

Society of Women Organists' Safeguarding policy

The Society of Women Organists (SWO) has an overarching commitment to keeping children safe. We believe that everyone has a responsibility to promote the welfare of children and young people, to keep them safe and to act in a way that protects them. We believe that children and young people should never experience abuse of any kind.

We will give equal priority to keeping all children, young people and vulnerable adults safe when interacting with SWO, regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. We recognise that some children and some adults are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of discrimination, previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.

1) Whom are we safeguarding?

- a) Every person up to and including the age of 17 years
- b) Every person with special education needs up to and including the age of 19 years
- c) Every vulnerable adult.

2) Volunteers who have unsupervised contact with children at SWO events are required to be familiar with SWO's safeguarding policy and the associated procedures, and to:

- a) recognise and accept their responsibilities
- b) develop awareness of the issues that cause children harm
- c) report any concerns as soon as possible to the Designated Safeguarding Officer appointed to the event, and/or the Senior Decision Maker (see page 7).

3) Behaviour code for adults working with children

- a) SWO volunteers will respect the recommended ratio of adults to children: 9 - 12 years - one adult to eight children; 13 - 18 years - one adult to ten children
- b) prioritise the welfare of children and young people.
- c) Provide a safe environment and ensure proper equipment use.
- d) Follow safeguarding policies and procedures.
- e) Report inappropriate behaviour and concerns about abuse.
- f) Listen to and always respect children.
- g) Value children's contributions
- h) Explain confidentiality limits when necessary.
- i) Treat all children fairly without discrimination.
- j) Recognize individual needs and respect differences.
- k) Challenge discrimination and encourage open discussions.
- l) Promote trust, respect, and honesty in relationships.
- m) Avoid favouritism and ensure appropriate contact with children.
- n) Report concerns and avoid unnecessary risks.
- o) Avoid developing inappropriate relationships or making false promises.
- p) Avoid abusive behaviour or share personal contact details.
- q) Follow the code consistently; reputation alone is not protection.

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4) Behaviour codes for children and young people

- a) Children and young people at SWO events should:
- b) be supportive and kind to others
- c) be friendly
- d) listen to others
- e) be helpful
- f) have good manners
- g) treat everyone with respect
- h) take responsibility for their own behaviour • talk to the DSO or SDM (see page 7) about any worries or concerns
- i) follow this code of behaviour and other rules (including the law)

5) Photography and sharing images

- a) SWO will always ask for written consent from a child and their parents or carers before taking and using a child's image
- b) SWO will always explain what the images will be used for NS how they will be stored
- c) If a child or their family later withdraws consent for an image to be shared, it may not be possible to delete images that have already been shared or published
- d) SWO will identify children only when necessary and in that case will use only first names.
- e) SWO will never publish personal information about individual children and will disguise any identifying information (e.g. the name of the child's school).
- f) SWO will ensure that parents and carers understand how images of children will be securely stored and for how long, and will do everything in its power to reduce the risk of images being copied and used inappropriately
- g) SWO will only use images that positively reflect young people's involvement in the activity.
- h) When children themselves, parents, carers or spectators are taking photographs or filming at our events and the images are for personal use, SWO asks that photos taken during the event must not be shared on social media or that people gain permission from children, their parents and carers before sharing photographs and videos that include them.
- i) Additionally, SWO recommends that people check the privacy settings of their social media account to understand who else will be able to view any images they share
- j) SWO will also inform children, young people, parents and carers if photography and filming is part of a programme and ask for written consent.
- k) If SWO hires a photographer for one of our events, we will
 - i) brief the photographer about appropriate content and behaviour
 - ii) ensure the photographer wears identification at all times
 - iii) inform children, their parents and carers that a photographer will be at the event and ensure they give written consent to images which feature their child being taken and shared
 - iv) prevent the photographer to have unsupervised access to children
 - v) forbid the photographer from carrying out sessions outside the event
 - vi) report concerns regarding inappropriate or intrusive photography following our child protection procedures.

6) We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

- a) valuing, listening to and respecting them.
- b) appointing a nominated child protection lead for children and young people at any events involving children.
- c) adopting child protection and safeguarding best practice through our policies, procedures and code of conduct for our volunteer leaders.
- d) ensuring that all volunteer leaders know about and follow our policies, procedures and behaviour codes.
- e) Ensuring that all appropriate checks are made before appointing a volunteer.
- f) recording and storing and using information professionally and securely, in line with data protection legislation and guidance
- g) sharing information in writing about safeguarding and good practice with children and their guardians. This includes ensuring that children, young people and their guardians know where to go for help if they have a concern
- h) using our safeguarding and child protection procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving children, young people, parents, families and carers appropriately.
- i) using our procedures to manage any allegations against staff and volunteers appropriately.
- j) creating and maintaining an anti-bullying environment and ensuring that we have a policy and procedure to help us deal effectively with any bullying that does arise.
- k) ensuring that we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place.
- l) ensuring that we provide a safe physical environment for our children, young people and volunteers, by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance.
- m) building a safeguarding culture where volunteers, children, young people and their families treat each other with respect and are comfortable about sharing concerns.

7) When to be concerned

- a) Even if uncertain whether concerns are justified or sufficiently significant to warrant action, we should share our concerns and seek advice. This also applies when we know the alleged perpetrator of abuse, or feels there is insufficient evidence. Our duty to act to safeguard others must be met, when:
- b) A specific disclosure is made by a child, vulnerable adult or another volunteer.
 - i) A complaint is made by a third-party. But, in the event that information that a child or adult is suffering abuse or neglect is shared with you by a third party, please encourage the person sharing the information to make their own referral to the relevant agencies and seek advice from the SWO Designated Officer.
- c) Observation or verbal hints suggest that inappropriate behaviour is taking place, or has taken place .
- d) A child or volunteer seeks your advice regarding inappropriate behaviour
- e) The behaviour, development, or appearance of a child or volunteer is worrying.
- f) There is evidence of an unusual injury or regular unexplained injuries and/or confused or conflicting explanations of how injuries were sustained.

- g) A child shows sexualised behaviour or uses sexualized language inappropriate to a client's age and stage of development.
- h) A child or adult exhibit extreme changes in behaviour, performance or attitude.
- i) A child or adult exhibit extremist ideas that may suggest the person has been radicalised.
- j) You have needed to restrain someone to keep them safe.
- k) You accidentally hurt a client.

8) Reporting concerns

- a) If in any doubt, seek advice from the appropriate SWO officer (see page 7). But do not delay if you feel that immediate action is warranted. In the event that a child or adult may be at imminent risk of significant harm, the police should be contacted immediately on 999. **The Safeguarding Reporting form should be completed as soon as practicable following any incidents requiring the attendance of any emergency services.** If you cannot contact the relevant officer, contact the relevant external agency yourself (Children's Social Care, Adult Social Care). The consent or agreement of the subject (or subject's parents/legal guardian if under 18 years of age) of the referral is not required when the referrer is concerned that the subject is at risk of harm and is acting in their best interests.
- b) Any SWO volunteer who has concerns that a child may be suffering abuse or neglect or an adult is at risk of abuse should clearly document their concerns on the Safeguarding Reporting form at the end of this document.
- c) The Safeguarding Reporting form should be shared with the SWO Designated Officer within 24 hours and they will assess risk and decide what action/s to take.
- d) The Safeguarding Reporting form should be completed for all safeguarding concerns, irrespective of whether any actions, e.g. onward referral, are being undertaken.
- e) The Safeguarding Reporting form will be stored confidentially in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

9) Managing Disclosures

a) If you receive a disclosure of abuse:

- i) Listen to what is said without displaying shock or disbelief.
- ii) Take the person seriously and show empathy; do not judge or give advice
- iii) Try to ask open questions (e.g. what happened?) - do not ask leading questions.
- iv) Reassure the person that he/she is doing the right thing by telling someone.
- v) Never promise confidentiality; explain who you need to share the information with and why.
- vi) Explain what you will do next and how you will keep them informed of the progress of actions.
- vii) Make a written record of the conversation as soon as possible with the time and date, noting any relevant non-verbal behaviour and the specific words used as far as possible. This information should be transferred in its entirety to the Safeguarding Reporting form as soon as practicably possible.
- viii) Report the matter to the SWO Designated Safeguarding Officer or, if she is unavailable, the Senior Decision-Makers (SDM) as soon as possible, along with the Safeguarding Reporting form.

ix) **If you receive a disclosure of historical abuse, the response should be the same as a response to current abuse because:**

- (1) There is a significant likelihood that a person who abused a child in the past will have continued and may still be doing so.
- (2) Criminal prosecution may be possible if sufficient evidence can be carefully collated.

