



Good Practice Guide for the Safeguarding of Adults and Children Participating in Productions

Originally prepared in reference to best practice models from Swindon Children's Services & NODA
January 2026

Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to outline the basic philosophy of the M4 Theatre Company concerning the safeguarding of adults and children participating in the rehearsals and productions. The guidance offered in this document is intended to serve to avoid either children, or those charged with their care, being placed in any compromising situation; a 'common sense' attitude is always recommended to avoid such situations.

The M4 Theatre Company designated lead with responsibility for Safeguarding is *Russell Langdown*. The Safeguarding lead is Enhanced DBS cleared, qualified in Child Protection at Level 3, with further enhanced training. The Safeguarding lead has contact details should additional, professional support be necessary. **Whenever possible, safeguarding concerns should be raised in person in the first instance with Russell.** If you are not able to speak with him in person or via phone, they can be contacted via: m4theatre@gmail.com marked **CONFIDENTIAL**, and will respond quickly to any safeguarding concerns. To mitigate the 'single point of failure' risk, safeguarding matters may be shared with additional members of the M4 Theatre Company Management Team.

Safeguarding of Adults

The care, wellbeing and safeguarding of adult members is an important feature of the M4 Theatre Company.

The M4 Theatre Company believes that:

- we promote a culture where everyone is treated with kindness and respect
- in no way should bullying, sexual harassment, nor any other kind of abuse, be tolerated
- all participants, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection and/or support.
- all concerns regarding the conduct of participants should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

The M4 Theatre Company will ensure that:

- The Safeguarding Policy is circulated to participant for each production and is available in the Members' Area of the website
- The Safeguarding Lead will be clearly identified in the Members' Area of the website.

Safeguarding of Children

The M4 Theatre Company recognises its duty of care under the Children and Young Persons Act 2008, Examples of Best Practice – Child Performance and Activities Licensing by Local Authorities in England (Feb 2015), the Protection of Children Act 1999, the Children & Families Act 2014 and Keeping Children Safe In Education.

A child is defined as anyone up to the age of 18 years, however, regulations relating to children in theatrical performances apply up to the age of 16, so young people between the ages of 16 and 18 may require reasonable adjustment.

The M4 Theatre Company is committed to practice that protects children from harm and believes that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount

- abuse can take many forms, whether it be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect.
- 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 of the society should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

The M4 Theatre Company 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.
- bullying will not be accepted or condoned.
- all adult members/participants of the group 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 informed of changes in legislation and policies for the protection of children.

Philosophy

The basic philosophy of the M4 Theatre Company concerning the care of children at rehearsals and during performances is that all individuals should be treated as one might expect one's own children to be treated. Please note that it is NOT the role of the group to decide whether a child has been abused or not; this is the task of Children's Social Care, it is, however, everybody's responsibility to ensure that concerns are shared and appropriate action taken.

The following list of measures is not intended to be exhaustive but is to form a framework within which the M4 Theatre Company will operate in its dealing with children.

General Measures

- Responsibility for safeguarding children and young people is the responsibility of the M4 Theatre Company's Management Team.
- A Children's Coordinator will be appointed for each production.
- The M4 Theatre Company will apply to Swindon's Local Authority for a Child Performance License (or BOPA) to demonstrate its commitment to safeguarding any children performing in our shows.
- The society expects permission to be given by parent/carers for images of their children to be used in any promotional material, archive recording and photography, including the group's website.

Advice may be sought at any time from Swindon Borough Council's "Children & Families Contact Swindon" (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) department on 464646 (office hours) contactchildrenandfamilies@swindon.gov.uk or 436699 (outside office hours).

Chaperoning / Welfare Procedures:

- Guidance suggests 1 Chaperone per 12 children.
- Parents/carers will drop their child off at the rehearsal or performance venue and the child will be signed in by the Children's Coordinator, Lead Chaperone, or Production Director.
- At the end of rehearsals / performances, children will only be released according to the instructions of the parent/carer; this may include identity of other individuals authorised to collect the child at the end of the session.
- For the period of rehearsals and production, M4 Theatre Company will hold contact details of children and carers, including: Names, Addresses, Contact numbers and Email addresses.
- Changing areas will be separate for male, female and non-binary children; this is also separate from adult performers.
- The use of cameras or mobile phones with camera or video capability in dressing rooms and other inappropriate environments should be expressly forbidden whilst children are changing.

- Children will be always kept together except when using separate dressing rooms.
- The Children's Coordinator or Chaperones will be aware of where the children are always.
- Children are not to leave the rehearsal venue or theatre unsupervised by chaperones unless in the company of their parents.
- The Children's Coordinator or Chaperones should be aware of the safety arrangements in the venue, and will ensure that children in their care do not place themselves and others in danger.
- The Children's Coordinator or Chaperones should ensure that any accidents are reported to, and recorded by, the society.
- Children should be signed out of the performance venue when leaving and a record made of the person collecting
- If a parent has not collected the child, it is the duty of the chaperone to stay with that child until contact is made.

Basic guidance for members

You must:

- Adults should avoid being alone at any time with individual children.
- If it is necessary to be alone with a child, this should be in a room with an open door or with windows; a second adult should be informed under these circumstances.
- Treat all children and young people with respect
- Provide an example of good conduct you wish others to follow; including choice of language.
- Respect a young person's right to personal privacy
- Encourage young people and adults to be comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviour they do not like
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well-intentioned
- Recognise that special caution is required when you are discussing sensitive issues with children or young people
- Operate within the organisation's principles and guidance and any specific procedures
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations/suspicions of abuse – *see Appendices A&B*

You must not:

- accompany a child to the toilet; adults must wait outside of the toilet area in public view.
- physically chastise a child
- have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with children or young people
- allow yourself to be drawn into inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour / make suggestive or derogatory remarks or gestures in front of children or young people
- jump to conclusions about others without checking facts
- either exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues
- show favouritism to any individual
- rely on your good name or that of the organisation to protect you
- believe “it could never happen to me”
- take a chance when common sense, policy or practice suggests another more prudent approach

Disclosure of abuse

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

- Remain calm and in control but do not delay acting.
- 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. Use the first opportunity you have to share the information with the Safeguarding Lead (Russell Langdown). It is that person's responsibility to liaise with the relevant authorities, usually social services or the police, as well as the parents/carers. 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.
- 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, any further action taken e.g. 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.

Safeguarding Concerns

If you observe a behaviour, hear a comment, or have any other safeguarding concerns regarding the behaviour of a child or an adult **other than a direct disclosure**, the following should be actions:

- Remain calm and in control but do not delay acting.
- Speak immediately to the person with responsibility for Safeguarding. It is that person's responsibility to liaise with the relevant authorities, usually social services or the police, as well as the parents/carers.
- As soon as possible after the disclosing conversation, make a note of what was said, using the child's own words where relevant. 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.
- 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, 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.

Local Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

The Local Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (Swindon Safeguarding Partnership) website provides information, guidance and advice for anyone involved in safeguarding the welfare or well-being of children and young people in Swindon. [Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)

Date of next review: January 2027

Sources:

Swindon LSCB – *Model Child Protection Policy for Community Groups*

Swindon Children's Services

NODA – Professional support for amateur theatre – *Children in the Theatre*

NODA – Professional support for amateur theatre – *Model Child Protection Policy*

Wyvern Theatre – Contractual Agreement Appendix

HM Government (2023) *Working Together to Safeguard Children* London: The Stationery Office.
www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/safeguarding

What is abuse and neglect?

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely by a stranger for example, via the internet. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or "making fun" of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capacity, as well as the overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber-bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involved forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health and development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.