

SURREY HILLS ORCHESTRA

Incorporation # A00 33982N

V1.0 17/2/2024

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

All children have the right to feel safe and be safe, but safety does not just happen. Victoria's Child Safe Standards exist to prevent harm and abuse from happening in organisations.

Surrey Hills Orchestra is committed to promoting and protecting the interests, safety, and wellbeing of children. It principally does this by relying on the supervision of its members in all concert and rehearsal settings by its appointed volunteers (the Conductor, Concertmaster, members of the Committee and anyone to whom this responsibility is delegated), and by screening these volunteers with Working With Children Checks.

We have zero tolerance for child abuse and discrimination.

PURPOSE

Surrey Hills Orchestra commits to upholding the Child Safe Standards and ensuring child safety. The purpose of this policy is to:

- facilitate the prevention of discrimination, harm or child abuse occurring within Surrey Hills Orchestra
- work towards an organisational culture of child safety and wellbeing
- ensure that everyone is aware of their responsibilities to care for children in our organisation and prevent or report instances of poor behaviour or abuse
- provide guidance about how to report any harm or abuse within or outside of the organisation
- provide assurance that all suspected abuse will be reported and appropriately investigated
- implement procedures that encourage and support all members to feel safe and included.

This policy as a whole applies to all members, volunteers, children and other individuals involved with the Surrey Hills Orchestra. All members of the Surrey Hills Orchestra are responsible for the care and protection of children, and reporting information about child abuse. Volunteers are specifically furthermore responsible for ensuring they can present Working With Children Checks.

COMMUNITY HERITAGE AND DIVERSITY

Surrey Hills Orchestra respectfully acknowledges the traditional owners of the lands on which we rehearse and perform, the Wurundjeri peoples of the Kulin Nation. Through our rehearsals and performances we honour the continuation of one of the oldest music practices in the world.

We acknowledge that members of the Surrey Hills Orchestra and the people of Surrey Hills and surrounds have diverse cultural, religious, and language backgrounds. We welcome all people to our organisation and recognise that cultural safety is of critical importance to the safety and wellbeing of children.

We welcome everyone into our orchestra and welcome input from all of our members and volunteers to make our organisation more inclusive, accessible, and safe.

CHILDREN SHOULD FEEL SAFE

We acknowledge that the children who participate in our organisation have the right to:

- participate and be heard
- be safe and not harmed by anyone
- live and grow up healthy
- express their views and have a say about decisions that affect them, and
- receive information, such as information about the policies and procedures that affect them.

We will uphold these rights for our child members and be open to feedback on how we can improve.

CODE OF CONDUCT

The Surrey Hills Orchestra is committed to creating a safe and respectful environment for everyone who participates in our organisation. This means that everyone has the right to feel safe and be safe when participating in our activities.

We expect members, volunteers and others associated with our organisation to behave appropriately and:

- treat everyone with courtesy and respect
- be considerate of others and their ability to participate and contribute to our activities
- listen to the views of others in a respectful way
- listen to the Conductor in rehearsals and follow their instructions
- be on time to rehearsals and events and submit an apology in advance if they can't attend
- report anything that makes members feel uncomfortable to the Secretary or another member of the committee.

Adult members are expected to uphold the safety and wellbeing of young people who participate in our activities. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, and the safety needs of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, the LGBTIQ+ community or those living with a disability.

Members will not:

- treat another member or volunteer in a disrespectful way
- physically or verbally hurt or abuse another person
- tease, bully or harass another person within the orchestra's community
- exclude people from our activities
- enter toilets or change rooms other than their own
- use inappropriate language or discuss matters of an adult nature in the presence of children
- discriminate against any child or any other member, including because of age, sex, culture, race, religion, disability, sexuality or gender identity
- communicate or exchange personal contact details with child members of the orchestra without the knowledge of a parent/guardian
- transport children (other than their own) to orchestra events without parent/guardian consent.

ROLE OF COMMITTEE

The Surrey Hills Orchestra committee is responsible for ensuring that child safety and wellbeing is embedded in our organisational leadership, governance and culture. The committee will:

- Model the standard of behaviour the organization expects to see and members to uphold, and call out when this standard is not met
- take all reasonable steps to protect children and young people from abuse, discrimination, and other harms
- ensure children and young people and their families, are engaged and active participants in decision-making processes, particularly those that have an impact on their safety and wellbeing.
- listen and respond to the views and concerns of children and their families, particularly if they are telling you that they are worried about their safety or are being harmed
- assess child safety risks and take action to reduce these risks
- ensure as far as practicable that no adult is left alone with any child without another adult present
- undertake training as required to build a child safe organisation.

RECRUITING MEMBERS, VOLUNTEERS AND CONDUCTORS

Anyone in our community capable of playing to the required standard can join the Surrey Hills Orchestra. All members and volunteers must be willing to follow this Policy and our Code of Conduct. We will publish this Policy and Code of Conduct on our website to ensure that prospective members understand our expectations.

Surrey Hills Orchestra differentiates between its members, and its volunteers. Members are persons who have elected to join the orchestra only to play, and may include children. Volunteers are members who have been charged by the Constitution or the Committee with specific responsibilities. All volunteers are members, but not all members are volunteers.

At minimum, the volunteers of the Surrey Hills Orchestra include:

- All members of the Committee
- All members of any subcommittee convened by the Committee, including the Music Committee
- Any other person such as the Committee may determine.
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To ensure the safety of all children and young people who participate in our organisation and ensure that members are appropriate to be involved in an organisation alongside children, we require that volunteers be compliant with the provisions of the *Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic.)*. This requires that all such persons either hold a valid Working With Children Check, or are subject to a relevant exemption. Exemptions include:

- Being a parent of a member of the orchestra who is a child (under eighteen years old)
- Being a VIT-registered teacher
- Being a sworn member of Victoria Police

Volunteers will be asked to provide the details of their WWCC or exemption, or otherwise to apply for a WWCC, prior to being offered or taking any office or role of responsibility at Surrey Hills Orchestra. The person may not commence in their appointed duties until they have received and provided to the Secretary these details.

