



The Queen Mother Theatre

Incorporating The Bancroft Players, Big Spirit Youth Theatre, Ensemble and The Bancroft Juniors

The QMT

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Incorporating the Chaperone Policy

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QMT's Designated Safeguarding Officers

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Statement

The Queen Mother Theatre (QMT) is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children and young people by taking all reasonable steps to protect them from neglect, physical, sexual or emotional harm. Safeguarding children and young people is at the centre of the QMT's activities and beliefs and is the responsibility of everyone. The QMT aims to keep safe all children and young people who use QMT's services as well as the officers and other volunteers who work in the theatre.

The QMT aims to provide safe, positive and empowering environments for all young people who engage in projects, programmes and events organised directly by it, or in partnership with other organisations. The QMT's work with young people aims to be fun, informative and inspirational. This can only be achieved in an atmosphere of trust and respect. The QMT recognises that there are a variety of approaches required to ensure an effective prevention of harm strategy. These include: creating the right environment, developing practice standards, empowering young people, paid staff and volunteers, sharing information and developing a monitoring role.

QMT officers and other volunteers must, at all times, show respect for and understanding of the rights, safety and welfare of our users and conduct themselves in a way that reflects this.

The QMT takes any concerns or suspicions seriously. Full support will be given to any individuals who raise concerns.

Dissemination

All staff will be made aware of this policy and procedure as part of their induction. They have a responsibility to adhere to it. It will be made freely available to all QMT users via our website.

Review date

This Policy and Procedure will be reviewed every 2 years by the Safeguarding Officer, to ensure that the operation of this procedure is satisfactory. This document was created in January 2024, reviewed in January 2026. The QMT will review any incidents during the year and take the appropriate action to resolve them, adapting policies and procedures immediately if so required.

QMT Definitions

Young people/person - All safeguarding and child protection legislation and guidance recognises a child or young person as anyone up to the age of 18. Some aspects of this policy, such as the Staff Code of Conduct are in place to protect all young people, regardless of age.

QMT staff/volunteers - This includes all adults who work/volunteer in theatre activities.

Legislation to protect children and young people

- **Human Rights Act 1998 & The United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child**
- **Children Act 2004, 1989**
- **Protection of Children Act 1999**
- **Police Act 1997 Part V**
- **Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974**
- **Disability Discrimination Act 1995**
- **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974**
- **Data Protection Act 1984 and 1998**
- **Sexual Offences Act**
- **Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act**

DBS Checks for adults working with children and Young People in the Theatre

The QMT has used "Keeping it Safe" in the drawing up of its policies and definitions and believes in the principles of "Every Child Matters."

Every adult who works directly with children and young people in any capacity in the Theatre will be DBS (enhanced) checked. The current policy is that while the safeguarding team may accept DBS checks through people's place of work, if they have an enhanced check specifically for working with children (say as a teacher or social worker), we expect such people to be DBS checked through the Theatre Safeguarding system within one year too so that they will have a site-specific enhanced DBS. This is in keeping with the best practice guidelines. Whilst we accept DBS certificates from other settings, they need to have been done within the last three years.

Designated Safeguarding Officer

The designated worker takes responsibility for disseminating and implementing safeguarding procedures within the Organisation at all times. In particular, they will:

- Keep up to date with Safeguarding Legislation
- Receive information from paid staff, volunteers, children and young people, parents and carers about child protection concerns
- Maintain secure, confidential records of any child protection or other safeguarding concerns raised, action taken and follow-up required
- Provide support during and after incidents involving child protection

- Promote safeguarding across the organisation and keep all staff and volunteers informed on good practice and new legislation and guidance
- Monitor the overall trend of safeguarding concerns, keep records of their disposal and feed back to the organisation on the quality **of their safeguarding work**

Code of conduct

The QMT believes that all members of its company should have a clear understanding of the responsibilities and powers their positions of trust carry. The QMT Code of Conduct clearly outlines what is acceptable behaviour and what is not and how to behave appropriately when working with young people and as such ensuring that the 'position of trust' is not abused. This not only protects those in the positions of trust, but also safeguards those being cared for.

