

SAFEGUARDING POLICY 2024

Safeguarding Policy dated: 19 September 2024

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Charity Number: 312828

This policy will be reviewed annually by the RSCM Council.

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1. Introduction

The Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) takes seriously its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of all who engage in any RSCM activity, in particular children, young people and adults at risk of harm. We have produced the following Safeguarding Policy and underpinning procedures in order to set out the standards we wish to uphold.

The RSCM Council (who are the Trustees) are committed to the safeguarding and promotion of the welfare of all who engage with the RSCM, and require staff, volunteers and beneficiaries to share this commitment. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and everyone has the right to protection from abuse regardless of their age, sex, race or ethnicity, disability, sexuality, religion or beliefs.

This policy and associated procedures apply to everyone involved, in any way, with the RSCM.

2. Director's statement

Safeguarding is of fundamental importance to the activity of the RSCM, at every level. It must, in whatever circumstance and on whatever occasion, be an embedded part of our thinking and culture, and not mere lip-service gesture. It is not something to fear, nor to negatively worry about; but is rather a positive way of ensuring the safety and wellbeing of everyone who engages with the RSCM. The RSCM aims to ensure a model of best practice; and this will require ongoing evolution and refinement of policy, and of process, to ensure we continue to be at the forefront of safeguarding thinking.

3. Definition of terms

For the purposes of this Safeguarding Policy, all references to:

- *RSCM* denotes the Council, employed staff and volunteers.
- '*Child*', '*children*', '*young person*', '*young people*', – whether singular or plural – are used interchangeably and are taken to refer to those under 18 years of age.
- *Positions of Trust* legislation has changed. The government has extended positions of trust offences to include where an adult is coaching, teaching, training, supervising or instructing in a religion to a 16 or 17-year-old on a regular basis. It is now an offence for a person in a position of trust to have a sexual relationship with anyone aged 16 or 17 with whom they are in that position.
- '*Workers*', '*staff*', '*volunteers*', '*helpers*' are used interchangeably and are taken to refer to anyone interacting with children or adults at risk of harm on behalf of the RSCM, whether employed or voluntary.

- *'Child abuse'* refers to any of the recognised forms of abuse – physical, emotional, neglect, sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation or neglect.
- *'Adult abuse'* refers to any of the recognised forms of abuse – physical, sexual, psychological / emotional, financial / material, neglect and acts of omission, domestic abuse.
- *'Other forms of abuse'* including but not limited to institutional, spiritual, human trafficking, modern slavery.
- *'Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children'* - Safeguarding is a term used to denote measures to protect the health, well-being and human rights of individuals, which allow people — especially children and young people — to live free from abuse, harm and neglect.
- *Allegation* – where it is alleged that a person who works with children has:
 - Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child.
 - Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child.
 - Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.
- *Concern* - relates to:
 - The welfare of a child, young person or adult at risk of harm, including that they are suffering or are likely to suffer harm in a context outside the RSCM – be that at home or otherwise (by adults and/or peers).
 - The behaviour of an individual who is associated with the charity towards a child that does not meet the threshold of an allegation.

4. **Mission statement**

The RSCM recognises the importance of its ministry with children, young people and adults at risk of harm and its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk of harm entrusted to its care. The welfare of the child is always paramount.

As part of its mission, the RSCM is committed to:

- The safeguarding, care and nurture of children, young people and adults at risk of harm within the RSCM community and who participate in any activity of the RSCM.
- Safer recruitment, supervision and training for all RSCM workers.
- Responding without delay to every report or cause for concern that a child, young person or adult at risk of harm for whom it is responsible may be or may have been harmed in any way.

- Full cooperation with statutory agencies during any investigation into allegations concerning abuse of a child, young person or adult at risk of harm.
- Providing informed pastoral care to any child, young person or adult at risk of harm who has experienced abuse.
- The management and supervision of any member of the RSCM community known or thought to pose a risk to children, young people or adults at risk of harm.

