



Safeguarding Policy

Updated July 2024

The Halifax Playhouse/Halifax Thespians acknowledges the duty of care to safeguard, protect and promote the welfare of all of its members, children and vulnerable adults and is committed to ensuring that these practices reflect statutory responsibilities, and government guidance and complies with best practice requirements.

Every child (defined as any person under the age of 18), young and vulnerable people and all vulnerable adults who perform at the Playhouse, including attending rehearsals at the Carlton Rooms, can be assured that we will endeavour to keep them in a safe environment whilst they are on our premises.

All suspicions and allegation of abuse and/or unfair treatment of a child whilst on our premises will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

We have procedures in place to address these issues and to also help and support any child or vulnerable adult who appears to be at risk or who is a victim of abuse.

The Halifax Playhouse/Halifax Thespians will work extensively with relevant external agencies such as the Police and the NSPCC to ensure that children and vulnerable adults are protected.

We will not tolerate any bullying whatsoever towards our members, children and vulnerable adults and appropriate action will be taken.

The designated Safeguarding Officer is:

Jeanette Kendall (Secretary)
32 Wheatley Close
Halifax
HX3 5HS
07495 799055
secretary@halifaxplayhouse.org.uk

The Safeguarding Officer is the first point of contact for parents and external agencies and they are responsible for the safety and well-being of all the members and children when on the Halifax Playhouse premises.

The Safeguarding Officer's role

- Act as a front-line point of contact for anyone concerned about the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult
- to review, and update annually, the safeguarding policy, or when necessary
- refer relevant issues of safeguarding to the Board of Directors, along with a report of the action taken and outcome
- reporting to the Board of Directors any observations and/or findings concerning safeguarding
- monitoring data on all safeguarding activities through the Playhouse/Halifax Thespians
- contact the Local Authority Social Services and/or Police in the event of a child/vulnerable adult is found to be at risk of harm
- keeping accurate records of concerns about children and vulnerable adults and the action(s) taken
- Ensure that accurate child protection records are kept securely in relation to the safeguarding policies and procedures the Halifax Playhouse have in place.
- Monitor and protect all sensitive data relating to children and the Playhouse members. This includes personal information such as contact details and email addresses.
- To see that all cases of suspected abuse are referred to the local authority MAST team for child/vulnerable adult protection concerns
- Being the contact for the Disclosure and Barring Service
- Contact for Police
- Act as a source of support, advice and expertise to staff on matters of safety and safeguarding

Identifying & Responding to Concerns about a child/Vulnerable Adult

To effectively protect all children and vulnerable adults against harm, it is important to recognise the various types and key signs of abuse.

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional
- Neglect

Extremism & Radicalisation

Radicalisation is the process by which individuals support terrorism or violent extremism. There is no typical profile for a person likely to become involved in extremism or for a person who moves to adopt violence in support of a particular ideology.

There is no place for extremist views of any kind in The Halifax Playhouse/Halifax Thespians, whether from internal sources such as members, or external sources such as friends, agencies or associates. The Playhouse is seen as a safe place and our members will encourage and facilitate this view and will challenge any extremist ideology displayed on the premises.

Our members will be alert to the following:

- Use of inappropriate language
- Possession of violent extremist literature, including electronic material accessed via the internet and communication such as e-mail and text messages.
- Disclosures of exposure to the extremist actions, views or materials of others outside of the Playhouse, such as in their homes or community groups, especially where people, including children, have not actively sought these out
- Graffiti symbols, writing or art work promoting extremist messages or images
- Parental reports of changes in behaviour, friendship or actions and requests for assistance
- Members and children voicing opinions drawn from extremist ideologies and narratives
- Use of extremist or 'hate' terms to exclude others or incite violence
- Intolerance of difference, whether secular or religious, to views based on, but not exclusive to, gender, disability, homophobia, race, colour or culture
- Attempts to impose extremist views or practices on others
- Anti-Western or Anti-British views

The Halifax Playhouse/Halifax Thespians members will strive to eradicate the myths and assumptions that can lead to some people and children becoming alienated and influenced which may make it harder for them to challenge or question these radical influences.