Please see the QMT Code of Conduct for full details

Safe practice when working with young people within the Theatre

Safe Areas for children and Young People to work in the QMT

At the Queen Mother Theatre, we have agreed that if children or young people are working within an area, that adults, whether they have a DBS or not, should not enter that area informally. An area is defined as the foyer/Main Theatre or the Studio space. If anyone needs to be in that same area for an important reason, they will need to liaise with either Rory (Youth Theatre) or Claudia (Juniors) beforehand, so they have permission to be in the space while children/young people are working there. (Rory: 07828 60209, Claudia: 07774 580575)

Guidance to protect children and young people working in the Theatre.

The following are general guidelines for Adults working with children and young people that have been adapted from guidance offered by the National Youth Theatre Association (NYTA).

Adults working with children and young people are held to the highest standards of public accountability. This means that behaviour within the Theatre setting as well as behaviour outside of that setting should follow the rules of propriety.

Adults working with children should:

- Follow the rules of respectful behaviour as outlined in the *QMT Code of Conduct*
- Dress appropriately as someone who works with children and young people.

- Be mindful of your personal boundaries when working in the theatre. For example, it is not acceptable to make personal jokes about children or young people, inviting others to laugh at them. This could deeply offend or attack the self-esteem of the child or young person concerned.
- Be careful in your use of language with children and young people. Be aware of each person's gender preference pronouns. □ Never ask young people to come to your home. Do not give a young person a lift in your car (unless it is an emergency and you have permission from a parent/Guardian)
- It is not appropriate for an adult to share anything about their own personal relationships or problems which may cause concern to children or young people.
- Never ask young people to email you or use any communication outside of the standard Theatre WhatsApp or Messenger groups which are moderated. Do not phone a young person directly or ask them to phone you.
- Make sure that all posts on the moderated social media platforms are appropriate. The moderator has the important role of ensuring that all posts are acceptable and will issue a warning where messages appear to cross the boundary.
- Always be a good role model and respectful in the way you interact with adults, young people and children in the Theatre. The QMT should always feel like a "safe space" for all members of the Society.

Touching/Physical contact in Theatre Work

Theatre work can sometimes involve a degree of physical contact between some adults and young people as part of a production. However, it is crucial that in all circumstances, this is undertaken in ways which are appropriate to their professional or agreed role and responsibilities. Note: not all children and young people will accept being touched for, say, cultural, personal or neurodevelopmental reasons and permission to do so should never be assumed. Always check that you have consent. Consider the use of an Intimacy Coach if the situation calls for one.

One-to-One Working

In some roles in Theatre work you may have to work one-to-one with a child or young person. This is acceptable when necessary but you must ensure it is done in a safe environment and that there is a DBS chaperone available to be with you if you do not have a DBS certificate yourself.

The safe ratio is defined as the minimum number of staff who should be in charge of a group.

For theatre sessions involving children, the theatre states this is one adult to up to 10 children aged 8-13 years and one adult to up to 15 children aged 14+

When running sessions with groups of children, even if one adult would meet the ratio guidelines, there must always be two adults present in the setting.

Safe practice when working with young people at events away from the Theatre

Information to parents and carers

Parents and carers must be provided with event information for any QMT activity involving a person under the age of 18 years. The information provided must include - date, times, location, travel arrangements, refreshments, money, clothing or equipment needed and contact information should a parent or carer wish to contact the member of staff in charge of the activity.

Consent of parent or carer for activities outside of the Theatre

Consent must be obtained from a child's parent or carer for any QMT activity involving a person under the age of 18 years.

Staff to participant ratio on outside visits

- One adult to 10 children aged eight to 13 and one adult to 15 children aged 14plus
- One adult to 10 children for residential trips, trips abroad or for water or adventure sports

These ratios will be considered in the risk assessment for each activity or event.

