



YOUTH MUSICAL THEATRE

Safeguarding

This policy applies to all individuals involved in WOW Youth Musical Theatre, including but not limited to Trustees, paid professionals, volunteers, chaperones, and other helpers.

The purpose of this policy is:

- to protect WOW members as well as anyone working for their benefit
- to provide adults working in WOW with the overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding.

WOW believes that:

- Nobody who is involved in our work should ever experience abuse, harm, neglect or exploitation.
- We all have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all our members, paid professionals and volunteers, to keep them safe and to work in a way that protects them.
- We all have a collective responsibility for creating a culture in which our people not only feel safe, but also able to speak up, if they have any concerns.

As a youth-focused charity we recognize that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount
- All people, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues
- working in partnership with children, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

We will seek to keep children safe by:

- valuing them, listening to and respecting them
- adopting child protection practices through procedures and a code of conduct for adults
- providing effective support and training for the adults coming into contact with the members
- ensuring necessary checks are made for those adults
- sharing information about child protection with children, parents, carers and volunteers
- sharing concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately.

WOW has child protection procedures which accompany this policy. This policy should also be read in conjunction with WOW's Equal Opportunities Policy and Health & Safety Policy.

Online Safety

We will identify and manage online risks by ensuring:

- Volunteers, staff and trustees understand how to keep themselves safe online. We may use high privacy settings and password access to meetings to support this.
- The online services we provide are suitable for our users. For example, use age restrictions and offer password protection to help keep people safe.
- The services we use and/or provide are safe and in line with our code of conduct.
- We protect people's personal data and follow data protection legislation.
- We have permission to display any images on our website or social media accounts, including consent from an individual, parent, etc.
- Concerns may be reported using this policy, or direct to a social media provider using their reporting process.

We are committed to reviewing our policy and practice regularly, particularly following any safeguarding incident investigation.

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

Children Act 1989, United Convention of the rights of the Child 1991, Data Protection Act 1998, Protection of Children Act 1999, Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000, Sexual Offences Act 2003, Children Act 2004, Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, Children (Performances and activities) (England) Regulations 2014, Working together to safeguard children 2015.

Child Protection

WOW recognises its duty to care for the children members and those who look after them while in rehearsal or performance.

WOW'S RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Criminal Record Checks

All WOW committee members and regular helpers are 'vetted' by the DBS and we work with the Dorset Youth Service to offer a free DBS check for parent chaperones and volunteers.

1. Auditions for new members

Personal data gathered for new members' auditions is seen by the interviewing panel and the members secretary and stored in a locked cabinet for as long as the member is in WOW, after which it is shredded. Committee member(s) and/or chaperones ensure that the children are safe whilst auditioning at WOW.

2. During rehearsals

Designated Committee members and parent chaperones ensure that the children are safe during the rehearsal and seen safely off the premises at the end.

3. During productions

At the outset of any production WOW will undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout the production process.

Chaperones and other individuals with responsibility for children are recruited, including appropriate vetting (if necessary in consultation with the local education authority), so that children are supervised at all times.

4. Parents/carers

WOW believes it to be important that there is a partnership between parents and WOW.

Parents are encouraged to be involved in the activities of WOW and to share responsibility for the care of children. All parents will be given a copy WOW's Child Protection Policy and procedures.

All parents have the responsibility to collect (or arrange collection of) their children after rehearsals or performances. It is NOT the responsibility of WOW to take children home.

5. Unsupervised contact

WOW will attempt to ensure that no adult has unsupervised contact with children.

If possible there will always be two adults in the room when working with children.

If unsupervised contact is unavoidable, steps will be taken to minimise risk; for example, work will be carried out in a public area, or in a designated room with a door open.

6. Physical contact

All adults will maintain a safe and appropriate distance from children.

Adults will touch children only when it is absolutely necessary in relation to the particular activity.

Adults will seek the consent of the child prior to any physical contact and the purpose of the contact shall be made clear.

7. Managing sensitive information

WOW will, from time to time, take, use and store photographs, videos and images of children specifically for training or promotional purposes.

Permission will be sought from the parents for use of photographic material featuring children for promotional or other purposes.

WOW's web-based materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use.

WOW 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.

8. Accidents

To avoid accidents, chaperones and children will be advised of "house rules" regarding health and safety and will be notified of areas that are out of bounds. Children will be advised of the clothing and footwear appropriate to the work that will be undertaken.

If a child is injured while in the care of WOW, a designated first-aider will administer first aid and the injury will be recorded in WOW's accident book. This record will be countersigned by the person with responsibility for child protection.

If a child attends with an obvious physical injury a record of this will be made in the accident book and countersigned by the person with responsibility for child protection. This can be useful if a formal allegation is made later and will also be a record that the child did not sustain the injury while participating at WOW.

Child Abuse

Abuse can take many forms, whether it be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect.
WOW is committed to practice which protects children from harm.
All adults in WOW accept and recognise their responsibilities
to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm.

Suspicion of abuse

If you see or suspect abuse of a child while in the care of WOW, please make this known to the person with responsibility for child protection. If you suspect that the person with responsibility for child protection is the source of the problem, you should make your concerns known to the Chairman.

Please make a note for your own records of what you witnessed as well as your response, in case there is follow-up in which you are involved.

If a serious allegation is made against any member of WOW, 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 in the production.

Disclosure of abuse

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

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

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 will be recorded, regardless of whether or not the concerns have been shared with a statutory child protection agency.
- * An accurate note shall be made of the date and time of the incident or disclosure, the parties involved, what was said or done and by whom, any action taken to investigate the matter, 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 WOW, he or she will be made aware of his rights under WOW's disciplinary procedures.
- * No matter how you may feel about the accusation, both the alleged abuser and the child who is thought to have been abused have the right to confidentiality under the Data Protection Act 1998. Remember also that any possible criminal investigation could be compromised through inappropriate information being released.
- * In criminal law the Crown, or other prosecuting authority, has to prove guilt and the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

WOW believes that:

All suspicions and allegations of abuse should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
All helpers at WOW should be clear on how to respond appropriately: Receive. Respond. Refer. Report. Record.

WOW will ensure that:

And Finally

- * All children will be treated equally and with respect and dignity.
- * The duty of care to children will always be put first.
- * A balanced relationship based on mutual trust will be built which empowers the children to share in the decision making process.
- * Enthusiastic and constructive feedback will be given rather than negative criticism.
- * Bullying will not be accepted or condoned.
- * All adult members of WOW 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 undertake relevant development and training.
- * It will hold a register of every child involved with WOW and will retain a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies.
- * Know how to get in touch with the local authority social services, in case it needs to report a concern.

Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership (<http://pdscp.co.uk>)

Visit the **PDSCP** website for further advice and support if you have concerns about a child.

The PDSCP brings together information for:

- * children
- * young people
- * their families
- * anyone who works with children and families

Under 18s

Family Support and Advice Line - 01305 228558

Out of hours emergency - Tel: 01305 221000

If you believe a social worker is already involved with the child or young person, contact the worker through the social work team:

Family Support in Locality

Chesil Locality (Weymouth and Portland)

Email: chesillocality@dorsetcc.gov.uk

Tel: **01305 762400**

Dorchester Locality

Email: dorchesterlocality@dorsetcc.gov.uk.

Tel: **01305 224220**

Dorset Police: 101 (non emergency)

Emergency 999

Kirstie Purnell is the WOW Committee Member with responsibility for ensuring that the child protection policy and procedures are adhered to. Contact Kirstie on the WOW phone or at WOW Park Street premises during rehearsals.

The WOW Committee will regularly monitor this policy.

Updated: October 2025