

Bradford Festival Choral Society (BFCS)

Safeguarding Policy for Children and Vulnerable Adults

About BFCS

Established in 1856, Bradford Festival Choral Society is one of the oldest and most exciting choirs in the North of England. Performing at least four concerts per year, we have a fascinating past and a vibrant future.

The recent re-emergence of choral singing as a popular activity has brought us many new members of all ages, thoroughly enjoying themselves regardless of ability or previous experience.

We are committed to investing in our members and the wider community, providing vocal coaching, music-reading classes and enjoyable and productive rehearsals. Our regular Come and Sing events are popular, attracting many singers from the region and beyond.

BFCS also supports Learn to Sing classes, informal performances in various venues at Christmas and collaborative community arts ventures such as the Bradford Festival and Saltaire Festival.

BFCS also supports the Bradford Friendship Choir, a choir for refugees, people seeking asylum and their friends. It meets every Tuesday in central Bradford.

How BFCS operates

BFCS with the Friendship Choir has over 120 active members and attracts other singers to its Come and Sing events twice a year. These are all amateur singers from all walks of life. The choir performs four concerts annually, as well as occasional special events and charity concerts.

BFCS trustees are elected from the membership.

Rehearsals are run by our self-employed Musical Director, Assistant and volunteers.

Who are Children and Vulnerable Adults?

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

A vulnerable adult may fall into any one of the following groups: older and frail people; people with a mental health need, a learning difficulty, a physical impairment, a sensory impairment; people who are substance or alcohol dependent; refugees and those seeking asylum and their families or family carers providing assistance to another vulnerable adult.

Most choir members in BFCS are independent adults. 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.

If members are identified as vulnerable they will be accompanied by a named responsible adult.

The Friendship Choir by its nature, has members who are vulnerable, both children and adults.

Only in exceptional circumstances would a member of the choir, the choir leader or volunteers be alone with another member of the Friendship Choir of any age.

BFCS recognises the need to be aware of the particular needs of individuals and any potential risks to their safety. BFCS will be vigilant in dealing with any incidents that cause concern in line with the policy.

What is 'abuse'?

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other persons(s) or group of people. Abuse may be single or repeated acts. Abuse of vulnerable adults occurs in all cultures, all religions and all levels of society. The abuser may be anyone including family, friend, neighbour, partner, carer, stranger, care worker/service provider, manager, volunteer, another person who uses the service or any person who comes into contact with the vulnerable adult.

Abuse can be:

- Physical: e.g. hitting, slapping, burning, pushing, restraining or giving the wrong medication.
- Psychological and emotional: for example, shouting, swearing, frightening, blaming, ignoring or humiliating a person, threats of harm or abandonment, intimidation, verbal abuse.
- Financial: including the illegal or unauthorised use of a person's property, money, pension book or other valuables, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance.
- Sexual: such as forcing a person to take part in any sexual activity without his or her informed consent – this can occur in any relationship.
- Discriminatory: including racist or sexist remarks or comments based on a person's disability, age or illness, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment. This also includes stopping someone from being involved in religious or cultural activity, services or support networks;
- Institutional: the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to vulnerable people. This includes a failure to ensure the necessary safeguards are in place to protect vulnerable adults and maintain good standards of care in accordance with individual needs, including training of staff, supervision and management, record keeping and liaising with other providers of care.

Abuse of vulnerable adults can occur in any setting or situation:

- Domestic Settings – including the person's home or another person's home.
- Institutional Settings – including day care, residential homes, nursing homes and hospitals.
- Public Settings – including the street, any public area, or social or work environment.

BFCS recognises the need to be aware of particular needs of individuals and potential risks to their safety. BFCS will be vigilant in dealing with any incidents that cause concern in line with the policy. BFCS will be alert to risks when performing or supporting others perform in settings other than traditional performance space.