Female Genital Mutilation

It is illegal to subject a child or vulnerable adult to female genital mutilation (FGM) or to take that child or vulnerable adult abroad, or to aid or abet someone to take a child out of the country to undergo the procedure - Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003.

Although the children and vulnerable adults with whom the Playhouse/Halifax Thespians engages is such that they are not necessarily in the 'high' risk category, a child or vulnerable adult may disclose that she is at risk of FGM, has suffered FGM or that she has a sister or family member who is at risk of mutilation.

Everyone should be alert to the following indicators:

- The family comes from a community known to practices FGM
- A child/vulnerable adult may talk about a long holiday to a country where the practice is prevalent

- A child/young person may confide that they or a sister/family member is to have a 'special procedure' or to attend a 'special occasion'.
- A child/vulnerable adult may request help from a teacher or another adult
- Any girl/young person born to a woman who has suffered FGM or has a sister or relative who has been subjected to FGM must be considered a potential risk.

Any information or concern about a child/vulnerable adult or a member of their family being at risk of FGM must be reported to the Safeguarding Officer as a matter of urgency.

This may be treated as an immediate child protection referral to the child/vulnerable adult's home borough.

DBS

We require those undertaking roles working with children/vulnerable adults undergo an Enhanced Disclosure Check from the DBS.

An enhanced check reveals the same information as standard but also it checks against information held by local police forces.

Any person who is on, or has been on the sex register will not be allowed to become a member of the Playhouse/Thespians or take part in productions.

People with a DBS can, if they wish, apply to be a chaperone for the Playhouse/Thespians. Chaperones will work on a rota basis during rehearsals and show week to ensure every child is cared for properly.

Chaperones

A chaperone's first priority is always to the child/vulnerable adult and must not take part in any activity that would prevent them from proper supervision and care of the children/vulnerable adults they are responsible for.

A chaperone will have total charge of a child/vulnerable adult, unless they are being chaperoned by their parent/guardian, whilst the child/vulnerable adult is at the theatre/Carlton rehearsal rooms. Once the show is over, the chaperone will hand the child/vulnerable adult to their parent/guardian, the chaperone will no longer have responsibility for the child.

Chaperones are required by law to keep a record of each child, per performance as shown below:

- These records must be kept and made available, together with each child's licence, at every place of performance where a child is present, for inspection by an officer of the Local Authority in whose area the performance takes place

- Upon completion of the the production, the daily record sheet(s) should be stored with the Safeguarding Officer for a period of not less than 6 months after the final performance date for which the licence has been granted.

A licence may not be needed where the child/vulnerable adult:

- Performs only for 4 days in any 6 month period
- Do not need time off from school to undertake the performance
- Do not receive any payment other than expenses

Anyone who has a Chaperone/Matron licence will be allowed to supervise children/vulnerable adults. A valid, current, licence will be required and a copy taken and stored by the Safeguarding Officer.

Child Performing Licensing

It will be the responsibility of the incoming Let who has children/vulnerable adults in it's cast to provide the necessary licences for the children to perform on our stage.

Break Times / Toilets

Any children taking part in our productions will be supervised at lunch/break times and escorted to the toilet properly by chaperones of the same sex.

Mobile Phones/Emails/Social Media

No mobile phones will be allowed in rehearsals where there are also children. If a child is seen with a phone, the chaperone or responsible adult will confiscate the phone until the end of rehearsals.

Volunteers and staff members should, in no circumstances, make or receive calls or texts to or from children and vulnerable adults using their own personal mobiles. In all instances, the Safeguarding Officer will contact the child's/vulnerable adult's parents or guardians.

At no time should a staff member or volunteer send or receive an email using the child's/vulnerable adult's personal email address.