We recognise that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- All children and adults at risk of harm, regardless of age, culture, disability, gender, ethnic origin, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to protection from abuse.
- Partnership working is essential to good safeguarding practice.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse and poor practice will be taken seriously and responded to without delay.
- All RSCM workers have a responsibility to report concerns to the RSCM Safeguarding Officer.
- RSCM workers must receive support and training to understand best practice and develop skills in managing any welfare or safeguarding issues that may arise.
- The RSCM is committed to offering pastoral care and support to those attending any RSCM event or activity who have been affected by abuse.

5. Scope of the Safeguarding Policy

This Safeguarding Policy applies to anyone associated with the RSCM, whether working for or with it, engaged as a Council member, paid employee, worker or self-employed contractor, or unpaid employee or volunteer, beneficiary (referred to as 'Council member, staff, volunteers and beneficiaries' for ease of reference throughout this document). We will take all reasonable steps to ensure they are familiar and comply with the safeguarding policy.

6. Roles and responsibilities

RSCM Council

The ultimate responsibility for Safeguarding within the RSCM rests with the RSCM Council. Council members have an essential role in setting the safeguarding aims and objectives and devising strategy.

Council members should promote a fair, open and positive culture and ensure that all involved feel able to report concerns, confident that they will be heard and responded to.

Council members should conduct periodic reviews of safeguarding policies, procedures and practice, and ensure that such policies and procedures are put into practice, are responsive to change and reviewed as necessary.

Council will appoint a Council Safeguarding lead who will provide oversight and direction to the work of the Safeguarding Team.

The Chair of Council

The Chair of Council will ensure safeguarding is always an item on the Council agenda and that Council members fulfil their responsibilities in respect of safeguarding.

Safeguarding Co-ordination Group

This group is appointed by Council to model and advise on safeguarding best practice and sustain a culture of positive safeguarding in all activities of the RSCM. It is made up of three Council members (one of whom chairs the group as agreed by Council), the Assistant Director (Finance and Operations) and Safeguarding Officer.

Director

The RSCM Director will ensure the strategic plan for safeguarding is implemented throughout the organisation.

Assistant Director (Finance and Operations)

The Assistant Director manages the Safeguarding Team, is responsible for the day-to-day work of the team, and ensures compliance with statutory requirements and implementing the directions given by Council.

Safeguarding Officer

The Safeguarding Officer is responsible for managing all aspects of safeguarding within the RSCM. Council members, staff, volunteers and beneficiaries must immediately relay any concerns or allegations to the Safeguarding Officer. The SG Officer also currently processes all CSDs, all Criminal Record Checks (DBS/PVG/Garda/Access NI), SG training, and records relevant data. If any concerns relate to the Safeguarding Officer, the concerns must be referred directly to the Assistant Director (Finance and Operations).

Event/Exam Safeguarding Supervisor is responsible for ensuring RSCM Safeguarding policy and procedures are followed at the specified event/exam.

All staff

All staff are responsible for ensuring a culture of safeguarding is maintained across the whole organisation.

Beneficiaries

It is recognised that 'safeguarding is everyone's responsibility' therefore everyone who engages in any way with the RSCM should be encouraged to be mindful of safeguarding and to take appropriate action should any concerns arise.

7. Reporting concerns or allegations

All concerns about the welfare of a child or concerns or allegations about the behaviour of anyone associated with the RSCM towards a child must be reported to the Safeguarding Officer immediately. The person reporting must make clear notes about the matter.

8. Discipline

It may, on occasion, be necessary to discipline or manage the behaviour of those attending RSCM activities. This may be necessary to protect the subject or others or to allow the activity to progress.

9. Bullying and harassment

The RSCM does not tolerate bullying or harassment of any sort under any circumstances. Any such behaviour will be dealt with and those perpetrating the bullying will be made aware that such behaviour is not acceptable.

Those experiencing bullying in any situation will be offered support to address the issues.

10. Online working

The RSCM recognises the specific risks associated with online working.

All staff and volunteers must comply with procedures relating to online Content, Contact and Conduct. Any breach of these requirements is not acceptable and will be dealt with immediately.

11. Responding to safeguarding concerns or allegations

The RSCM will respond to anyone who brings a safeguarding suspicion, concern or allegation of abuse (current or non-current) to the notice of the RSCM, in a respectful and timely manner, in line with current legislation, statutory safeguarding policy and procedures.

Under no circumstances should anyone carry out their own investigation into an allegation or suspicion of abuse.

