



Registered Charity No: 1160096  
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## **Safeguarding Children and Young People during FCMG Activities Policy Statement**

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### **Introduction**

The **Finchley Children's Music Group** comprises four choirs for young people aged 4 – 18 in north London. FCMG regularly works with leading professional choirs and orchestras in the UK's major concert halls and abroad and is recognised for its high vocal quality, musicianship and professionalism.

FCMG is a registered charity and is managed by a Board of trustees appointed by the members of the charity at its AGM. Trustees are largely drawn from parents of children and young people in the choirs, who are nominated for the skills and expertise they can bring to the governance and administration of the charity. There is also an operations committee to which the trustees delegate most of the routine aspects of managing rehearsals and events.

FCMG engages staff on a part-time freelance basis, namely the Music Director, three other conductors, two accompanists, a pastoral assistant and a musicianship tutor. There are also short term freelance individuals who are engaged as part of FCMG's Summer School venture. The FCMG Administrator is employed directly by FCMG on a part time basis.

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, their welfare and safety is paramount.

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 trustees and committee members, and all the operations of the choir including

arrangements and provision for auditions, rehearsals, performances, residential workshops, travel and chaperoning, alongside health and safety compliance in the buildings used by FCMG.

It is recognised that adherence to FCMG's safeguarding policy is in the firm interests of all its stakeholders. The trustees strive to ensure that FCMG continues to enjoy a positive reputation and add value to the community, while ensuring that all children and young people are kept safe and that potential risks of harm are minimised.

### **Safeguarding principles**

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;

Any suspicion or allegation of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately;

All staff, volunteers and others acting on behalf of FCMG have a duty of care to abide by this policy and to report concerns.

### **Procedures**

All staff, volunteers and others acting on behalf of FCMG accept responsibility for the welfare of children and young people who come into contact with its activities and will report any concerns they may have about a child or somebody else's behaviour using the agreed procedures.

There is a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) trustee who can be consulted and will take action following any expression of concern. This person has an understanding of child protection procedures and how to make appropriate referrals to child protection agencies in accordance with national and local government guidance. The current DSL is **Judith Iacovou (judith.iacovou@fcmg.org.uk)**.

The DSL must decide on the nature of the concern regarding a particular child/young person and agree a suitable course of action, which may include making a referral to the local child protection agency.

Information in relation to a concern must be recorded as soon as possible.

Every effort must be made for confidentiality to be maintained for all parties when an allegation has been made or a concern investigated, and information shared with FCMG personnel and relevant external parties only on a need to know basis as determined by the DSL.

### **FCMG – a behaviour code**

4.1 FCMG promotes good practice through adopting the following behaviour code for all staff, volunteers and others acting on behalf of FCMG. The code includes that:

All children and young people are kept informed of the schedule of activities and are given choice in how best they may contribute to the good of the choir, with communications being open and transparent at all times;

Unsupervised/unobserved contact with an individual child or young person must be avoided wherever possible;

It is important not to have physical contact with children and this should be avoided;

It is good practice not to take children alone in a car on journeys, however short;

Suggestive or inappropriate remarks to or about a child, including in jest, must be avoided at all times as this could be misinterpreted;

It is important to listen to anyone who may wish to make a disclosure and recognise that children and young people may have fears of not being believed;

All people involved with FCMG must recognise that those who abuse children can be of any age (including other children/young people), gender, ethnic background or social status, and it is important not to let personal preconceptions prevent appropriate action taking place;

Good practice includes valuing and respecting children as individuals. Adult modelling of appropriate conduct must exclude bullying, shouting, taunting, racism, religious discrimination, sexism or negative remarks regarding sexual orientation, abilities or disabilities.

A culture of mutual respect between children, young people and those who manage and represent FCMG is encouraged.

Children's contact details should be kept confidential and only used for the purposes of choir-related activity and communications. No member of staff should contact children by social media.

## **5. Definitions of Abuse**

FCMG recognises that abuse and risks to children and young people can be complex and require careful, supportive and confidential handling. FCMG accepts that risk potential is on a continuum from basic health and safety issues relating to buildings and transport arrangements, to learning of abuse that occurred outside the organisation, and includes observing or hearing about abuse perpetuated during choir attendance. To assist FCMG to take appropriate action the trustees, committee, staff and volunteers accept 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 of the likelihood that at least a small number of children and young people who join the FCMG choirs 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 ill-health, or deliberately causing ill-health to occur.

