

Royston Choral Society Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

INTRODUCTION

Royston Choral Society ('RCS' or 'Society') is a registered charity (Reg. no.1090459) managed by a committee of volunteers elected at the Annual General Meeting. To carry out its charitable objectives it presents several concerts a year sometimes performing with orchestral groups, professional soloists and musicians and other choirs.

How RCS operates

RCS engages a self-employed musical director and accompanist who are not members of the choir. They attend weekly rehearsals with members to prepare for the concerts. From time-to-time RCS organizes other events such as choral workshops, social events, and outings. RCS does not advertise itself as an activity suitable for children or vulnerable adults. Most choir members are independent adults and generally there are no members under the age of 18. Choir rehearsals and performances are group activities, and there is no requirement for any member of the choir to be alone with another individual member.

RCS recognises that it is not the role of our organisation to decide whether or not a child or vulnerable adult has been abused. That is the role of the local authority Children's or Adult Services department who have legal responsibility, or of the NSPCC who have powers to investigate child protection concerns under the Children Act. Nevertheless, RCS is committed to act responsibly within its remit to safeguard the welfare of young people and children with whom it works and comes into contact, and believes all participants have the right to enjoy the activities of the choir in a happy, safe, and secure environment.

The main laws and sources of guidance supporting this policy are:

- Children Act 2004
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- NSPCC (www.nspcc.org.uk)
- 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 2018
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

As a matter of good practice RCS has developed this policy to provide:

- protection for children or vulnerable adults with whom RCS has contact.
- guidance to ensure that the risks of harm to a child or vulnerable adult's welfare are minimised.
- guidance on procedures that should be adopted in the event that any adult suspects a child or vulnerable adult may be experiencing or be at risk of experiencing harm.

The policy applies to RCS employees, choir members, volunteers and others invited to work or perform with RCS.

For the purposes of this policy the following definitions apply:

- Anyone up to the age of 18 (ie under 18) is classified as a child.
- Anyone over 18 years of age is classified as a vulnerable adult, who is or who may be unable to take care of themselves, or be unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation.

General Principles and Guidelines

- RCS welcomes the participation of children in designated concerts.
- RCS is committed to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults and ensuring their wellbeing.
- RCS believes that the safeguarding of all children and vulnerable adults who participate in choir activities is the responsibility of every choir member.

The purpose of this policy is

- To protect from abuse children and vulnerable adults with whom the choir has any involvement
- To provide an outline of the principles that guide our approach to safeguarding.

Contact with children falls into the following categories:

1. Children may become members of RCS and attend its weekly rehearsals and RCS activities.
 - In these circumstances RCS requires the child's parent/carer to nominate an adult member of RCS to act as chaperone and accompany the child to all rehearsals and performances.
2. Children take part in some concerts through a collaboration with local schools or other choirs.
 - In these circumstances, RCS will expect that children will be accompanied by an adult member or members of their choir and that arrangements for safeguarding will be followed according to the policy of that choir. RCS will collaborate with the other choir to ensure that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place for the event. Except for emergency first aid members of the choir will not conduct any form of health intervention and will not administer medication. The responsible adults from the other organisation will be required to take charge in accordance with their safeguarding policy.
3. Children take part in some concerts as a soloist
 - When children take part in concerts as soloists, they will be accompanied by a parent/carer or other responsible adult nominated by the parent/carer.
 - RCS will expect that the adult accompanying the child will act in loco parentis and be responsible for the safety of the child. The choir will exercise its duty of care towards the child.
 - Except for emergency first aid members of the choir will not conduct any form of health intervention and will not administer medication.
 - The parent/carer retains full responsibility for the child's transport arrangements to and from rehearsals and the venues for performances.

- Rehearsals will be conducted in an open environment to avoid private or unobserved situations. Choir members should ensure that they are not alone with a young person.

The above guidance also applies to the safeguarding of vulnerable adults.

4. Children and vulnerable adults form part of the audience at public performances given by RCS.
 - The choir does not make special arrangements for children or vulnerable adults as part of the audience other than exercising a reasonable duty of care. It is the responsibility of the parent, or carer to ensure that their child/vulnerable adult is supervised at all times. If a parent/carers is not personally attending an event with their child/vulnerable adult, this policy requires them to be satisfied that their child/vulnerable adults will be accompanied and adequately supervised by a responsible adult acting on their behalf at all times. Choir members will not make contact with, nor ask for the contact details of children, or vulnerable adults not known to them.

Privacy Arrangements

- If it is not possible to arrive at a venue in concert dress, RCS will ensure an individual's privacy is respected if required to change at a venue. RCS will work with any school or other young peoples' choir to ensure their safeguarding requirements are met, such as providing separate changing rooms and toilets.
- In common with its policy for adult members, RCS will not disclose contact details for any vulnerable adult without obtaining permission from their carers. In the case of a child, the parents/carers should be consulted. The purpose of any request for contact details, and the identity of any person making such a request will be provided.
- Parents/carers should be aware that photography, audio and video recording may be undertaken from time to time at concerts and rehearsals. The images and recordings may be stored digitally and used both on-and off-line including on the internet. These provide valuable tools to promote the work of the choir to a wider audience and form part of the historical record of our work. Prior approval to do so will be obtained in writing from the parent/carers.

Measures for the implementation of this policy

A copy of this policy is available on the RCS website and is sent by email to each choir member. A copy will be sent to each parent/carers upon request.

The policy will be brought to the attention of RCS members at each AGM and reviewed annually at the first committee meeting following the AGM. RCS members will be informed of any changes as soon as the committee has approved them.

RCS has nominated a *Designated Person*, who will undertake appropriate training as required and will be identified to children/vulnerable adults as the principal person they should turn to if they have concerns or queries.

RCS members or anyone with concerns should report to the *Designated Person* (or in their absence the chair of the committee), who will take action as described in the 'Approach to be taken in event' section below and:

- Obtain and record information from the person expressing the concern
- Assess the information quickly and carefully and ask for further clarification as appropriate
- Seek advice from Children's or Adult Service at the relevant Local Authority
- Seek medical attention as necessary and/or make a referral to a statutory child protection agency or the police without delay depending on the particular circumstances

A permanent confidential record will be kept of the report by the *Designated Person*.

Approach to be taken in the event of a complaint

RCS notes the importance of being alert to signs of abuse and to the difficulty individuals may have in reporting it. To assist in responding appropriately to a complaint, anyone made aware of an issue from or concerning a child or vulnerable adult should:

- Ensure the child or vulnerable adult understands that information given about abuse cannot be kept confidential
- Listen carefully
- Reassure the child or person involved that this matter will only be disclosed 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 or person what you are going to do next (in the first instance, report the matter to the *Designated Person*)

General guidance to choir members participating in events alongside children/vulnerable adults

In implementing our safeguarding policy, we should ensure that if and when we participate in RCS events that also involve children or vulnerable adults we should:

- Value and respect them as individuals
- Ensure that there is more than one adult present during activities with them
- Watch out for each other and ensure that we are not drawn into situations that could be misinterpreted
- Avoid physical contact
- Avoid inappropriate remarks to or about them - even in fun this could be misinterpreted
- Not take them to our home, offer them transport, gifts or money.

Reports of suspicions or allegations of abuse or a serious incident are to be sent to the appropriate contact as soon as possible. The local Safeguarding Children's Board and

Safeguarding Adults websites include contact details and information about how to make referrals. Any incidents should be reported to the Safeguarding Board covering the area in which the child or vulnerable adult lives.

Adopted November 2022

Reviewed October 2023

Review due October 2024 following AGM

The current *Designated Person* is Jane Osgathorp.