There must be at least two adults present on any trip.

Use of photographs or recorded images of children and young people

We may want to take photographs or record the activities undertaken by the young people. QMT commits to ensure that all publications and media represent participants appropriately and with due respect. There are consent forms which are completed by all children, young people and their parents for the Junior Bancroft Players and Big Spirit Youth Theatre.

QMT websites are carefully monitored to eliminate the use of inappropriate images or improper text.

Confidentiality (and the limits of confidentiality)

Whilst QMT staff will ensure that young people's rights to privacy and confidence is respected, there may be times when this confidence needs to be breached. If a young person discloses information about themselves or another young person, which raises safeguarding concerns about the safety of that young person or others, then these concerns will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Officer in line with the QMT reporting concerns procedure which is included in this policy. The QMT will ensure that the young person is involved, consulted and kept informed about what action, if any, is to be taken and during each step of the reporting procedure.

Any personal information gathered about a young person regarding a child protection concern will be stored in a secured and confidential place. Only appropriate staff will have access to this information (eg paid staff member or volunteer involved, Designated Safeguarding Officer). It may be necessary to pass this information on to the relevant Local Authority and police. When doing so, QMT will ensure that the young person is involved and gives consent in making that decision where possible. The only situation when a referral can and will be made without the consent of the young person will be if that young person is at risk of serious harm.

QMT staff will ensure that any information gained or given will be treated with the strictest of confidence. Young people will be consulted and involved in the decision making process.

What constitutes child abuse

Child abuse occurs when a child or young person has suffered from, or is at significant risk of suffering from, ill-treatment or impairment of development, by any person who knowingly colludes with or fails to prevent the ill-treatment of the child or young person by not ensuring reasonable standards of care and protection.

All staff should be aware that abusers are not just strangers. They can include parents, carers, family members, friends, people in positions of trust and authority, other children or young people, or anyone who has contact with children and young people.

Children and young people who are abused are often abused by an adult they know and trust.

Misunderstandings and misinterpretations of different cultural and religious beliefs and practices often mean that children and young people from these communities and families may be more vulnerable to abuse going undetected and often statutory services fail to meet the needs or deliver appropriate services to the children and young people

It is important to remember that, although many abusers are men, women also abuse, and that abusers come from all social and ethnic backgrounds, races, classes and professions.

Definitions of abuse

Four categories of abuse have been defined and are generally accepted, although it is important to remember that abuse will often fall into more than one category at any one time:

- Neglect - the persistent or severe neglect and failure to meet the child's or young person's basic physical and or psychological needs, i.e. food, warmth, shelter, clothing, care and protection
- Physical - any form of non-accidental injury or failure to protect against injury to a child or young person. This may involve hitting, shaking, poisoning, throwing, suffocating, burning and scalding. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer puts on the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child or young person under their care.
- Emotional - severe or persistent rejection or emotional ill-treatment of the child or young person which would negatively affect the emotional or behavioural development of the child or young person.
- Sexual - the actual, or likely, sexual exploitation of the child or young person by any person, whether or not that child or young person is aware of what is happening. This would include physical contact (penetrative or non penetrative) and non-physical contact (looking at pornographic materials, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children/young people to behave in sexually inappropriate ways).

How to recognise abuse

The following is a guide to help paid staff and volunteers to become more alert to and aware of the signs of possible abuse. These lists are not definitive. Please bear in mind that there may also be other factors within the family that may be the reason for sudden changes in behaviour, for example death, the birth of a new sibling, etc

Recognising possible abuse is a complex and complicated procedure. It is not your responsibility to decide whether a young person has been abused or is at significant risk. Investigation of child abuse is a specialised professional task which should only be undertaken by the designated agencies, i.e. the Local Authority Children's Services, police, Local Safeguarding Children's Board or the NSPCC. However, you do have a responsibility to act on any concerns and report them in accordance with the reporting procedure.