Policy

BFCS is committed to taking all reasonable measures to ensure that the risks of harm to children and vulnerable adults are minimised. BFCS trustees have agreed the following safeguarding policy:

1. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. We will work together to prevent and minimise opportunities for abuse. If we have concerns that someone is being abused, our loyalty to the vulnerable person comes before anything else – our group, our colleagues and the person's friends and family.
2. We will ensure that the Designated Named Person and other volunteers will have access to training around Safeguarding Children and Adults.
3. We recognise that everyone has different levels of vulnerability and that all children and vulnerable adults should be offered respect and given inclusion and empowerment within their choir.
4. We will put in place appropriate recruitment processes for all paid staff, taking up references with past/current employers as a matter of course. For any staff who will have direct and unaccompanied contact with members and their families BFCS request an appropriate level of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.
5. Any outreach programmes with children and vulnerable adults will be undertaken in collaboration with parents or other responsible adults who will remain responsible for them throughout rehearsals and performances. A risk assessment will be completed by the Designated Safeguarding Officer in advance ensuring any mitigating actions are communicated to and taken by relevant staff/volunteers/members.
6. All suspicions or allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to. If we know or suspect that a young person or vulnerable adult is being abused, we will do something about it and ensure our work is properly recorded.
7. We undertake to notify Local Authorities/Police and other appropriate agencies when an abuse situation is identified.
8. BFCS will cooperate fully with the relevant agencies in every situation and will not conduct its own investigations. It recognises that it is not the role of BFCS to decide whether a child or vulnerable adult has been abused or not. This is the role of the Social Services department who has legal responsibility, or the NSPCC who have powers to investigate child protection concerns under the Children Act.
9. Confidentiality for all parties will be maintained at every stage of such event.
10. Safeguarding issues will be reviewed at least annually by the Trustees.

BFCS has a duty of care to abide by this policy and to report concerns. All officers and volunteers will be asked to familiarise themselves with this document, and BFCS will publicise its safeguarding policy on its website.

BFCS Safeguarding Officers.

Sue Hayton and Karen Jones are BFCS's Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Officers.

Sue Hayton can be contacted on 07951865008 and suexhayton@gmail.com

If you have reason to believe that a child is at **immediate risk of harm**, contact the police on **999**

Guidelines

1. What to do if you suspect that abuse may have occurred

You must report the concerns immediately to the Designated Person who will obtain information, assess what to do next and take the appropriate action.

BFCS's Designated Person is Sue Hayton

The Designated Person has been nominated by BFCS to refer allegations or suspicions of neglect or abuse to the statutory authorities. In the absence of the Designated Person the matter should be brought to the attention of the Chair.

You should under no circumstances discuss your suspicions or allegations with anyone other than those nominated above. Make notes as soon as possible (ideally within 1 hour of being told; witnessing the abuse or receiving the disclosure of abuse – see 2 below).

You should report your discussion with the Designated Person as soon as possible. If this person is implicated you need to report to the Chair of BFCS. If both are implicated report the matter to Bradford Council Social Services or the NSPCC.

Guidelines for Responding to a Child or Vulnerable Adult making an Allegation of Abuse

If a child or vulnerable adult should talk to you of abuse:

- Stay calm, listen carefully to what is being said
- 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
- Allow the child or vulnerable adult to continue at his/her own pace
- Ask questions for clarification only, and at all times avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer
- Reassure the child or vulnerable adult that they have done the right thing in telling you
- Tell them what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared

Helpful statements to make:

- I believe you (or showing acceptance of what the child or vulnerable adult says)
- Thank you for telling me
- It's not your fault
- I will help you

Do not say:

- I can't believe it!
- Are you sure that this is true?
- Why? Who? When? Where
- Why didn't you tell anyone before?

Don't make promises you may not be able to keep..

2. How to record suspected abuse

The following format should be used to report all suspicions or allegations of abuse or a serious incident and is to be sent to the Local Authority Designated Child Protection Officer or Adults Central Duty team at Bradford Social Services.

