

VOCES8 Foundation
Policy for the safeguarding and protection of children

Introduction

The VOCES8 Foundation (V8F) is committed to good practice which safeguards and protects children from harm. The Foundation recognises its duty of care towards children to see that all young people's rights to protection from abuse are upheld. All suspicions or allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately. The Foundation understands that all singers, staff members, volunteers and trustees have a duty of care to abide by this policy and to report concerns.

All singers, staff members, volunteers and trustees are required to familiarise themselves with the Foundation's safeguarding policy.

Policy Aims

The VOCES8 Foundation is committed to a child centred approach.

- We put the wellbeing, safety and dignity of every participant first
- Professional relationships between V8F singers, staff members are based upon mutual trust and respect and must remain appropriate at all times
- The feelings and concerns of any participant, teacher, parent or carer are listened to and acted upon appropriately
- We are committed to maintaining an attitude of 'it could happen here' and to supporting V8F staff, singers, volunteers and trustees who raise concerns about the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults with whom we work.

This Policy Statement

This policy statement has been approved by the Trustees and copies are provided for all V8F staff, singers, volunteers and partner organisations participating in projects involving children. The policy is available on the V8F website and is reviewed annually by the Trustees.

Roles and Responsibilities

- The Director of Education is the V8F's designated safeguarding lead.
- The Director of Education with the support of the CEO and Chair of Trustees is responsible for ensuring the implementation and monitoring of the V8F's safeguarding and child protection procedures.
- The Director of Education is responsible for considering (in consultation with other V8F staff members and the Chair of Trustees) whether any incidents involving children should be reported to social care, the police or other relevant authority.
- The Director of Education and Director of External Relations are responsible for ensuring appropriate DBS checks are carried out.
- The Director of Education, CEO and Chair of Trustees are responsible for making decisions in relation to the suitability of individuals for work with children.

Safeguarding Procedures for Working with Children

- In most circumstances V8F singers will not be working alone with children. Where small group work is taking place during a V8F project a singing leader may be alone with children for short periods provided the space they are working in has a window in the door and the Director of Education or another member of the Senior Team is easily accessible (in an adjoining room or corridor). This is to ensure that singers can easily request support and assistance should it be required for example if an accident or medical incident occurs, a child is behaving inappropriately or a child appears uncomfortable in any way.
- V8F staff and singers should always use toilets specifically designated for their use.
- V8F staff and singers should always change in a room specifically designated for their use.
- V8F staff and singers must maintain professional boundaries at all times. Personal contact details should not be shared with children. Singers and staff should not communicate with children by telephone, email or social networks (including Facebook Instagram and Twitter).
- V8F staff and singers should not travel alone with children (for example by giving them a lift in a car).
- V8F's Director of Education or the Director of the VOCES8 Centre must ensure that all necessary consents have been obtained before photos or video footage can be taken during the course of a project. Staff must receive authorisation from the Director of Education or Director of the VOCES8 Centre before taking any photos or video footage.
- Circumstances may arise where a child touches a member of the V8F staff or a singer. This might occur when participants have learning difficulties or special needs or when young children used to hugging teachers in school are participating in a project. In these situations singers or V8F staff should respond in a sensitive manner appropriate to the circumstances of the individual child and seek to minimise contact.
- All children should be treated with respect at all times, regardless of age, sex or ethnicity. Any child or young person in performance with the Foundation is a valued member of the entire team and as such, is of equal importance to any other performer.
- At the same time, the Foundation expects similar respectful behaviour from the children.
- Shouting at children or displays of anger or irritation are never appropriate. If a child or young person is behaving inappropriately, singers should seek support from a member of school staff if working in a school or from the Director of Education or senior member of the V8F team.
- V8F singers and staff should always give participants enthusiastic and constructive feedback.

Media

Photographs or video footage of children participating in V8F projects will not be taken unless appropriate written consent has first been obtained from either parents, carers or from the school. Where photographs and video footage is taken, care will be taken to ensure that the use of such material does not put any child at risk. Material should not be linked online to the full names of participants or any other personal information.

Teaching/Leading workshops online

- In most circumstances online workshops will be arranged through a school, Music Hub, university, college or other organisation. A member of the teaching/choir leading staff from the organisation should be present during the workshop.
- If teaching a lesson or leading a small group session with young people who are at home, a parent or carer should be present in the room or nearby. V8F team members should ask to say hello to the parent or carer.
- V8F singing leaders/staff leading workshops from home should check what is visible from their camera. A neutral background is best, and singers should ensure there is nothing personal on display.
- V8F singing leaders should dress as they would when leading workshops 'in person'.
- If a participant is dressed inappropriately the organisation's member of staff should deal with this. If this does not happen, the singing leader should end the session and communicate the reason afterwards.
- Permission to record a session must be received from the participating organisation, parent or carer in writing in advance of the online session.

