

Cantate Youth Choir

Safeguarding Policy

- All parents, volunteers, staff and carers are asked to read this document carefully prior to a child taking a place in the Choir
- The purpose of this is to keep each child safe while she or he attends Cantate

Introduction

Safeguarding is about more than child protection. Child Protection is specifically about protecting children and young people from suspected abuse and neglect. Safeguarding is much wider than child protection. It includes everything an organization can do to keep children and young people safe, including minimizing the risk of harm and accidents and taking action to tackle safety concerns.

The purpose of this Safeguarding Policy is to set a clear protocol of action and a framework for our responsibilities and legal duties in relation to each child's welfare. The hope is to ensure a reliable and effective response in the event of any concern for a child's welfare, and to support each child and each family identified.

Commitment

Cantate Youth Choir ("the Choir") will meet their commitment to safeguard children through the following means:

Awareness

Ensuring that all staff and volunteers are aware of the problem of child abuse and risks to children

Prevention

Ensuring, through awareness and good practice, that staff/volunteers and others minimise the risk to children

Reporting

Ensuring that staff and volunteers are clear what steps to take where concerns arise regarding the safety of children

Responding

Ensuring that action is taken to support and protect children where concerns arise regarding possible abuse

Staff and Volunteer Recruitment Practices

Ensuring that references are sought for paid staff in advance of starting employment with the Choir and that all volunteers, staff, and Trustees are enhanced DBS checked

Promoting a culture of openness and safety

Providing an environment where safeguarding is openly discussed with students, volunteers and staff whilst promoting safeguarding as everyone's responsibility

We will do this within the legal framework of the Children Act 1989 & 2004, the Childcare Act 2006, Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, and the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015

In order that the above standards of reporting and responding are met the Choir and more specifically, the Trustees, will ensure that they:

- Take seriously any concerns raised
- Take positive steps to ensure the protection of children who are the subject of any concerns
- Support children, volunteers, music staff or other adults who raise concerns or who are the subject of concern
- Act appropriately and effectively in instigating or co-operating with any subsequent process of investigation
- Listen to and take seriously the views and wishes of children
- Work in partnership with parents/carers and/or other professionals to ensure the protection of children
- Maintain confidentiality within a “need-to-know” framework

Types of abuse

The following definitions of abuse have been taken from the multi-agency code of practice ‘Working together to Safeguard Children’.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and permanent adverse effects on the child’s emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequately valued, or that developmentally inappropriate expectations could be being imposed on the children. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, 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.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or inciting a child or a young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include 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 medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to a child's basic emotional needs.

Bullying

Bullying is use superior strength or influence to intimidate (someone), typically to force them to do something either online or in person. This can be both child-on-child or adult-on-child and will never be tolerated within the Choir. Incidents of child-on-child will be dealt with by temporary exclusion from Choir activities of the perpetrator on a first incidence with the parents/carer being informed by letter. A second incidence will be dealt with by permanent exclusion from Choir activities with the parents/carer being informed by letter.

When to be concerned: Recognising signs of abuse

It is not always easy to spot when children have been abused. However, some of the more typical symptoms which should trigger suspicions would include:

Physical Abuse

- Unexplained or untreated injuries
- Injuries on unlikely or unusual parts of the body
- Cigarette burns, bites or belt marks, scalds
- Fear of parents being contacted, going home or receiving medical attention
- Flinching when touched, refusal to discuss injury
- Covering arms or legs
- Aggressive or withdrawn
- Fear of one person

Emotional Abuse

- Over-reaction to mistakes
- Sudden speech disorders
- Extremes of emotions
- Self-mutilation
- Poor personal hygiene
- Over-intrusive caretaking from adults

Sexual Abuse & Exploitation (including online)

- Pain, itching, bruising or bleeding to genital areas
- Stomach pains
- Discomfort when walking
- Unexplained source of money
- Inappropriate sexual drawings/language/behaviour
- Pregnancy or Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)
- Sexting and/or use of sexualised language
- Broadcasting or receiving sexual images

Abuse by Neglect

- Constantly hungry
- Inappropriate clothing or dress
- Constantly tired, lonely, no friends
- Underweight
- No parental support or interest
- Dishevelled appearance