- Your name and designation and the name and designation of anyone else who has been involved in collecting information
- The date, time and place that you were advised of the Incident or when you became suspicious of abuse.
- The names, addresses and telephone contact details of any witnesses to the incident.
- The name and address and telephone contact details of the person making the allegation.
- The name, address and (if known) the telephone number of the alleged victim of the incident
- Brief account given of the incident including if any abuse has occurred.
- If applicable, describe any injuries which have been observed (e.g. cuts, bruises, burns etc. and where on the body they were observed).
- If the incident relates to neglect, please describe the conditions that are in place that have led to the need to take safeguarding action , e.g. state of the home, clothing or the child or vulnerable adult

Note: Child Abuse

It is the right of any individual to make direct referrals to the child protection agencies. If for any reason you believe that the nominated persons have not responded appropriately to your concerns, then it is up to you to contact the child protection agencies directly.

Note: Abuse of Vulnerable Adults

To determine the appropriate action it is important to consider:

- Does the vulnerable adult understand and accept the risk?
- Is the vulnerable adult able to make their own decisions and choice? Do they wish to do so?
- How serious the abuse is – with the starting point being the perception of the vulnerable adult.
- If the vulnerable adult expresses a wish for the concerns not to be pursued, this should be respected wherever possible, subject to considerations of safety and competence.

3. What the Designated Person Will Do

The role of the Designated Person is to:

- obtain information from staff, volunteers, children, parents or carers with child protection concerns or concerns about the welfare of a vulnerable adult, and record the information
- assess the information quickly and carefully and ask for further clarification as appropriate
- make a referral to a statutory child protection agency or appropriate agency for vulnerable adults, or the police without delay
- if in any doubt about what to do, to seek advice from Social Services.

It is NOT the Designated Person's role to investigate.

If a child or vulnerable adult has a symptom of physical injury or neglect, and the abuse may have been deliberate the Designated Person will:

- contact Social Services for advice
- seek emergency medical attention if it is necessary and not already arranged and inform the doctor of any suspicions of abuse. The doctor will then initiate further action if necessary
- inform the parents or carers only if advised by Social Services to do so.

If a child or vulnerable adult has a symptom of physical injury or neglect, but there is no sign that the abuse was deliberate, the Designated Person will:

- seek emergency medical attention if it is necessary and not already been arranged and inform the doctor of any suspicions of abuse. The doctor will initiate further action if necessary
- otherwise, speak with the parent/carer/guardian and suggest that medical help/attention is sought for the child or vulnerable adult
- if appropriate, encourage the parent/carer to seek help from Social Services.

In the event of allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse the Designated Person will:

Contact Social Services and speak to no one else about the matter.

Useful Contacts

- During office hours call Children's Social Care Initial Contact Point - **01274 437500** - (8.30am to 5pm Monday to Thursday, 8.30am to 4.30pm on Friday)
- At all other times, Social Services Emergency Duty Team - **01274 431010**
- If you have reason to believe that a child is at **immediate risk of harm**, contact the police on **999**

Notes

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 on the Rights of the Child. The relevant government guidance includes Safe from Harm 1993; Working Together to Safeguard Children 1999, Caring for the Young and Vulnerable 2000 and Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

Appendix

Disclosure and Barring Service Checks and employment of ex offenders

1. Most work for Bradford Festival Choral Society is with adults and in public. If vulnerable people take part in BFCS activities we will ensure there is a named adult responsible for their protection. The risk of an employee of BFCS abusing a position of authority is therefore usually very low.
2. Risk may increase when new work is being undertaken in different settings or with more vulnerable or less supervised groups. This may include choirs operating under the umbrella organisation of BFCS, Learn to Sing groups or one-off, sometimes joint events, in the community. In such circumstances the Trustees are responsible for assessing any risk and taking appropriate action.
3. A DBS check on someone employed by BFCS will be requested when consideration of the position, or an area of work indicates that a check is proportionate and relevant to the position concerned.
4. In considering DBS checks BFCS will follow the *Revised Home Office Code of Practice for Disclosure and Barring Service Registered Persons*, (November 2015)
5. In following that Code of Practice, we will treat DBS applicants who have a criminal record fairly and not discriminate automatically because of a conviction or other

information revealed.

This policy will be reviewed by 31.3.2022
rwv16.3.19