

OSJ logo

Safeguarding policy

In the context of our community projects and our Music for Autism programme, the Orchestra of St John's (OSJ) works with children and young people in community settings, in schools, including Special Educational Needs schools, and occasionally in concerts. From time to time, our community projects may also involve working with vulnerable adults.

We recognise, and are fully committed to, our responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all those children, young people and vulnerable adults with whom we come into contact.

Scope and purpose

This policy applies to all OSJ personnel (whether employees, volunteers or freelancers) as well as the orchestra's Trustees and anyone working on behalf of OSJ or taking part in its activities.

The purpose of the policy is to ensure that all of the above, as well as the schools, community organisations and other partners with whom we work, are aware of the principles that guide our approach to safeguarding, and of the procedures and Code of Practice that should be followed in order to ensure that we create a safe, comfortable and supportive environment whenever we work with children, young people or vulnerable adults.

Definitions

- A child, as defined by the Children Act 1989, is anyone under the age of 18.
- A vulnerable adult is someone aged 18 or over who is receiving, or may need, community care services because of illness or a learning, physical or mental special need or disability. It is also someone who is unable to protect him- or herself against significant harm or exploitation.
- Some children and young people are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of disabilities, previous experiences, communication difficulties or other issues.

Principles

- The safety and well-being of every child, young person and vulnerable adult with whom we come into contact is of paramount importance.
- Any allegation or suspicion of abuse must be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- We respect the rights and dignity of everyone with whom we come into contact, and we aim to ensure that interactions between OSJ personnel and all those with whom we work are always rooted in mutual trust and respect.
- Everyone with whom we work is treated equitably and sensitively, regardless of age, disability, race or racial heritage, gender, sexual orientation or identity, religion or belief.

Designated Safeguarding Officer

The OSJ's Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) is the General Administrator, Simon Payne.

Designated Safeguarding Officer's responsibilities

The DSO's responsibilities are to:

- Be involved in the planning of all events which involve working with children or vulnerable adults.
- Be the first point of contact to whom allegations or concerns of abuse should be reported.
- Assess information promptly and seek to obtain advice from the relevant Safeguarding authorities as soon as possible.
- Make a formal referral to the appropriate person or body. Depending on the situation, this may be the Designated Safeguarding Lead at the school or community organisation or the local MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub).
- Ensure that all OSJ personnel receive, read and understand this policy; and keep records to substantiate this.
- Ensure that the policy is reviewed at regular intervals, at least annually.
- Keep detailed records of any safeguarding issues that may arise and of all contacts with local Safeguarding authorities.
- Ensure that DBS checks at the appropriate level are carried out on relevant OSJ personnel and keep appropriate records of such checks in a format which is in keeping with relevant regulations and legal requirements.

Board member with responsibility for oversight of safeguarding

One of OSJ's Trustees, Sami Cohen, is nominated as the Board member with responsibility for the oversight of the Orchestra's Safeguarding policy and practice.

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Code of Practice for OSJ personnel

OSJ personnel, musicians, volunteers and anyone working for or on behalf of OSJ must follow the safeguarding procedures and Code of Practice set out in this document.

- I. Always remember that **the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult is of paramount importance. It must always come first.**

II. Working with children

- Music for Autism events follow a well-established format. They generally take place in schools with the presence and active participation of class teachers and support

staff from the school at all times. They do not involve one-to-one contact with the children.

- In the event of any departure from this format, the OSJ's Designated Safeguarding Officer must be informed in advance. A Risk Assessment will be carried out and its conclusions acted upon.
- Community projects vary in content and format. Each project is different. In each case, advance planning for the event must include a Risk Assessment and a thorough consideration of Safeguarding aspects and how they will be addressed. This must be agreed with the partner school or community organisation with which we are collaborating and with the OSJ's Designated Safeguarding Officer.

In all cases:

- One-to-one contact with children should be avoided. If such contact is unavoidable, it must take place within sight or hearing of others who are aware of the situation.
- For any out-of-school events, one or more appropriately qualified members of staff from the school, or from an appropriate third-party organisation such as the Oxfordshire County Music Service, must be present, and they should be responsible for the safety of the children.
- OSJ staff and players must ensure that participants are informed of, and are comfortable with, any physical contact which may be a necessary part of the work being undertaken, e.g. demonstrating the correct bow hold or posture when playing an instrument.
- No suspicion or disclosure must go unreported. Where there are concerns about a child's safety, neither parental / guardian nor child consent is needed in order for a referral to be made to the appropriate member of staff or authority with responsibility for safeguarding. Child protection takes precedence over data protection.
- It is not the role of OSJ personnel to assess or decide whether a child has been abused or is at risk of being abused. This is the responsibility of the relevant authorities. It is, however, everyone's responsibility to ensure that concerns are reported, in confidence, to the relevant people so appropriate action can be taken.

III. Filming and photography and use of images

- If an OSJ photographer or filmmaker is going to be present to take photographs or film an event, contact must be made with schools or adults acting *in loco parentis* in advance in order to ensure that any identifying images are only of those children whose parents have given the necessary permission to the school or pastoral carer. School staff will be given the opportunity to identify those participants who must not be filmed or photographed.

- When using any such photographs or films, and unless the contrary has been agreed with the relevant child and their parents, the OSJ will not include the participants' full names. If names need to be used, they it will usually be first names only.
- At education concert events the OSJ may reasonably wish to take more general, wide-angle photos of the concert and orchestra. As 'non-identifying' images, it is not reasonable or practical to require parental consent for this type of photography. Partner organisations should be aware that such photography is likely to occur in an event of this type.

IV. Reporting a child protection concern

OSJ personnel must follow the guidelines below if they have a suspicion that a child may be the subject of abuse.

