

Child Protection & Vulnerable People Policy

At Young Voices, we are committed to a practice that protects children from harm. We aim to promote an environment of trust and understanding where the welfare of children is paramount. We recognise our responsibility and the responsibilities of all who work with us to develop awareness of the issues that cause children harm.

We will promote the welfare of children participating in our activities by:

- Adopting protection guidelines through procedures and a Code of Conduct for all staff and volunteers;
- Ensuring that all staff and volunteers at Young Voices are made aware of this policy, and have access to a copy of it;
- Ensuring that all staff and volunteers assigned to work with children will abide by and sign up to the attached Code of Conduct;
- Ensuring that a risk assessment is carried out for any event involving children. Copies of the risk assessment will be sent to the Child Protection Officer;
- Ensuring that a copy of this policy is given to all partner organisations with whom we work, and is made available to the parents and carers of children with whom we plan to work;
- Ensuring that all partner organisations have adopted adequate protection policies that Young Voices staff and volunteers can follow during their placement with the partner organisation;
- Ensuring all partner organisations and all those who work with them agree to abide by our Code of Conduct;
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents, children and carers appropriately;
- Carefully following the procedures for recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers working with children and ensuring that they have been CRB checked;
- Providing appropriate training and support for staff and volunteers on protection issues so that they are clear about their responsibilities;
- Where appropriate, obtaining necessary consents from parents/carers;
- Reviewing our policy and good practice on an annual basis or more frequently if required.

Appointed Child Protection Officer

The overall responsibility for child protection lies with the Management Team. However, Dan Timms, Director of Operations, has been appointed the Child Protection Officer (CPO). This role is, in close liaison with the Management Team to lead on day-to-day child protection procedures. This will include:

- Attending relevant training and keeping up-to-date with current legislation and developments;
- Providing all employees or volunteers with a full induction to the organizations' Child Protection & Vulnerable Adults Policy and Code of Conduct.

In consultation with the Management Team, the CPO will respond to queries from parents, young people, visiting companies, contractors, suppliers, and any other outside agencies. Together, the CPO and Management Team will act on any child protection allegations and incidents in liaison with Children's Services and the NSPCC.

In the instance that the CPO is unavailable, the Director of Logistics, Paul Lewis, will lead as CPO.

Promoting Good Practice

Young Voices acknowledges that child abuse can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and to not allow them to interfere with your judgement about the appropriate action to take.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school, creative, or educational environments. There will be instances where staff and volunteers have regular contact with young people and this will make them an important link in identifying cases where they need protection. There may also be occasions when staff and volunteers witness child abuse or bullying, or when a young person discloses such information to them. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the procedures set out in this policy.

Good practice means:

- Young Voices staff and volunteers will not be in a situation where they find themselves on their own with a child or young person;
- When young people have been identified as having additional needs or behaviours that are likely to require additional supervision, specialist expertise or support, Young Voices will cater to any needs to ensure the young person can be supported to participate safely;
- Young Voices staff and volunteers should consider the individual needs of each participant, particularly where additional support has been brought to our attention;
- Activities must be inclusive so the whole group can participate;
- All staff and volunteers, when working with young people, should demonstrate behaviours that promote the welfare of young people, to reduce the likelihood of allegations being made;
- Being an excellent role model which includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people when in the role of organizer. This continues whilst the organizer is on premises before or after the concerts where a young person might view and interact with them;
- Always working in an open environment;
- Treating all young people equally, with respect and dignity;
- Being aware and respectful of young people from different religions and cultures;
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers young people;
- Always putting the welfare of each young person first, before achieving sales, production, or management goals;
- Respecting the personal space of participants, other staff and volunteers;
- If any physical contact is required, it should only be provided openly and with explanation.

Practices to be Avoided:

The following should be avoided except in emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable, it should be with the full knowledge and consent of the young person's teacher or parent/carer.

- Avoid spending time alone with young people away from others;
- Avoid taking a role with responsibilities for which you are not appropriately trained. For example: physically handling disabled participants;
- Do not promise to keep secrets for a young person as this may be at the detriment of the young person's welfare;
- Do not give personal contact details to a young person. For example: Facebook, mobile number, email, etc.;
- Do not use physical intervention to manage challenging behaviour.

Practices Never to be Sanctioned:

- Physical punishment or the threat of such;
- Refusal to speak with or interact with a child;
- Depriving young people of food, water, access to changing facilities or toilets or other essential facilities;
- Verbal intimidation, ridicule, humiliation or reducing a young person to tears as a form of control;
- Engaging in rough or sexually provocative actions;
- Allowing or engaging in any form of inappropriate touching;
- Allowing young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged;
- Making sexually suggestive comments to a young person;
- Failing to act upon and record any concerns raised by a young person;
- Doing things of a personal nature for young people that they can do for themselves. For example: feeding them;
- Inviting or allowing young people to stay with you at your home unsupervised.

Selection of Staff and Volunteers

All staff and volunteers who are to work with children, prior to taking up their position, will be required to:

- Accept and commit to our Child Protection & Vulnerable People Policy and our Code of Conduct;
- Complete a written application form;
- Provide the name and contact information of two character references;
- Provide photographic evidence of their identity;
- If required, undergo an Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Check;
- If required under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, be registered with the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) before engaging in Regulated Activity with children and undergo an ISA check.

