

# My Town Choir

## Safeguarding Members

### 1. POLICY STATEMENT

#### **Purpose and aim of the policy**

My Town Choir (MTC) is a community choir that welcomes members from the age of 15 upwards. We have no maximum age limit and do not discriminate based on religion, race, gender, or sexual orientation.

My Town Choir will not tolerate the abuse of members in any of its forms and is committed to safeguarding members particularly with care and support needs from harm.

The purpose of this safeguarding policy and procedures is:

- to protect members who receive My Town Choir's services. The intended outcome of the members' safeguarding policy is to protect members at risk from abuse or harm, to promote their wellbeing and to respond promptly and effectively if concerns are raised about them.
- to provide everyone with the overarching principles that set out our approach to the protection of vulnerable members.

This policy applies to anyone working on behalf of My Town Choir including: Choir Management, Volunteers and Choir Members.

#### **Legal framework**

This policy has been drawn up using legislation, policy and guidance to comply with:

- Human Rights Act 1998
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Health and Social Care Act 2008
- Equality Act 2010
  
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015

- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018

### **Related policies and procedures**

This policy statement should be read alongside My Town Choir other organisational policies and procedures.

### **Our approach to Safeguarding**

We believe that:

- people should never experience abuse of any kind
- we have a responsibility to promote the welfare and safety of everyone
- all people have the right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect
- abuse may be committed by anyone, including those in a trusting relationship with the person at risk
- there is a duty to do everything possible to prevent, report and tackle abuse

We recognise that:

- everyone, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- some people may be additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues

We will aim to keep people safe by:

- valuing, listening to and respecting them
- appointing a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO), and a Deputy
- adopting safeguarding best practice through our policies, procedures, and code of conduct for all staff and volunteers
- developing and implementing an effective online safety policy and related procedures
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers through support
- recruiting new staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
- recording and storing information professionally and securely
- using our safeguarding procedures to share relevant information with agencies who need to know
- using our procedures to manage any allegations against staff or volunteers appropriately, creating and maintaining an anti-bullying environment

- ensuring that we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place
- ensuring that we provide a safe physical environment for our members, staff and volunteers, by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance.

**Who to contact if you need more information or want to raise a concern:**

**MTC Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO)**

Name: Joanne Edworthy – [jo@mytownchoir.co.uk](mailto:jo@mytownchoir.co.uk) – 07954 312920

**MTC Deputy DSO** (in the event of a complaint made against the DSO)

Name: Cathy Bruin - [bagpussrocks@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:bagpussrocks@hotmail.co.uk) - 07432 127472

**2. DEFINING SAFEGUARDING**

Safeguarding is defined as protecting a person’s right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect, while at the same time making sure that the member’s wellbeing is promoted, including where appropriate, having regard to their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs in deciding on any action. This must recognise that people sometimes have complex interpersonal relationships and may be ambivalent, unclear, or unrealistic about their personal circumstances.

A person at risk is a person who:

1. has needs for care and support (whether or not a local authority is meeting any of those needs)
2. is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, and
3. as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

We expect all staff and volunteers to adhere to MTC’s policies and:

- take all suspicions and/or allegations of abuse or risk seriously, and respond swiftly and appropriately
- support the timely sharing of information with relevant authorities
- contribute to effective partnership working between all those involved in providing services

In terms of safeguarding MTC expect, without exception, adherence to the principles and practices as outlined above. Any concerns you might have may not always be of the same nature and may not require the same course of action. Concerns are likely to arise in several ways:

- **General concerns:** these may arise as part of MTC's usual activities and are not to do with safeguarding, e.g. anxiety about a performance. Such concerns will be dealt with immediately or as soon as is practicably possible as part of MTC's ongoing emotional health and wellbeing support to its members.
- **Safeguarding concerns:** these concerns will go beyond those that are dealt with as above and will usually be about a person's vulnerability, where it is felt that vulnerability needs further assessment and possible action.

Everyone has a responsibility to ensure concerns no matter how unclear, are passed on and assessed. MTC staff and volunteers should not undertake any investigations, their responsibility is to be vigilant, record and report only.

## **DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE**

### **Abuse**

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. It can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it.

Abuse may:

- consist of a single act or repeated acts
- be physical, verbal, or psychological
- be an act of neglect or omission to act
- 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.

### **Harm**

This includes:

- ill-treatment (including sexual abuse and forms of ill-treatment that are not physical)
- the impairment of, or an avoidable deterioration in, physical or mental health
- the impairment of physical, emotional, social, or behavioural development.

## **The abuser**

This may be any of a wide range of people and no-one can be excluded.

Examples include:

- relatives and family members
- professional paid staff in an institutional or community setting
- organisation staff or volunteers, including trustees
- someone known to the person or a stranger.

## **Bullying**

Bullying may be defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. It can take many forms, but the three main types are physical (e.g., hitting, kicking, theft), verbal (e.g., racist or homophobic remarks, threats, name calling) and emotional (e.g., isolating an individual from the activities and social acceptance of their peer group). The damage inflicted by bullying (including bullying via the internet) can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress, to the extent that it affects health or, at the extreme, causes them significant harm (including self-harm).

### **Additional vulnerabilities**

It is also important to be mindful that some people are particularly vulnerable to abuse because of their age or their living circumstances or characteristics. Disabled people are at greater risk of abuse than non-disabled people. Members from particularly isolated or new communities may also be at increased risk of abuse as well as those members who show challenging behaviour.

## **3. CODE OF PRACTICE**

MTC expects all staff, volunteers & members to be aware of this Code of Practice and adhere to its principles of good practice in their approach.