Disclosure and Barring Service Checks

The Foundation requires all its singers and staff to undergo a DBS check. The Foundation will facilitate the appropriate checks for all V8F staff, singers and volunteers including paying the necessary application fee. However, where a singer or member of staff already has an enhanced DBS check for the appropriate workforce from a previous employer or organisation **and has already subscribed to the DBS update service** no further DBS check will be required. Where a singer or member of staff has **not** subscribed to the DBS update service, a fresh DBS check will need to be undertaken in respect of their work at the V8F.

All DBS checks must be renewed every three years.

Situations Where it is Impractical to Obtain an Enhanced DBS Check

In exceptional circumstances where there are valid reasons why it has not been possible to obtain an enhanced DBS check in time for a project, the Director of Education may, in consultation with any other partners involved in a project, decide that the singer should be permitted to take part in a particular project. Where a singer without an enhanced DBS check is permitted to take part in a project, their work with children should be supervised at all times by a member of the V8F team with an enhanced DBS check.

Assessing Information Disclosed as a Result of a DBS Check

In the event of a DBS check disclosing information relevant to the individual's suitability to work with children or vulnerable adults, the certificate information will be retained until a decision regarding the individual's suitability to work with children or vulnerable adults has been determined. Responsibility for decisions concerning an individual's suitability to work with children rests with the Director of Education, CEO and Chair of Trustees.

Teachers and Parents Accompanying Children

The Foundation will assume that all teachers, parents and other adults accompanying children have been recruited according to practices laid down by select criteria in place at their schools including DBS checks, documentary evidence of qualifications and references followed through in writing.

Disclosures of Abuse and Reporting Procedures

It is possible that during a project a child might make a disclosure of abuse or of information that might be an indicator of possible abuse. It is important that staff, singers and volunteers know how to respond appropriately to such disclosures. V8F staff, singers and volunteers should follow these guidelines:

1. Stay calm.
2. Listen carefully to what is said and show that you are taking it seriously.
3. Find an appropriate early opportunity to explain that the information will need to be shared with others – do not promise to keep it secret.
4. Tell the child that the matter will only be disclosed to those who need to know about it.
5. Allow the child to continue at her/his own pace.
6. Ask questions for clarification only. Avoid asking leading questions.
7. Reassure the child or vulnerable adult that they have done the right thing in telling you.
8. Tell them what you will do next, and with whom the information will be shared. When working in a school, this will be the teacher responsible for the group or the school's designated safeguarding lead. When working in other venues it will be either a member of the group's staff, V8F's Director of Education or the Director of the VOCES8 Centre.
9. Make no judgement about what you have heard.
10. Record what was said in writing as soon as possible. Use the child's words, note the date, time, any names mentioned, to whom the information was given and ensure that you sign and date the record. If possible, it should be placed in an envelope and sealed. When in a school, the designated safe guarding lead will then take this record.
11. If you witness an incident of abuse of potential abuse in the course of your work for the V8F you should alert the Director of Education or CEO as soon as possible.
12. Remember that whilst you may have been the first person a child has chosen to disclose abuse to, it is not your responsibility to decide whether abuse has occurred. That is a task for professional agencies following a referral from the school or from the V8F's Director of Education.

Signs of abuse and neglect

Abuse can take many forms including physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, online abuse and sexual abuse. The NSPCC website has useful information regarding different types of child abuse and possible signs and symptoms of abuse. <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/>

Safeguarding allegation against a member of the Foundation's staff, singers or volunteers

Any expression of concern regarding a Foundation team member must immediately be reported to the designated trained Foundation team member (the Director of Education) who will in turn report to the CEO and Chair of the Board of Trustees and in conference with them decide on the most suitable course of action.

The reported problem will be immediately logged.

Confidentiality for all parties will be maintained at every stage of such an event. Please see below for named persons and contact details.

Ann Wright, Director of Education
0779 3733634
ann@voces8.foundation

Paul Smith, CEO
07989 514981
paul@voces8.foundation

Roy Blackwell, Chair of Trustees
r.blackwell.home07@gmail.com