In line with the provisions of The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (Amendment) (England and Wales) Order 2014, it is a legal requirement that adults intending to work with young people should declare all convictions including spent convictions. No person on the ISA's Children's Barred List will be able to take up a role working with Young Voices.

Young Voices recognises that training and education are essential to implementing this protection policy. All staff and volunteers will be given training in relation to this policy, the Code of Conduct, and the safeguarding of children.

Suspicious of Abuse

Young Voices staff and volunteers are trained so if they witness or suspect abusive behaviour towards a child, they will make an immediate written record of the details. This should then be reported to the Child Protection Officer immediately.

If a child makes a disclosure alleging abuse:

- stay calm;
- listen carefully;
- be reassuring and explain that the information will need to be shared with others;
- DO NOT promise to keep the disclosure a secret;
- only ask questions for clarification;
- explain to them what will happen next.

Any disclosure must be immediately recorded in writing and reported to the Child Protection Officer. It is not the duty of Young Voices staff or volunteers to carry out an investigation themselves. Concerns must be referred to the CPO and not discussed with anyone other than the CPO.

The Child Protection Officer will:

- Obtain information from staff, volunteers, children or parents and carers who have concerns;
- Make a written record of any incidents or concerns about abuse whether major or minor;
- Assess the information quickly and ask for further information as appropriate;
- Clarify any doubts or worries with the statutory authorities;
- Make a referral to the statutory authorities (including the ISA) or police where necessary.

The Child Protection Officer will be responsible for contacting the statutory protection agencies including (but not limited to) the local authority social services department or the police where there is a concern about the possible abuse of a child. It is the legal responsibility of the statutory protection agencies to find out if abuse has taken place. Young Voices recognises that it is not our responsibility to decide whether abuse has taken place.

It is the right of any individual to make direct referrals to the statutory authorities. If you feel that the Child Protection Officer has not responded appropriately to the concern/incident raised then it is up to you to contact the protection agencies directly.

Alleged Breaches by Staff and Volunteers

Any allegations of abuse made against anyone working for Young Voices in any capacity will be thoroughly investigated as will any alleged breach of this policy or the Code of Conduct. All allegations or concerns should be directed to the Child Protection Officer who will liaise with the NSPCC (or international equivalent for YV branches) for advice and work together to follow the procedures in this policy.

Where there is a complaint against a member of staff or volunteer, there may be up to three types of investigation, dependent on the nature of the investigation:

- A criminal investigation by the police;
- A child protection investigation by Children's Services;
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation by Young Voices.

The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence and inform the disciplinary investigation, but all available information will be used to reach a decision.

If an allegation is made against a Young Voices staff or volunteer directly to that person from which the complaint is about, the accused should make a written record of the allegation and advise the Child Protection Officer immediately. Young Voices staff and volunteers should also report to the CPO if they:

- Accidentally hurt a participant;
- If he/she seems distressed in any manner;
- If a participant appears to be sexually aroused by you;
- If a participant misunderstands or misinterprets anything you have done.

Record Retention

In line with guidance contained in the Data Protection Act 1998, personal information should not normally be held for longer than six (6) years after the subject's last contact with the authority. Exceptions to the six year period will occur when records:

- Need to be retained because the information in them is relevant to legal action that has been started;
- Are required to be kept longer by law;
- Are archived for historical purposes;
- Consists of a sample of records maintained for the purposes of research;
- Relate to individuals and providers of services who have, or whose staff have, been judged unsatisfactory;
- Are held in order to provide, for the subject, aspects of their personal history.

If an allegation is made against a Young Voices staff or volunteer, a record will be kept until the person reaches normal retirement age, or for 10 years, whichever is longer. Such records will contain details of who followed up and resolved the allegations, and of any action taken and decisions reached. These records will be kept in a confidential personnel file and a copy shall be given to the individual whom the allegation is against.

Whistleblowing

Young Voices assures all staff and volunteers that we will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is or may be abusing a child. We recognise that the person raising the concern may wish to raise a concern in confidence. Individuals who raise concerns will not have their identity disclosed without their prior consent. It must be appreciated, however, that in some situations the investigation process may not be concluded unless the source of the information and a statement by the individual is produced as part of the evidence.

Dissemination

Young Voices will make the Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults Policy available to all staff and volunteers. It should be made clear to all that failure to conform to the policy will result in disciplinary action and, where possible, exclusion from the organization.

Young Voices expects all contractors and suppliers to adhere to the above policy and for any company members working with these groups to have gone through the Disclosure and Barring process. Contractors and suppliers must be able to provide a copy upon request.

Use of Photographic Filming Equipment

Photographing and filming young people under the age of 18 is allowed only when a legal guardian has given prior consent and only if intended for use as a teaching aide or promotional tool.

It is the responsibility of the teacher in charge to obtain a signed permission slip from all children in their respective choir for involvement in our Concerts. Young Voices reserves the right to ask you to supply all your permission slips for reference and may do so as part of its annual auditing procedures. Refer to Terms & Conditions, clause 5 for further information on permission slips.

This also applies to any photos or videos used on the website or for the use of the media.

The member of staff with ultimate responsibility for this policy is the Director of Operations, Dan Timms.