Neglect - this can be a difficult form of abuse to recognise and yet it can have some of the most lasting and damaging effects:

- The physical signs and changes in behaviour that may indicate neglect may include:
- Constantly hungry, perhaps stealing food from others
- Constantly dirty or in an unkempt, unwashed state
- Inappropriately dressed for the weather conditions
- A loss of weight or being constantly underweight
- Being tired all the time
- Failure to attend medical appointments or not requesting them
- Mentioning being left alone or unsupervised

Physical abuse - It is quite normal for children and young people to get cuts and bruises as part of their daily life. However, some children and young people will have bruising or cuts that could only have been caused non-accidentally. Important indicators are where on the body the bruises or injuries occur, whether any explanation given, or the lack of explanation, fits the injury and also whether there was a delay in seeking medical treatment when treatment may be quite necessary.

The physical signs and changes in behaviour that may indicate physical abuse may include:

- Injuries on any part of the body that cannot be explained
- Bruises which reflect hand marks or fingertips from slapping or pinching
- Cigarette burns, bite marks, broken bones, scalds
- A fear of approaching parents for an explanation
- Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts
- Flinching when touched or approached
- Depression, withdrawn behaviour
- Running away from home
- Reluctance to get changed

Emotional abuse - again this is can be very difficult to identify; often those who appear well cared for may be emotionally abused by being put down or belittled. Also, some children and young people may be receiving little or no love, affection and/or attention from their parents or carers. Those not allowed to mix and play with others may also be experiencing emotional abuse.

The physical signs and changes in behaviour that may indicate emotional abuse may include:

- A failure to thrive or grow
- Sudden speech disorders
- Delayed development, either physically or emotionally

- Exhibiting neurotic behaviour such as hair twisting or rocking
- Reluctance to have their parents or carers contacted or approached regarding their behaviour
- Exhibiting a lack of confidence or the need for approval or attention
- Fear of making mistakes
- Exhibiting self-harming behaviour

Sexual abuse - adults who exploit their power and use children or young people to gratify their own sexual needs abuse both girls and boys of all ages, cultures and abilities, including babies, toddlers and young people. More often than not, the child's or young person's behaviour will cause you to become concerned; however, there are physical signs that highlight concerns. In all cases, children and young people who talk about sexual abuse do so because they want it to stop. Therefore, it is vitally important that they are listened to and taken seriously.

The physical signs and changes in behaviour that may indicate sexual abuse may include:

- Stomach pains, discomfort when walking or sitting down
- Bruising or injuries to parts of the body that are not normally seen
- Pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections
- Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour and/or mood ie becoming aggressive or withdrawn
- Nervousness or fear of being left with specific persons or groups
- Acting in a sexually inappropriate way with peers and or adults
- Sexual knowledge, drawings and language that are beyond the child or young person's age or developmental level
- Running away
- Self-harm and mutilation, suicide attempts
- Eating disorders such as bulimia or anorexia
- Indicating that they have secrets that cannot be told to anyone
- Bedwetting
- Substance abuse (drug and alcohol)

NB These are some typical signs and indicators for each type of abuse, but all could indicate a different type of abuse or another concern.

Always Respond

The appropriate response is vital. No disclosure about possible abuse or neglect should be ignored. In order to determine the most appropriate response, ascertain what you are

dealing with. See also section below If a child or young person confides in you, you must do the following:

Reporting concerns, suspicions and allegations

Report any safeguarding concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Officer or their Deputy as soon as possible. Once you have reported concerns about abuse to the Designated Safeguarding Officer the responsibility for taking action lies with them.

Any concern being reported will be taken seriously. The QMT will support children, young people and staff in raising any concern or suspicions which will continue whilst concerns are being investigated.

Children Under 18 years of age performing

If an under 18 year old is cast in a show within the QMT outside of Big Spirit, Junior or Ensemble productions, the Safeguarding Officer needs to be informed.

