



Regd. Charity (CIO) No. 1178159

Safeguarding Policy - Children, and Adults who are at risk

A child is defined as a person under 18, and child abuse as any form of maltreatment of a child, either by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. It includes physical, sexual or emotional abuse, or neglect.

An adult at risk is defined as (but not restricted to) a person 18 or over who may be any of the following: frail, have a learning, physical or mental health disability, and may be unable to protect themselves fully from harm or exploitation.

Chester Little Theatre (CLT) recognises that:

All children and adults have the right to be protected from abuse regardless of age, gender, disability, cultures, language, ethnic origin, religious beliefs or sexual identity/orientation.

The aims of the CLT safeguarding policy are:

- To ensure protection of all children, and adults at risk, who participate in any theatre activity or social event at CLT and enable them to participate in an enjoyable and safe environment.
- To achieve best practice in the area of child protection.
- To ensure that CLT is a safe environment for all members, free from physical, sexual, emotional or social abuse.

CLT will endeavour to safeguard children and others by adhering to good practice principles:

- To put the welfare of each child, or adult at risk, first.
- To treat all people equally, with respect and dignity.
- To always work in an open environment to encourage transparency (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations, particularly one-to-one).
- To maintain safe and appropriate distance with children (e.g. it is not appropriate to have an intimate relationship with a child).
- To strive for equitable relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children, and adults at risk, to share in the decision-making process.
- To ensure that CLT activities are enjoyable and promote healthy safe practice.
- To maintain up to date insurance policies and to ensure their guidelines are followed.
- To defer to and to involve all parents/carers/guardians/teachers wherever possible and appropriate.
- To give clear direction and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- To be aware of the developmental needs and capacity of children and adults at risk.

Best practice recommendations

- Keep written records of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Acquire written parental consent if you wish to transport children - collecting children from the theatre and ensuring they get home safely is the parents' responsibility.
- Ask parents for written consent for any photographs or names of children to be published in CLT literature or local press (see separate form in Green Book).
- Ensure that any form of manual/physical touch is appropriate to the activity and undertaken openly. Children should always be consulted and their understanding and agreement gained.
- When groups of children have to change clothes, try to ensure that adults supervise in pairs.

Practice never acceptable

- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative activities.
- Allowing or engaging in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Allowing children or adults to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Making sexually suggestive comments to a child, or adult at risk, even in fun.
- Reducing a child to tears as a form of control.
- Allowing allegations made by a child or adult to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Doing things of a personal nature for children, or adults at risk, that they can do for themselves.
- Allowing or inviting children to visit your house unsupervised.

Adult plays with cast members under statutory school-leaving age

As admissions charges apply: (1) the children must be licensed, or a Body of Persons Approval (BOPA) obtained from the LA; (2) the child's parent(s) or LA approved Matrons/Chaperones will be needed at all rehearsals and performances. A parent may only chaperone her/his own child.

Where parental (or Youth Theatre Leader - See Appendix) attendance cannot be arranged, the Director and/or Stage Manager may be required to apply for Matron/Chaperone status, which must be done well in advance of any rehearsals/performances.

Even with a BOPA, a child may perform on only 6 consecutive days. For 7 day shows either two or more children should play the role in turn, or each child must be individually licensed.

Responding to allegations or suspicions

It is not the responsibility of any CLT member to decide whether or not any abuse has taken place. All suspicions and allegations of abuse must be reported swiftly and appropriately. Allegations of child abuse must be reported to Social Services. If a criminal offence is suspected the police must be informed immediately. If there is injury/suspected injury, the at-risk person should be taken to an appropriate medical facility (e.g. GP practice, hospital/clinic).

CLT recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse others in some way and, following discussion within Committee, any member deemed unsuitable will have their membership rescinded.

Safeguarding Officer

Chair of CLT

Reporting incidents of abuse

- Any suspicion that abuse has taken place should be reported to the Safeguarding Officer who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the individual in question and any others who may be at risk. In the event of the Safeguarding Officer not being present, any Trustee, or failing that, any other Member should be approached and the child, or adult at risk, suitably protected.
- The Safeguarding Officer will contact the CW&C Integrated Access & Referral Team where necessary, or the police if it is believed that the individual is at immediate risk. See below for contact details.
- The Safeguarding Officer will advise the Committee of the allegation and facts to hand, taking into account confidentiality and urgency, and the Committee should record the action taken without reference to the names of those involved being recorded in its public Minutes.
- If the Chair is subject to suspicion or allegation or fails to take action in an appropriate timescale, the incident must be reported to the House Manager for action instead.

Confidentiality Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned.

Documentation

- It is essential that a detailed record of any disclosure is made - with precise facts, not opinions.
- The names of witnesses must be noted, and they should be asked for a written report.
- All written or recorded evidence should be signed dated and timed.

Outside agency contact numbers

CW&C Integrated Access & Referral Team 0300 123 7047 & select option 1 (If out of hours 01244 977277)
Police 999 - where it is believed that the individual is at immediate risk

APPENDIX

Youth Theatre (YT) provisions - to apply when a CLT Youth Theatre is in operation

YT Leaders/Helpers

Confirmation as a YT Leader or Helper will depend on a satisfactory Enhanced level Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) disclosure and Local Authority (LA) approval as a Matron/Chaperone.

Registration

A register must be kept of all children involved, with a contact name/number kept to hand for emergencies.

Performances: children under statutory school leaving age (<16 at the end of the preceding summer holidays)

If admission charges are to be made - even if only to cover costs of e.g. refreshments or programmes:

- (1) the children must be licensed, or a BOPA applied for from the LA, 21 days before the performance;
- (2) LA approved Matrons/Chaperones (including DBS checking) must be involved.

If no charges are made, or only donations are invited, Matrons/Chaperones will not be required.

**This policy relates to all Members and Guest Members of Chester Little Theatre.
Copies will be made available to all new Members as part of their induction.
Chester Little Theatre is committed to reviewing this policy and good practice annually.**

*As agreed by CLT Committee February 2024
Next review due February 2025*