



# Barnstaple Musical Comedy & Dramatic BMCDS / BYG SAFEGUARDING POLICY (Children, Young People & Vulnerable Adults)

Barnstaple Musical Comedy & Dramatic BMCDS / BYG (BMCDS) recognises its duty of care under the law.

For the purposes of this policy, the term 'children' generally refers to those of compulsory school age, while 'young people' refers to members aged 16-17 who are above compulsory school leaving age (the last Friday in June of the school year in which the child reaches the age of 16), but still under the age of 18. References to under-18s apply to both groups.

BMCDS / BYG recognises that abuse can take many forms, whether it be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect. BMCDS / BYG is committed to practice which protects children and young people from harm. All members of BMCDS / BYG are encouraged to accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children and young people harm.

While the majority of BMCDS / BYG safeguarding activity relates to children and young people, BMCDS / BYG recognises its responsibility to safeguard vulnerable adults and will apply the same principles of care, dignity, protection and appropriate conduct where vulnerable adults are involved in any activity or production.

## BMCDS / BYG believes that:

- The welfare of the child or young person is paramount.
- All children and young people, 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 BMCDS / BYG should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

## BMCDS / BYG will endeavour to ensure that:

- All children/young people will be treated equally and with respect and dignity.
- The duty of care to children/young people will always be put first.
- A balanced relationship based on mutual trust will be built, which empowers the children and young people 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 of BMCDS / BYG 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 health & safety 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 and young person involved with BMCDS / BYG and will retain a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies.

BMCDS / BYG has child and young person protection procedures which accompany this policy.

This policy should also be read in conjunction with the:

- BMCDS / BYG's Anti-Bullying Policy,
- Equal Opportunities Policy,
- Health & Safety Policy
- GDPR Policy.

BMCDS / BYG has a Designated Safeguarding Lead who is in charge of ensuring that the child, young person and vulnerable adult safeguarding policy is adhered to:

Safeguarding Lead: Khadine Ruhleman  
Contact: [safeguarding@barnstaplemusicalcomedy.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@barnstaplemusicalcomedy.co.uk)

BMCDS / BYG is committed to regular review of its policies and procedures to ensure they continue to promote the safeguarding of children and young people.

## PROCEDURES

### Responsibilities of BMCDS / BYG

At the outset of any production involving children and young people, BMCDS / BYG will:

- Undertake a risk assessment and monitor the risk throughout the production process.
- Identify at the outset, the person with designated responsibility for safeguarding.
- Engage in effective recruitment of chaperones and other individuals with responsibility for children and young people.
- Ensure that children are supervised at all times.
- Produce a rehearsal schedule with dates and times and will notify parents/guardians/carers of any changes to this.
- Know how to get in touch with the local authority social services, in case it needs to report a concern.

### Parents

- BMCDS / BYG believes it to be important that there is a partnership between parents/guardians/carers and BMCDS / BYG. Parents/guardians/carers are encouraged to be involved in the activities of BMCDS / BYG and to share responsibility for the care of children and young people. All parents/guardians/carers will be given a copy of BMCDS / BYG's Safeguarding for Children and young people Policy and Procedures.
- All parents/guardians/carers have the responsibility to collect (or arrange collection of) their children after rehearsals or performances. It is NOT the responsibility of BMCDS / BYG to take children home.



### Unsupervised Contact

- BMCDS / BYG will attempt to ensure that no adult has unsupervised contact with children/young people.
- 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.

### Physical Contact

- All adults will maintain a safe and appropriate distance from children/young people.
- Adults will only touch children/young people when it is necessary in relation to the particular activity, e.g. costume measuring or teaching particular choreography/direction. Where physical contact involves children of compulsory school age, a licenced chaperone should be present.
- Adults will explain the purpose of any necessary physical contact and, where appropriate, seek the agreement of the child/young person before proceeding.

### Managing sensitive information

- BMCDS / BYG has a policy and procedures for the taking, using and storage of photographs or images. (See GDPR Policy)
- Permission will be sought from the parents/guardians/carers for use of photographic material featuring children for promotional or other purposes.
- BMCDS / BYG's web-based materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use.  
BMCDS / BYG will ensure confidentiality in order to protect the rights of its members, including the safe handling, storage and disposal of any sensitive information such as criminal record disclosures. (See GDPR Policy)

### Suspicion of abuse

- If you see or suspect abuse of a child or young person while in the care of BMCDS / BYG, please make this known to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. If you suspect that the Designated Safeguarding Lead is the source of the problem, you should make your concerns known to the President or other Committee member or LADO, if necessary.
- Please make a note for your own records of what you witnessed, as well as your response in case there is a follow up in which you are involved.
- If a serious allegation is made against any member of BMCDS / BYG, chaperone, 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/young people in the production.



## Disclosure of abuse

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

- Remain calm and in control but do not delay in taking action.
- Listen carefully to what has been said. Allow the child/young person 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 person with responsibility for safeguarding.
- 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/young person what you are going to do next.
- 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 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 and inform the Safeguarding or Deputy Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible.

## Recording

- 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 must be recorded.
- 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.

