

Updated 17/01/25

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Background Information on the Burford Singers' Safeguarding Policy

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 are minimised, and where there are concerns, to share them with other local agencies. The relevant legal requirements arise from:

- The Children Act 1989;
- The Human Rights Act 1998;
- The Protection of Children Act 1999;
- The Sexual Offences (Amendments) Act 2006;
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- Care Act 2014
- The relevant government guidance including: *Safe from Harm 1993; Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015, updated Dec 2023; Caring for the Young and Vulnerable 2000.*

Burford Singers (**the Choir**) recognises that it is not the role of our organisation to decide whether or not a child or adult at risk has been abused. This is the role of the Social Services department who have legal responsibility or the NSPCC who have powers to investigate child protection concerns under the Children Act. However we are committed to undertaking responsibility within our remit.

Good Practice

In formulating this Policy the Trustees of the Choir have followed the guidance of *Making Music*, the national amateur music performance association (*Safeguarding; what are your responsibilities 2015*) and *Guide to Safeguarding and Child Protection for the voluntary and community sector 2019*, the safeguarding advice resource of the NSPCC.

Who are Children, or Adults at Risk?

In this context anyone up to the age of 18 is classified as a child. Anyone 18 years of age or older 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 an adult at risk of harm, usually shortened to adult at risk (previously known as a vulnerable adult; the terminology was updated in the Care Act 2014)

Contact with children typically falls into the following categories:

- Young people become members of the Choir and attend its weekly rehearsals and other activities.
- Children take part in a concert, typically as part of a youth choir or as a soloist

- Children form part of the audience at public performances given by the Choir.
(Less commonly children may join a choir social event or other non singing activity)

How The Burford Singers Operates

The Choir is a Registered Charity, composed of choir members. Officers and other committee members are elected to serve on the Committee, and others may be co-opted onto the Committee from time to time. Rehearsals are run by our self-employed Musical Director or a substitute on occasion, with a professional accompanist. From time to time the Choir organises other events such as choral workshops, social events and outings.

The Choir does not advertise itself as an activity suitable for children or adults at risk. Most Choir members are independent adults. It happens only rarely that a young person or an adult who may be at risk joins, rehearses and performs with us. There are no employed staff or volunteers who are charged with the care of others.

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 or adults at risk. Nonetheless the Trustees of the Choir recognise the need to safeguard the welfare of any young and potentially vulnerable people with whom we may work or come into contact.

This policy applies to employees, members, volunteers and all others invited to perform, volunteer or work with the Choir.

If the choir organises a social event that involves the serving of alcoholic drinks any volunteers or helpers must be aged 18 or over

The Burford Singers' Safeguarding Policy

General principles and guidelines

1. The purpose of this policy is:
 - To keep children, young people and adults at risk with whom the choir has any involvement safe from abuse.
 - to provide an outline of the principles that guide our approach to safeguarding.
2. Young people will be welcome to participate in choral works requiring children and/or as individual youth voices within The Burford Singers (the Choir) as long as the following guidelines are followed:
 - Children under the age of 18 must complete a Choir membership application form.
 - The child's parent or guardian must provide written permission for their child to take part in Choir activities. A consent form for this purpose will be provided by the Choir Membership Secretary. When completed, the form shall be attached to the child's application form and retained by the Choir Membership Secretary.
 - The Choir will also secure parental consent in writing to act *in loco parentis* if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other emergency medical treatment if the parent or guardian cannot be contacted at short notice.
 - The parent or guardian retains full responsibility for the child's transport arrangements to and from rehearsals and the venues for performances or activities.
 - Rehearsals and other activities including social events will be conducted in an open environment to avoid private or unobserved situations. Adult members and employees (other than a parent or guardian) should ensure that they are not alone with a young person.

Tours or trips (day and/or residential)

3. Any child who wishes to go on a tour/residential trip or day trip with the choir must be accompanied by a parent or guardian or a responsible adult of their parent/ guardian's choice to act *in loco parentis*.
4. On residential tours/trips only the adult acting *in loco parentis* may share a room with the child. Other adults should not enter children's rooms or invite children into their rooms.
5. Parents or guardians will be informed of arrangements for the tour and asked to confirm their approval in writing.

Privacy arrangements

6. In the rare event of it not being possible to arrive at a venue in concert dress, the Choir will endeavour to ensure an individual's privacy is respected if required to change at a venue.
7. In common with its policy for adult members, the Committee will not disclose contact details for any child member without first obtaining both the child's and their parent or guardian's permission. The purpose of any request for contact details, and the identity of any person making such a request will be provided.
8. Note: Parents and guardians 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.

Joint concerts with children

9. The Choir will make appropriate joint working arrangements to ensure that school/youth 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.

Children in audiences

10. It is the responsibility of the parent, guardian or carer to ensure that their child is supervised at all times, and that an adult at risk has the support they need. If a parent/guardian/carers is not personally attending an event with their child/adult at risk, this policy requires them to be satisfied that their child/ adult at risk will be accompanied and adequately supervised by a responsible adult acting on their behalf at all times.

Measures for implementation of this policy

11. A copy of this policy is available on the Choir's website www.burfordsingers.org.uk and we draw it to the attention of members at the beginning of each season. A copy will be sent to each parent/guardian/carers upon request.
12. The Choir has nominated a Designated Person, who will undertake appropriate training as required and will be identified to children as the principal person they should turn to if they have any concerns or queries. Contact details for the named person are also given in the parent/guardian consent form and on the website.
13. Choir members or anyone with concerns should report to the Designated Person (or in their absence the Chairman or Vice Chairman of the Choir 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 medical attention if necessary and or make a referral to a statutory child protection agency or the police without delay depending on the particular circumstances;
- If in any doubt as to what to do, seek advice from Social Services;
- Maintain confidentiality as far as possible subject to the principle of the welfare of the child/vulnerable adult being paramount which means that information may have to be shared (but only with people who need to know about it).

14. A permanent confidential record will be kept of the report by the Choir Secretary.

15. The policy and procedures will be brought to the attention if members at each Choir AGM and reviewed annually at the first Committee meeting following the AGM.

Approach to be taken in event of a complaint

16. The Choir notes the importance of being alert to signals of abuse and to the difficulty individuals may have in reporting it. To assist in responding appropriately to a complaint, we offer the following strategy for anyone who is made aware of an issue:

- Listen carefully.
- Reassure the child or person involved 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/person what you are going to do next (in the first instance, report the matter to the Designated Person for safeguarding)

Signed by the Chairman on behalf of the Committee.

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List of contacts:

1. The Designated Person is Gerry Shields (Choir member).
2. The Chair is Elizabeth Bennett.
3. The Vice Chairman is Robin Hall.

Note: all the above can be contacted either in person or via the Choir's website

4. Reports of suspicions or allegations of abuse or a serious incident are to be sent to the appropriate contact as soon as possible, either:
 - a. Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board (OSAB), or
 - b. Oxfordshire Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)