first aiders
- Registration of participants, accounting for them at all times, and actions to take in the event that a young person is not accounted for
- The safe dispersal of young people at the end of the activity

Supervision of Children and Young People

Making arrangements for the proper supervision of children and young people is one of the most effective ways of minimising opportunities for children and young people to suffer harm of any kind whilst in our care. A child or young person is considered to be in our care when they have been invited into any space where we have planned an activity for them, such as workshops, rehearsals, meetings, or tours.



Children and young people should be supervised by staff who have:

- Relevant skills to conduct the activity – especially if it involves activities that involve a higher degree of risk (e.g. stage fighting, technical etc.)
- The correct approach and demeanour to work with the group – in particular groups that are particularly vulnerable such as those with additional needs or younger children
- A commitment to upholding Bridge Youth Theatre's policies
- Knowledge and initiative to respond to emergency situations

Adults supervising young people must:

- Meet our requirement around DBS checks (see 7.)

Follow the risk assessment regarding supervision ratios, and not leave young people unsupervised:

- Know where young people are at all times, taking registers as appropriate
- Not leave young people unsupervised at any venue, whether it be indoors or out
- Not allow young people under the age of 16 to leave the building at breaks or lunchtimes without the prior written consent of parents or carers
- Not take young people off the premises without the prior written consent of parents or carers
- Not film, photograph or allow filming or photographing young people without the written consent of parents or carers
- Allow the use of any technical, specialist or dangerous equipment without a risk assessment and the constant supervision of an appropriately skilled adult
- Not allow dangerous behaviour by young people
- Not overlook or fail to challenge inappropriate behaviour by young people such as bullying or inappropriate remarks

Adults supervising children or young people must ensure they leave safely. This includes:

- Establishing whether a child or young person is to transport themselves or be collected by a parent or carer and waiting with young people until they have safely left the premises.
- Attempting to contact a parent or carer if the child or young person has not left safely
- Organising a taxi for a child or young person if there is a concern about them travelling alone – every effort should be made to contact parents or carers to confirm these arrangements
- Transporting a child or young person to safety, if accompanied by a second responsible adult, and the car/driver is covered by business insurance

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5. Chaperone and Performance Licenses

The involvement of children under the age of 16 in performances is regulated by the Children's and Young Person's Act 2014. Basic rule-of-thumb guidance is given below but the full regulations must be checked before going ahead with a performance involving children under the age of 16.

If young people will not be missing school, and will perform for less than four days, the Local Authority can grant a Body of Persons Approval (known as a BOPA) to an organisation to cover specific productions. All Youth Theatre performances, holiday projects and one-off events should be approved by relevant local council in this way if is presented to a public audience. No such performance should take place without the appropriate licenses being in place.

6. Recruitment

Safe recruitment and selection practice is vital in safeguarding young people. Bridge Youth Theatre recognises and takes seriously its responsibility to adopt practice which minimises risks to young people by ensuring that measures are in place through this practice to deter, reject or identify people who might abuse young people or are unsuitable to work with them.

When appointing employees who will be working with young people, we will:

- Seek previous experience working safely with children or young people by stating so in job descriptions
- Interview all candidates face-to-face, either in-person or on Zoom
- Obtain a DBS check where appropriate in line with our policy
- Question those who will be working with young people on their approach to safeguarding
- Question any unexplained gaps in a potential employee's employment history
- Provide full induction, including supervision and guidance
- Continuously assess their suitability to work with young people throughout their employment and take immediate disciplinary action if this is ever in doubt



7. Criminal Convictions and DBS

We will carry out an Enhanced DBS check for select staff as appropriate to each project if working on a show with young people which may but does not necessarily include the following roles:

- Director
- Associate Director
- Choreographer / Movement Director
- Company Manager
- Stage Manager
- Wardrobe Staff
- Chief Electrician
- Chaperones

This is not an exhaustive list, and other roles may be checked if their duties involve working with young people.

Rehabilitation of Offenders

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 requires that people applying for positions which give them 'substantial, unsupervised access on a sustained and regular basis' to children under the age of 18 years must declare all previous convictions which are then subject to police checks. This includes potential volunteers and self-employed people such as freelance practitioners. They should also be required to declare any cases pending against them. Applicants should be reassured that any information will be treated in confidence and will not be used against them unfairly.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks

Training and supervising young people is a regulated activity. Bridge Youth Theatre is therefore entitled and required to check that those working with young people are safe to do so. This means obtaining an enhanced DBS check and a barring list check.

We recognise that other roles will involve occasional contact with young people in public spaces and infrequent supervised contact. We do not routinely require a DBS check in these circumstances, but if a role changes or tasks involve working frequently, regularly, or unsupervised with young people, a DBS check will be required.

If an applicant discloses on their form the existence of a prior conviction, the DSO must be informed. The existence of a conviction does not automatically exclude someone from the recruitment process. The DSO and relevant line manager will discuss how to manage the disclosure on a case-by-case basis.

We do not keep copies of DBS certificates, in accordance with data protection rules. We note the number of the certificate and the date of issue. We consider a date of issue within the last three years to be acceptable. If the date is earlier than three years, we will request a new DBS check for that individual.

