



Safeguarding / Child Protection Policy

Fulham Children's Choir

INTRODUCTION

Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play in safeguarding children.

Fulham Children's Choir believes that the safety and welfare of children is paramount.

The Children Act 1989 defines a child as anyone who has not reached their 18th birthday. We will ensure that:

- All children whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and / or sexual identity have the right to be protected from harm.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All staff (paid or unpaid) working in the organisation have a responsibility to report concerns to the Fulham Children's Choir Child Protection Officer (see below).

POLICY AIMS

The aim of the Fulham Children's Choir Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice with a view to:

- Providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of Fulham Children's Choir
and
- Allowing all staff / volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

CHILD SAFEGUARDING OFFICER

The Fulham Children's Choir shall appoint a suitably qualified and trained Child Safeguarding Officer who is the main contact point for all concerns. The Child Safeguarding Officer will respond to concerns and allegations promptly and appropriately. The current Child Safeguarding Officer is Hermione Ruck Keene.

DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICE

All staff working with FCC must have a valid DBS certificate; adult volunteers accompanying the children on trips or taking the register must also have a valid DBS certificate.

PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICE

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about the appropriate action to take.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and leisure environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. All

suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

When a child enters the choir having been subjected to child abuse outside the musical environment, singing can play a crucial role in improving the child's self-esteem. In such instances, the choir organiser must work with the appropriate agencies to ensure the child receives the required support.

All personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to promote children's welfare and reduce the likelihood of allegations being made. The following are common-sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.

Good practice means:

- Always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets).
- Treating all young people/disabled adults equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of each young person first, before winning or achieving goals.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance from members of the choirs (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them).
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children to share in the decision-making process.
- Making singing fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play.
- Ensuring that if any form of manual/physical support is required (e.g. to demonstrate correct posture) it should be provided openly.
- Involving parents/carers wherever possible. For example, encouraging them to take responsibility for their children in toilets and changing rooms. If groups have to be supervised, always ensure parents, members of staff or officials work in pairs.
- Ensuring that if a mixed gender choir is taken away, it should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff or official. However, remember that same gender abuse can also occur.
- Ensuring that at residential events (e.g. a concert tour) adults should not enter children's rooms unless strictly necessary, or invite children into their rooms.
- Being an excellent role model - this includes not smoking or drinking excessive alcohol in the company of young people.
- Avoid contact with young people through social media.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people.
- Avoiding excessive rehearsal or competition and not pushing them against their will.
- Securing parental consent in writing to act *in loco parentis* if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
- Keeping a written record of any illness or injury that occurs during choir activities, along with the details of any treatment given.

Practices to be avoided:

The following practices should be **avoided** except in emergencies. For example, a child might sustain an injury and need to go to hospital, or a parent might fail to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable it should be with the full knowledge and consent of a committee member or the child's parents.

- avoid spending time alone with children away from others.
- avoid taking or dropping off a child to an event or activity without other adults being present

Practices never to be sanctioned:

The following practices should **never** be sanctioned. You should never:

- engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- share a room with a child.
- allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.

PROCEDURE IF A CHILD MAKES A SAFEGUARDING DISCLOSURE TO AN ADULT

If a child discloses:

- Remain calm, accessible and receptive
- Listen carefully without interrupting
- Be aware of the non-verbal messages you are giving
- Make it clear that you are taking the child seriously
- Acknowledge their courage and reassure them they are right to tell
- Reassure them that they should not feel guilty and that you are sorry that this has happened to them
- Avoid leading questions
- Tell the child what you are going to do next (i.e. inform a responsible person)
- Write down what was said and who was present, using the child's actual words wherever possible.
- Immediately report the incident to the Safeguarding Officer, without telling anybody else.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE OF CHILDREN

Children must be signed in on arrival at choir by the designated adult (parent volunteer on a rota system). Upon departure, children must be signed out by the adult collecting them; children must not sign themselves out, and must have specific written permission in place to leave by themselves. If the adult collecting them is not their parent/carer, they must give the choir password (FCC) to collect the child. **No children may leave the Hall without being accompanied by an adult unless the appropriate permissions are in place.**