10) When an adult discloses childhood abuse,

- a) the person receiving the information should record the discussion in detail, using the Safeguarding Reporting Form if available and establish if the adult has any knowledge of the alleged abuser's recent or current whereabouts and whether they currently have contact with children.
- b) Due to the risk the alleged abuser may pose to other children, a referral should be made to children's social care with the support of the DSO. The adult should also be encouraged to report the abuse to the Police.
- c) The DSO may wish to inform the survivor of childhood abuse and neglect that there is specialist support available and signpost them to National Association for People Abused in Childhood: (www.napac.org.uk) for further details.

11) Allegations involving SWO volunteers and officers

- a) All adults who work with children are potentially at risk from allegations of abuse or inappropriate behaviour. An allegation may relate to a person who works or volunteers with children who has:
 - i) Behaved in way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child
 - ii) Possibly committed a criminal offence against or relating to a child
 - iii) Behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children
 - iv) Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children
- v) Allegations must be taken seriously. If you have reason to suspect that any SWO member may have abused a child or has behaved in a way that raises concerns about the risk they may pose, you must inform the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO).
- vi) Should the allegation relate to the DSO, or if you feel that policies are not being observed or enforced, you should contact the SWO Senior Decision-Makers (SDM).
- vii) The DSO will consider the allegation/s and agree the necessary actions required to safeguard any child/ren or adults at risk.
- viii) If a referral to Children's Service and/or the Local Designated Officer is needed, the DSO will take advice from the relevant agency regarding what the alleged perpetrator, child and parents will be told, by whom and when.

12) If you are the subject of an allegation of abuse:

- a) You will be suspended from further involvement in any SWO activities that may bring you into contact with other individuals, pending a formal resolution of the matter; **NB This action is**

taken to protect you as much as the complainant: no presumption of guilt is thereby implied or intended

- b) You should cease your involvement in any related SWO activity immediately
- c) You should have no further contact whatsoever with the person making the allegation, or with any third party involved in the alleged incident(s), until the matter is resolved formally
- d) You should refer any direct approaches from parents, guardians or other interested parties to the DSO – do not engage in discussion about the circumstances that led to the allegation being made
- e) Take advice from your union or professional association, and/or from a solicitor.

13) Establishing appropriate relationships

- a) The relationship between SWO volunteers and individuals attending a SWO event should be positive, mutually rewarding, and safe.
- b) Volunteers are strongly advised to avoid any behaviour that could be open to misinterpretation.
- c) Any encounter with a child or vulnerable adult should preferably take place in a public area or in the presence of a chaperone; if in a semi-public area, such as a church, doors should be left open, and/or a chaperone should be present if possible.
- d) In rare cases where the above conditions cannot be achieved, if the student is under 18 years, written permission must be obtained from the parent/guardian and a written risk assessment should be conducted and sent to the DSO.
- e) You should only use your car to transport students under 18 years if another adult is present and your insurance permits it, unless in an emergency.
- f) A minimum of two adults should be present when moving young people from place to place in small groups.
- g) Where students are under 18 years, staff, teachers and volunteers must never text, exchange email addresses or use social media as a means of contacting a child or vulnerable adult individually.
- h) Avoid commenting on the appearance, including clothes, of students
- i) Physical contact should be avoided unless it is necessary to prevent harm
- j) If there is a justifiable reason, such as administering first aid; and you should not kiss or hold hands with a student unless the latter relates to helping a young child to cross a road.
- k) Personal money should not be given to students.
- l) Volunteers should note that the Sexual Offences Act 2003 states that it is an offence for a person aged 18 or over to engage in sexual activity with or directed towards a person under that age if they are in a position of trust in relation to that person.

14) SWO safeguarding contacts:

Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO)

Kate Matthews

Senior Decision-Makers (SDM)

Anne Marsden Thomas

Hannah Gill

To contact any of the above, please email societyofwomenorganists@gmail.com

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) - search the web for contact details of the LADO for the area in which the incident/disclosure has taken place (e.g. 'LADO Oxfordshire'; 'LADO Birmingham'; etc.)

NSPCC helpline: 0808 800 5000

National Domestic Violence helpline: 0808 2000 247 (24 hrs)

PREVENT helpline: 020 7340 7264

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually. This policy was last reviewed on: 16th August 2025

Signed:

Anne Marsden Thomas

Senior Decision Maker Anne Marsden Thomas Date: 16th August 2025

Further information is available at www.nspcc.org.uk

including signs of: Emotional abuse, Neglect, Child Criminal Exploitations, Domestic abuse/violence, Self neglect, Adult abuse and exploitation

Also available there:

- Further points about safeguarding adults at risk
- Sources of support and advice