

Stortford Youth Choirs (SYC)



Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Signed: Author: Josephine Cowley (SYC Founder and Principal Conductor)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Cowley".

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This Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy forms part of a suite of safeguarding policies, procedures and guidelines, and should be read in conjunction with:

- SYC Missing Member Policy
- SYC Online Safeguarding Policy & Code of Conduct

In addition, the following LYC policies affect (or are affected by) SYC's safeguarding policies:

- SYC Member, Parent, Carer, and Guardian Code of Conduct & Behaviour Policy
- SYC Privacy Policy

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About Stortford Youth Choirs (SYC)

Stortford Youth Choirs (SYC) is a youth choir organisation established in 2026 to provide young singers living or educated in and around Bishop's Stortford with an outstanding choral education, through exceptional musical training and high-level performance opportunities. SYC's vision is to inspire young people aged between 7 and 18 to achieve the highest possible standard in choral singing, musicianship and vocal production in a supportive and welcoming environment, whilst representing their local community.

The sessions are designed to inspire, build confidence and develop skills in teamwork and in leadership, all whilst championing inclusivity. SYC aims to be truly representative of the population of Bishop's Stortford and the surrounding area and currently works with young people from many different schools across the area.

SYC rehearses on a weekly basis in central Bishop's Stortford. It aims to host regular concerts to a public audience. An important part of SYC's work is to provide opportunities for our members to work with other groups, including other adult choirs and musical ensembles, and to take part in festivals and special events involving other organisations. These events are generally in or around Bishop's Stortford but may include trips to other performance venues in the UK.

Safeguarding Introduction and Policy Purpose

The NSPCC defines Safeguarding as '*action that is taken to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm*'.

Safeguarding means:

- protecting children from abuse and maltreatment
- preventing harm to children's health and development
- providing support to meet children's needs when problems emerge
- ensuring children grow up with safe and effective care, within their family where possible
- taking action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcomes.

Child Protection is a part of the safeguarding process. It focuses on protecting individual children identified as suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. This includes child protection procedures detailing how to respond to concerns about a child.

For the purposes of this policy, the term Staff is defined as:

- Business Owner
- Freelance staff
- Volunteers

The purpose of the SYC Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy is to:

- Show staff how to identify and respond to safeguarding concerns
- Outline the reporting procedure
- Support staff when dealing with safeguarding concerns
- Describe the process when an allegation is made against Staff
- Show members and guardians that there are effective and transparent processes in place at SYC for safeguarding, and that all concerns will be dealt with in a proportionate, timely and sensitive manner.

For the purposes of this document, the terms Safeguarding and Child Protection relate to SYC members aged 17 and under.

This policy has been produced with reference to:

[8 Steps to Safeguarding and Child Protection.](#)

[Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025. \(Statutory guidance for schools and colleges\)](#)

[Working Together to Safeguard Children. \(Statutory guidance on multi agency working to help, support and protect children.\)](#)

[Lessons Will Be Learned: Transforming Safeguarding in Education. Martin Baker & Mike Glanville \(2021\)](#)

[Information Sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents & carers \(HM Government - May 2024\)](#)

SYC's Safeguarding Commitments and Principles

SYC recognises its responsibilities for safeguarding its members. We believe that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and the first responsibility of SYC Staff. We recognise that harm can take place within the family, in communities, by those known and unknown to children. We also take the view that it could happen here - in SYC. We will not be complacent. We commit to do all we can to prevent any abuse of our members. SYC believes that our members have the right to be protected from harm, and that SYC should be a place where they are nurtured, feel safe, valued and respected, where creativity and artistic expression are encouraged, and where members flourish.

SYC Safeguarding Standards

SYC Safeguarding Standards sets out the measures which we are committed to upholding throughout our work:

- The best interests of the child are paramount in all welfare and protection considerations.

