

Safeguarding Policy - Hereford Choral Society

Overview

Commitment to safeguarding

Hereford Choral Society believes that a child¹, young person or vulnerable adult should never experience abuse of any kind. We recognise that we have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults. We are committed to safeguarding the well-being of all children, young people and vulnerable adults we encounter and to protecting them from harm.

About this policy

- This policy applies to; all members, staff (whether employees or freelancers), volunteers and anyone working on behalf of Hereford Choral Society or taking part in Hereford Choral Society activities.
- The purpose of this policy is to provide members, staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to the protection of vulnerable people.
- This policy recognises vulnerable people as:
 - Children up to the age of 16 or young people aged 16-18.
 - Adults aged over 18 defined as vulnerable by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006; this might include adults with a learning or physical disability, a physical or mental illness, chronic or otherwise, including an addiction to alcohol or drugs, or reduced physical or mental capacity.
- This policy aims to:
 - Protect children, young people and vulnerable adults who are, members of, or volunteer for, Hereford Choral Society.
 - Ensure members and volunteers working with children, young people and vulnerable adults are carefully recruited and understand and accept responsibility for the safeguarding of those vulnerable individuals they are interacting with.
 - Ensure that the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults according to its ground rules, ways of working and procedures are a primary consideration when Hereford Choral Society undertakes any activity, event or project.

The main laws and guidance supporting this policy are:

- Children Acts 1989 and 2004
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991

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- Data Protection Act 2018 (incorporating the General Data Protection Regulations)
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Government guidance on safeguarding children
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- The Safe Network's 'Are they safe?' Guide (www.safenetwork.org.uk)
- The Charity Commission's 'Strategy for Dealing with Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Issues in Charities'.

How Hereford Choral Society might work with vulnerable people

Hereford Choral Society is a registered charity of amateur choral singers managed by a committee of volunteers elected at the annual general meeting or co-opted as necessary. Committee members are trustees of the charity. To carry out its charitable objects it presents several concerts a year sometimes performing with orchestral groups, professional soloists and other choirs, including on some occasions, children's choirs. Rehearsals are run by our Musical Director or a substitute on occasion, with an accompanist. They attend weekly rehearsals with members in term time to prepare for the concerts. There are no employed staff or volunteers in the conventional sense. From time-to-time Hereford Choral Society organises other events such as choral workshops and social events.

The choir typically has about 150 members, the great majority of whom are independent adults. In general, the membership does not include children under 16, but young people aged 15-18 are eligible to become members and rehearse and perform with the choir. Specifically, Hereford Choral Society will support the development of a small number of younger singers, some of whom may be under 18, by offering up to four modest bursaries per year.

The involvement of young people aged 15 to 18 remains the exception, however. The choir is predominantly adult and does not advertise itself as an activity suitable for children or vulnerable adults. Choir rehearsals and performances are group activities, and there is no need for a member of the choir to be alone with another member of any age. The choir is therefore unlikely to be targeted by a person seeking opportunities to abuse children, young people or vulnerable adults.

Nevertheless, Hereford Choral Society recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of children and vulnerable adults with whom it works and comes into contact and believes that everyone has the right to enjoy the activities of the Choir in a happy, safe and secure environment. Any child/young person becoming a member of Hereford Choral Society must be accompanied by a parent or other responsible adult who remains responsible for them throughout rehearsals and performances. If the responsible adult is a person other than the parent and is provided by the choir (for example, as part of the bursary scheme) they shall be DBS checked and be a licensed chaperone.

As such our involvement with children and vulnerable people might include, but is not limited to:

- Members of the group who may become members and attend rehearsals and concerts as performers, as described above.

- Relatives and friends of members who attend rehearsals and concerts in a volunteering capacity.
- Audience members at public concerts.

Named safeguarding person: **Dr Ian Roper** has responsibility for safeguarding issues, is DBS checked and undergoes annual safeguarding training. All queries and concerns relating to safeguarding should be referred to **Dr Ian Roper** in the first instance.

Any projects, events or other activities that will involve vulnerable people must be planned with the involvement of **Dr Ian Roper** and in line with established procedures and ground rules (see below).

Procedures and ground rules: A further document – [Ground rules, ways of working and procedures](#) is available and forms part of this policy.

Policy review: This policy will be reviewed and amended (if necessary) on an annual basis by the Executive Committee of Hereford Choral Society. It will also be reviewed in response to changes in relevant legislation, good practice, or in response to an identified failing in its effectiveness.

