**Devon Youth Orchestras Child Protection Policy Statement**

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Devon Youth Orchestras acknowledges the duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and is committed to ensuring safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities, government guidance and complies with best practice.

The policy recognises that the welfare and interests of children are paramount in all circumstances. It aims to ensure that regardless of age, gender, religion or beliefs, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or socioeconomic background, all children

* have a positive and enjoyable experience of being part of one or more of the Devon Youth Orchestras in a safe and child centred environment
* are protected from abuse whilst participating in Devon Youth Orchestras or outside of the activity.

Devon Youth Orchestras acknowledge that some children, including disabled children and young people or those from ethnic minority communities, can be particularly vulnerable to abuse and we accept the responsibility to take reasonable and appropriate steps to ensure their welfare.

As part of our safeguarding policy Devon Youth Orchestras will

* promote and prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and young people
* ensure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and is provided with appropriate learning opportunities to recognise, identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating to children and young people
* ensure appropriate action is taken in the event of incidents/concerns of abuse and support provided to the individual/s who raise or disclose the concern
* ensure that confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and securely stored
* prevent the employment/deployment of unsuitable individuals
* ensure robust safeguarding arrangements and procedures are in operation.

The policy and procedures will be widely promoted and are mandatory for everyone involved in Devon Youth Orchestras. Failure to comply with the policy and procedures will be addressed without delay and may ultimately result in dismissal/exclusion from the organisation.

Monitoring

The policy will be reviewed a year after development and then every three years, or in the following circumstances:

* changes in legislation and/or government guidance
* as a result of any other significant change or event.

(Last reviewed September 2024)

Our Code of Practice

1. Inappropriate physical contact with children must be avoided. Physical contact is only appropriate in very limited circumstances. For more detailed advice please see the Guidance for Private Music Teachers set out in the Appendix to the ISM (Independent Society of Musicians) Code of Conduct.
2. It is not good practice to take children alone in a car on journeys, however short, unless with the prior consent of the child’s parent or guardian, and then only in exceptional circumstances.
3. Do not make suggestive or inappropriate remarks to or about a child, even in fun, as this could be misinterpreted. Inappropriate remarks include innuendo, swearing, and discussing their or your own intimate relationships.
4. Other than in exceptional circumstances, do not communicate directly with children by email or text messages and only then with the prior consent of the child’s parent or guardian. If electronic communication is necessary best practice would be to communicate directly with parents or guardians.
5. Never communicate with children via Twitter, Facebook or other social media.
6. Do not engage in behaviour which could be construed as ‘grooming’ a child (for example giving a child money, presents or favours or talking or behaving in an inappropriate or unprofessional manner towards children).
7. Do take a disclosure of abuse from a child seriously. It is important not to deter children from making a ‘disclosure’ of abuse through fear of not being believed, and to listen to what they have to say. Guidance on responding to an allegation of abuse is set out in section 4 of this document. If the allegation gives rise to a child protection concern it is important to follow the ISM’s procedure for reporting such concerns, and not to attempt to investigate the concern yourself.
8. Remember that those who abuse children can be of any age (even other children), gender, ethnic background or class, and it is important not to allow personal preconceptions about people to prevent appropriate action taking place.
9. Good practice includes valuing and respecting children as individuals, and the adult modelling of appropriate conduct - which will always exclude bullying, shouting, racism, sectarianism or sexism.

Guidance on responding to a child making an allegation of abuse

1. Stay calm.
2. Listen carefully to what is said and show that you are taking it seriously.
3. 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.
4. Tell the child that the matter will only be disclosed to those who need to know about it.
5. Allow the child to continue at her/his own pace.
6. Ask questions for clarification only, and at all times avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer.
7. Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you.
8. Tell them what you will do next, and with whom the information will be shared (if this is in a school it will need to be the designated person within that school).
9. Make no judgment about what you have heard.
10. Record in writing what was said, using the child’s own words as soon as possible – note the date, time, any names mentioned, to whom the information was given and ensure that the record is signed and dated.
11. Remember that whilst you may have been the first person encountering an allegation of abuse it is not your responsibility to decide whether abuse has occurred. That is a task for the professional child protection agencies, following a referral from the Designated Safeguarding Person in the organisation.

How to report your concerns

Leaders could have their suspicion or concern raised in a number of ways, the most likely of which are:

1. the conduct of another music professional or adult;
2. a child “disclosing” abuse;
3. bruising or evidence of physical hurt;
4. unusual behaviour by a child.

If a Devon Youth Orchestras leader has such concerns they should report them immediately to the appropriate person in the organisation within which the concern has arisen (for example a school, orchestra or music service).

If a child in your care has suffered a serious injury as a result of abuse, seek medical attention immediately and then inform your Local Authority Children’s Social Care Department.

If you have a concern you can seek advice from the NSPCC free 24-hour Child Protection Helpline (0808 800 5000).

The most common examples of the types of concerns that must be reported immediately are:

* someone has behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
* someone has possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
* someone has behaved towards a child in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children.

Urgent enquiries

If you believe that urgent action is needed because, for example, a child is in immediate danger or needs accommodation, phone the MASH on 0345 155 1071 and give as much information as you can. Your information will be passed immediately to a manager who will decide the action needed and will normally respond to you within one hour. You must follow up your telephone call by sending a completed referral form to the MASH within 48 hours. The link below will take you to the appropriate page on the Devon Children & Families Partnership to report a child safety concern:

[**https://www.dcfp.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/multi-agency-safeguarding-hub-in-devon/**](https://www.dcfp.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/multi-agency-safeguarding-hub-in-devon/)