

MK Dance Theatre

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

MK Dance Theatre (MKDT) is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare, safety, and well-being of all children and young people who attend our classes, rehearsals, workshops, and activities. We believe that all students have the right to learn, perform, and develop in a safe, respectful, nurturing, and transparent environment.

This policy incorporates statutory guidance from:

- *Children Act 1989 & 2004*
- *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018*
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023*
- *Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) guidelines*

The policy has been strengthened through MKDT's 2025 Safeguarding Enhancements Plan, which introduces improved professional boundaries, clearer communication protocols, enhanced training, and updated procedures for both staff and students.

1. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- *Protect all children attending MK Dance Theatre from harm, abuse, and exploitation.*
- *Promote a positive culture of safeguarding, transparency, and professional conduct.*
- *Provide clear procedures for recognising, reporting, and managing concerns.*
- *Strengthen professional boundaries between staff and students.*
- *Establish safer working practices specific to the dance environment.*
- *Ensure compliance with national safeguarding legislation and local authority guidance.*

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- *All MKDT employees, teachers, contractors, volunteers, chaperones, freelance practitioners and rehearsal leaders.*
- *All children and young people under 18 attending any MKDT activity.*
- *All digital, in-person, off-site, and performance-related interactions.*

3. Definitions

- **Safeguarding:** *Protecting children from maltreatment and ensuring safe, effective care.*
- **Child Protection:** *Processes for responding to specific concerns a child is suffering—or likely to suffer—harm.*
- **DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead):** *The person responsible for managing safeguarding procedures.*
- **Physical Contact:** *Any intentional touch between staff and students within a dance or rehearsal context.*
- **Professional Boundaries:** *Expected behaviours that maintain a safe and appropriate professional relationship.*

4. Types of Abuse

Staff at MK Dance Theatre must be aware of the different forms of abuse and their potential signs, including:

- **Physical Abuse:** *Deliberate harm or injury to a child (e.g., hitting, shaking).*
- **Emotional Abuse:** *Persistent emotional maltreatment causing severe effects on the child's emotional development (e.g., humiliation, bullying).*
- **Sexual Abuse:** *Forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether physical or online.*
- **Neglect:** *Persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and emotional needs, leading to harm or impairment (e.g., inadequate food, shelter, or supervision).*

5. Roles and Responsibilities

A. Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):

The DSL is responsible for:

- *Overseeing all safeguarding policy, practice, and concerns.*
- *Making referrals to LADO, police, or social services when necessary.*
- *Maintaining accurate safeguarding records.*
- *Advising and supporting staff.*
- *Ensuring all staff follow updated boundaries, contact policies, and reporting procedures.*
- *Updating safeguarding documentation annually.*

DSL Contact Information:

- **Name:** *Rosemary Lane*
- **Phone:** *07738767475*
- **Email:** *principal.rlsb@gmail.com*

B. All Staff and Volunteers:

- *Follow this updated Safeguarding Policy and strengthened Code of Conduct.*
- *Report all concerns immediately to the DSL.*
- *Avoid private one-to-one interactions without visibility or an additional adult present.*
- *Maintain professional communication and appropriate physical boundaries at all times.*
- *Use only approved communication platforms for speaking with students.*
- *Never engage with students on personal social media.*
- *Attend mandatory safeguarding training annually and additional refresher updates.*

6. Safer Recruitment

MK Dance Theatre implements strict Safer Recruitment practices to ensure that all staff and volunteers who work with children are suitable for their roles. This includes:

Practices include:

- *Enhanced DBS checks*
- *Reference checks with a safeguarding focus*
- *Verification of qualifications*
- *Safeguarding interview questions*
- *Signed acceptance of Code of Conduct before starting any role*

7. Induction and Training

Enhancement Plan requirements integrated:

- *Mandatory safeguarding induction before first working day*
- *Annual safeguarding training for all staff*
- *Refresher training focusing on professional boundaries, digital conduct, and appropriate physical contact*
- *Specialist training offered to staff involved in mentoring, rehearsal leadership, and student development*

8. Strengthened Professional Boundaries (Enhanced)

8.1 Staff-Student Interaction

- *No closed-door one-to-one interactions*
- *Meetings must occur in visible, open spaces or rooms with glass panelling*
- *A second staff member should be present for any sensitive conversation*
- *Staff must maintain professional, not social, relationships*
- *Staff must not give lifts to students unless pre-approved by the DSL and parents*

8.2 Physical Contact Policy (Dance-Specific)

- *MKDT adopts a “hands-off unless necessary” approach.*
- *Physical contact is permitted only for:*
 - *Injury assistance*
 - *Demonstration essential for safe technique*
 - *Preventing immediate harm*
- **Contact must be:**
 - *Explained before it occurs*
 - *Professional, non-invasive, and limited*
 - *Documented or communicated if repeated adjustments are required*
 - *Students may refuse physical contact at any time.*