Ground rules, ways of working and procedures

This document forms part of the Hereford Choral Society Safeguarding policy

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The purpose of this policy is to provide members staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to the protection of vulnerable people.

This policy recognises vulnerable people as:

- Children up to the age of 16 or young people aged 16-18.
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This document includes:

- Recruitment practices around safeguarding
- Ground rules and ways for working. Planning is carried out in line with this policy and procedures.
- The event is attended by an appropriate number of DBS checked adults – this will be a minimum of one but more when possible.
- Where possible the total number of adults in attendance (not necessarily DBS checked) compared with the total number of children will be in line with the ratio table below - as per Ofsted recommendations. g regarding safeguarding of vulnerable people
- Procedures for raising safeguarding concerns and incidents of abuse.

Recruitment practices around safeguarding

If an existing or potential new member, staff member or volunteer will be working with vulnerable people in the capacity **as a chaperone** as part of the Hereford Choral Society activities the appropriate level of DBS will be requested before that work is undertaken and the individual will be required to be licensed as a chaperone with Herefordshire Council

- A Standard disclosure will apply for anyone with supervised access to children. An Enhanced disclosure will be required for anyone with unsupervised access, and they shall be required to be a licensed chaperone.
- The Society will have a written code of practice for the handling of disclosure information.
- The Society will ensure that information contained in the disclosure is not misused.

Ground rules and ways for working regarding safeguarding of vulnerable people.

Membership

Should any child or close relative (under 18) of a member of Hereford Choral Society participate in choral works with Hereford Choral Society the member must function as a responsible adult. Should any other child/young person participate in any Hereford Choral Society activities they must be accompanied by a parent or other responsible adult who remains responsible for them throughout rehearsals and performances. Where the responsible adult is a member of Hereford Choral Society, they shall be DBS checked and be a licensed chaperone.

Joint concerts with schools and other children's choirs.

Hereford Choral Society will make appropriate joint working arrangements to ensure that such groups will always be in the care of their teachers and helpers and/or parents who will bear responsibility for their welfare at all times. This does not detract from the choir's general responsibility to provide a safe environment for joint activities and the principles of this safeguarding policy still apply.

Audiences and Social Events

Hereford Choral Society is aware that children and vulnerable adults may attend their concerts as members of the audience, or attend social functions hosted by Hereford Choral Society. It is the responsibility of the parent, guardian, or carer to ensure adequate supervision. If a parent/guardian/carer is not personally attending an event this policy requires them to be satisfied that the child or vulnerable adult will be accompanied and adequately supervised by a responsible adult always acting on their behalf.

Privacy

In the rare event of it not being possible to arrive at a venue in concert dress, Hereford Choral Society will endeavour to ensure a child's privacy is respected if required to change at a venue.

The Committee, in common with its policy for adult members, will not disclose contact details for any child member without first obtaining the permission of the parent/guardian. The purpose of any request for contact details, and the identity of any person making such a request will be given to the parent/guardian.

Parents and guardians should be aware that photography, audio, and video recording are undertaken from time to time at concerts and rehearsals. The images and recordings are used both on- and off- line including on the web. They provide valuable tools to promote the work of the choir to a wider audience and form part of the historical record of our work.

Abuse.

Hereford Choral Society endeavours by the implementation of this safeguarding policy to protect and minimise the risks of abuse of children, young people, and vulnerable adults. The term child abuse is used to describe a range of ways that people harm children. Abuse of adults can happen anywhere. It can happen at home, in a residential or nursing home, in a hospital, at work or in the street. There are four main categories of abuse namely physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect. Hereford Choral Society notes the importance of being alert to signals of abuse and to the difficulty children or vulnerable adults may have in reporting it.

When Hereford Choral Society organises an activity or event where they will be responsible for vulnerable people they will ensure:

- Planning is conducted in line with this policy and procedures.
- The event is attended by an appropriate number of DBS-checked adults – this will be a minimum of one but more when possible.
- Where possible the total number of adults in attendance (not necessarily DBS-checked) compared with the total number of children will be in line with the ratio table below - as per Ofsted recommendations.
- There is a main contact for safeguarding on the day - this will be an individual who has been DBS-checked.
- The main contact has access to emergency contact details and other relevant details (e.g. information about picking up arrangements for vulnerable people).
- That if vulnerable people of different gender will be taking part in activities adults of different gender will be in attendance too.
- Volunteers on duty at an event will wear clear identification. The Secretary of Hereford Choral Society will maintain a register of all volunteers who are not members of Hereford Choral Society.
- A vulnerable person is not to be left alone with an adult, unless that adult is DBS checked and conducting regulated activity.
- Two adults (one DBS checked) should be the last to leave a venue once the activity has finished and will be responsible for ensuring vulnerable people get home safely.

