

## The Midlands Hospitals' Choir

### Safeguarding Policy and Procedures for Children and Vulnerable Adults

#### 1. Legal Context

The law requires any organisation involving young people and/or vulnerable adults to take all reasonable measures to ensure that the risk of harm to their welfare is minimised and where there are concerns to share them with other 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
- The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child
- The relevant government guidance including *Safe from harm 1993*, *Working together to safeguard children 1999*, *Caring for the young and vulnerable 2000*

#### 2. Definitions

In this context anyone up to the age of 19 is considered a child: anyone over 18 who is or who may be unable to take care of themselves or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation is classified as a vulnerable adult.

#### 3. The Organisation

The Midlands Hospitals' Choir is a registered charity, composed of adult choir members. Officers and other committee members are trustees and are elected to serve on the committee. Others may be co opted from time to time. Rehearsals are run by a self employed Musical Director who is DBS checked and supported by a professional accompanist. Occasionally a substitute conductor is arranged by the Musical Director. The choir does not advertise itself as an activity suitable for children or vulnerable adults. Our choir members are independent adults.

#### 4. Purpose of the choir

The main purpose of the organisation is to perform concerts in support of charity. Alongside this the choir gives opportunities for members to participate in and enjoy singing which has well known health and social benefits.

#### 5. Contact With Children

Currently contact with children occurs when school choirs take part in our concerts usually 3 times a year when they may also be part of the audience. The children do not attend MHC rehearsals and on the day of the concert rehearse with the Musical Director in the presence of teachers, carers or parents who remain responsible for their welfare. Choir rehearsals and performances are group activities and there is no need for a member of the choir to be alone with a child. Nonetheless the trustees of the choir recognise the need to safeguard the welfare of any young and vulnerable people with whom we might work or come into contact.

## **6. Privacy arrangements**

It is not always possible for choir members to arrive at the concert venue in concert dress and changing facilities may be needed. It is the choir's responsibility to ensure that children or vulnerable adults performing at the concert have their own area for assembly and changing if required.

Parents and guardians should be made aware, usually by their teachers, that photography, audio and video recording may be undertaken from time to time at concerts. 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 the choir's work.

## **7. Recognition of Abuse of Children**

Abuse or neglect of a child is caused by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional setting by those known to them or more rarely by a stranger.

### *Physical Abuse*

This may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. This may also include fictitious illness by proxy also known as Munchausen Syndrome where a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of or deliberately causes ill health to a child in their care.

### *Emotional Abuse*

This is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on 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 and Child Sexual Exploitation*

This involves forcing or enticing children or young people to take part in sexual activities whether or not they are aware of what is happening. 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 emotional needs.

## **Abuse of vulnerable adults**

Membership of the choir is open to all adults. It is possible that a member might be considered to be vulnerable if aged over 18 years and who is or may be unable to take care of themselves, or is unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability, or any other reason.

### **8. The following principles underpin this policy:**

- The welfare of the child or vulnerable adult will always be paramount.
- The rights, wishes and feelings of children, young people and vulnerable adults and their families will be respected and listened to.
- The people in positions of responsibility within the organisation will work in accordance with the interests of children and young people and vulnerable adults and follow the procedures outlined below.
- Those people in positions of responsibility within the organisation will ensure that the same opportunities are available to everyone wherever possible and that all differences between individuals will be treated with respect.

### **9. Procedures in case of concerns**

**9.1** If you are concerned about a child or vulnerable adult you must share your concerns. Initially you should talk to the person designated as responsible for safeguarding within your organisation. This person requires a DBS check and training as required. In this organisation, the person is Jan Wright. Following consultation with you, she will as appropriate, refer the matter to the relevant Social Services office or police. If this person is implicated in the concerns you should discuss the matter directly with Social Services or Police. A confidential record will be kept by the Secretary and sent on to the relevant Social Services Office or Police. A copy of the referral details will be kept securely.

**9.2** Immediate action may be necessary at any stage in involvement with children and families. It is vital to take whatever action is needed to safeguard children and vulnerable adults. Should emergency medical attention be required this can be secured by calling an ambulance (dial 999) or taking a child to the nearest Accident and Emergency Department. If a child is in immediate danger the police should be contacted (dial 999) as they alone have the power to remove a child immediately if necessary, via Police Protection Order.

**9.3** You should consult externally with your local social services department in the following circumstances:

- When you remain unsure after internal consultation as to whether child safeguarding concerns exist
- When there is disagreement as to whether safeguarding concerns exist
- When you are unable to consult promptly or at all with your designated internal contact for child safeguarding
- When the concerns relate to any member of the organising committee.

**10.** This policy is subject to annual review.

**Date:**