

Bicester Choral & Operatic Society

Safeguarding Policy

Legal Context

The law requires any organisation involving young people to take all reasonable measures to ensure that the risk of harm to the welfare of vulnerable adults and children is minimised and, where there are concerns, to share them with relevant local agencies. The relevant legal requirements arise from The Children's Act 1989, The Human Rights Act 1998, The Protection of Children Act 1999, The Sexual Offences (Amendments) Act 2006, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The relevant government guidance includes Safe from Harm 1993, Working Together to Safeguard Children 1999 and Caring for the Young and Vulnerable 2000. Bicester Choral & Operatic Society (BCOS) recognises that it is not the role of our organisation to decide whether a child or vulnerable adult has been abused or not. This is the role of the Social Services department who have legal responsibility or the NSPCC who have powers to investigate child protection concerns under the Children Act.

Good Practice

In developing this policy, BCOS has taken input from the National Association of Choirs, Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB), NSPCC, The Charity Commission of England and Wales, and The Safe Network.

Defining Children, Young Person and Vulnerable Adults

Children are defined as anyone up to the age of 18. For the purposes of this policy document Children will be defined as under 16 years of age, Vulnerable Adults as anyone over 18 years who is or may be unable to take care of themselves or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation, and Young Persons defined as aged 16-18 where they are associated with the society on/after the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

How BCOS Operates

BCOS is a Registered Charity, composed of choir members. Officers are elected and others co-opted to serve on the committee. Rehearsals are run by our self-employed Musical Director or a substitute on occasion, with an accompanist and, on occasion, a Stage Director. There are neither employed staff nor volunteers in the conventional sense. BCOS does not advertise itself as an activity suitable for children or vulnerable adults. Choir members are independent adults, and it happens only occasionally that Young Persons or Vulnerable Adults join, rehearse and perform with us, and by exception that children would do so (for a specific event requiring children). Choir rehearsals and performances are group activities, and there is no need for a member of the society to be alone with another member of any age. BCOS is therefore unlikely to be targeted by a person seeking opportunities to abuse Children or Vulnerable Adults. Nonetheless, BCOS recognises the need to safeguard any young and vulnerable members and the Committee has therefore agreed the following Safeguarding Policy.

BCOS Safeguarding Policy

1. BCOS will publicise its Safeguarding policy on its website www.bcoswesing.org.uk and draw it to the attention of members at the beginning of each season via the AGM. New members will be directed to an online copy of the policy in response to any enquiry about joining the society and on joining.
2. Young Persons or Vulnerable People will be welcome to join BCOS at any time.
3. Children will be welcome to join BCOS whenever a production or event necessitates it, as long as they bring a parent or other responsible adult who remains responsible for them throughout rehearsals and performances. For stage shows BCOS will provide chaperones as necessary and in accordance with Oxfordshire County Council guidelines.
4. BCOS will nominate a Designated Person(s) who will be in attendance at any rehearsal/performance where a Young/Vulnerable Person is present. Where Children are in attendance the Designated Person(s) will also be DBS-checked.
5. Choir members will report any concerns to the Designated Person(s) based on the detailed guidance in Appendices 1-5:
 - Appendix 1 Forms of Abuse
 - Appendix 2 Ways to Recognise Child Abuse and Neglect
 - Appendix 3 Guidelines for Responding to a Child, Young Person or Vulnerable Adult making an Allegation of Abuse
 - Appendix 4 What to Do if You Suspect that Abuse may have occurred
 - Appendix 5 What the Designated Person will do
 - Appendix 6 Confidential Record of Suspected Abuse
 - Appendix 7 Contact in Oxfordshire County Council
6. A permanent confidential record will be kept of the report.
7. If BCOS should need to recruit or employ new or additional people in a leadership capacity, then we will apply safeguarding principles to ensure that appointees are suitable to work with young or vulnerable people (see Appendix 8).
Our current MD and accompanist will be DBS-checked in the event that we undertake a production necessitating the involvement of Children. (see Appendix 7 for DBS process)
8. The policy and procedures will be reviewed annually at committee meeting.

Approved at a committee meeting on 9th Dec 2015.

