PARSNIPS YOUTH THEATRE – SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1. PURPOSE AND COMMITMENT
   Parsnips Youth Theatre (PYT) believes that all children and young people, without exception, have an absolute right to protection from abuse, neglect, and exploitation, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, or beliefs.

This policy defines our structural commitment to creating a safe environment and aligns our operations with the statutory principles of the Department for Education's guidance "Keeping Children Safe in Education" (KCSIE 2025/26), "Working Together to Safeguard Children", and the expectations of the Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership (LRSCP).

1. ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND GOVERNANCE
   Safeguarding is the responsibility of all directors, employees, freelance contractors, and volunteers at PYT.

- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Claire Bower (nee Parsons)
  Contact Number: 07950468887 | Email: parsnip27@hotmail.com
- Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL): Lisa Hilton. Contact Number: | 07702218815 Email: lisa@parsnipsyouththeatre@gmail.com
- Oversight and Governance: The DSL is responsible for the operational implementation of this policy, ensuring compliance, maintaining accurate records, and leading annual policy reviews.

1. SAFER RECRUITMENT, DBS CHECKS AND TRAINING

- Enhanced DBS Vetting: All staff, directors, teachers, assistants, and long-term volunteers aged 16 and over must undergo an Enhanced DBS check with Children's Barred List checks before starting regulated activity. Vetting certificates must be renewed or verified via the DBS Update Service at least every 3 years. PYT will not accept unverified, open photocopies.
- Regulated Activity and Supervision: Short-term visitors, guest artists, theatre staff, or front-of-house volunteers who lack an Enhanced DBS check must never be left unsupervised. They must remain under the continuous, line-of-sight supervision of a fully DBS-checked PYT staff member.
- Professional Safeguarding Training: All staff and volunteers must complete formal safeguarding training at least annually. This training can be inhouse and led by the DSL. Training must meet LRSCP competency standards, covering the identification of abuse indicators, response pathways, and contextual modern threats.
- Legal Duty to Refer: PYT recognises its legal duty to refer individuals to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) if they have been removed from working with children due to safeguarding concerns, or if they would have been removed had they not resigned.

1. RECOGNISING INDICATORS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT
   All PYT personnel are trained to maintain an attitude of "it could happen here" and to identify signs across overlapping categories of harm:

- Physical Abuse: Unexplained bruising, fractures, burns, or a child shrinking back from physical contact.
- Emotional Abuse: Severe lack of self-esteem, extreme anxiety, social withdrawal, or excessive fear of failure during rehearsals.
- Sexual Abuse / Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB): Age-inappropriate sexual knowledge, sexualised language, or peer-on-peer sexual harassment.
- Neglect: Persistent poor hygiene, inadequate clothing for weather conditions, extreme hunger, or frequent unexcused absences.
- Extra-Familial Harm and Contextual Safeguarding: Risks outside the home, including Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE/County Lines), serious violence, youth radicalisation (Prevent Duty), Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Forced Marriage, and Honour-Based Violence (HBV).
- Vulnerable Groups: PYT recognises that certain learners face a heightened statistical risk of harm. This includes children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), Looked-After Children (LAC/PLAC), young carers, Elective Home Education (EHE) students, and children who are absent from education.

It is understood that one single area may not indicate abuse, however PYT are committed to documenting and passing on to the DSL or DDSL any concerns in writing.

1. RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE (THE 4 R's PROTOCOL)
   When a child or young person makes a direct disclosure of abuse or neglect, staff must follow the strict 4 R's workflow:
2. RECOGNISE: Stay calm, listen actively, and accept what the child says without judgment.
3. RESPOND: Reassure the child that they have done the right thing. Explicitly explain that you cannot promise absolute secrecy, as you must speak to the DSL to keep them safe. Ask open clarification questions using TED words (Tell, Explain, Describe). Do not ask leading questions or investigate.
4. RECORD: Write an objective, factual report using the child's exact words where possible within an Incident Report Form. Note the date, time, and any physical indicators observed. Do not record personal assumptions or opinions.
5. REPORT AND REFER: Hand the written record directly to the DSL immediately. If a child is at immediate risk of harm, emergency services (999) or Children's Social Care must be contacted without delay.
6. MANAGING ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF AND LOW-LEVEL CONCERNS

- Reporting Allegations: Any allegation or suspicion that a member of staff, contractor, or volunteer has harmed a child, committed a criminal offense against a child, or behaved in a way that indicates they are unsuitable to work with children must be reported directly to the DSL immediately. If the allegation concerns the DSL, it must be reported directly to the Leicestershire LADO.

- Immediate Timeframe: The DSL must report any allegation meeting the harm threshold to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within 1 working day of the incident coming to light.
- Low-Level Concerns: Staff must report any "low-level concern"—defined as behaviour that does not meet the harm threshold but is inconsistent with the PYT Staff Code of Conduct (e.g., being overly familiar, sending a personal message to a student, or sharing inappropriate jokes)—to the DSL. These concerns will be recorded securely to ensure a transparent organizational culture.

1. LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CONTACT DETAILS

- Leicestershire Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
  Email: cfs-lado@leics.gov.uk | Enquiries: 0116 305 7550 / 0116 305 6302
- First Response Children's Duty Team (MASH)
  Phone (24/7 Referrals): 0116 305 0005 | Email: childrensduty@leics.gov.uk
- Emergency Services: 999 (Imminent danger) | Non-Emergency Police: 101

1. CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE AND INCLUSIVITY

- Zero-Tolerance Stance: PYT enforces a zero-tolerance policy towards child-on-child abuse, peer-on-peer bullying, sexual harassment, and discriminatory behaviour. This includes zero tolerance for sexism, misogyny/misandry, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and racism.
- Vulnerable Identity Support: Clear support systems are in place for students who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT), or gender-questioning, ensuring their emotional wellbeing and dignity are protected during all theatre activities.
- Code of Behavior: All staff, volunteers, and students under 18 (along with their parents/guardians) must sign and return the PYT Code of Behavior annually.

1. PREVENTATIVE EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY BOUNDARIES

- Online Safety and Smart Technology: While mobile phones and tablets are permitted for line-learning and production communication, taking photographs or recording videos in backstage environments, dressing rooms, or changing facilities is strictly prohibited.
- Digital Monitoring: PYT maintains clear digital boundaries. Staff are forbidden from connecting with minor students via personal social media profiles or personal phone numbers. All communication must occur through official company structures.
- Curriculum Integration: PYT incorporates safety themes, peer respect, personal boundaries, and online safety principles directly into its theatre curriculum. Staff handle sensitive student questions regarding relationships and sex by providing age-appropriate, objective guidance that emphasizes mutual respect and personal safety.

1. POLICY REVIEW AND CONTROL
   This policy is reviewed, updated, and signed off annually by the PYT Director and Governing Body to maintain strict alignment with local and national safeguarding requirements.

- Current Review Date: 26 October 2026
- Responsible Person (DSL): Claire Bower
- DSSL: Lisa Hilton
- Next Mandatory Review Date: 26 October 2027