



**PRESIDENT: Sir Colin Davis**

**MUSICAL DIRECTOR: Grace Rossiter**

# **Safeguarding Children and Young People during Choir Activities**

## **Policy Statement**

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Finchley Children's Music Group (FCMG) is a North London Youth Choir for children and young people aged between 4 and 18. It is dedicated to the promotion of choral music. It is a versatile group of mixed-voice choirs that is recognised for its high vocal quality, musicianship and professionalism. The choir has an annual schedule of performances that include local community music festivals, high profile national events and international performances.
  
- 1.2 FCMG has charitable status and is managed by an elected committee appointed at the open Annual General Meeting of the choir. The membership is usually drawn from parents of children and young people in the choir who are nominated for the skills and abilities that they may bring as a committee member covering, financial, musical, website, child safety or other such expertise. FCMG employs 7 staff including a Director of Music, two Choir leaders, two senior accompanists, a General Manager and a Choir Administrator.  
A special feature of the choir is the nomination of children and young people as representatives for each element of the choir and who are involved in listening to the views of respective choirs, mentoring and supporting new members and feeding in to the musical director their views on new developments.
  
- 1.3 FCMG is committed to promoting the well-being of children and young people through channelling their creative singing potential and ensuring that while doing so, that their welfare and safety lays at the heart of all activities.
  
- 1.4 FCMG acknowledges that it has a responsibility for the safety of children and young people under its temporary care and works closely with parents to ensure that the needs of all children and young people are taken into account. The care and possible risks to children and young people are considered in relation to the range of activities that take place. These include, the recruitment of staff, the appointment of committee members, and all the operations of the choir including, arrangements and provisions for auditions, rehearsals, performances, summer school, travel and chaperoning, and health and safety standards in the buildings used by the choir. There are two designated Committee members for child protection. They are Jane Burgering and Jim Dunne.

- 1.5 It is recognised that adherence to FCMG's safeguarding policy is in the firm interests of all its members, including adults (parents, staff and volunteers) to ensure that the choir continues to enjoy a positive reputation, adds value to the community, while ensuring that all children and young people are kept safe and that potential risks of harm are minimised.

## **2. Safeguarding principles**

2.1 FCMG works to the following principles:

- The welfare of the child and young person is paramount
- All children and young people, without exception have the right to protection from abuse
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately and
- All FCMG staff and volunteers have a duty of care to abide by this policy and to report concerns

(Ref: Charities Commission Guidance August 2002)

## **3. Procedures**

- 3.1.1 All staff and volunteers acting on behalf of FCMG accept responsibility for the welfare of children and young people who come into contact with its tasks and functions and that they will report any concerns about a child or somebody else's behaviour using the procedures laid down
- 3.1.2 There are two designated people on the committee who can be consulted and take action following any expression of concern, who are trained in child protection procedures and know how to make appropriate referrals to child protection agencies in accordance with Dfes and local Area Child Protection Committee Guidance

- 3.1.3 The chair of FCMG must be informed immediately of an expression of concern
- 3.1.4 The designated Committee members and the chair must decide on the nature of the concern regarding a particular child/young person and agree a suitable course of action including making a referral to the local child protection agency
- 3.1.5 Information in relation to a concern is recorded as soon as possible
- 3.1.6 Every effort is made that confidentiality is maintained for all parties when an allegation has been made or a concern investigated

#### **4. FCMG A Behaviour Code**

- 4.1 FCMG promotes good practice through adopting the following behaviour code for its committee, staff, volunteers and helpers. The code includes that:
  - 4.1.1 All children and young people are kept informed of the schedule of activities and given choice in how best they may participate to the good of the choir, and that communications are kept open and transparent at all times
  - 4.1.2 Unsupervised/unobserved contact with an individual child or young person must be avoided where possible
  - 4.1.3 It is important not to have physical contact with children and this should be avoided
  - 4.1.4 It is good practice not to take children alone in a car on journeys, however short
  - 4.1.5 Suggestive or inappropriate remarks to or about a child, even in fun, must be avoided at all times as this could be misinterpreted
  - 4.1.6 It is important to listen to children who may wish to make a disclosure and recognise that children and young people will have fears of not being believed