Radicalisation

- Sudden interest in dogmas
- Alter the way they dress
- Change their diet
- Remove themselves from their established friendship groups
- Online research in to a group or activity on which they are now focussing
- The presence of older adolescents or adults who hold extreme views that they look up to

Dealing with a disclosure

If a child discloses that s/he has been abused, the member of staff/volunteer should:

- Listen carefully to what the child says without displaying shock or disbelief
- Accept what is being said
- Allow the child to talk freely without prying too much in to the details - risking evidence contamination in a criminal investigation
- Reassure the child but do not make promises which it may not be possible to keep
- Do not promise confidentiality – it may well be necessary to inform the relevant authorities (including but not limited to Social Services and the Police)
- Reassure the child that it is not his or her fault
- Stress that it is right to speak up about the issues
- Do not criticise the perpetrator – the child may well still love him or her
- Explain what you have to do next
- Ensure the child's immediate safety by liaising with the Safeguarding Lead
- Thank him or her for confiding in you and reassure them that action will be taken

Record Keeping

When abuse is disclosed or suspected the member of staff/volunteer should:

- Make brief notes as soon as possible giving quotes if they can be recalled
- Dates and times should be recorded
- Notes should be factual and precise
- These notes must not be destroyed, even if a more detailed report is later written as they may be needed in court
- Draw a diagram to indicate any marks or injuries observed
- All Safeguarding files are marked “Strictly Confidential”, and are kept separate from other Choir records

- Parents do not have access to Safeguarding files
- The Choir will keep Safeguarding files for seven years

Designated Person

The Choir has a designated person, Siobhan Nundram, who takes on responsibility for safeguarding issues. Her role is to:

- Ensure that the local authorities Safeguarding Procedures are followed
- Ensure all staff and volunteers are aware of these procedures
- Maintain an up-to-date list of Safeguarding training undertaken by the staff, volunteers and Trustees
- Ensure all staff know to whom they must pass on their concerns
- Decide if the issue is one of “risk of harm” or “actual harm” has occurred to the child
- Act as a source of expertise and advice within the Choir
- Co-ordinate action within the Choir and develop an effective working relationship with other agencies
- Make referrals where child abuse is likely to occur, or is suspected or disclosed to the Local Safeguarding Children’s Board (LSCB) or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
- Attend safeguarding conferences (with staff, volunteers, or Trustees where possible) where necessary or submit reports on the Choir’s behalf to the conference

Procedures

All staff and volunteers are issued with a copy of the Choir's Safeguarding Policy after review and it will be posted on the Choir's website.

Where it is believed that a child is suffering from, or is at risk of significant harm, we will follow the procedure outlined below: -

- If any volunteer or member of staff is concerned about a child he or she must inform the Designated Person immediately
- Notes should be made about the concerns as quickly as possible
- The Designated Person may decide to seek advice initially from Social Services and will decide whether an immediate referral to Hertfordshire County Council Social Services department is necessary
- After a verbal referral has been made to Social Services the Designated Person will forward a written report confirming the telephone conversation within 24 hours
- Particular attention will be paid to the physical, social and emotional development of any child who has been identified as being at risk

Support

Dealing with safeguarding is always difficult and stressful. Members of staff, volunteers and Trustees should consider seeking support for themselves, initially from the Designated Person.

Allegations involving a member of staff

When an allegation is made against a colleague, immediate advice must be sought. The County Child Protection Guidelines must be followed and Disciplinary Procedures will be instigated. The person in question will be required to withdraw from all Choir activities immediately until informed otherwise by the Designated Person. This is as much to protect the individual as it is to prevent further abuse and damage the reputation of the Choir.

Information for staff and volunteers

What should I do if a child tells me he or she is being abused?

Always

- Stay calm – ensure the child is safe and feels safe
- Show and tell the child that you are taking what he or she says seriously
- Reassure the child and stress that he or she is not to blame
- Be honest; explain you will have to tell someone else to help stop the alleged abuse
- Make a note of what the child has said as soon as possible after the event. Be factual in your account of what the child has said
- Maintain confidentiality – do not tell anyone who does not need to know
- Inform the Designated Person of the disclosure immediately, if he or she is not available inform the Chairman or Vice Chairman of the Trustees

Never

- Rush into actions which may be inappropriate
- Make promises you cannot keep
- Interrogate the child
- Show shock or disbelief
- Gossip about the alleged incident

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