Any concerns regarding a DBS check will be referred to the DSO in the first instance.



8. Communication

Telephone

We recognise that young people will often prefer to communicate by mobile phone and text message. However, in no circumstances should staff share their personal phone number with a young person or send/receive texts from young people using their personal mobile phones.

In exceptional circumstances where phone numbers are shared with a young person – such as excursions away from the theatre – these must be designated work numbers distributed by Bridge Youth Theatre. This must be managed and overseen by the DSO.

Parents, carers, and chaperones may be issued with a member of staff's personal number to make contact during projects or excursions on behalf of the child or young person.

Email

Staff will, on occasion, be required to email young people. Those Under 16 will receive the same email. In all cases, staff should use formal language to avoid any misunderstanding on the part of the recipient and keep a copy of the correspondence if it relates to a safeguarding issue. In all cases, the DSO must be cc'd or bcc'd into the email. If the DSO is sending the email, at least one other member of staff must be cc'd or bcc'd into the email.

Social media

If a young person contacts a staff member directly through social media, staff should exercise caution to ensure communication is limited and professional. As per the code of conduct, staff should not enter into inappropriate relationships such as private messages or accepting friend requests or similar.

Staff are advised to protect themselves and to review their privacy settings and to keep personal information private.

Staff should also treat any inappropriate messages or content they become aware of in line with this policy, including challenging inappropriate behaviour or referring any cause of concern. Any concerns should be referred to the DSO.

9. Photography, Videos, and Digital

Photography

Written Parent/Carer consent is required for all photography or video recording of a child or young person. This should be obtained through registration forms or contracts for engagement at the commencement of each project. Photographs or videos of children or young people will be stored in a designated folder that is only accessible by designated staff. Bridge Youth Theatre will ensure that relevant notices are displayed in front of house areas and that relevant announcements about photography and video recording are made during events and performances.



Zoom

Bridge Youth Theatre identifies Zoom as the primary tool for conducting meetings and sessions online. This policy thus details a distinct code of conduct for using Zoom with children and young people.

Code of conduct for Zoom:

1. At least one DBS checked staff member will be in the session
2. No 1-1 calls with children or young people should take place
3. All staff should work from a location that should be as neutral/professional as possible wearing appropriate clothing, even if you don't think you will be seen
4. The session leader should check that all participants are in a suitable and safe environment for the activity you plan to deliver
5. No recording or photography should take place unless it is by the host and with permission of the participants
6. The session leader should establish additional rules that the group should follow at the beginning of the session and is responsible for upholding these
7. Record and action safeguarding concerns in the same way as in other sessions
8. Children and young people should not be in break out rooms 'unattended' unless the session leader feels the quality of the activity would be impacted if a member of staff was 'observing' – break out rooms used in this manner should be utilised infrequently and for short amounts of time and with the prior approval of the DSO
9. Participants should refer to the session leader directly if worried about anything

Anyone who does not abide by this code of conduct will not participate in Zoom sessions.

Asking participants to submit videos

We may decide to ask participants to submit videos to Bridge Youth Theatre for use on social media or other mediums. Participants should be instructed to:

- Not use their full name in the video
- Not film things that might reveal their exact address, school or somewhere you go regularly (e.g. a sports club or activity)
- Not to film anyone else under the age of 18
- To wear appropriate clothing
- Keep themselves safe - not share something that feels too personal

Bridge Youth Theatre will only accept videos from participants that have given signed photo consent and clear information should be given to them about the intended use of the video.



10. Specific Safeguarding Issues

Radicalisation and Extreme Ideologies

Bridge Youth Theatre recognises the positive contribution it can make towards protecting young people from radicalisation to violent extremism. Bridge Youth Theatre will empower young people to create cohesive communities built upon shared values, respect, trust and diversity. Bridge Youth Theatre also recognises that protecting young people from radicalisation and exploitation is part of our duty of safeguarding and care.

Radicalisation is the process by which individuals come to support terrorism or violent extremism. It should be remembered that extremism can exist in all sections of society, regardless of any faith, ethnicity or background. There is no typical profile for a person likely to become involved in extremism, or for a person who moves to adopt violence in support of their particular ideology.

Possible indicators are listed below. This is not an exhaustive list:

- Use of inappropriate language
- Possession of violent extremist literature or material (which can include those accessed by the internet, email and text message)
- Behavioural changes
- Expression of extremist views
- Advocating violent actions and means
- Association with known extremists
- Seeking to recruit others to an extremist ideology

If staff have any significant concerns about a young person, they should discuss this with the DSO.

Female Genital Mutilation

It is illegal in the UK to subject a child to female genital mutilation (FGM) or to take a child abroad or aid or abet someone to take a child out of the country to undergo the procedure. Despite the harm it causes, FGM practising communities consider it acceptable to protect their cultural identity. The age at which girls are subject to FGM varies greatly from shortly after birth to any time up to adulthood. The World Health Organisations (2018) states that FGM normally occurs between infancy and 15.

A young person may disclose that they are at risk of FGM, has suffered FGM or that they have a family member who is at risk of mutilation.