1.All activities will be as open as possible, and it is important that no time should be spent alone with any vulnerable person.

2.Value and respect people.

3.It is important not to have physical contact with anyone and this should be avoided.

4.Do not make suggestive or inappropriate remarks, even in fun, as this could be misinterpreted.

5. Remember that those who abuse can be of any age, gender, ethnic background or class and it is important not to allow personal preconceptions about people to prevent appropriate action taking place.

6. Good practice includes valuing and respecting people as individuals and the person, modelling of appropriate conduct - which will always exclude bullying, shouting, racism, sectarianism or sexism.

7. Staff & volunteers should avoid situations where they are alone with vulnerable individuals.

#### **4. HOW TO RESPOND TO A PERSON MAKING AN ALLEGATION OF ABUSE**

1. Stay calm.

2. Listen carefully to what is said.

3. 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.

4. Tell the person that the matter will only be disclosed to those who need to know about it.

5. Allow the person to continue at her/his own pace.

6. Ask questions for clarification only and always avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer.

7. Reassure the person that they have done the right thing in telling you.

8. Tell them what you will do next, and with whom the information will be shared.

9. Record in writing what was said, using the person's own words as soon as possible - note the date, time, any names mentioned, to whom the information was given and ensure that the record is signed and dated.

10. It is important to remember that the person who first encounters a case of alleged abuse is not responsible for deciding whether abuse has occurred. That is a task for the professional protection agencies, following a referral from the Designated Safeguarding Officer in the organisation.

#### **5. PROCEDURE: WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT A PERSON'S WELFARE**

There are essentially four key steps to remember, and this procedure explains them:

1. Recognising abuse or neglect

2. Responding to the concerns

3. Referring concerns on

4. Recording any actions taken and outcomes

MTC staff and volunteers could have their suspicion or concern raised in several ways, the most likely of which are:

- the conduct of a MTC staff member or MTC volunteer
- a person 'disclosing' abuse
  
- bruising or evidence of physical hurt which may or may not be accompanied by unusual behaviour

If anyone has such concerns, they should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) or Deputy.

Concerns about a specific person should be reported immediately by telephone to the DSO and confirmed in writing within 24 hours. Delay could prejudice the person's welfare. In an emergency call 999 or the local equivalent.

Concerns in relation to the conduct of a MTC staff member or volunteer may indicate unsuitability to continue working with vulnerable people in their present position, or in any capacity. Consideration will need to be given to whether:

- someone has behaved in a way that has, or may have harmed an individual
- someone has possibly committed a criminal offence against an individual

MTC will support and protect any staff member or volunteer who, in good faith, reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be abusing a person. If an allegation is made that is found to be malicious or fraudulent MTC retains the right to take appropriate action against the individual responsible for making the claim.

### **No compromise agreements**

The fact that a member of the workforce tenders his/her resignation or ceases to provide their services will not prevent an allegation/concern from being followed up in accordance with these procedures and a conclusion reached. A so called 'compromise agreement' by which an individual agrees to resign, and an employer agrees not to pursue disciplinary action, and both agree to a form of words to be used in future references will never be used by MTC in situations where there are concerns about their behaviour.

### **Referral for consideration of barring**

If an allegation/concern is substantiated and the person is dismissed, resigns or MTC decides to cease to use their services then the DSO in conjunction with the relevant Local Authority will decide whether a referral should be made to the Disclosure and Barring Service about whether that individual is barred from, or

has conditions imposed in respect of working with vulnerable people. If a referral is appropriate the referral should be made within one month. A referral must always be made if MTC thinks that the individual has harmed someone.

### **Poor practice**

There may be circumstances where allegations are about poor practice rather than actual abuse but, where there is any doubt, the line manager should consult with the DSO. If the investigation shows that the allegation is clearly about poor practice then MTC will determine how best to remedy this, e.g. as part of its performance management, or disciplinary procedure dependent on the nature and seriousness of the practice.

## **6. THE ROLE OF THE DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING OFFICER**

My Town Choir (MTC) has appointed a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) and a deputy who are responsible for dealing with any safeguarding concerns. Please refer to the policy statement on page 3 for their contact details.

The role of the DSO is to:

1. know which outside protection agency to contact in the event of a protection concern coming to the notice of MTC
2. provide information and advice on safeguarding within MTC
3. ensure appropriate information is available when making a referral and that the referral is made within one working day and confirmed in writing within two working days
4. liaise with local person's social care services and other agencies, as appropriate
5. keep relevant people within MTC informed about any action taken and any further action required; for example, disciplinary action against a staff member or volunteer
6. ensure that a proper record is kept of any referral and action taken, and that this is kept safely and in confidence
7. Review the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures regularly to ensure the procedures are working and that it complies with current best practice

## **8. CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION SHARING**

The principles of Data Protection legislation that must be adhered to when handling personal information are:

- Personal information is obtained and processed fairly and lawfully
- Used only for the purpose that the information was provided

- Only disclosed in appropriate circumstances
- Adequate, relevant and not excessive for the purposes for which they are held
- Accurate and where necessary kept up to date
- Kept securely

## **Disclosure**

Data protection legislation allows for the disclosure of personal information without consent of the subject in certain conditions, including for the purposes of the prevention and detection of a crime, for example where there is a safeguarding concern.

Any report/records regarding abuse shall be kept confidential and any disclosure should be restricted to only those who have proven authority for dealing with the incident (e.g. DSO, police).

In all cases where information is shared the following action should be recorded:

- Date and time when the information was shared
- Summary of information shared
- Who the information was shared with
- Whether you are sharing with or without consent
- How the information was shared and any receipt of it having been received