Signed by the Chairman on behalf of the Committee.
Ian Muddle

Reviewed and updated 23rd Jan 2017

Reviewed 31st Jan 2018

Reviewed 31st Jan 2019

Reviewed 5th Mar 2020 – urls of websites updated, designated persons list updated

Reviewed 31st Jan 2023 – urls of websites updated, designated persons list reviewed

Appendix 1 Forms of Abuse

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm or impairment. It can include misuse of medication, undue restraint or inappropriate sanctions. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child or vulnerable adult whom they are looking after. A person might do this because they enjoy or need the attention they get through having a sick child. Physical abuse can be caused through omission or the failure to act to protect.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child or vulnerable adult such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on emotional development. It may involve making the child or vulnerable person feel or believe that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve threats of harm or being abandoned, humiliation, verbal or racial abuse, and isolation, bullying, shouting, or swearing. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed. It may also involve causing the child or vulnerable adult to feel frequently frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of a child or vulnerable adult. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment, though it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or vulnerable adult to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the person is aware of, or consents to what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative acts such as rape, or oral sex or non-penetrative acts such as fondling. Sexual abuse may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children or vulnerable adults in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material, or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Boys and girls can be abused by males and/or females, by adults and by other young people. This includes people from all different walks of life.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child or vulnerable adult's basic physical and/or psychological needs. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter, and clothing, failing to protect the person from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or dental treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to a person's basic emotional needs.

Financial or Material Abuse

This can include theft, fraud, misuse of property, inheritance, state benefits, possessions, or pressure in relation to wills.

Discriminatory Abuse

This can include harassment or slurs based on race, gender, disability or age.

Note

There are other sources of stress for families, such as social exclusion, domestic violence, the mental illness of a parent or carer, or drug and alcohol misuse. These may have a negative impact on a child or vulnerable adult's health and development and may be noticed by a carer organisation. If it is felt that the person's well-being is adversely affected by any of these areas, the same procedures should be followed.

Appendix 2: Ways to Recognise Abuse and Neglect of a Child Young Person or Vulnerable Adult

Physical Abuse

What Constitutes Abuse?

Definitions are provided below of the different forms of abuse. This list is not exhaustive and should be considered as guidelines and examples only. Abuse is the violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons.

"Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal or psychological, it may be an act of neglect or an omission to act, or it may occur when a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented or cannot consent. Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it" (No Secrets, Department of Health 2000). Abuse can broadly be defined in the following categories:

Physical Abuse

The non-accidental infliction of physical force that results (or could result) in bodily injury, pain or impairment.

Examples of behaviour: hitting, slapping, pushing, burning, physical restraint, harassment, enforced sedation, inappropriate use of medication, and catheterisation for management ease.

Sexual Abuse

Direct or indirect involvement in sexual activity without consent.

Examples of behaviour: Non-contact: looking, photography, indecent exposure, harassment, serious teasing or innuendo, pornography.

Contact: coercion to touch, e.g. of breast, genitals, anus, mouth, masturbation of either self or others, penetration or attempted penetration of vagina, anus, mouth, with or by penis, fingers, other objects.

Neglect

Ignoring or withholding physical or medical care needs.

Examples of behaviour: failure to provide: appropriate food, shelter, heating, clothing, medical care, hygiene, personal care; inappropriate use of medication or over-medication.

Psychological / Emotional Abuse

Psychological abuse is that which impinges on the emotional health and development of individuals. Psychological / emotional abuse might also occur as a result of the other forms of abuse.

Examples of behaviour: shouting, swearing, insulting, ignoring, threats, intimidation, harassment, humiliation, depriving an individual of the right to choice and privacy.

Financial / Material Abuse

The unauthorised, fraudulent obtaining and improper use of funds, property, or any resources of a vulnerable person.

Examples of behaviour: misappropriating money, valuables, or property, forcing changes to a will, denying the vulnerable adult the right to access personal funds.

Abuse of Individual Rights / Discriminatory Abuse

Abuse of individual rights is a violation of human and civil rights by any other person or persons. Discriminatory abuse consists of abusive or derisive attitudes or behaviour based on a person's sex, sexuality, ethnic origin, age or disability.

Professional Abuse

Professional abuse is the misuse of therapeutic power and abuse of trust by professionals, the failure of professionals to act on suspected abuse/crimes, poor care practice or neglect in services, resource shortfalls or service pressures that lead to service failure and culpability as a result of poor management systems/structures.