The Halifax Playhouse/Halifax Thespians recognise that social media can be a legitimate and effective way to communicate with children/vulnerable adults, including facebook, Twitter, Tik Tok and instagram HOWEVER, this will only take place through organisational accounts, as approved by the Social Media Manager, Sharon Old.

Videos, Photography and Online Safety

Parental/guardian consent regarding photography or video recording of any child/vulnerable adult will be collected prior to attending rehearsals or performing on stage.

The Halifax Playhouse/Halifax Thespians will announce at all relevant performances that "Video and photography is not permitted during the performance".

Health/Medication

The Safeguarding Officer will provide all relevant members and/or chaperones with information regarding a child's allergy and/or medical issue, along with instructions on what to do if the need arises or the person/child suffers a reaction.

At no time will any untrained member/chaperone/volunteer administer any medication to a child unless given permission from the parent and instructions on how to correctly administer the medicine.

Only on production of a completed parental consent and authorisation form signed by the child's parent/carer will the paediatric-trained staff member administer any required medication.

Only in a life-threatening situation would a member of the Playhouse or its associates perform CPR and/or call the emergency services.

Abuse

Any person who wishes to become a member of The Halifax Playhouse/Halifax Thespians and discloses that they have in the past, or is now presently, on the Sex Offender Register (UK), they will be refused membership and will not be allowed near a young person or child.

All chaperones will be vigilant when caring for the children and be aware of any possible form of abuse either by another child/adult both on and off the premises.

Responding to the child/vulnerable adult who discloses abuse, all members will:

- listen carefully to what is being said and make notes when necessary
- Avoid showing shock or disbelief
- Observe the child's demeanor
- Find an appropriate opportunity to explain that the information will need to be shared with others. The member/chaperone will not promise to keep the information confidential or a 'secret'

- Allow the child to continue at her/his own pace and do not interrupt if the child is freely recalling events. They will not stop him/her in order to find a 'witness' as this could inhibit the child from saying more
- Avoid asking questions or pressing for more information. Ask for clarification only. If questions are necessary, they should be framed an open manner and not 'lead' the child in any way.
- Reassure the child, if necessary, that s/he has done the right thing in telling
- Explain what will happen next and with whom the information will be shared
- Not ask the child to repeat the disclosure
- Not to ask him/her or any other children who were present to write a written account or 'statement'
- The member/chaperone will then inform the Child Protection Officer/Secretary of the whole discussion and written notes if available

Hearing a Disclosure

If a child/vulnerable adult reports that they are being abused, or information is received which gives concern that a child/vulnerable adult is being abused in any way including those listed above, the Safeguarding Officer will follow the guidance listed below:

- Speak to the child/vulnerable adult, listen to what is being said, without showing shock or disbelief
- Accept what is said and react calmly
- Make a note of what has been said as soon as possible
- Reassure the child/vulnerable adult that they have done the right thing in speaking out
- Tell the child/vulnerable adult that they are not to blame
- WILL NOT promise to keep the information a secret
- Take what the child/vulnerable adult says seriously
- Do not ask leading questions for example 'what did they do next?' Such questions may invalidate the evidence
- Where physical injuries have been observed, these will be carefully noted but not photographed
- The Safeguarding Officer will not ask to see injuries that are said to be on an intimate part of the body. It will be duly noted on the incident report.
- Explain what happens next and whom needs to be contacted
- Make brief notes at the time of the meeting
- The original notes will be kept in case they are required in court
- Record the date, time, place, persons present and any noticeable non-verbal behaviour
- Be specific when noting the words used by the child/vulnerable adult
- Use the Incident Report Form (Appendix 1) to ensure all required information is recorded
- Once all the details have been recorded and all concerns have been considered, a decision will then be reached as to whether the concern should be referred to Social Services as well as the Board of Directors

- All incident reports will be kept securely via the Safeguarding Officer

If the allegation is against the parents of the child/vulnerable adult and/or the incident took place within the family home, the Safeguarding Officer will:

- Contact the MAST team at Calderdale Council in the first instance
- The reason for not contacting the parents will be recorded on the incident form

Where there is no disclosure by a child/vulnerable adult but concerns are accumulating, such as in relation to neglect or emotional abuse, the concerned staff member will alert the Safeguarding Officer who will ensure that all information is brought together and that s/he makes a professional judgement about whether to refer to outside agencies.