## Rights & Confidentiality

- If a complaint is made against a member of BMCDS / BYG, he or she will be made aware of his/her rights under BMCDS / BYG's disciplinary procedures.
- No matter how you may feel about the accusation, both the alleged abuser and the child/young person who is thought to have been abused, have the right to confidentiality under the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR. 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.



## Accidents

- To avoid accidents, chaperones and children/young people will be advised of “house rules” regarding health and safety and will be notified of areas that are out of bounds. Children/young people will be advised of the clothing and footwear appropriate to the work that will be undertaken.
- If a child/young person is injured while in the care of BMCDS / BYG, a designated first aider will administer first aid, and the injury will be recorded in BMCDS / BYG’s accident book. This record will be counter signed by the person with responsibility for safeguarding.
- If a child/young person joins the production with an obvious physical injury, a record of this will be made in the accident book. This record will be countersigned by the person with responsibility for safeguarding. This record can be useful if a formal allegation is made later and will also be a record that the child/young person did not sustain the injury while participating in the production.

## Criminal Record Disclosures

- If BMCDS / BYG believes it is in its best interests to obtain Criminal Record Disclosures for any 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/young people. A chaperone licence will be required for anyone with unsupervised access to children.
- BMCDS / BYG will have a written code of practice for the handling of disclosure information. (See GDPR Policy)
- BMCDS / BYG will ensure that information contained in the disclosure is not misused.

## Chaperones

- Only chaperones licenced by the Devon County Council will be appointed by BMCDS / BYG.
- Chaperones will be appointed by BMCDS / BYG, 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/guardian/carer might be reasonably expected to give to a child. Chaperone supervision ratios will not exceed one licensed chaperone to 12 children.
- Chaperones will be made aware of BMCDS / BYG’s Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.
- Chaperones should avoid being alone with children in private or unobservable situations wherever possible.
- Where chaperones are not satisfied with the conditions for the children, they should bring this to the attention of the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- If a chaperone considers that a child is unwell or too tired to continue, the chaperone must inform the Director/Producer and if necessary, the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Chaperones have the authority to raise concerns and stop any activity involving a child or young person which they believe may place them at risk of injury or harm.
- During rehearsals and performances, chaperones will be responsible for meeting children at the stage door and getting them signed in and out of the building.
- Chaperones will be aware of where the children are at all times.



- Children are not to leave the theatre or rehearsal rooms unsupervised by chaperones unless in the company of their parent/guardian/carer.
- 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 and will ensure that children/young people in their care do not place themselves and others in danger.
- Chaperones should ensure that any accidents are reported to and recorded by BMCDS / BYG.
- Chaperones should have written arrangements for children after performances. If unexpectedly, someone different is to collect the child, a telephone call should be made to the parent/guardian/carer to confirm the arrangements.
- If a parent/guardian/carer has not collected the child, it is the duty of the chaperone to stay with that child, until the parent/guardian/carer makes suitable alternative arrangements for collection by them or their appointed representative.

### Mobile Phones

- Children will not be permitted mobile phones in the theatre for show week, to prevent the unauthorised taking of photographs whilst children may be changing.
- Licenced chaperones may take authorised backstage photographs to provide an appropriate record of the children's involvement in the production.
- Before this happens, each parent will sign a permission form to say they are happy for chaperones to take back-stage photos of their children in costume.
- If a parent disagrees, the child in question will not be included in any back-stage photographs.
- If the child themselves, chooses not to be in a particular photograph, they have the right to opt out.
- Mobile phones and other devices must be used appropriately during rehearsals. Children and young people must not access, display or share inappropriate, offensive or age-inappropriate content whilst attending rehearsals or other society activities.
- Chaperones and production staff may intervene where mobile phone or device usage is considered inappropriate or raises safeguarding concerns.

### Physical Contact and Performance Content Involving Under-18s

BMCDS / BYG recognises that theatrical performances may occasionally include physical contact, romantic themes or emotionally sensitive material. The welfare and comfort of children and young people must always take priority over performance considerations.

Any physical contact involving a member under the age of 18 must be appropriate, necessary for the production, and carefully managed by the production team.

Under-18s must not be placed in situations involving:

- Sexualised behaviour or dialogue that is inappropriate for their age



- Intimate touching
- Simulated sexual activity
- Physical contact that could reasonably cause discomfort, embarrassment or safeguarding concerns

Where scenes involve romantic or physical interaction between an adult and an under-18 performer, the production team must ensure that:

- The interaction is staged appropriately and professionally
- Unnecessary physical contact is avoided
- Rehearsal processes remain open and supervised
- The young person feels able to raise concerns at any time
- Parents/guardians are informed in advance where appropriate

Stage kisses or similar intimate actions involving an adult and an under-18 performer should be avoided wherever possible. Where considered necessary for the production, they must be risk assessed in advance and discussed with the adult performer, the young person and their parent/guardian, agreed by the Designated Safeguarding Lead and handled in a controlled and professional manner.

The agreement of a young person or parent/guardian does not remove the responsibility of BMCDS / BYG to ensure that all interactions and performance content remain appropriate and professionally managed.