- If you see or suspect abuse of a child, please report your concern at the earliest possible opportunity to Simon Payne, the OSJ's Designated Safeguarding Officer.
- If the suspicion or allegation relates to the OSJ's Designated Safeguarding Officer, then the concern should be reported directly to Sami Cohen, the OSJ Board member with responsibility for oversight of Safeguarding policy and practice.
- You must NEVER attempt to investigate the matter yourself.
- And you must not delay your report even if you have only a passing doubt or suspicion.
- It will be for the Designated Safeguarding Officer, normally with advice from the relevant Safeguarding authorities, to decide what to do next.
- In the meantime, it is always better to refer a concern than not to. It may be that there isn't an issue; equally you may have spotted a sign that a child may be or is at risk of being the subject of abuse.

V. Responding to a disclosure

If, as an OSJ musician or a member of the orchestra's personnel, a child discloses information relating to abuse to you:

- Stay calm and take the time to listen carefully.
- Do not express any judgement or allow your body language to show signs of shock or indignation.
- Allow the child to say what s/he wishes to say without unnecessary interruption, making it clear that you are taking them seriously.
- Do not ask any leading questions of the type: 'what did s/he do / say to you?', or 'what happened next?'. If you need to, ask only open questions, such as 'Is there anything else you would like to tell me?'
- Never promise confidentiality. Where someone's safety is at stake, we all have a responsibility to report the issue as soon as possible to the designated person or authority. If a child making a disclosure asks for confidentiality at any point in the conversation, you should tell them that you may need to share the information they give you with another adult, but that you will do so only with those who need to know and who can provide help and support.

- Make notes, ideally while the child is speaking to you, making sure that, wherever possible, you record verbatim significant words and phrases used by the child. Always keep your original hand-written notes, even if you later type them up for the sake of legibility.
- Speak to the OSJ's Designated Safeguarding Officer, Simon Payne, as soon as you can and hand your written notes to him.
- Do NOT share any of this information with any third party who should not be involved. The report should remain strictly confidential at all times.
- Do NOT speak to the person who is the subject of the allegation of abuse or alert them in any way to the fact that there has been an allegation. You must leave this to the Safeguarding Officer who will act in the light of the relevant Safeguarding guidelines and on the advice of the Safeguarding authorities.

VI. Working with vulnerable adults

In situations which involve working vulnerable adults, OSJ personnel will:

- Treat such vulnerable adults with the same courtesy, respect and consideration as they do anyone else with whom we work, while also being aware that additional care and sensitivity may be needed.
- Through the Designated Safeguarding Officer, work with other agencies as necessary and refer any concerns or allegations of abuse to the relevant social services authorities.

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DBS checks

DBS checks (at the standard or enhanced level, as appropriate) are carried out for all core OSJ personnel who are likely to be working with children, whether they be freelancers or volunteers. Members of the orchestra's board of Trustees should also have DBS certificates, usually at the basic level.

Records of DBS checks are kept by the OSJ's Designated Safeguarding Officer.

Staff recruitment

When a new employee appointment is to be made, selection and recruitment processes for any position which may involve working with children and vulnerable adults will include DBS checks at the enhanced level. At least two references will also be taken up, and these will be verified by telephone. Reference requests will include specific questions relating to the candidate's suitability for working with children and vulnerable adults.

Communicating this policy to OSJ personnel

- Existing personnel: this Safeguarding policy is sent to all existing personnel every time it is amended. Recipients are asked to return a copy, signed and dated to confirm that they have received, read and understood its content.
- New personnel: the policy will be sent to any newly appointed OSJ personnel who will be asked to return a copy, signed and dated to confirm that they have received, read and understood it, before they start working on behalf of OSJ.

Process for dealing with an allegation of abuse

If an allegation of abuse against a member of OSJ personnel is received, the following process will be followed:

- As soon as possible after receiving the allegation, the Designated Safeguarding Officer will alert the Board member with responsibility for oversight of Safeguarding matters and, where applicable, the Designated Safeguarding Lead at the school attended by the child in question. In all probability, this will be promptly followed by a call to the local MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) to seek their advice on how to proceed.
- The subsequent steps will be guided by the advice received from the MASH. This may involve making a formal referral to children's social care and/or reporting the allegation to the police.

When dealing with an allegation, it is important to ensure that:

- The process is quick, fair and consistent;
- effective protection is provided for the child or vulnerable adult making the allegation;
- appropriate support is provided for the person who is the subject of the allegation.

In the event of an allegation being received, and as part of its duty of care towards its musicians and volunteers, the OSJ will:

- seek to manage and minimise the stress caused by the allegation;
- subject to guidance from the MASH, inform the person who is the subject of the allegation as soon as it is appropriate to do so, explaining the likely process for dealing with the allegation;
- advise the subject of the allegation to seek support from a colleague or a relevant professional body;
- appoint a named representative to keep the subject of the allegation informed about the progress of the case.

It may be that, following consultation with the MASH, the person who is the subject of the allegation is suspended with immediate effect from all contact with children pending an investigation. In such instances, a suspension should not be interpreted as an indication of

guilt. It may simply be considered a necessary precaution, from the point of view of the child(ren) and the adult concerned, to suspend all contact between them until the matter is resolved.

Local Safeguarding bodies

- MASH (Oxfordshire's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) – tel: 0345 050 7666
- OSCB (Oxfordshire Children Safeguarding Board) – tel: 01865 815843

Policy review

This policy is reviewed annually, and more often if necessary, in the light of experience, of good practice, and of the latest guidance and regulations relating to safeguarding and child protection.

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Date last reviewed: 2 March 2022