

Royal College of Music

Learning and Participation child protection policy and procedure



Child protection policy

- The College has an important role to play in the safeguarding and protection of children from abuse. For the purposes of this procedure, a child is a person under the age of 18. Unless otherwise specified the following terms apply:

‘participant’ means RCM Sparks child participant

‘student assistant’ means and RCM undergraduate/graduate student engaged with Sparks schools or community work

‘Sparks Juniors mentor’ means and RCM undergraduate/graduate student engaged specifically with the Sparks Juniors programme only

‘workshop leader’ means an professional workshop leader employed on a freelance basis

‘staff’ mean some/all of the above positions in relation to RCM Sparks

- The College must ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to ensure child protection. In circumstances where a child abuse concern is raised, the College will consider whether it requires the involvement of an external agency.
- The principal areas in which the College has a child protection responsibility, given the nature of its work, are as follows:
 - Staff, students assistant, Sparks Juniors mentors and workshop leader appointment procedures; procedures to help identify suspected abuse and to take appropriate action, whether suspected by a member of RCM staff or another adult.
 - procedures to help identify suspected abuse and to take appropriate action, whether suspected by a member of RCM staff, student assistant, Sparks Juniors mentors and workshop leaders or another adult.
 - Instances of abuse may result from action by a member of RCM staff, student assistant, Sparks Juniors mentors and workshop leaders, but may also be caused by individuals (whether adults or children) unconnected with the RCM, including family members. Suspicions of abuse will be acted upon by the RCM regardless of the possible source, although cases may be turned over to other authorities, including the student’s school, where appropriate.

Categories of abuse

1. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting; by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. The definitions below are from Working Together to Safeguard Children (Department of Health, 1999).
2. *Physical abuse.* Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child whom they are looking after. This situation is commonly described using

terms such as factitious illness by proxy or Munchausen syndrome by proxy.

3. *Emotional abuse.* Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.
4. *Sexual abuse.* Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (eg rape or buggery) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
5. *Neglect.* Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

The appointment, induction and updating of staff

6. Most appointments to work or deliver work as part of RCM Sparks, whether of administrative staff, student assistant, or workshop leaders, will not involve unsupervised, sustained one-to-one contact with students and/or accompanying children on concert tours.
7. Sparks Juniors mentors, due to regular weekly contact will require checks that will encompass obtaining and checking references as and when necessary and reference to a Disclosure and Barring Service check either through the RCM or another education body within the last two years.
8. New administrative staff, student assistants, Sparks Juniors mentors or workshop leaders working with RCM Sparks will receive a copy of this policy and procedure and will be asked to sign a declaration acknowledging they have read and understood its terms.
9. Appointments/selections must be signed-off by the Head of Learning & Participation and the Head of Junior Programmes, who will together review the documentary and other information obtained during the appointment process.
10. HR will keep records (where permitted by law) of the documentary information obtained during the appointment process and of the appointment sign-off. These records will be monitored annually, as set out in the relevant section below.
11. Those appointed/selected will receive a copy of this policy and procedure and will be asked to sign a declaration acknowledging they have read and understood its terms. The Head of Learning & Participation will ensure that there are induction and updating events for all appointed/selected to ensure they are aware of and understand the policy and procedure.

Allegations against staff

12. There might be occasions when a participant accuses of administrative staff, student assistant, Sparks Juniors mentors or workshop leaders of physically or sexually abusing them.

The College will treat such accusations seriously. In responding to such accusations the College will try to keep the damaging effects of false allegations to a minimum. In some cases these allegations are false or unfounded. For an innocent person to be subject to what may be a lengthy period of investigation, which may include suspension and/or the threat of arrest, is a serious ordeal which can result in long term damage to a person's health and career.

13. If a participant alleges serious or gross misconduct, physical (including sexual) abuse against a member of teaching or administrative staff, where the nature of the alleged offence suggests that a student may be at risk, the member of staff may be suspended from duty by the Director, RCM. The suspension should normally be on full pay. The reasons for the suspension should be clearly defined, as should its length, although where criminal charges are pending this will not always be possible. It will be made clear to any suspended member of staff that the suspension does not imply any guilt and will not prejudice any disciplinary hearing. If the allegation appears to involve criminal liability the Director will inform the Chairman of Council.
14. The College's normal staff disciplinary procedure will be used to consider cases. If necessary, special arrangements will be made to enable the presentation of a student's evidence while ensuring the protection of the student and/or avoiding further distress.
15. Any dismissal as result of misconduct involving child protection issues or a resignation because of such misconduct that would otherwise have led to dismissal will be reported to the appropriate government or other agencies in accordance with the law.
16. In some circumstances, the allegation may involve criminal proceedings. This need not prevent a staff disciplinary process from being followed. However, there may be circumstances when it is more appropriate to delay the staff disciplinary process from being concluded until legal proceedings are concluded.