This assists us to protect children from harm by ensuring that everyone who holds a position of authority in the Surrey Hills Orchestra is subject to a basic child safety screening process. Members in general do not require WWCCs because they do not directly interact with children except under the direct supervision of any of the volunteers of the orchestra (whether that is in rehearsal, performance or in correspondence).

Conductors and Concertmasters (Leaders of the Strings) must have a WWCC or valid exemption, and the Committee must be satisfied that they are suitable to work with children as part of the recruitment process. Our commitment to child safety and diversity and screening requirements will be included in all advertisements for such positions.

REPORTING A CHILD SAFETY CONCERN OR COMPLAINT

Any member or volunteer who has a child safety concern or complaint or who witnesses a child safety incident must report that concern, complaint or incident to the Secretary or the President of the Surrey Hills Orchestra.

Who can make a report?	Anyone - a member of the orchestra (child or adult); a conductor or concertmaster; a parent or guardian of a member; a volunteer, helper or guest of the orchestra	
What can be reported?	Any child safety concern including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disclosure of abuse or harm by a child or young person • allegation/observation of abuse or harm against a child or young person • breach of the Code of Conduct • general safety or environmental concern 	Call 000 if a child is in immediate danger
How to report?	Face-to-face verbal report, letter, email, telephone call, at a meeting or any other way that is considered appropriate	
Who to report to?	The President or Secretary , or any member of the Committee	
What happens next?	The President or Secretary will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offer support to the child, parents, the person who made the report and the person who is alleged to have caused harm • initiate processes to ensure the safety of all children involved • clarify the nature of the complaint • determine whether the incident must be reported to police, child protection or the Commission for Children and Young People and made a report as soon as possible • Commence disciplinary processes against the member in line with the rules of the Surrey Hills Orchestra • keep and secure accurate records of the incident and response. 	
Outcome	Once the outcome is known: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relevant staff, volunteers, parents and children will be notified of the outcome, having regard to the privacy of those involved • disciplinary action will be taken as required • policies and procedures will be reviewed and updated as necessary. 	

Adult members and volunteers must make a report to Victoria Police if they form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child in Victoria by another person aged over 18. Failure to disclose this information is a criminal offence.

REVIEW AND IMPROVEMENT

Child safety and wellbeing matters will be reviewed by the Surrey Hills Orchestra committee annually and on an as-needed basis to ensure the ongoing protection of children who participate in our organisation. All child safety and wellbeing concerns arising will be addressed as a matter of urgency. A summary of these matters will be noted at committee meetings, as required.

This policy will be reviewed by the Surrey Hills Orchestra committee and presented to the Annual General Meeting of the Surrey Hills Orchestra every two years to assess whether our child safety and wellbeing policies or procedures require modification to better protect the children involved in our organisation.

Through the Annual General Meeting the Surrey Hills Orchestra will seek views, comments and suggestions from child members, their parents and adult members within the orchestra.

APPENDIX: WHAT TO DO IF AN ALLEGATION OF CHILD ABUSE IS MADE

IF YOU BELIEVE A CHILD IS AT IMMEDIATE RISK OF ABUSE, PHONE 000.

If a child discloses an incident of abuse to you:

- Try and separate them from the other children discreetly and listen to them carefully.
- Let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred. Do not interrupt them or make assumptions about what you think happened.
- Reassure the child that you take what they are saying seriously, and that it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing.
- Explain to them that this information may need to be shared with others, such as with their parent/carer, specific people within the Orchestra (President, Secretary or Committee), or the police.
- Take detailed notes at the time of the report or as soon as possible after receiving it. Confirm your notes with the person who raised the concern to ensure you have written everything down accurately.
- Do not make promises at this stage, except that you will do your best to keep the child safe.
- Do not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.
- As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child's words and report the disclosure to Secretary or President.
- Ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

If a parent/carer says their child has been abused within our organisation or raises a concern:

- Ask about the wellbeing of the child.
- Explain that the Surrey Hills Orchestra has processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken seriously.
- Allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in their own words. Do not interrupt them while they are relaying their account of events, do not paraphrase or make assumptions about what you think may have happened.
- Advise the parent/carer that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details. Confirm your notes with the person who raised the concern to ensure you have written everything down accurately.
- Explain to them the information will need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as the Secretary or President, the Police, or Child Protection Agencies.
- Explain that all persons 18 years or older are mandated to make a report to Victoria Police if they form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child in Victoria by another person aged 18 or older.
- Do not make promises at this early stage, except that you will do your best to keep the child safe.
- Ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be.
- Ensure the incident report is recorded accurately and the record is stored securely.

Be aware that some people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers in reporting allegations of abuse. For example, people from some cultures may experience anxiety when talking with police, and communicating in English may be a barrier for

some. You need to be sensitive to these issues and meet people's needs where possible, such as having an interpreter present (who could be a friend or family member).

If an allegation of abuse involves a child from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background, you will need to ensure a culturally appropriate response. A way to help ensure this could include engaging with parents of Aboriginal children, local Aboriginal communities or an Aboriginal community controlled organisations to review policies and procedures.

Some children living with a disability may experience barriers disclosing an incident. For example, children with hearing or cognitive impairments may need support to help them explain the incident, including through sign language interpreters.