We will:

- Treat seriously all reports or concerns.
- Ensure there are arrangements in place to cover if the Safeguarding Officer is not available.
- Provide a written procedure for dealing with abuse and allegations and make this available to all RSCM workers.
- Clearly display contact details of the Safeguarding Officer and the RSCM Safeguarding team, as well as national services for advice with safeguarding issues.
- Store personal information and safeguarding records securely and ensure information needed in an emergency is readily available
- Ensure all RSCM workers are aware of their responsibilities in the recording, storage and sharing of information.

If you believe a child is in immediate danger or is at risk of harm, a referral should be made to children's social care and/or the police immediately. If a referral is made the Safeguarding Officer should be informed as soon as possible.

In non-emergency cases, the Safeguarding Officer will liaise with relevant external agencies.

The Safeguarding Officer will oversee the referral/reporting obligations to relevant external agencies.

Please note, should a worker offer to resign or the RSCM decides to dismiss or cease using an individual's services on safeguarding grounds, the Safeguarding Officer must be informed, and a referral made to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), and any other relevant professional bodies.

If a parent, guardian or carer wishes to complain about the way an incident concerning a child or adult at risk of harm for whom they are responsible has been handled by staff or volunteers at any RSCM activity, they should put the complaint in writing to the RSCM Safeguarding Officer in the first instance. If they remain dissatisfied with the response, they may refer the matter to the RSCM Director for further consideration.

The RSCM may remove an honorary award from a person convicted of abuse, a person who has an allegation substantiated, or a person who is barred from working with children and/or adults by any recognised professional organisation or body. The policy for removing honorary awards may be accessed from the RSCM.

12. **Safer Recruitment**

The RSCM has a robust recruitment process, including all prospective workers, where eligible, being required to apply for a criminal record check for the relevant country at the appropriate level and to complete a Confidential Self Declaration.

The RSCM's Safer Recruitment Policy must be followed in all recruitment processes. We will select, vet and train all RSCM workers working or volunteering with vulnerable groups in accordance with the Safer Recruitment Policy.

RSCM reserves the right not to engage anyone banned from working with children and/or adults by any recognised professional organisation or body.

The RSCM Safer Recruitment Policy is available on request.

13. **Code of Conduct**

All Council members, staff, volunteers, and beneficiaries are required to adhere to the relevant Code of Conduct for the role they are undertaking.

14. **Whistleblowing**

The RSCM Whistleblowing policy about the ways in which staff can voice their concerns, without fear of repercussions can be found in The RSCM Staff Handbook.

Staff should recognise their responsibility to bring matters of concern to the attention of the Safeguarding Officer and / or external agencies. This is particularly important where the welfare of vulnerable groups may be at risk.

If anyone has concerns about poor or unsafe safeguarding practice, and/or potential failures in the charity's safeguarding system and is concerned the senior leadership team will not take these seriously, they should report their concerns using the RSCM's Whistleblowing procedure. Suspected serious wrongdoing can also be reported by those who work or volunteer for a charity directly to the Charity Commission, using its whistleblowing procedure.

15. **Record keeping**

All those receiving or being aware of any safeguarding concern or allegation must record the full details. These records should be forwarded to the RSCM Safeguarding Officer who will ensure all records are retained in accordance with the RSCM data protection policy and GDPR requirements. Safeguarding data will be retained for 75 years.

16. **Confidentiality**

Absolute confidentiality should never be promised in a safeguarding context. No promises of confidentiality should ever be made to anyone making a disclosure.

Guarantees can be given that the information will be shared only on a need-to-know basis and sufficient to ensure that appropriate action is taken to safeguard the child. Where information is shared with external agencies, this should be in accordance with the government's information-sharing advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services (updated May 2024).

All staff and volunteers who receive confidential information in the course of their role will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

17. Managing those who may pose a risk

When it is known that a person wishing to participate in any RSCM activity may pose a risk of harm to children and/or adults at risk, the RSCM Safeguarding Officer will ensure that a safe course of action is identified and implemented, in conjunction with the relevant statutory agencies or other organisations such as dioceses where the person is involved. This may include a risk assessment and contract, which will detail the conditions under which the person may participate in any RSCM activity.