Examples of behaviour: entering into a sexual relationship with a person who uses the service, failure to refer disclosure of abuse, poor, ill-informed or outmoded care practice, failure to support vulnerable adult to access health care/treatment, denying vulnerable adults access to professional support and services such as advocacy, service design where groups of people living together are incompatible, punitive responses to challenging behaviours, failure to whistle-blow on issues when internal procedures to highlight issues are exhausted.

Emotional abuse?

Where May Abuse Occur and By Whom

Abuse of vulnerable adults can occur in any setting or situation. Abuse may occur in:

- Domestic Settings - including the person's home or another person's home.
- Institutional Settings - including day care, residential homes, nursing homes and hospitals.
- Public Settings - including the street, any public area, or social or work environment.

Abuse of vulnerable adults occurs in all cultures, all religions, and all levels of society. The abuser may be anyone including family, friend, neighbour, partner, carer, stranger, care worker/service provider, manager, volunteer, another person who uses the service or any person who comes into contact with the vulnerable adult.

Appendix 3: Guidelines for Responding to a Child, Young Person or Vulnerable Adult Making an Allegation of Abuse

If a child or vulnerable adult should talk to you of abuse:

- Stay calm, listen carefully to what is being said
- Find an appropriate early opportunity to explain that it is likely that the information will need to be shared with others-do not promise to keep secrets
- Allow the child or vulnerable adult to continue at his/her own pace
- Ask questions for clarification only, and at all times avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer
- Reassure the child or vulnerable adult that they have done the right thing in telling you
- Tell them what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared (see Appendix 4)

Helpful statements to make

- I believe you (or showing acceptance of what the child or vulnerable adult says)
- Thank you for telling me
- It's not your fault
- I will help you

Do not say

- Why didn't you tell anyone before?
- I can't believe it!
- Are you sure that this is true?
- Why? Who? When? Where?
- Never make false promises

Appendix 4: What to do if You Suspect that Abuse may have occurred.

You must report the concerns immediately to the Designated Person who will obtain information, assess what to do next and take the appropriate action.

The BCOS Designated Person(s) is/are: Nikki Fine, Nicky Roberts, Emily Brown

The Designated Person has been nominated by BCOS to refer allegations or suspicions of neglect or abuse to the statutory authorities. In the absence of the Designated Person the matter should be brought to the attention of a member of the committee.

You should under no circumstances discuss your suspicions or allegations with anyone other than those nominated above.

Make notes as soon as possible (ideally within 1 hour of being told).

You should write down exactly what the child or vulnerable adult has said and what you said in reply and what was happening immediately before being told (i.e., the activity being delivered)

You should record the dates, times and when you made the record and ensure that the record is signed and dated.

You should report your discussion with the Designated Person as soon as possible. If this person is implicated, you need to report to the Chairman of the BCOS. If both are implicated report the matter to Oxfordshire Council Social Services – see Appendix 7 for contact details.

Note: Child Abuse

It is the right of any individual to make direct referrals to the child protection agencies. If for any reason you believe that the nominated persons have not responded appropriately to your concerns, then it is up to you to contact the child protection agencies directly.

Note: Abuse of Vulnerable Adults

To determine the appropriate action, it is important to consider:

- Does the vulnerable adult understand and accept the risk?
- Is the vulnerable adult able to make their own decisions and choice, and do they wish to do so?
- How serious the abuse – with the starting point being the perception of the vulnerable adult.
- If the vulnerable adult expresses a wish for the concerns not to be pursued, this should be respected wherever possible, subject to considerations of safety and competence.

Appendix 5: What the Designated Person Will Do

The role of the Designated Person is to:

- obtain information from staff, volunteers, children or parents and carers who have child protection concerns or concerns about the welfare of a vulnerable adult, and to record this information.
 - assess the information quickly and carefully and ask for further clarification as appropriate.
 - make a referral to a statutory child protection agency or appropriate agency for vulnerable adults, or the police without delay
 - If in any doubt about what to do, to seek advice from Social Services (see Appendix 7 for contact details).
- IT is NOT the Designated Person's role to investigate.

If a child or vulnerable adult has a symptom of physical injury or neglect, and the abuse may have been deliberate the Designated Person will:

- contact Social Services for advice
- seek emergency medical attention if it is necessary and inform the doctor of any suspicions of abuse. The doctor will then initiate further action if necessary.
- inform the parents or carers only if advised by Social Services to do so.

