

Safeguarding Policy

This document was reviewed by the Committee in September 2019.

Introduction

HCS Youth Choirs recognises the responsibility it has for arrangements regarding safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults.

Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect

A child is abused or neglected when somebody inflicts harm or fails to act to prevent harm. A child or young person up to the age of 18 years can suffer abuse or neglect and require protection.

Physical Abuse - May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates or induces illness in a child whom they are looking after.

Sexual Abuse - Forcing or enticing a child/young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening, may involve: physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts; non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of pornographic material or watching sexual activities; or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect - Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Emotional Abuse - The persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional and behavioural development. It may involve conveying to the child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age and developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children to feel frightened or in danger, for example witnessing domestic abuse within the home or being bullied, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone

We believe that:

- Children and young people should never experience abuse of any kind
- We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, to keep them safe and to practise in a way that protects them.

We recognise that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- All children have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- Some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

We will seek to keep all children and young people safe by:

- Valuing, listening to and respecting them
- Appointing a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) for children and young people and a deputy
- Adopting child protection and safeguarding best practice through our policies, procedures and code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- Developing and implementing an effective online safety policy and related procedures
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support, training and quality assurance measures
- Recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
- Recording and storing information professionally and securely
- Using our safeguarding procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving children, young people, parents, families and carers appropriately
- Using our procedures to manage any allegations against staff and volunteers appropriately
- Creating and maintaining an anti-bullying environment and ensuring that we have a policy and procedure to help us deal effectively with any bullying that does arise
- Ensuring that we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place
- Ensuring that we provide a safe physical environment for our children, young people, staff and volunteers, by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all volunteers:

- Are clear about how to identify and respond to safeguarding concerns about children (any person under the age of 18 years)
- Have a clear understanding of the principles and practice involved in the safeguarding and protection of children
- Understand the importance of prevention in responding proactively and efficiently to all concerns.

The policy will ensure that participating groups, young people and volunteers understand that if abuse is disclosed, the information may not remain confidential and that HCYC will report it to the appropriate person.

There are 2 main elements to our policy:

Prevention through the pastoral support offered to the members

Preventing unsuitable people working with children and vulnerable adults: Our policy applies to all staff and volunteers and members working for HCS Youth Choirs

Prevention

We recognise that high self-esteem, confidence, supportive friends and good lines of communication with a trusted adult help prevention. HCS Youth Choirs will therefore:

- Establish and maintain an ethos where vulnerable members feel secure and are encouraged to talk and are heard;
- Ensure vulnerable members know that there are adults in the choir setting they can approach if they are worried or in difficulty.

Safeguarding will be a regular agenda item at youth choir committee meetings

Preventing unsuitable people from working with children and vulnerable adults

HCS Youth Choirs will operate safe recruitment practices, including ensuring appropriate DBS checks are undertaken and records maintained

Any allegation against a member of staff or a volunteer must be reported to the safeguarding officer without delay unless the safeguarding officer is the subject of the allegation, when the HCS committee chair must be informed. HCS Youth Choirs will ensure that any allegations against staff relating to child protection are notified to the proper authorities.

Each adult present will write down accurately the details of the incident / conversation / concern and record facts only. Details must not be discussed prior to being recorded. All pages should include the name, date and signature of the adult reporting the incident.

HCS Youth Choirs will ensure that all staff are aware of the need for maintaining appropriate and professional boundaries in their relationships with children and vulnerable adults.

Staff will not be alone with children or vulnerable adults at any time.

Confidentiality

The work that HCS Youth Choirs does with children and vulnerable adults sometimes brings us into contact with confidential information. To ensure that all those attending and working for HCS Youth Choirs can do so with confidence, we will respect confidentiality in the following ways:

- Parents will have access to any information that HCS Youth Choirs holds regarding their child(ren).
- Staff / volunteers will not discuss individual children or vulnerable adults for purposes other than planning or safeguarding.
- Information given by parents will not be shared without permission
- Information given by staff / volunteers will not be shared without permission.

Safety

The safety of the people in our care is of paramount importance. In order to secure the safety of both children and adults HCS Youth Choirs will ensure that:

- The young people receive the appropriate amount of supervision.
- An accident / incident book is available at all times.

All staff are aware of the procedures in operation for the arrival and departure of our children and vulnerable adults and an adult will supervise the door at these times.

- Children and vulnerable adults will only be permitted to leave with an authorised adult.
- A register of both children and adults is completed on arrival in order that a complete record of all present is available in case of emergency.
- Fire doors are never obstructed.
- The buildings HCS Youth Choirs use operate no smoking policies.
- A correctly stocked first aid box is available at all times.

Digital Media

HCS Youth Choirs will not allow the use of mobile phones or any other digital media to record images or sounds of the young people in our care, either by staff / volunteers or by the young people themselves., other than for promotional activities authorised by HCS Youth Choirs.

Contact

The Designated Safeguarding Lead person will have overall responsibility.

Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) Nicola Tanner hcsyouthchoirs@gmail.com

Deputy DSO: Rachael Kain

NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000