8.3 Social Media & Communication

Enhancement Plan integration:

- *Staff must not communicate with students via personal accounts or numbers.*
- *Only school-approved platforms (e.g., official email or class communication apps) may be used.*
- *Staff must not:*
 - *Follow students on personal social media*
 - *Message students privately*
 - *Share or repost images of students on personal accounts*
- *All online communication must be transparent, professional, and accessible to the DSL.*

9. Identifying and Reporting Concerns

a. Recognising Concerns:

Staff should be alert to potential signs of abuse, which may include:

- *Unexplained injuries or inconsistent explanations.*
- *Sudden changes in behaviour or mood.*
- *Poor physical appearance, hygiene, or clothing.*
- *Fear of certain individuals or situations.*
- *Disclosure of abuse by the child.*

b. Reporting Concerns:

- **1. Immediate Action:** *If a child is in immediate danger, call the police on 999.*
- **2. Report to DSL:** *If there is a concern about a child's welfare, report it immediately to the DSL. Do not investigate the matter yourself.*
- **3. Referral to Authorities:** *If the DSL deems it necessary, they will make a referral to the relevant child protection authorities (e.g., local safeguarding board, children's social services).*

c. Confidentiality:

- *All safeguarding concerns and reports must be handled confidentially.*
- *Information should only be shared with the DSL and relevant authorities on a need-to-know basis.*

10. Responding to a Disclosure

If a child discloses abuse to a staff member, the following steps should be taken in the following order:

- *Do not promise confidentiality: Explain that the information will need to be shared with those who can help.*
- *Listen carefully and calmly: Allow the child to speak without interruption.*
- *Reassure the child: Let them know they have done the right thing by speaking up and that they will be supported.*
- *Record the details: Write down the child's exact words as soon as possible, including any relevant details such as dates, times, and people involved.*
- *Report to the DSL immediately: Do not delay in passing the information to the DSL.*

11. Allegations Against Staff

If an allegation of abuse is made against a staff member or volunteer:

- *The DSL must be informed immediately.*
- *The staff member will be suspended or removed from working with children until the investigation is complete.*
- *A referral will be made to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), who will oversee the investigation.*
- *The allegation will be handled confidentially, with due regard for the rights of both the child and the accused staff member.*

12. E-Safety and Online Conduct

Staff must ensure that children are protected from potential risks online, including cyberbullying, grooming, or exposure to inappropriate content. Staff should:

- *Follow MK Dance Theatre's E-Safety Policy when using technology or social media in dance education.*
- *Ensure all communications with children online are professional and appropriate.*
- *Report any e-safety concerns or suspicious online behaviour to the DSL.*

13. Photography and Video Recording

To protect children's privacy and safety:

- *Written parental consent must be obtained before taking photographs or video footage of children.*
- *Photographs or videos should only be used for professional purposes, such as promoting MK Dance Theatre or recording performances.*
- *Staff should never share photos or videos of children on personal social media accounts.*

14. Whistleblowing Policy

MK Dance Theatre encourages staff to raise concerns about potential wrongdoing or malpractice, particularly where child welfare is at risk. Staff may report concerns:

- *To the DSL, without fear of reprisal.*
- *Directly to external safeguarding authorities if they feel the concern is not being adequately addressed.*

15. Record Keeping

Accurate and confidential records must be kept of all safeguarding concerns, including:

- *Details of the concern or allegation.*
- *The actions taken and any referrals made.*
- *Communications with parents or authorities.*

All records should be stored securely in compliance with Data Protection Laws and only accessible to authorised personnel.

16. Additional Safeguarding Measures (Enhancements)

16.1 Anonymous Reporting System

- *MKDT will maintain a confidential method for students/staff to report concerns anonymously.*

16.2 Supervision in Common Areas

- *Increased staff oversight in changing areas, waiting areas, lobbies, and corridors.*

16.3 Quarterly Safeguarding Meetings

- *DSL will hold termly safeguarding briefings for staff to review concerns, updates, and policy changes.*

16.4 Annual Policy Review

- *Full policy review every 12 months or sooner if required by legislation.*
- *Staff must sign updated documents annually.*

17. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or following any significant changes in legislation or safeguarding practices. MK Dance Theatre is committed to continuous improvement and will seek feedback from staff, children, and parents to ensure the effectiveness of our safeguarding procedures.

Date of Last Review: 01 - 09 - 2025

Date of Next Review: 01 - 09 - 2026

By adhering to this policy, all staff and volunteers at MK Dance Theatre contribute to the safety, well-being, and protection of the children in our care.

MK Dance Theatre CIC

14 Courteenhall, Northampton, NN72QE

www.mkdancetheatre.com

mkdancetheatre@gmail.com

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):

Rosemary Lane

principal.rlsb@gmail.com