Child to adult ratio table

Childs age	Number of adults	Number of children
12-18	1	10

Working with parents/guardians: If a vulnerable person wishes to take part in Hereford Choral Society activities written permission (email is fine) should be obtained from parents/guardians where appropriate, and before the activity takes place. Written permission should include emergency contact details of any relevant pick-up arrangements, including permission for another adult to pick up the vulnerable person after the activity has finished.

Procedures for raising safeguarding concerns and incidents of abuse.

Hereford Choral Society notes the importance of being alert to signals of abuse and to the difficulty children may have in reporting it. To assist in responding appropriately to a child who has a complaint, it offers the following strategy:

- Listen carefully.

- Reassure the child that this matter will be disclosed only to those who need to know about it and that they are doing the right thing in telling you.
 - Avoid leading questions or closed questions.
 - Write down what has been said, with date and time and any names mentioned.
 - Tell the child what you are going to do next (in the first instance, report the matter to the 'Named Person' for safeguarding). Hereford Choral Society notes that it is not its role to investigate whether a child has been abused or not and it is not qualified to do so. This is the role of bodies such as Social Services, the NSPCC, or the Police.
- If any member, staff or volunteer in Hereford Choral Society witnesses, suspects or is informed of a witnessed or suspected case of abuse they should immediately report it to the Named Safeguarding Officer, **Dr Ian Roper**.
 - If the Named Person is not available, or is involved in or connected to, the abuse, it should be reported to the Society Secretary/Vice Chair **Mr Mark Ewins** or a DBS-checked adult: *see appendix 1*.
 - If an individual wishes to report an incident of abuse against themselves, they should report it to the named safeguarding officer or an individual they trust.

The Named person (or person reported in their absence) will first decide based on the immediacy of the concern and the following two factors:

1. If the vulnerable person is in immediate danger or needs emergency medical attention, call the police and/or ambulance service.
2. If the person at the centre of the allegation is working with vulnerable persons at the current time, remove them, in a sensitive manner from direct contact with vulnerable people and follow the procedures below.

If none of the above applies the named person will:

- Make a note of the concerns reported to them.
- Speak with committee members to decide how to handle the reported abuse. Excluding any committee members who of involved in the incident.
- Escalate the report by either:
 - Raising concerns with the police – for serious or possible criminal offences.
 - Requesting an assessment by the local authority social care department about whether a vulnerable person needs protection.
 - An internal investigation – for less serious incidents where they feel internal mediation will be successful.
- Where cases are escalated the committee will cooperate with the police or local authority in dealing with the reported incident.

- Where an internal investigation takes place, the committee will:
 - Inform all parties involved of the reported abuse as soon as possible.
 - Inform the family/guardians of the person reported as having been abused of the incident.
 - Arrange separate meetings with both parties within 10 days of the reported incident. A joint meeting may be arranged if appropriate.
 - Both parties should be given the chance to bring a friend or representative to the meeting.
 - Meetings will be attended by the named safeguarding officer and at least one other committee member.
 - All parties will also be invited to submit a written statement in advance of the meeting.
 - Once meetings have taken place the committee will decide on next steps and communicate them to all parties in writing within 5 days. They will be either:
 - Escalate the incident to the relevant authority.
 - Further investigation – with established procedures and timelines to work towards a resolution.
 - A decision or resolution.

Resolution and disciplinary action

- If abuse is found to have taken place any final resolution or decision will be taken in the best interest of the person who has suffered the abuse and the best interests of Hereford Choral Society.
- Any disciplinary action will be taken in line with the Hereford Choral Society constitution.

A copy of this policy is lodged with the choir's Safeguarding Officer and will be available as soon as possible on the Hereford Choral Society website. It can also be sent to each parent, guardian, or carer before the event upon request.

ⁱ For the purposes of this policy, the terms 'young people' and 'child' are interchangeable and used to describe any person under the age of 18 years, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity.