

Policy	Equal Opportunities
Effective Date	1 April 2017
Date Last Reviewed	September 2022
Authorised by	Trustees Meeting
Scheduled Review Date	June 2024
Supersedes	All previous Policies and/or Statements

1. Introduction

The Harrogate Choral Society (HCS) is a music group open to all. We aim to treat our members, volunteers, staff and supporters equally regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, class and socio-economic background.

The Chair of Trustees and Committee Secretary are responsible for providing advice and guidance on equality and diversity issues, and to ensure the Equal Opportunities Policy is kept up to date

2. Equality of opportunity- Harrogate Choral Society aims to:

- promote equality for its members and potential members in access to membership and musical activities and opportunities
- ensure no member or potential member will receive less favourable treatment or is disadvantaged by the criteria and characteristics set out in the introduction
- ensure no individual wishing to volunteer or work for (including on a freelance basis) Harrogate Choral Society will receive less favourable treatment or is disadvantaged by the criteria and characteristics set out in the aims.

3 Inclusion and Respect

- Harrogate Choral Society values its members, staff, volunteers and supporters and will do all it can to:
 - treat them in a respectful manner and ensure they are made to feel equally welcome and included in all activities.
 - provide an environment in which the contribution and needs of everyone are fully valued and recognised.
- Accordingly all members, staff volunteers, supporters and those representing Harrogate Choral Society are expected to treat each other with respect and dignity and ensure activities are welcoming and inclusive for all.
- Inappropriate, violent or abusive behaviour or otherwise offensive and inflammatory remarks and behaviour are not acceptable. These constitute harassment, and have no place in Harrogate Choral Society

- Harrogate Choral Society will support our members, volunteers, staff and supporters in not tolerating any inappropriate, violent or abusive behaviour from other group members, volunteers, colleagues, other organisations or customers.

4 Accessibility: Harrogate Choral Society aims to use venues that are accessible to all for rehearsals, concerts and any other activities or events it undertakes

5 Dealing with Complaints

- If any member, volunteer, staff or supporter feels they have been discriminated against or harassed they should raise it with the committee.
- The committee will take complaints of discrimination and harassment seriously.
- The committee will investigate the complaint, listening to all parties involved:
 - If the complaint is against a committee member, that member will not be part of conducting the investigation.
 - If the complaint is against an individual, that individual will have the opportunity to express their point of view in a safe environment and accompanied by a friend.
 - The person making the complaint will have the same opportunity.
- If a complaint is found against Harrogate Choral Society, the committee must work to ensure that such discrimination is not repeated in the future and must inform the members of how they propose to do this.

6. Employment practices – general

- Harrogate Choral Society aims to promote equality and inclusivity as an employer and shall ensure that no volunteer, employee, person engaged to provide a service (e.g. freelance), or job/volunteer applicant receives less favourable treatment or is disadvantaged by the characteristics set out in the aims of this policy
- Harrogate Choral Society selects all candidates for interview based on their skills, qualifications and experience.
- Selection, recruitment, training, promotion and employment practices will be subject to regular review to ensure that they comply with the Equal Opportunities Policy.
- Harrogate Choral Society regards discrimination, abuse, harassment, victimisation or bullying of staff or volunteers in the course of work as disciplinary offences that could be regarded as gross misconduct.

7. Request for DBS checks for current and potential members, staff and volunteers – with reference to ex-offenders

General:

- In assessing applicants' suitability for positions which are included in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order using criminal record checks processed through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), Harrogate Choral Society complies fully with the code of practice and undertakes to treat all applicants for positions fairly.

- Harrogate Choral Society promotes equality of opportunity for all with the right mix of talent, skills and potential and welcome applications from a wide range of candidates, including those with criminal records.

8. Request of DBS checks

- An application for a criminal record check is only submitted to DBS after a thorough risk assessment has indicated that one is both proportionate and relevant to the position concerned.
- For those positions where a criminal record check is identified as necessary, all application forms, job adverts and recruitment briefs will contain a statement that an application for a DBS certificate will be submitted in the event of the individual being offered the position.
- Harrogate Choral Society can only ask an individual to provide details of convictions and cautions that Harrogate Choral Society are legally entitled to know about, and where a DBS certificate at either standard or enhanced level can legally be requested (where the position is one that is included in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 as amended, and, where appropriate, Police Act Regulations as amended).
- Harrogate Choral Society makes every subject of a criminal record check submitted to DBS aware of the existence of the code of practice and makes a copy available on request.

9. Outcome of check and selection process

- Harrogate Choral Society undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of a criminal record check on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed.
- Harrogate Choral Society undertakes to discuss any matter revealed on a DBS certificate with the individual seeking the position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment.
- In an interview or separate discussion Harrogate Choral Society will:
 - only ask an individual about convictions and cautions that are not protected
 - ensure an open and measured discussion takes place on the subject of any offences or other matter that might be relevant to the position.
- Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment.

10. Responsibilities

Harrogate Choral Society ensures that all those who are involved in the recruitment process are:

- aware of the Harrogate Choral Society Equal Opportunities policy.
- aware of when and what type of DBS check is appropriate.
- have read the DBS code of practice.
- have read the Making Music guidance on safeguarding and DBS checks.

- have read any other guidance deemed appropriate by the Harrogate Choral Society committee

11. Policy Review

The policy will be reviewed every two years by the board of trustees/management committee unless there is any significant change in legislation which triggers review before then.

Change Control History

Date of Change	Summary of Revisions Made
March 2018	No changes required
March 2019	Considerable re-write to encompass all diversity issues
March 2020	No changes needed
June 2021	No changes needed
May 2022	No changes made
Nov 2022	Policy significantly revised to align fully with Making Music Equal Opportunities policy guidance. This includes policy on employment practices and DBS checking. This includes freelancers. Some changes aligned to changing roles and responsibilities within HCS Management Committee.