



Stevenage Singers - Safeguarding Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to protect people, particularly children, at risk adults and beneficiaries of assistance, from any harm that may be caused due to their coming into contact with Stevenage Singers. This includes harm arising from:

- The conduct of staff or personnel associated with Stevenage Singers
- The design and implementation of Stevenage Singers programmes and activities

The policy lays out the commitments made by Stevenage Singers, and informs members and associated personnel of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding.

This policy does not cover:

- Safeguarding concerns in the wider community not perpetrated by Stevenage Singers or associated personnel

What is safeguarding?

In the UK, safeguarding means protecting peoples' health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.

In our sector, we understand it to mean protecting people, including children and at risk adults, from harm that arises from coming into contact with our members or program's.

Scope

- Any staff contracted by Stevenage Singers
- Associated personnel whilst engaged with work or visits related to Stevenage Singers, including but not limited to the following: consultants; volunteers; contractors; programme visitors including journalists, celebrities and politicians

(continued on next page)

Policy Statement

Stevenage Singers believes that everyone we come into contact with, regardless of age, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation or ethnic origin has the right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation. Stevenage Singers will not tolerate abuse and exploitation by members or associated personnel.

This policy will address the following areas of safeguarding: child safeguarding, adult safeguarding, and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.

Stevenage Singers commits to addressing safeguarding throughout its work, through the three pillars of prevention, reporting and response.

Prevention

Stevenage Singers responsibilities

Stevenage Singers will:

- Ensure all members have access to, are familiar with, and know their responsibilities within this policy
- Design and undertake all its programs and activities in a way that protects people from any risk of harm that may arise from their coming into contact with Stevenage Singers. This includes the way in which information about individuals in our programmes is gathered and communicated
- Implement stringent safeguarding procedures when recruiting, managing and deploying staff and associated personnel
- Ensure staff and members receive training on safeguarding at a level commensurate with their role in the organisation
- Follow up on reports of safeguarding concerns promptly and according to due process

Staff/Member responsibilities

Child safeguarding

Stevenage Singers staff, members and associated personnel must not:

- Engage in sexual activity with anyone under the age of 18
- Sexually abuse or exploit children
- Subject a child to physical, emotional or psychological abuse, or neglect
- Engage in any commercially exploitative activities with children including child labour or trafficking

Adult safeguarding

Stevenage Singers staff, members and associated personnel must not:

- Sexually abuse or exploit at risk adults
- Subject an at risk adult to physical, emotional or psychological abuse, or neglect

Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse

Stevenage Singers staff, members and associated personnel must not:

- Exchange money, employment, goods or services for sexual activity. This includes any exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries of assistance
- Engage in any sexual relationships with beneficiaries of assistance, since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics

Additionally, Stevenage Singers staff, members and associated personnel are obliged to:

- Contribute to creating and maintaining an environment that prevents safeguarding violations and promotes the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy
- Report any concerns or suspicions regarding safeguarding violations by an Stevenage Singers staff, member or associated personnel to the appropriate person

Enabling reports

Stevenage Singers will ensure that safe, appropriate, accessible means of reporting safeguarding concerns are made available to staff, members and the communities we work with.

Stevenage Singers will also accept complaints from external sources such as members of the public, partners and official bodies.

How to report a safeguarding concern

Staff members who have a complaint or concern relating to safeguarding should report it immediately to their Safeguarding Focal Point (Chairman of Stevenage Singers). If the staff member does not feel comfortable reporting to their Safeguarding Focal Point (for example if they feel that the report will not be taken seriously, or if that person is implicated in the concern) they may report to any other appropriate staff/committee member.

Response

Stevenage Singers will follow up safeguarding reports and concerns according to legal and statutory obligations.

Stevenage Singers will apply appropriate disciplinary measures to staff, members and others found in breach of policy.

Confidentiality

It is essential that confidentiality is maintained at all stages of the process when dealing with safeguarding concerns. Information relating to the concern and subsequent case management should be shared on a need to know basis only, and should be kept secure at all times.

Safeguarding means:

Taking all reasonable steps to prevent harm, particularly sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment from occurring; to protect people, especially vulnerable adults and children, from that harm and to respond appropriately when harm does occur.

This definition draws from our values and principles and shapes our culture. It pays specific attention to preventing and responding to harm from any potential, actual or attempted abuse of power, trust, or vulnerability, especially for sexual purposes.

Safeguarding applies consistently and without exception across our programmes, partners and staff and members. It requires proactively identifying, preventing and guarding against all risks of harm, exploitation and abuse and having mature, accountable and transparent systems for response, reporting and learning when risks materialise. Those systems must be survivor-centred and also protect those accused until proven guilty. Safeguarding puts beneficiaries and affected persons at the centre of all we do.

Dealing with Safeguarding Reports

Purpose and scope

The purpose of this document is to provide procedures for dealing with reports of breach of Stevenage Singers Safeguarding Policy, where the safeguarding violation is:

- Against staff, members or members of the public,
- Perpetrated by staff, members, partners or associated personnel.

Procedures

1. Report is received

1.1 Reports can reach the organisation through various routes. This may be in a structured format such as a letter, e-mail, text or message on social media. It may also be in the form of informal discussion or rumour. If a member (or committee member) hears something in an informal discussion or chat that they think is a safeguarding concern, they should report this to the appropriate member in their organisation.