- 4.1.7 All people involved in the choir must recognise that those who abuse children can be of any age (including other children/young people), gender, ethnic background or class, and it is important not to allow personal preconceptions about people to prevent appropriate action taking place
- 4.1.8 Good practice includes valuing and respecting children as individuals, and adult modelling of appropriate conduct, which must exclude bullying, shouting, taunting, racism, sectarianism, sexism or negative remarks regarding sexual orientation, abilities or disabilities
- 4.1.9 A culture of mutual respect between children, young people and those who manage and represent the choir is encouraged with adults modelling good practice

## 5. Definitions of Abuse

- 5.1 FCMG recognised that abuse and risks to children and young people can be complex and require careful, supportive and confidential handling. The choir accepts that risk potential is on a continuum from basic health and safety issues to do with buildings and transport arrangements, to hearing about abuse that occurred outside of the choir and include observing or hearing about abuse perpetuated during choir attendance. To assist all members of the choir to take appropriate action the committee accepts the following broad definitions of the types of abuse that might occur.

It is recognised that the definitions may not include all examples of the specific concerns that might arise for a child/young person, but adults in the choir are expected to be aware, that it is likely that at least a small number of children and young people, who join the FCMG choir could have suffered or continue to suffer some form of abuse.

### 5.1.1 Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. It may be the result of a deliberate act, but could also be caused through the omission or failure to act to protect. It may include fabricating the symptoms of, or deliberately causing ill-health to occur.

### 5.1.2 Emotional Abuse

FCMG safeguarding policy

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person, age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children, causing children frequently to feel frightened, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

### **5.1.3 Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of, or consents to, what is happening. It may involve physical contact, including rape or oral sex, or non-penetrative acts such as fondling. Boys and girls can be sexually abused by males and/or females, and by other young people. It also includes non-contact activities such as involving children in watching or taking part in the making of pornographic material, or encouraging children to behave in inappropriate ways.

### **5.1.4 Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, or failing to ensure that a child gets appropriate medical care or treatment

( Derived from/Associated Board/Child Protection Policy)

- 5.2 For the purposes of FCMG's safeguarding policy these definitions recognise the range of the types of abuse that might occur and that might vary in levels of extremity and a child's exposure to different forms of abuse.

## **6. Recruitment Practices**

- 6.1 FCMG promotes high standards and practices in the recruitment and selection of new staff to ensure that they are suitably qualified and fit to work with children and young people. In doing this the following aspects of recruitment are seen as vital.

- A role description is available for all roles
- Recruitment is based on pre-agreed selection criteria

- A signed declaration of previous convictions is incorporated
- Documentary evidence of qualifications is required
- CRB checks are carried out
- A rigorous selection process is in place
- References are followed through in writing

6.2 Similar safeguards are in operation for volunteers and helpers in keeping with their respective roles and responsibilities.

## **7. Responding appropriately to a child wishing to tell us about abuse**

As professional expertise in working to safeguard children and young people has grown over the years there are a number of helpful pointers in responding to abuse that have been accepted. It is recognised by FCMG that a child or young person may find it extremely difficult to tell an adult of abuse that either they are someone close to them is experiencing. All members of FCMG must be alert to the signals of abuse and be prepared to raise concerns where they suspect that some form of abuse may have taken place or there are signals that a child or young person is displaying some form of distress, through behaviour, emotional changes or other signals. When a child or young person does wish to talk about an abuse there are some good practice pointers that must followed:

1. Always stay calm
2. Listen carefully to what is said
3. Find an opportunity to share that the information may need to be shared with others – do not promise to keep secrets
4. Reassure 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 clarification questions only, avoid leading or closed questions
7. Reassure the child/young person 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
9. Record in writing what was said, using the child's own words, note the date, time, any names mentioned
10. Remember that you are not being asked to decide whether abuse has occurred or not

## 8. Updating and reviewing the Safeguarding Policy

- 8.1 FCMG will review this policy on an annual basis and seek the views on how it may be improved.

References
Associated Board Child Protection Policy
Charities Commission Child Protection Guidance (2002)
Dh/Dfes What to do if you're worried a child is being abused (2003)

Signed: Jannie Dinham ( Chair) on behalf of the Committee of FCMG
Date: 4 th March 2007