If a child or vulnerable adult has a symptom of physical injury or neglect, but there is no sign that the abuse was deliberate, the Designated Person will:

- seek emergency medical attention if it is necessary and inform the doctor of any suspicions of abuse. The doctor will then initiate further action if necessary.
- Otherwise, speak with the parent/carer/guardian and suggest that medical help/attention is sought for the child.
- If appropriate, encourage the parent/carer to seek help from Social Services.

In the event of allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse the Designated Person will:

- contact Social Services and speak to no one else about the matter.

Appendix 6 BCOS Confidential Record of Suspected Abuse

Please complete this form with as much detail as possible. Use additional pages if necessary.

Name of person recording	
Name of child/vulnerable adult	
Date of birth of child/vulnerable adult	
Ethnicity of child/vulnerable adult	
Religion of child/vulnerable adult	
First language of child/vulnerable adult	
Disability of child/vulnerable adult	
Parent/Carer's name	
Home address	
Telephone number	
Are you reporting your concerns or someone else's?	
Give a brief description of what prompted the concerns (include dates, times, specific incidents)	
Please give details of any physical signs	
Please give details of any behavioural signs	
Please give details of any indirect signs	
Have you spoken to the child/vulnerable adult? If so, what was said?	
Have you spoken to the parent/carer of the child/vulnerable adult? If so, what was said?	
Has anybody been alleged to be the abuser? If so, give details.	
Have you consulted anybody else? If so, please give details	
Person reported to	
Date reported	
Name of reporting person	
Signature of reporting person	

Date of report	

Appendix 7: Contact Details In The Event of Suspected or Disclosed Abuse

In An Emergency – Telephone: 999

Report to Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub: 045 050 7666

Oxfordshire Social and Community Services During Office Hours: 0845 0507 666

Oxfordshire Social and Community Services Outside Office Hours: 0800 833408

1. OCC Safeguarding Adults Multi-Agency Procedures:

<http://www.osab.co.uk/professionals/multi-agency-procedures/>

2. Safeguarding Themes: types of abuse

<https://www.osab.co.uk/resources-and-publications/types-of-abuse/>

3. DBS Checks Overview (via Gov.uk)

<https://www.gov.uk/dbs-check-applicant-criminal-record>

4. How to get DBS Checks via Making Music

<http://www.makingmusic.org.uk/resource/how-get-disclosure-and-barring-service-dbs-checks-making-music>

Appendix 8: Recruitment Process for Staff – Applying Safeguarding Principles

Recruitment as used here refers to employees, volunteers, and self-employed musicians, including young people who have been involved with the organisation and have become volunteers. The provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974) will apply only in the exceptional circumstance that an employee, volunteer, or self-employed musician will at choir have “substantial, unsupervised access on a sustained or regular basis” to children under the age of 18 or vulnerable adult. The Act requires a police check prior to making a job offer. In order to embed the principles of safeguarding into the recruitment process we will consider the following:

- **Define the role:** we will think about the tasks and responsibilities involved and the type of person most suitable for the job.
- **Selection criteria:** we will put together selection criteria based on a list of essential and desirable qualifications, skills, and experience.
- **Application Pack:** we will send a copy of our Safeguarding Policy with our application pack
- **Application form:** we will ask all applicants to apply in writing and their application should cover their personal details, previous and current work/volunteering experience.
- **Short listing:** we will assess the application against the selection criteria described above.
- **Declaration:** we will ask all applicants to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they should be considered unsuitable to work with children or vulnerable adults.
- **Identification:** we will ask for photographic evidence to confirm the identity of the applicant e.g., passport
- **Qualifications:** we will request to see documentation of any qualifications detailed by the applicant.
- **Selection tools:** we will always interview candidates and ask for two references check.
- **Interview:** we will have at least two people from our organisation on the interview panel.
- **Briefing Candidates:** Candidates will be briefed at interview about safeguarding policy and attitudes to working with children and vulnerable adults will be discussed at the interview
- **References:** we will request two written references who are not family members or friends and who have knowledge of the applicant’s experience of working with children or vulnerable adults. We will ask the referee to comment on the candidate’s suitability for working with children or vulnerable adults. We will also try and follow up written references with a telephone call.
- **DBS Checks:** Successful candidates will be appointed subject to satisfactory completion of DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service checks).