### **5.1.2 Emotional Abuse**

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 a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on a child, causing that child to frequently 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, although 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 may 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.

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 it 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 safer recruitment in the 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 considered essential:

A job description, including person specification, is available for all roles

Recruitment is based on rigorous pre-agreed selection criteria

Documentary evidence of qualifications relevant to the role is required

An enhanced, ongoing DBS check within the last 3 years must be in place or be undertaken prior to commencement in the post

References must be formally followed up

Similar safeguards are in operation for volunteers, helpers and others acting on behalf of FCMG in keeping with their respective roles and responsibilities.

## **7. Responding appropriately to a child wishing to disclose abuse**

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 or someone close to them is experiencing. All FCMG representatives 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 signs that a child or young person is displaying some form of distress through their behaviour. When a child or young person does wish to talk about an abuse the following good practice should be followed:

Always stay calm.

Listen carefully to what is said.

Find an opportunity to let the child/young person know that the information may need to be shared with others – do not promise to keep secrets.

Reassure the child/young person that the matter will only be disclosed to those who need to know about it.

Allow the child/young person to continue at her/his own pace.

Do not ask the child/young person any questions.

Reassure the child/young person 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.

Make notes of what was said, using the child's own words, and note the date, time and any names mentioned. If it is an older child ask them to read it through and verify it is what they said. Ensure that nothing on the notes is identifiable as the individual other than to you.

Remember that you are not being asked to decide whether or not abuse has occurred.

Electronically record the notes and make them securely available to the FCMG DSL or their deputy in event of their unavailability as appropriate.

The DSL should be telephoned first in all instances. If they do not pick up, leave a message and send a top line email or WhatsApp message asking them to call you about a safeguarding issue (no specific detail) and they will get back to you as soon as possible.

If the referral is urgent (ie singer at immediate risk) and you can't get hold of the DSL, please still leave a message but call the deputy in their absence following the above process.

If it is not appropriate to call the deputy or they are unavailable, please discuss with the FCMG Chair following the above process.

The DSL will be responsible for recording a timeline of events and for ensuring associated documentation is stored securely on the FCMG shared drive.

The DSL will assess the referral and either arrange a follow up minuted assessment with the child and parent/guardian or a referral to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) as appropriate, the nature of the complaint warranting the timeline for scheduling.

The DSL will store the official minutes of the assessment and any other associated documentation securely on the FCMG shared drive for access on a need to know basis, and should include dates for ongoing review as appropriate.

## **8. Legal Framework**

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child 1989  
Data Protection Act 1998  
Sexual Offences Act 2003  
Children Act 2004  
Protection of Freedoms Act 2012  
Keeping children safe in education 2022 (Appendix 1)  
Relevant government guidance on safeguarding children

## **9. Updating, reviewing, compliance and concordance of the Safeguarding Policy**

FCMG will review this policy on an annual basis and seek guidance on how it may be improved. A designated person for child protection will be confirmed annually by the trustees in line with this policy and will hold current certification in Level 3 Safeguarding. FCMG Staff and trustees will undertake "Read and Sign" concordance of the Safeguarding Policy annually and an electronic record of responses kept on the FCMG shared drive. FCMG staff and trustees will be offered safeguarding and child protection online training hosted by the NSPCC or suitable equivalent every 3 years and records kept of its completion (or other certification of similar training completion which has been conducted outside FCMG). Volunteer chaperone leads will be asked to read the Safeguarding policy and the Chaperone policy (Appendix 2) ahead of their scheduled chaperoning sessions. All Staff and Trustees will be in possession of Disclosure and Barring Service certification which has been issued within the last 3 years. Singers are not to have music sessions with staff where the staff do not hold a current DBS certificate. In the instances where deputisation of staff may occur, an individual with a current DBS must accompany the deputy during their FCMG activity. If an external person is invited to direct any FCMG activity as a deputy or any role of a similar nature, every effort by staff must be made to obtain confirmation of an individual's existing DBS prior to their FCMG activity.

**Appendix 1 Keeping children safe in education 2022**  
**Appendix 2 FCMG Chaperone Policy**