If the child lives outside of the Halifax and Calderdale area, the Safeguarding Officer will search for the local council website for where the child lives and contact their social services team.

Where the child already has an allocated social worker, that person or a manager or duty worker in the same team will be contacted promptly.

At this present time, the Safeguarding Officer is also experienced in monitoring and assessing children and young adults who appear to be displaying signs of certain learning difficulties, as listed below:

- ASD
- ADHD
- OCD
- Dyspraxia
- Severe Anxiety

If a child is seen to be displaying characteristics of any of the above, the Officer will speak to the parents of the child in confidence.

Parents are welcome to ask questions and talk to the Safeguarding Officer regarding these conditions at any time.

Allegations of Misconduct or Abuse by Staff/Volunteers

In the event that an allegation is made against a volunteer/staff member of the Halifax Playhouse/Halifax Thespians, two separate procedures will be followed:

1. In respect of the child/vulnerable adult, the Safeguarding Officer will lead the process as stated above.
2. In respect of the staff member/volunteer, the Safeguarding Officer will lead the process as stated below.

The Safeguarding Officer will contact the LADO (local authority designated officer), via the LADO Referral Form, Appendix 2, to report the allegation that a person who works with children/vulnerable adults has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child/vulnerable adult
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against a child/vulnerable adult
- Behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they are unsuitable for such work
- Subject to the advice from LADO, and to any subsequent restrictions on the information that can be shared, the Halifax Playhouse/Halifax Thespians will, as soon as possible, inform the accused person about the nature of the allegation, how enquiries will be conducted and the possible outcome.

The LADO will instruct the Halifax Playhouse/Halifax Thespians on procedure and what information may be shared with the person who is the subject of the allegation.

We will decide what may be shared in situations that may possibly lead to a criminal investigation. We will also consult any relevant agencies, including the Police.

In all instances, we will seek to ensure that any volunteer/staff member is treated fairly and honestly and that they understand the concerns expressed and processes involved. They will be kept informed of the progress and outcome of any investigation and the implications for any disciplinary or related process.

Safeguarding/Accidents

The Halifax Playhouse/Halifax Thespians will ensure that everyone, including children, are visibly comfortable when in either the Playhouse or Carlton rehearsal rooms. It will be at the member/chaperone's discretion to notice when someone, including a child, is beginning to suffer mentally or physically in any way within rehearsals or productions. At that point it is the responsibility of that member/chaperone to take appropriate action.

The Secretary/Child Protection Officer will be made aware of any student that has been injured within rehearsal/show time. When a student has been injured, the Secretary/Child Protection Officer will fully complete the accident book. If the Secretary is absent or incapacitated, the incident will be passed on to Sharon Old, the H & S Officer. In the case of a child, their parents/carers will be informed of the incident. It will be at both parents' and the Secretary/Child Protection Officer's discretion as to whether the member or child goes home or to the hospital, depending on the severity of the injury or illness.

The Halifax Playhouse/Halifax Thespians are determined to meet its obligations to ensure that those providing performing arts opportunities for members, young people and children, do so to the highest possible standard of care.

These procedures apply to all members.

Smoking & Alcohol

The Halifax Playhouse/Halifax is a non-smoking/vaping organisation and anyone who wishes to smoke or vape can do so outside of the building. Members, parents/carers, volunteers and the general public are not permitted to smoke or vape in any area inside the building or in the immediate vicinity of the stage door, main entrance doors, ramp entrance or bar entrance. There are No Smoking/No Vaping signs clearly displayed around the premises.