- Safeguarding must be embedded throughout our leadership and culture.
- Young people must be valued, empowered and supported to inform and shape our activities, including decision-making, risk identification and review of our safeguarding practices.
- Our recruitment, induction and training procedures must ensure that staff and volunteers are suitable and supported to implement safeguarding best practice.
- Our physical and online environments should be safe and secure, and promote enjoyable and positive experiences.
- We must have clear policies and procedures for reporting, acting upon and following -up safeguarding concerns which are monitored and regularly reviewed to identify learning and/ or implications for policy and practice.
- Our Safeguarding Policy and related documents will be publicly available.

Equality Statement

At SYC we ensure that all members have equal access to support, but we recognise that for some there may be barriers for support. These barriers provide an increased risk of abuse, and they can play a part in recognising or disclosing abuse. We are committed to anti-discriminatory practice. We look to ensure that all members have the same protection, regardless of any barriers they may face. Children and young people who are potentially at greater risk of harm and may benefit from early help include those who:

- Have a social worker
- Are in care - or known as 'looked after children'
- Have special educational needs or disabilities or have multiple vulnerabilities (whether or not they have a statutory Educational Health Care plan)
- Are young carers
- May experience discrimination due to their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, identification or sexuality
- Have English as an additional language
- Are known to be living in difficult situations - for example, homelessness, or temporary accommodation or where there are issues such as substance abuse, domestic violence or family histories of poor mental health
- Are at risk of 'honour' based violence which may include FGM, sexual exploitation, forced marriage or radicalisation
- Are asylum seekers
- Have a mental health need
- Are showing signs of being drawn into antisocial or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups or county lines
- Are frequently missing/goes missing from education, home or care

- Have experienced multiple suspensions, is at risk of being permanently excluded from schools, colleges and in Alternative Provision or a Pupil Referral Unit
- Are at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual and/or criminal exploitation
- Are at risk of being radicalised or exploited
- Have a parent or carer in custody, or is affected by parental offending
- Are misusing drugs or alcohol themselves
- Are a privately fostered child

What Underpins LYC's Safeguarding Work?

Safeguarding is at the heart of everything Stortford Youth Choirs stands for and, as such, the organisation aims to recruit people with like-minded values. Safeguarding at SYC starts with the identification of role requirements and advert placement, and follows through to new staff induction and training. Risk management is also at the heart of safeguarding at SYC. SYC engenders a culture of openness, respect and compassion amongst its staff. SYC encourages a culture of open communication: one where all concerns - whether they come from members, staff or parents - are taken seriously and dealt with sensitively and appropriately. This includes what may be regarded as "smaller" or "trivial" issues - so everyone knows that no matter the perceived severity of their concern, they will always be taken seriously, and with full respect. SYC's Staff Code of Conduct (Safeguarding) sets out the organisation's expectations of Staff. These are consistent with safeguarding best practice, legislation and guidance within the United Kingdom. SYC expects all staff to engage in respectful behaviour to each other and to members, and to minimise the risk of safeguarding allegations being made against them as individuals by adopting best practice at all times.

SYC provides mandatory safeguarding training to all staff. Induction safeguarding training takes place before staff start working for SYC.

SYC Roles and Responsibilities

The Head of Safeguarding & Pastoral Care (HoS) / Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Josie Cowley:

- Responsible for writing and maintaining safeguarding policies
- Ensures that staff have access to appropriate safeguarding advice and support Stortford Youth Choirs (SYC) - Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Checks that safeguarding referrals, incident reports and actions taken are recorded, reviewed, and logged safely
- Reports to the LADO for any safeguarding concerns
- Ensures SYC safeguarding policies are fully accessible and publicly available
- Supports SYC in ensuring that partner organisations working with SYC have appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures in place

- Refers safeguarding concerns on to the LADO

All staff and volunteers

- Uphold the SYC Code of Conduct.
- Recognise their personal responsibility for maintaining the welfare of all SYC members.
- Be familiar with SYC Safeguarding Policies.
- Complete an incident log or report verbally to DSL depending on the severity of the situation.
- Help promote SYC safeguarding policies and good practice at all times
- Recognise the need to be professionally curious, if something isn't adding up, on behalf of all our members

It is not the responsibility of SYC staff to determine if abuse has taken place or to conduct any investigation, but it is their responsibility to pass on concerns to the appropriate individual or authorities in a timely manner.

Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures

SYC's safeguarding and child protection procedure is structured around six Rs:

1. Recognise
2. Respond
3. Report
4. Record
5. Refer
6. Review

Recognise

In order that safeguarding concerns are recognised and dealt with in an appropriate and timely manner, staff must be able to recognise potential signs of abuse. Any staff approached by an SYC member with a concern should be listened to carefully. Consideration will be given to members for whom English is not their first language, or if they have any other communication barriers (e.g. hearing loss). Members may disclose concerns about anyone, including a family member, a teacher, an unknown adult, another child, or an SYC staff member. Children who experience abuse may be afraid to tell anyone that the abuse is occurring, so staff must be aware of the signs of a child in distress. This procedure therefore also applies not only to members who have not been forthcoming about concerns, but also in circumstances where a member of staff may recognise signs of abuse of their own volition.

Respond

If a member expresses a non-immediate safeguarding concern, or if a member of staff witnesses or has cause for concern, they should respond by:

- Listening carefully to what is being said. Do not display shock or disbelief.
- Accept the information at face value and convey that it is being taken seriously.
- Provide reassurance to the member, such as, "thank you for talking to me"
- Reassure the child/young person that they have done the right thing in telling you

An appropriate response to a member who has expressed a safeguarding concern is one where the facts are established from the member's perspective, but they are not interrogated or asked leading questions - as leading questions could prejudice potential court proceedings. As much information as possible should be gathered during the initial conversation, but members should not be asked to repeat themselves for other staff to hear at this stage.

Staff should not promise confidentiality, but they should explain that they will have to discuss their concerns with other staff, usually the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), or deputies. Members making an allegation of any type of abuse should be taken seriously. When a member has made a disclosure, staff should make an assessment whether the member needs immediate medical attention. If yes, the appropriate medical number must be called immediately. While waiting for the emergency services to arrive, help should be sought from the nearest first aider.

Staff should remain with the member, and reassure them as best they can. If an SYC first aider is not available, ambulance control must be made aware that there is no one with any first aid knowledge present. They will stay on the phone and guide staff on any immediate first aid that needs to be given. The most senior Staff available should inform the member's next of kin that an incident has occurred, that the member is in need of emergency medical attention, and that immediate steps have been taken to get help. Arrange to meet them at the hospital or medical centre. If the child is not with you but you believe them to be in immediate danger elsewhere, call emergency services (999) and explain the situation.

Report

Staff should report safeguarding concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) as soon as possible after a concern being raised. Reporting should be by telephone or face to face, and is in addition to a written record of the case. If for any reason they cannot be reached, and concern for the member warrants immediate attention, staff should contact the LADO for Hertfordshire County Council.

Record

Accurate and timely record keeping is essential when recording safeguarding concerns. Notes should be made as soon after the disclosure or incident as possible but within 48 hours of any event. This record is in addition to verbally reporting the incident to the DSL or DDSL.

Refer

It is acknowledged that as a small organisation, the best advice for the DSL is to seek advice and support from the LADO. It may be appropriate in the first instance, to reach out to the child's school DSL.

Review

Within one month of the reporting of the initial concern, there will be a review to check that the policy has been followed and concerns referred on.

Allegations against a member of SYC Staff

If an allegation is made against a member of SYC staff, it should be reported to the DSL (Josie Cowley) who will seek immediate guidance and agree next steps with the LADO.

Should an allegation need to be against the DSL, this should be made directly to the LADO:

To contact the Hertfordshire LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) for concerns about professionals working with children, you must report it to Hertfordshire County Council Children's Services via their main line at 0300 123 4043 (24 hours), or for non-urgent queries, email contact@hertfordshire.gov.uk.

