

## Policy Statement

Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus (SPC) will ensure the safety and protection of all children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in its activities through adherence to its Safeguarding Policy and guidelines.

*A child is defined as a person under the age of 11, young people are aged 11-18, and a vulnerable adult is a person aged 18 or over who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or maybe unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.*

The nature of SPC's activities are such that interaction with children is likely to be very minimal; the words 'young people' will therefore be used in this document. However, throughout, they refer to children, young people, and vulnerable adults.

SPC members includes the chorus, Music Director, accompanist and Voice Coach.

### 1. Practices never to be sanctioned

SPC members and volunteer helpers should never:

- Engage in rough physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- Share a room with a young person
- Spend excessive amounts of time alone with young person away from others
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- Allow a young person to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a young person, even in fun
- Reduce a young person to tears as a form of control
- Do things of a personal nature for young person that they can do for themselves
- Invite or allow young person to visit them at home unsupervised
- Allow allegations made by a young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- Build individual relationships with young people under 18 via networking sites or any other kind of electronic communications

### 2. Incidents that must be reported / recorded

If any of the following occur, SPC members must report immediately to the SPC Chair or, if unavailable, another member of the committee. Account should also be taken of SPC's Risk Management Policy, and advice taken from any qualified First Aiders, in these situations. The incident must also be recorded, with witness statements logged where possible / appropriate. The parents/guardians of the young person should also be informed, preferably by the SPC Chair.

- If a young person is accidentally hurt
- If he/she seems distressed in any manner
- If a young person appears to be sexually aroused by their actions

- If a young person misunderstands or misinterprets something an SPC member has done

### 3. Photography & film

SPC will gain parental permission, via a third party such as a school where appropriate, for anyone under 18 years old who will be photographed or filmed as part of a project or event being organised by SPC. Such photos / films will be stored securely in password-protected and limited access files. SPC will seek photo & film permissions for every under-18 taking part in its projects to be able to build up a stock of permitted images for use in for funding and publicity purposes.

SPC will communicate this requirement clearly to schools and/or parents at the beginning of the project or event, and wherever possible will take reasonable steps to accommodate young people for whom permission cannot be obtained. Often this will be done through requiring coloured stickers to be worn; photographers / filmers will then know who not to record.

At public events involving young people, the default practice will be to display signs advising that “filming/photography are taking place today. Anyone preferring not to appear should contact a member of SPC.” Such individuals will then be [still] photographed and SPC will use these images solely for the purposes of deleting any images or footage later found to depict those people. These images will then be securely deleted.

While parents are always welcome, for personal family use, to photograph their own young people who may be involved in an event organised by SPC, and a professional photographer may be employed by SPC to make a photographic record of such an event, SPC cannot allow any other photographing of young people by the general public. The ban on photography by the general public will be clearly signed, and SPC members will be encouraged to intervene if such activity occurs, with sensitivity to the production taking place. Exceptions to this rule might be made from time to time, in which case, appropriate signage and announcements will be put in place.

Anyone taking photos or film in an official capacity for SPC will be clearly identified, i.e. with a lanyard, and will receive a briefing that includes any Safeguarding considerations.

Any young person should be identified in public only by a first name, and then only when explicit parental permission has been given. SPC or an approved partner, should keep a record of this permission.

### 4. Recruitment and training

SPC recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse young people in some way. All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with young people. Any SPC member or volunteer helper who is working with young people will:

- have their job requirements and responsibilities made clear in advance, and monitored as appropriate
- be required to adhere to SPC’s Safeguarding Policy (this policy)

The SPC Chair is responsible for communicating new or changing safeguarding policies to SPC members and volunteer helpers.

### **5. Responding to allegations or suspicions**

It is not the responsibility of SPC members to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities. SPC will fully support and protect anyone who in good faith reports his/her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a young person.

Where there is a complaint against an SPC member or volunteer helper, there may be three types of investigation:

- a criminal investigation
- a child-protection investigation
- a disciplinary or misconduct investigation

The results of the police and child-protection investigations may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily. If the allegation is clearly about poor practice, it will be dealt with as a misconduct issue.