For any member that is struggling with alcohol abuse there is a website for help and information - www.alcoholconcern.org.uk / 020 7264 0510.

For any member who is wanting help with smoking, there is a website for help and information - www.ash.org.uk / 020 7739 5902.

Drugs

It is a criminal offence to possess, supply or deal in illegal drugs and we strongly oppose the use, abuse and supply of illegal, prohibited or inappropriate substances both inside the building and on the grounds of the Halifax Playhouse. We are responsible for providing a safe environment for all members and visitors.

If any member/staff/volunteer is found to be in possession, or under the influence, of any illegal drug whilst on the Playhouse premises, the substance will be confiscated and the person will be asked to leave the grounds immediately and to await further contact from the Halifax Playhouse Managers and Board of Directors.

If a member of the Halifax Playhouse/Halifax Thespians suspects that someone is taking drugs on the premises, they must contact the Safeguarding Officer, Jeanette Kendall.

The Safeguarding Officer will, in the first instance:

- take a statement from the person making the claim.
- Report the concern to the Board of Directors and produce the written statement for discussion.
- *depending on the severity of the incident, and the substance, the Safeguarding Officer will contact the Police as well as the Calderdale Safeguarding Adults Board / Safeguarding Children Partnership. Any drugs found on the member will be kept as evidence.
- Arrange for a meeting to take place between the Board of Directors and the individual concerned, along with a chosen support adult if they wish to have one. The support adult will be in attendance only and will not participate in the

matter. They are not there in any legal capacity, but as support only to the individual.

- Record the outcome of the Board's decision.
- To archive the findings and keep on record for no more than five years.

The Board of Directors will decide upon the appropriate action and the Safeguarding Officer will pass this decision onto the individual. Outcomes may vary including that person's membership comes under threat, or the the member is removed from consideration for future productions to allow them time to deal with any private issues and to get well and return to performing at a later date. Each case will be dealt with individually.

The Halifax Playhouse/Halifax Thespians understand that anyone taking illegal drugs is vulnerable too and may be struggling as a result. We want all of our members to feel valued and respected within the organisation. We understand that we have a duty of care to every member and will try to support them in every way. We promise to:

1. Deal with every reported incident with respect, confidentiality and empathy.
2. Offer support and advice, signposting them towards substance misuse specialist services as below:

www.turning-point.co.uk - Turning Point 0330 303 6000
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/addiction-support/drug-addiction-getting-help/>
www.addaction.org.uk

NPS Drugs

There are substances in circulation known as NPS (new psychoactive substances) which have been designed to mimic the effect of illegal drugs but are structurally different enough to avoid being classified as illegal substances under the Misuse of Drugs Act. Despite being labelled as legal these substances are not always safe to use and often contain controlled drugs making them illegal to possess. We will treat NPS as any illegal substance and will be dealt with in the same way.

In the case of a child or young person being found to be under the influence or in possession of alcohol or illegal substances whilst on the Playhouse premises, their parent/emergency contact/carer will be called to take the child/young person home.

Parents/Carers under the influence - if it is believed that any parent/carer is under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances on The Halifax Playhouse's premises, our members will calmly approach them and explain that they believe the parent/carer is under the influence and that we will be contacting the necessary authorities.

If the member/chaperone is unhappy to release a child to the person collecting as a result of their behaviour, for example, aggression, as a result of being under the influence, we will contact the necessary authorities.

The Halifax Playhouse/Halifax Thespians understand that we have no legal rights to prevent a person from leaving or a child being taken by a family member, however we would endeavour to protect that person or child to the best of our ability. If the parent/carer takes the child from our care, and we believe that child to be in danger, we will advise the parent that we will be notifying the police and the MAST team at Calderdale Council, stating we believe them to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances, thus putting a child at risk.

If there are any omissions or errors within this policy, please contact Jeanette Kendall.