

# Safeguarding Policy

## Policy statement and purpose

BelCanto Male Chorus aims to ensure that no act or omission on the part of the organisation, or that of its members, puts a child, young person or vulnerable adult inadvertently at risk; and that measures are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of all members.

The purpose of this policy is:

- to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults, with whom the choir has any involvement, from abuse.
- to provide an outline of the principles and processes that guide our approach to safeguarding.

## 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 is minimised, and where there are concerns, to share them with other local agencies. 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 including: *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015* and *Every Child Matters 2004*.

BelCanto Male Chorus (hereafter referred to as the 'Choir') recognises that it is not the role of our organisation to decide whether a child or vulnerable adult has been abused. This is the role of the statutory authorities (Police and DCC Children's Social Care Services) who have legal responsibility, or the NSPCC who have powers to investigate child protection concerns, under the Children's Act. However, we are committed to undertaking responsibility within our remit.

## Who are 'Children' and 'Vulnerable Adults'?

A 'child' is anyone who has yet to reach their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Anyone of 18 years of age or over 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 a 'vulnerable adult'.

The Choir recognises the need to safeguard the welfare of any young and vulnerable people with whom we may work or come into contact. Contact with children typically falls into the following categories:

- Young people become members of the Choir and attend its 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.

## How BelCanto Male Chorus Operates

The Choir is an 'unincorporated association', composed of approximately 20-30 members who meet for the purpose of singing as a choir. A small group of members are elected to serve on the Committee, to manage and administer the Choir. Rehearsals and performances are led by our Musical Director (who is not employed by the Choir and who receives no remuneration), together with a professional Accompanist. From time to time the BelCanto Male Chorus organises other events such as social events and outings.

The Choir does not advertise itself as an activity suitable for children or vulnerable adults, albeit that membership is open to young people of 14 years or older. The great majority of Choir members are independent adults. It happens only rarely that a young person or vulnerable adult 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. This policy applies to any person invited to perform or work with the Choir.

## BelCanto Male Chorus Junior Members

Young people, of 14 years or older, are welcome to join the Choir as Junior Members, subject to the following conditions:

1. A parent or guardian, or other responsible adult of the parent or guardian's choice, MUST accompany the child and remain responsible for them throughout all rehearsals, performances or other events.
2. New members under the age of 18 (Junior Members) must complete a BelCanto Male Chorus membership application form. The child's parent or guardian must complete and sign a Parental Consent Form, giving written permission for their child to join the Choir and take part in Choir activities. If the parent or guardian nominates another adult to accompany the child on their behalf (in loco parentis), prior written consent to that effect shall be provided by the parent or guardian. This correspondence will be retained securely by the Choir's Secretary.
3. The Parental Consent Form will also include a notice to parents or guardians informing them 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.)
4. The parent or guardian retains full responsibility for the child's transport arrangements to and from rehearsals and the venues for performances or activities. Other adult Choir members will NOT provide transport for unaccompanied junior members, under any circumstances.
5. Rehearsals and other activities will be conducted in an open environment to avoid private or unobserved situations. Adult members and other parties (other than a parent or guardian, or their nominee) should ensure that they are not alone with a young person.
6. Any child who wishes to go on a tour or (residential 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. Parents or guardians will be informed of arrangements for the event and asked to confirm their approval in writing.

## Privacy arrangements

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.

In common with its policy for adult members, the Choir will not disclose contact details for any Junior 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.

## Joint concerts with schools and youth groups

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

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

## Measures for implementation of this policy

This policy is available on the Choir's website at <http://www.belcantomalechorus.org.uk>. A hard copy of this policy will be issued to all new adult members, as part of their introduction to the Choir. A hard copy of this policy will be provided to the parent or guardian of all new Junior Members.

This policy will be brought to the attention of members at each Choir AGM and then reviewed annually at the first Committee meeting following the AGM.

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 provided on the parent/guardian consent form and on the website.

Choir members or anyone with concerns should report to the Designated Person (or in their absence, the Chairman), 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 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).
- A permanent confidential record will be kept of the report by the Choir Secretary.

## Belcanto Male Chorus

Recognising the tutorial nature of their roles, the Choir will require the Musical Director and the Accompanist to hold enhanced DBS certificates. Similarly, recognising the supervisory nature of their roles, the Designated Person for this policy and at least one elected officers of the committee will also be required to hold enhanced DBS certificates. For all these positions, the Choir may accept a DBS enhanced disclosure certificate processed by another organisation, provided it has been issued within the past three years and is of the required level of disclosure. If in the future, Belcanto Male Chorus should need to recruit staff, then the Choir will apply appropriate safeguarding good practice to ensure that appointees are suitable to work with young or vulnerable people.

### Approach to be taken in event of a complaint

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).

Version 1 of this policy was adopted by BelCanto Male Chorus at their Special General Meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> day of February, 2017

Signed by the Chairman on behalf of BelCanto Male Chorus.

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Gerald Heath

Date: 21 February 2017

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