Any suspicion that a young person has been abused by an SPC member should be reported to the SPC Chair, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the young person in question and any other young person who may be at risk. The SPC Chair will refer the allegation to Children and Family Services (CFS) at SCC (which may involve the police), or go directly to the police if out-of-hours. The parents or carers of the young person will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from CFS. The SPC Chair should also notify the committee in confidence in order to deal with any media enquiries.

If the SPC Chair is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to another member of the committee who will refer the allegation to CFS.

### **6. Confidentiality**

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need-to-know basis only. The following people might be party to such information and should be especially aware of their duty of confidentiality:

- The SPC Chair
- One or more committee members
- The parents/carers of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- The person making the allegation
- Sheffield Safeguarding Board/police
- The alleged abuser (and her/his parents, if the alleged abuser is a young person)

Information should be stored in a secure place, access to which is restricted to designated people. In line with data protection laws, in the first instance this shall be the SPC Chair and the Chorus Administrator, who should ensure that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure.

## 7. Internal enquiries and suspension

The SPC Chair, in consultation with the SPC committee at a specially-convened committee meeting, will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended from SPC pending further inquiries.

Irrespective of the findings of CFS or police inquiries, the committee will assess individual cases to decide whether an SPC member or volunteer helper can be reinstated and to ensure that this is sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision, particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, the committee must reach a decision based upon the available information, which could suggest that on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the young person should remain of paramount importance throughout.

## 8. Information for social services or the police about suspected abuse

To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern. It should include the following:

- The young person's name, age, date of birth, home address, and telephone number.
- Whether the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- The nature of the allegation, including dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information
- Make a clear distinction between fact, opinion, and hearsay
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries, and of any indirect signs such as behavioural changes
- Details of any witnesses.
- The young person's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred
- Whether the parents been contacted; if so, what has been said
- Whether anyone else has been consulted; if so, details should be recorded.
- If the young person was not the person who reported the incident, whether the young person has been spoken to. What was said?
- Whether anyone has been alleged to be the abuser; details should be recorded.

Where possible, referral to the police or CFS should be confirmed in writing by the SPC Chair within 24 hours. The name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

Anyone worried about sharing concerns about abuse with the SPC Chair, can contact social services or the police direct, or the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline on 0808 800 5000, or Childline on 0800 1111.

## 9. Support

The British Association for Counselling Directory is available from The British Association for Counselling, 1 Regent Place, Rugby CV21 2PJ, Tel: 01788 550899, Fax: 01788 562189 [www.bacp.co.uk](http://www.bacp.co.uk)

## 10. Allegations of previous abuse

Allegations of abuse might be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a young person or by an SPC member who is still currently working with young people). Where such an allegation is made, SPC should follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to the social services or the police. This is because other young people, either within or outside the activities organised by SPC, might be at risk from this person.

Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with young people. This is reinforced by the Protection of Children Act 1999.

## 11. Action if bullying is suspected

If bullying is suspected, the same procedure should be followed as set out in 'Responding to suspicions or allegations' above.

Action to help the victim and prevent bullying:

- Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- Report any concerns to the SPC Chair and/or the school (or other place where the bullying is alleged to be taking place).
- Where appropriate, help the victim to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority, or ask the SPC Chair to do so on your behalf.
- Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe, or ask the SPC Chair to do so on your behalf.
- Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help them, although you cannot promise not to tell anyone else.
- Keep records (written up as soon afterwards as possible) of what is said (including what is said to have happened, who did what, and when). It might be helpful to record contemporaneous verbal notes on a smartphone or other device which can then be written up later.

Action towards the bully / bullies:

- Report any concerns to the SPC Chair and/or the school (or other place where the bullying is alleged to be taking place).
- Inform the bully's parents or ask the SPC Chair to do so on your behalf
- Impose sanctions as necessary
- Encourage and support the bully to change her/his behaviour
- Inform all organisation members of action taken
- Keep a written record of action taken

## Duration and review of this policy

This policy shall remain in force until amended at a later date or superseded by a new version. Best practice is that it should be reviewed each year and comprehensively examined and updated every three years.