Staff should be alert to the following indicators:

- The family comes from a community that is known to practice FGM
- A child/young person may talk about a long holiday to a country where the practice is prevalent
- A child/young person may confide that they or a family member is to have a 'special procedure' or to attend a special occasion
- A child/young person may request help from a teacher or another adult



- Any girl/young woman born to a woman who has suffered FGM or has a sister or relative who has been subjected to FGM must be considered to be at potential risk

Any information or concern about a young person or member of their family being at risk of FGM must be reported to the DSO as matter of urgency. This may be treated as an immediate child protection referral to the local authority.

Child Sexual Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage of increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Like all forms of child sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation:

- Can affect any young person (male or female) under the age of 18 years, including 16- or 17-year-olds who can legally consent to sex
- Can still be abuse even if the sexual activity appears consensual
- Can include both contact (penetrative and non-penetrative acts) and non-contact sexual activity
- Can take place in person or via technology, or a combination of both
- Can involve force and/or enticement based methods of compliance and may or may not be accompanied by violence or threats of violence
- May occur without the young person's immediate knowledge (through others copying videos or images they have created and posted on social media, for example)
- Can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and children or adults. The abuse can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over times, and range from opportunistic to complex organisational abuse
- Is typified by some form of power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the abuse
- Whilst age may be the most obvious, the power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, sexual identity, cognitive ability, physical strength, status and access to economic or other resources.

Staff should report any concerns regarding child sexual exploitation to the DSO immediately.



11. Reporting and Referring Procedures

When an allegation is made or an instance of potential abuse or harm towards a child or young person is reported to the DSO, the following procedure will be followed:

1. The DSO will take a detailed account of the allegation from the person or persons making the allegation.
2. If the person making the allegation is a child or young person, the parent or carer will be contacted and informed immediately.
3. If the DSO deems the allegation to be criminal offence, the police will be contacted immediately and uptake all responsible for handling the allegation.
4. Where the allegation needs further investigation before disciplinary action or prosecution is taken, the DSO will take a detailed account from the individual whose alleged misconduct has been reported.
5. Once the DSO is in possession of all relevant accounts, they will assess on a case-by-case basis the relevant bodies to whom the allegation must be reported e.g. the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
6. Such cases will be handled calmly and confidentially, only involving the minimum necessary people. Information will only be disclosed to others to whom the information is relevant or essential and will be done so in consultation with those involved.

Disclosures

It is recognised that a young person or adult at risk may seek out a specific staff member to share information specifically about abuse, neglect or self-harm, or a person may talk spontaneously, individually or in a group when staff or volunteers are present.

In these situations, staff should:

- Stay calm
- Listen, and allow the person to freely recall significant events, keeping questions to the absolute minimum necessary to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. Ask questions for clarification only; NEVER ask questions that suggest a particular answer. E.g. 'When did this happen?' rather than 'Did this happen today?'
- Reassure them but tell them that a record of the information given will be made and do this. Include timing, setting and others present. Record the person's demeanour as well as what is said.
- Explain that they cannot promise to keep confidential anything the young person says if it relates to child protection or abuse. Staff should not enter into any agreement with young people to keep disclosed information secret. If any member of staff becomes aware of any information, which may be a threat to someone's wellbeing, they should inform the DSO immediately. Staff can offer reassurance and commitment to help a young person but cannot offer unconditional confidentiality to a young person in such circumstances.
- If a young person or adult at risk makes a request to speak to an adult alone this should never be undertaken in a closed room and the adult should inform other volunteers where they are.
- Explain that help may be required to keep them safe, but do not ask the young person to repeat their account of events to anyone else. The information is only shared if it is necessary to safeguard them, i.e. to the DSO or DDSO, not to other members of staff.
- Reassure the young person/adult at risk that they have done the right thing in telling you.
- Tell them what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared.
- Record in writing what was said using the young person or vulnerable adult's own words as soon as possible. This should include:
 - The young person's name, address and date of birth
 - Date and time of the incidents and/or nature of allegations



- Your observations e.g. describe the behaviour and emotional state of the child and any physical injuries such as bruising
- The child's account - if it can be given – of what has happened
- Any action that you took as a result of your concerns e.g. comments made to the young person, whether the parents/carers have been contacted
- Record whether you are expressing their own concerns, or passing on those of someone else
- Sign and date the report
- Your name and full contact details – email, telephone and address

This information should immediately be passed on to the DSO who will liaise with the appropriate external agencies. Please note that when a disclosure is made, it is the person to whom the disclosure is made that the authorities (police and/or social services) will come to for an account of what was said. This first-hand account is of primary importance.

It is important that everyone in the organisation is aware that the person who first encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred. That is a task for the professional child protection agencies following a referral to them of concern about a child.

Managing allegations against an employee

It is recognised that regrettably, sometimes allegations of abuse may involve a member of staff. In these circumstances the allegation must be reported to the DSO, who will carry out the reporting procedure detailed at the top of this section.

If the allegation is against the DSO, then it should be reported to the Producer of Bridge Youth Theatre (Josh Lewis – josh@bridgeyt.co.uk)



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