Information Sharing, Record Keeping, Confidentiality and GDPR

Information sharing is essential for effective safeguarding and for promoting the welfare of children and young people. It is a key factor identified in many serious case reviews, where poor information sharing has resulted in missed opportunities to take action that keeps children and young people safe. SYC follows the seven golden rules of information as described in the HM Government document advice

Information Sharing: Advice for Practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers (May 2024)

1. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Data Protection Act 2018 and human rights law are not barriers to justified information sharing, but provide a framework to ensure that personal information about living individuals is shared appropriately.
2. Be open and honest with the individual (and/or their family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will be shared and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.
3. Seek advice from other professionals or a Data Protection Officer if you are in any doubt about sharing information concerned, without disclosing the identity of the individual where possible.
4. Where possible, share information with consent, and where possible respect the wishes of those who do not consent to having their information shared. Under the GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 you may share information if, in your judgement, there is a lawful basis to do so, such as where safety may be at risk.
5. Consider safety and well-being: base your information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and well-being of the individual and others who may be affected by their actions.

6. Necessary, proportionate, relevant, adequate, accurate, timely and secure: ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those individuals who need to have it, is accurate and up-to-date, is shared in a timely fashion and is shared securely.

7. Keep a record of your decision and the reasons for it, whether it is to share information or not, if you decide to share, then record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.

Written reports about safeguarding child/adult protection concerns

Written reports regarding safeguarding child/adult protection concerns must be either stored in a locked filing cabinet (with restricted access to that filing cabinet) or held securely electronically.

Concerns about a child:

The record must be kept for 25 years after the member has left SC or longer if a complaint has been made in respect of the case or legal proceedings.

Concerns about an adult:

The record will be kept until the person reaches the age of 65 or for 10 years - whichever is longer

Historic or Anonymous Concerns

If SYC staff receive historic or anonymous safeguarding concerns they should not be ignored or trivialised in any way and should be reported immediately to the DSL. A historic concern could be defined as, but not limited to, one that is related to a previous member of staff or one that happened several years ago. The concern will then be acted on in line with policy and procedure. The fact that a freelancer ceases to provide their services to SYC will not prevent an allegation from being followed up in line with these procedures, and appropriate action taken.

Policy Review & Update

This policy will be reviewed and updated by the author and the Safeguarding Trustee annually, unless an incident has occurred, or legislation updated that necessitates the policy being updated before that time.

Appendix 1: Definitions

Safeguarding is protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of children's health or development, ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.

Child protection is part of safeguarding. It refers to the action taken to protect specific children from abuse or neglect, or significant harm. A child protection response may be necessary in any case where a child or young person under the age of 18 may have been abused or may be at risk of abuse.

What is Abuse? All of the following definitions have been taken from the HM Government document Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2024). Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused by other children or adults, in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. There can be physical, emotional, sexual, peer-on-peer abuse, neglect, FGM, radicalisation and extremism.

Appendix 2: The GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) where safeguarding is concerned. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 introduce new elements to the data protection regime, superseding the Data Protection Act 1998. Practitioners must have due regard to the relevant data protection principles which allow them to share personal information.

The GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 place greater significance on organisations being transparent and accountable in relation to their use of data. All organisations handling personal data need to have comprehensive and proportionate arrangements for collecting, storing and sharing information.

The GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 do not prevent, or limit the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children and young people safe. To share information effectively:

- All practitioners should be confident of the processing conditions, which allow them to store and share the information that they need to carry out their safeguarding role. Information which is relevant to safeguarding will often be 'special category personal data' - meaning it is sensitive and personal
- Where practitioners need to share special category personal data, they should be aware that the Data Protection Act 2018 includes 'safeguarding of children and individuals at risk' as a condition that allows practitioners to share information without consent
- Information can be shared legally without consent, if a practitioner is unable to, or cannot be reasonably expected to gain consent from the individual, or if gaining consent could place a child at risk
- Relevant personal information can be shared lawfully if it is to keep a child or individual at risk safe from neglect or physical, emotional or mental harm, or if it is protecting their physical, mental, or emotional well-being.