

# **South West Philharmonia and Chorus (SWPC)**

## **Online and Digital Communications Safeguarding Policy**

**This Policy MUST be used, and adhered to, in  
conjunction with the SWPC Safeguarding Policy**

*Document Owner: John Cavill – Designated Safeguarding Lead*

*Date Policy adopted: 17<sup>th</sup> December 2025*

*Next review Date: September 2026*

### **1. Purpose of this Policy**

South West Philharmonia & Chorus (SWPC) is committed to creating and maintaining a safe environment for all children and young people involved in their activities.

This policy sets out how SWPC uses digital communication and online platforms safely, transparently and appropriately, ensuring:

- The welfare of children and young people is paramount
- Clear professional boundaries are maintained
- All persons connected with SWPC are protected
- Communication is auditable, appropriate and defensible

### **2. Scope**

*This policy applies to:*

- All children and young people under the age of 18
- Any adult deemed vulnerable or identifies themselves as such

- Parents and carers
- All members of; persons connected to, or working for, SWPC
- All forms of digital communication used by or on behalf of SWPC

*Including but not limited to:*

- Email
- WhatsApp
- SMS and messaging apps
- Social media platforms
- Online groups and forums
- Video calls and virtual rehearsals

### **3. Core Safeguarding Principles**

*SWPC operates on the following non-negotiable principles:*

1. No direct private digital communication with under-18s
2. All communication relating to children is routed through parents or carers
3. Digital communication must be professional, purposeful and transparent
4. At least two authorised adults (including a member of the SWPC Management Team) must be involved where group communication is used
5. Safeguarding outweighs convenience

### **4. Direct Communication with Under-18s**

#### **Prohibited Practice**

*SWPC members, volunteers, contractors and representatives must not:*

- Send private messages to under-18s
- Engage in one-to-one digital conversations with under-18s
- Respond to direct messages from under-18s on any platform
- Accept friend requests, follows or private messages from under-18s

*This includes (but is not limited to):*

- WhatsApp
- Instagram, Facebook, TikTok or other social media messaging

- SMS or iMessage
- Discord or similar platforms

**There are no exceptions, including for young people aged 16–17.**

## **5. Approved Communication Channels for Under-18s**

*All communication relating to children and young people must be conducted via:*

- Parent or carer email addresses
- Parent or carer WhatsApp groups (where used)
- Official SWPC promotion or communication platforms
- In-person communication with a named safeguarding lead or parent/carer present

Young people may be copied into emails only where appropriate and only when a parent or carer is the primary recipient.

## **6. Use of WhatsApp Groups**

*Where WhatsApp is used in relation to under-18s, the following conditions apply:*

### **Structure**

- Groups must include the parent or carer only
- Under-16s must not be members. 16 and 17 year olds may be added as members of OFFICIAL groups but a parent or carer must also be added as a member of the group to monitor the communications.
- Each group must have:
  - A minimum of two authorised adults (including a member of the SWPC Management Team)
  - Clearly identified group administrators
- Group names must clearly state they are official. Example: “SWPC Choir – (Official)”

### **Purpose**

*WhatsApp groups for SWPC members must only be used for:*

- Rehearsal and performance logistics
- Arrival, collection and timing information
- Emergency or last-minute updates

**They must not be used for:**

- Social chat
- Individual feedback about children
- Behaviour management
- Emotional support
- Sharing photos or videos without consent

## **7. Social Media and Online Presence**

### **Under-18s and social media**

- Under-18s must not be members of SWPC social media groups
- SWPC does not communicate with under-18s via social media messaging
- Young people must not be tagged or identified by name online

### **Images and Video**

*Images or videos of under-18s may only be shared where:*

- Written parental consent has been obtained
- Content is positive and appropriate
- No personal or identifying information is included

## **8. Virtual Rehearsals and Online Sessions**

*Where online sessions are used:*

- A minimum of two authorised adults, including a member of the SWPC Management Team, must be present
- Sessions must be scheduled, not ad-hoc

- Cameras and microphones should be optional for participants
- Sessions must not be recorded without explicit consent

**Private one-to-one online sessions with under-18s are not permitted.**

## **9. Accidental or Unauthorised Contact**

*If a staff member or volunteer receives a direct message from an under-18:*

1. Do not engage in conversation
2. Take a screenshot of the message
3. Inform the SWPC Safeguarding Lead immediately
4. Respond once only, copying:
  - Parent or carer
  - Another authorised adult, ideally a member of the SWPC Management Team
5. Redirect communication to an approved channel

**All incidents must be logged using the SWPC Safeguarding Report Form (found on the SWPC website) and send to the SWPC Safeguarding Lead.**

## **10. Code of Conduct for Members and Volunteers (including contractors)**

*All SWPC members and volunteers in contact with under-18s must:*

- Maintain professional boundaries online and offline
- Ensure that any member, volunteer or contractor is not left alone with an under-18
- Keep all communication transparent and appropriate
- Never initiate or continue private digital conversations with under-18s
- Report any concerns immediately

**Breaches of this policy may result in:**

- A revoke of membership from, or association with SWPC
- Referral to statutory authorities where appropriate

## 11. Record Keeping and Monitoring

- Key information must not be sent via messaging apps. Direct email **MUST** be used.
- Safeguarding concerns raised digitally must forwarded directly to the SWPC Safeguarding Lead who will log the concern securely
- The Safeguarding Lead is responsible for monitoring compliance

## 12. Roles and Responsibilities

### Safeguarding Lead

- Oversight of digital safeguarding
- Incident logging and reporting
- Staff training and guidance

### Members and Volunteers

- Adherence to this policy
- Reporting concerns without delay

### Parents and Carers

- Acting as the primary communication link
- Supporting safe digital boundaries

## 13. Review and Update

*This policy will be:*

- Reviewed annually
- Aligned with NSPCC guidance and local safeguarding arrangements

## **14. Policy Statement**

SWPC recognises that digital communication is an essential part of modern engagement. However, the safety and wellbeing of children and young people will always take precedence over convenience or informality.