NATIONAL YOUTH MUSIC THEATRE

IN TUNE WITH YOU

PHYSICAL CONTACT POLICY

P-PC-2611/1

PHILOSOPHY AND AIMS

The safety and wellbeing of the children and young people in our care at NYMT is paramount. Accordingly, and in line with our Safeguarding Policy, this includes:

- children's right to protection from harm or abuse;
- parents' right to feel safe when entrusting their children to NYMT;
- NYMT's commitment to providing an environment in which children and young people feel safe, secure, valued, respected and confident;
- all NYMT staff understanding and following our approach to safeguarding.

NYMT does not operate with a 'no touch' approach, which would be impractical and inappropriate in some of the work that we do. Nevertheless, care must always be taken to ensure that all physical contact is justified, appropriate and in line with the statements above.

DEFINITIONS

Young Company Member refers to a person who is receiving training as a participant at an NYMT activity.

Staff has the meaning given in the Safeguarding Policy, and includes all staff and volunteers.

Further definitions can be found in the main NYMT Safeguarding Policy document.

APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL CONTACT

There are occasions when it is appropriate for staff to have physical contact with Young Company Members, but such contact must be appropriate to their professional role and unambiguous. It should take place in the presence or view of other adults, be in response to the Young Company Member's needs, be appropriate to their age and stage of development, and last no longer than necessary. In deciding whether physical contact would be appropriate, staff must consider where a young person may be more vulnerable because of their personal characteristics like age, gender and cultural background.

Examples of where touching a Young Company Member might be appropriate:

- demonstrating exercises or physical techniques during a rehearsal;
- reassuring a child of younger age;
- comforting an upset or distressed Young Company Member;
- praising or congratulating a Young Company Member;

- reciprocating a hug initiated by a Young Company Member;
- giving first aid.

A member of staff who comforts a distressed Young Company Member tells a colleague afterwards, and is guided by the Young Company Member's own preferences.

Staff avoid physical contact with Young Company Members who are undressed, except where needed for first aid or under the arrangements for costume and microphone fitting set out below.

Staff should never engage in physical contact to the chest or to the legs above the knee. Contact to the mid-body should be particularly careful and kept to the minimum required. See also the Intimate Care section of the First Aid & Medical Policy.

Staff must seek the advice of senior colleagues if they are in any doubt about the appropriateness of physical touch. In line with their safeguarding training, staff must never act in a way that might make a reasonable person doubt their intentions.

The same principles of consent and appropriate contact apply to physical contact between Young Company Members in rehearsal, such as choreography, lifts and stage combat. Content that may be intimate is considered under section 7.8 of the Safeguarding Policy.

Costume fittings

Young Company Members dress themselves wherever possible. Where a dresser or wardrobe staff member needs to help – for example with fastenings, a costume fitting or a quick change – they explain what they will do and why, ask the Young Company Member's agreement, keep contact to what the task needs, and work in view of another adult. Young Company Members have privacy when changing, and adults do not change in the same place as them.

Radio microphone fitting

Young Company Members fit their own mic belts and packs wherever possible. Where sound staff need to fit or adjust a microphone, they explain what they will do, ask the Young Company Member's agreement, work over clothing where possible and work in view of another adult.

CONSENT

Consent should always be sought from a Young Company Member before making physical contact, unless it is not possible to do so (e.g. if a Young Company Member has fainted).

Young Company Members have the right to refuse permission for physical contact, and staff must adjust their work accordingly.

Young Company Members must be given the opportunity to withdraw permission at any time. As such, staff must always be clear about their intentions before engaging in physical contact.

When working in a group session, it may be practical to address the group as a whole about indicating their consent during a rehearsal. In this instance:

- Young Company Members should be invited to place their hands on their chest to indicate that they do not wish to be touched;
- A reminder about this consent procedure should be reissued at appropriate intervals.

A Young Company Member initiating physical contact (such as a hug) can be an indication of consent. Staff do not initiate hugs. Where it suits their role – for example, a member of pastoral staff comforting a distressed child – staff may ask whether the Young Company Member would like a hug, and proceed only if they say yes. Any hug is brief and in view of others.

PHYSICAL INTERVENTION

In rare situations, staff may need to intervene physically to prevent a Young Company Member from injuring themselves or others or damaging property – for example, stopping them stepping into a road.

Staff use physical intervention only when less restrictive options, such as speaking calmly or giving space, have not worked or are not possible. They use the minimum force needed, for the shortest time, and stop as soon as the risk has passed. Physical intervention is never used as a punishment or to make a Young Company Member comply with an instruction.

Any physical intervention is reported to the DSL the same day and recorded, including what happened beforehand, what was tried first, the type of intervention and its duration, and any injury. Parents or carers of under-18s are told the same day where possible. The DSL reviews the incident and makes sure the Young Company Member and staff involved are offered support.

INCIDENTS THAT MUST BE REPORTED

Staff are expected to report anything that concerns them or that may have been misinterpreted, in line with their safeguarding training. The following are examples of incidents that should be immediately reported to a member of the safeguarding team:

- a member of staff has used physical intervention;
- a member of staff has made contact that could be misinterpreted;
- a member of staff has accidentally hurt a Young Company Member;
- a Young Company Member appears to be aroused by physical contact with staff;
- a Young Company Member has objected to, or been upset by, physical contact;
- a Young Company Member misunderstands or misinterprets an adult's actions.

Young Company Members are encouraged at their welcomes/inductions to discuss any worries they have with pastoral staff, but they are free to do so with any trusted adult.

APPENDIX A: POLICY UPDATES & REVIEW

This version dated 1 November 2026. Date of next review: November 2027.

Changes made since the last version:

- Added a definition of Staff
- Aligned the principles of appropriate contact with the Guidance for Safer Working Practice
- Added contact between Young Company Members in rehearsal, with a reference to Intimacy in Performance
- Clarified the approach to hugs
- Added a section on physical intervention
- Added incidents that must be reported
- Added sections on costume fittings and changes, and radio microphones
- Corrected the reference to the Intimate Care section of the First Aid & Medical Policy