If the child is 16 years old or under they will need to have a chaperone present for every rehearsal and every performance.

The theatre has a list of DBS checked adults who can sign up for chaperone duties.

The chaperone has to have no other duties connected to the show that they are chaperoning for. A parent can chaperone their own child as long as they have no other duties in the production.

If the child is aged 17, the Safeguarding Officer still needs to be informed. They will risk assess the situation and decide if a chaperone is needed.

Children 16 years old or younger should not be included in any adult whatsapp groups or similar social media groups.

For 17 year olds permission from the parent/Guardian should be obtained before adding to communication groups containing adults.

For under 18s permission needs to be obtained from the parent/guardian for photographs to appear in any marketing, including social media.

A BOPA needs to be completed for any child performing in a show who is 16 and under. This form can be found on the North Herts County Council website and needs to be completed at least 21 days prior to opening night.

Young People Under 18 years Volunteering

The theatre believes that a young person 16 years or under should not be volunteering for Backstage or Front of House duties. For young people aged 17 who wish to volunteer the following rules apply

The Safeguarding Officer needs to be informed of the young person's name, date of birth, duties they will be carrying out and emergency contact details for a Parent/Guardian

A DBS person must be on site when the young person is volunteering. The young person must be aware of who that DBS checked person is and know where they are and that they can go to them at any time.

The DBS checked person must be informed in advance that the child will be onsite. The DBS checked person must remain on site for the duration of the time the young person is present.

Chaperone Policy and Guidelines

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the safety, welfare, and proper supervision of children participating in theatrical productions. This policy outlines the responsibilities, qualifications, and requirements of chaperones to maintain a professional, impartial, and secure environment for all children involved.

Policy Statement

1. Chaperone Eligibility:

All chaperones must be independent of the production. This means that they must not have any direct connection to the show, including as cast members, crew, or other production staff. Parents may act as chaperone to their own child or children if they are not involved with any other activities relating to the production.

2. Qualifications and Requirements:

- Chaperones must be at least 18 years of age.(ideally over 21)
- All chaperones must undergo a background check (DBS)
- They must be familiar with the theatre's health and safety policies and emergency procedures.

3. Duties and Responsibilities:

- Supervise children at all times during rehearsals, performances, and any associated activities.
- Ensure the safety, welfare, and appropriate behaviour of children in designated backstage areas, dressing rooms, and other relevant spaces.
- Maintain a log of attendance and be prepared to report on any issues or incidents promptly.
- Serve as the point of contact for children during emergencies or concerns.
- Ensure all children attending have sufficient breaks, based on their time at the theatre
- The maximum number one chaperone can look after is 12 although best practice suggests 8 children per chaperone provides a higher standard of care to the children. This may also be determined by ages of the children being chaperoned.

4. Prohibited Behaviours:

- Chaperones must not engage in favouritism, bias, or personal relationships with the children.

- Use of mobile phones or other distractions while on duty is strictly prohibited, except in emergencies.
- Any form of inappropriate behaviour, neglect, or misconduct will result in immediate dismissal from the role and possible legal action.

5. Selection Process:

- Safeguarding staff or the theatre secretary will check that the chaperones have up to date DBS certificates (either for the QMT or if from another setting it must be from within the last 3 years . We would require a QMT DBS within 12 months of validation of original non QMT DBS, If the person is in a regular position of working with children) If the certificate exceeds 3 years in age during the 12 month period, a new QMT DBS must be obtained immediately.
- The Director has a responsibility to ensure that a chaperone is present.
- The Production Manager and Safeguarding leads will supply the Director with a list of eligible chaperones.
- A Director may use their own chaperones but their eligibility must be checked by the theatre (see above in relation to DBS checks)

6. Monitoring and Review:

- The theatre management will regularly review chaperone performance and adherence to policies.

By adhering to these guidelines, we aim to create a safe and enjoyable environment for all children involved in theatrical productions while maintaining a professional and impartial supervision framework.