1.2 If a safeguarding concern is disclosed directly to a member, the person receiving the report should bear the following in mind:

- Listen
- Empathise with the person
- Ask who, when, where, what but not why
- Repeat/ check your understanding of the situation
- Report to the appropriate member (see below)

1.3 The person receiving the report should then document the following information, using an Incident Report Form if there is one:

- Name of person making report
- Name(s) of alleged survivor(s) of safeguarding incident(s) if different from above
- Name(s) of alleged perpetrator(s)
- Description of incident(s)
- Dates(s), times(s) and location(s) of incident

1.4 The person receiving the report should then forward this information to the Safeguarding Focal Point or appropriate member within 24 hours.

1.5 Due to the sensitive nature of safeguarding concerns, confidentiality must be maintained during all stages of the reporting process, and information shared on a limited 'need to know' basis only. This includes senior management who might otherwise be apprised of a serious incident.

1.6 If the reporting member is not satisfied that the organisation is appropriately addressing the report, they have a right to escalate the report to the Committee (or other governance structure), or to an external statutory body. The member will be protected against any negative repercussions as a result of this report.

2. Assess how to proceed with the report

2.1 Appoint a Decision Maker for handling this report

2.2 Determine whether it is possible to take this report forward

- Does the reported incident(s) represent a breach of safeguarding policy?
- Is there sufficient information to follow up this report?

2.3 If the reported incident does not represent a breach of Stevenage Singers Safeguarding Policy, but represents a safeguarding risk to others (such as a child safeguarding incident), the report should be referred through the appropriate channels (e.g. local authorities) if it is safe to do so.

2.4 If there is insufficient information to follow up the report, and no way to ascertain this information (for example if the person making the report did not leave contact details), the report should be filed in case it can be of use in the future, and look at any wider lesson learning we can take forward.

2.5 If the report raises any concerns relating to children under the age of 18, **seek expert advice immediately**. If at any point in the process of responding to the report (for example during an investigation) it becomes apparent that anyone involved is a child under the age of 18, the Decision Maker should be immediately informed and should seek expert advice before proceeding.

2.6 If the decision is made to take the report forward, ensure that you have the relevant expertise and capacity to manage a safeguarding case. **If you do not have this expertise in-house, seek immediate assistance**, through external capacity if necessary.

2.7 Clarify what, how and with whom information will be shared relating to this case. Confidentiality should be maintained at all times, and information shared on a need-to-know basis only. Decide which information needs to be shared with which stakeholder – information needs may be different.

2.8 Check your obligations on informing relevant bodies when you receive a safeguarding report. These include (but are not limited to):

- Funding organisations
- Umbrella bodies/networks
- Statutory bodies (such as the Charity Commission in the UK)

Some of these may require you to inform them when you receive a report; others may require information on completion of the case, or annual top-line information on cases. When submitting information to any of these bodies, think through the confidentiality implications very carefully.

3. Appoint roles and responsibilities for case management

3.1 If not already done so (see above), appoint a Decision Maker for the case. The Decision Maker should be a member, not implicated or involved in the case in any way.

3.2 If the report alleges a serious safeguarding violation, you may wish to hold a case conference. This should include:

- Decision Maker
- Person who received the report (such as the focal point, or manager)
- Safeguarding adviser (or equivalent) if there is one

The case conference should decide the next steps to take, including any protection concerns and support needs for the survivor and other stakeholders (see below).

4. Provide support to survivor where needed/requested

4.1 Provide appropriate support to survivor(s) of safeguarding incidents. Nb. this should be provided as a duty of care even if the report has not yet been investigated. Support could include (but it's not limited to)

- Psychosocial care or counselling
- Medical assistance
- Protection or security assistance (for example being moved to a safe location)

4.2 All decision making on support should be led by the survivor.

5. Assess any protection or security risks to stakeholders

5.1 For reports relating to serious incidents: undertake an immediate risk assessment to determine whether there are any current or potential risks to any stakeholders involved in the case, and develop a mitigation plan if required.

5.2 Continue to update the risk assessment and plan on a regular basis throughout and after the case as required.

6. Decide on next steps

6.1 The Decision Maker decides the next steps. These could be (but are not limited to)

- No further action (for example if there is insufficient information to follow up, or the report refers to incidents outside the organisation's remit)
- Investigation is required to gather further information
- Immediate disciplinary action if no further information needed
- Referral to relevant authorities

6.2 If the report concerns associated personnel (for example contractors, consultants or suppliers), the decision making process will be different. Although associated personnel are not members, we have a duty of care to protect anyone who comes into contact with any aspect of our programme from harm. We cannot follow disciplinary processes with individuals outside our organisation; however decisions may be made for example to terminate a contract with a supplier based on the actions of their staff.

6.3 If an investigation is required and the organisation does not have internal capacity, identify resources to conduct the investigation. Determine which budget this will be covered by.

7. Make decision on outcome of investigation report

7.1 The Decision Maker makes a decision based on the information provided in the investigation report. Decisions relating to the Subject of Concern should be made in accordance with existing policies and procedures for misconduct.

7.2 If at this or any stage in the process criminal activity is suspected, the case should be referred to the relevant authorities *unless this may pose a risk to anyone involved in the case*. In this case, the Decision Maker together with other senior staff will need to decide how

to proceed. This decision should be made bearing in mind a risk assessment of potential protection risks to all concerned, including the survivor and the Subject of Concern.

8. Conclude the case

8.1 Document all decisions made resulting from the case clearly and confidentially.

8.2 Store all information relating to the case confidentially, and in accordance with GDPR and local data protection law.

9 Record anonymised data.

9.1 Record anonymised data relating to the case to feed into organisational reporting requirements (e.g. serious incident reporting to Board, safeguarding reporting to donors), and to feed into learning for dealing with future cases.