Physical contact during lessons or workshops

17. It is not expected there should be any need for physical contact between of student assistant, Sparks Juniors assistant or workshop leader during sessions at the RCM or offsite in schools or community settings. In schools it is the responsibility of the school staff to deal with the children. Any child protection matters arising at a school venue should be refer directly to a school member of teaching staff.
18. The blinds on teaching room windows must always be kept open throughout breakout sessions during workshops.

Monitoring and review of policy and its implementation

19. This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it is up-to-date and appropriate. There will be an annual meeting of the Deputy Director, Head of Junior Programmes, Head of Learning & Participation and Head of HR to review the policy and monitor its implementation. This meeting will receive any reports of incidents during the year and will review the log of staff appointments and associated safeguarding checks within the year, including Disclosure & Barring Service checks made. An annual report of this meeting will be submitted to the Directorate and to Council.

Guidelines for teachers on professional conduct and child protection

20. Members of staff who are members of the Incorporated Society of Musicians are referred to the guidance provided in its information sheets: M2/6, Professional Conduct with School-aged Children and M2/7, Child Protection: the Law.

Child protection procedure

This procedure sets out what should be done to respond when an allegation or suspicion of child abuse is raised

1. Suspicions of abuse may be raised from a number of sources, including the participant, and in a number of ways. Sources include:
 - a participant disclosing information about him/herself;
 - when a participant is asked if everything is alright, the participant discloses abuse;
 - behaviour or physical marks on a participant (eg bruises, welts, lacerations);
 - a participant discloses through his or her academic or practical work that they are being abused;
 - a participant discloses that he or she knows that another participant is being abused;
 - a third party discloses that they know a participant is being abused.

2. It is most important that staff respond appropriately when suspicions are raised and that the RCM's child protection procedure is *always* followed. If a participant starts to disclose abuse, members of staff should take the following action:
 - **reassure** the participant that he or she is right to tell and is not to blame;
 - **confidentiality:** do not promise confidentiality, explain that you have to make sure that the participant is safe and you may need to ask other adults to help you do this. You can tell the child who you will need to tell and when you will do this;
 - **questioning** the participant should be kept to the minimum necessary to understand what is being alleged. Inappropriate questioning can cause problems for the subsequent investigation and any Court proceedings. Never ask leading questions as this may invalidate a participant's testimony in court, for example never say 'did they do 'x' to you?', rather say 'tell me what happened';
 - **Listen** carefully and repeat the participant's words. When the participant is finished make sure he or she feels secure; explain what you are going to do next;
 - **report:** a full written report should be made as soon as possible of the nature of the allegation and any other relevant information, including the name of the complainant and, where different, the

name of the participant who has allegedly been abused; the address and telephone number of the complainant and of the participant (if available); the participant's date of birth/age; the date and time of the alleged incident; the date and time of the report; the nature of the alleged abuse; a description of any injuries observed (but see 'examination' below); the account which has been given of the allegation which should, as far as possible, be in the participant's own words;

- **follow-up:** make arrangements with the participant to speak to them later: they have chosen you as an adult they can trust;
- **examination:** do not attempt a detailed examination to remove a participant's clothes to look further at any injury. A participant should only be examined by a doctor.

3. Immediately and without delay the member of staff to whom the disclosure has been made must inform the Head of Junior Programmes what has happened. The Head of Junior Programmes is the College's Child Protection Officer and leads any case teams established. The Head of Junior Programmes will immediately inform the Deputy Director, as senior management representative on the case team, and the Director, RCM. In the absence of the Head of Junior Programmes the Deputy Director will take on the role of case team leader. Another Directorate member may, if necessary, deputise for the Director or for the Deputy Director, in their absence. As soon as any absent member of staff returns they will be informed about the case. Information about the case will initially be confined to these individuals.

4. The following will form the case team: Head of Junior Programmes (case team leader), Deputy Director, the person responsible for the initial report. The case team will meet immediately to look at the evidence and to decide a course of action, which will be documented. As part of their consideration, the case team will consider whether the allegation concerns issues of abuse or whether, in fact, the allegation does not meet the definitions of abuse and is more properly considered as a *complaint* about the College's services. Any case that includes a suspicion of abuse will be treated first as a case of suspected abuse. This decision making process for suspected abuse cases will be as follows:

- is the incident/allegation/suspicion so clear that it is obvious that an immediate referral to other agencies should be made?
- if the issue is clearly one which has no substance but it is not immediately apparent whether a referral should be made, consideration will be given to seeking the advice of the police and/or social services and/or the child's school on a no names basis if necessary
- if the matter is inconclusive and the police and social services do not consider that an action is required at that point, consideration should be given to whether others such as the school or parents should be notified of the concern
- consideration will be given to whether the College's staff disciplinary

procedures should be enacted.

5. Any suspicion, allegation or actual abuse of a participant by a member of staff shall be reported to the Head of Junior Programmes as soon as possible. If within two hours of the initial concern arising it has not been possible to do so, the matter must be referred to the Deputy Director, which can be done via JD administrative staff or direct by email. Where the suspicion, allegation or actual abuse concerns the Head of Junior Programmes, the matter shall be reported direct to the Deputy Director.