No member should pressure a young person into physical contact or performance material that makes them uncomfortable. A young person may withdraw consent to physical interaction at any stage of rehearsals or performances.



## COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ADULTS AND UNDER-18S

BMCDS / BYG is committed to providing a safe, supportive and professional environment for all members. All cast, crew, volunteers and anyone working with our children and young people are expected to maintain appropriate professional boundaries when interacting with members under the age of 18.

### Professional Boundaries and Conduct

All adult cast, crew, volunteers and anyone working with our children and young people are expected to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with them at all times.

Adults should:

- Behave in a manner that is appropriate, respectful and professional
- Avoid conversations or behaviour that are inappropriate for the age and understanding of the children/young people.
- Avoid situations that could place themselves or a young person in an uncomfortable, isolated or compromising position.
- Remain mindful that their actions, language and behaviour may be interpreted differently by children and young people.
- Use mobile phones and devices appropriately during rehearsals and performances and avoid displaying or sharing content that may be inappropriate, offensive or unsuitable for children and young people.

Adult members should not:

- Engage in inappropriate jokes, comments or discussions of a sexual nature around children or young people.
- Share alcohol, cigarettes, vapes or other age-restricted substances with under-18s.
- Arrange unnecessary meetings or social activities with under-18s outside BMCDS / BYG activities
- Develop relationships with under-18s that could reasonably be perceived as inappropriate or overly personal.
- Should not take, store or share personal photographs or videos of children or young people during BMCDS / BYG activities unless this is part of an authorised production-related activity and appropriate permissions are in place.

Where possible, transport arrangements involving children and young people should be agreed in advance with parents/guardians and should avoid situations where an adult is alone with a child/young person unless unavoidable.

### Online and Social Media Contact

For children who are under the age of 18, members must not engage in private or one-to-one communication through personal social media accounts, messaging apps or other private online platforms. Adult members should also avoid adding or accepting children under the age of 18 on personal social media accounts unless there is an existing family relationship.



Communication relating to BMCDS / BYG should take place through:

- Official BMCDS / BYG communication channels.
- Group chats with multiple members present
- Or communication channels where parents/guardians have visibility.

For young people aged 16-17 who are above compulsory school leaving age but still under-18, adult members should continue to maintain appropriate boundaries and avoid unnecessary private or one-to-one communication wherever possible.

BMCDS / BYG recognises that some members may already have existing friendships or peer relationships, particularly where members are close in age. However, all adult members are expected to act appropriately and avoid behaviour which could be misunderstood or place themselves or a young person in an uncomfortable or inappropriate situation.

## **CONDUCT BETWEEN YOUNG PEOPLE AND YOUNGER CHILDREN**

### Appropriate Behaviour and Role Modelling

Older young people should:

- Act as positive role models setting a positive example for younger children
- Respectful language and behaviour should be maintained during rehearsals, performances and social activities.
- Conversations involving sexual content, alcohol, drugs or other adult topics should not take place around younger children
- Avoid behaviour that could cause discomfort, intimidation or exclusion
- Respect personal space and boundaries
- Not take, share or post photographs or videos of children during rehearsals or performances.

### Supervision and Responsibility

- 16–17-year-olds remain under-18 members and will not be placed in the sole charge of younger children.
- Where 16–17-year-olds are placed in supervised positions of responsibility or leadership, they are not expected to take on adult safeguarding responsibilities.

### Social Media and Messaging

- Group chats involving young children should remain appropriate and related to BMCDS / BYG activities

### Alcohol, Smoking and Vaping

- Under 18-members must not bring or use alcohol, cigarettes or vaping products during BMCDS / BYG activities or productions.

### Reporting Concerns

- Young people are encouraged to speak to the Safeguarding Lead or another trusted adult if they feel uncomfortable, need support, or have concerns about the behaviour or welfare of themselves or other members.



## CONCERNS AND CONDUCT

If any concerns are raised regarding communication or conduct involving under-18s, BMCDS / BYG will review the situation in line with its safeguarding responsibilities.

In cases where behaviour is considered inappropriate or repeatedly disregards this guidance, BMCDS / BYG reserves the right to take action where necessary, including removal from productions or the Society.

Any concerns regarding interactions with a young person should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

This guidance is intended to protect both younger members and adult members alike, and to help ensure everyone can enjoy being part of BMCDS / BYG in a safe and positive environment.

BMCDS is committed to regular review of its policies and procedures to ensure they continue to promote the safeguarding of children and young people.

Reviewed: May 2026

Next Review: May 2027

Signed:

Graham Ruhleman, Chairperson

Signed:

Khadine Ruhleman, Safeguarding Lead

Signed:

Sue Spiegelhalter, Society President

### External Safeguarding Contacts:

- Devon MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) Phone: 0345 155 1071  
Email: [mashsecure@devon.gov.uk](mailto:mashsecure@devon.gov.uk)
- Devon LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) Phone: 01392 384964  
Email: [ladosecure-mailbox@devon.gov.uk](mailto:ladosecure-mailbox@devon.gov.uk)