Make Your Mark: Notes on Music Education

Series 3 Episode 1: Safeguarding (Part 2)

[Intro music]

Yusef Sacoor: Welcome back, folks. It's part two of our episodes on safeguarding in education. With our guests, Brass Band England's Sarah Baumann and the NSPCC's Kevin Hartley, we tackled changes in safeguarding over the years. Employing the right people, intersectional safeguarding, and the unique challenges of safeguarding in music education. In this episode, it's time to talk the impact of emerging issues in child safeguarding, safeguarding young people into adulthood, and gain key resources and takeaways that you can use to improve your safeguarding game. As with episode one, sensitive topics around child exploitation and abuse are discussed, so please take care whilst listening to this podcast. Let's get into it.

Lucy Davies: We've talked quite a bit now about changes to attitude and approaches around safeguarding awareness, those sorts of things, but kind of to drill down a bit more on how is the development of technology, things like AI, you know, other developments as well? How has that impacted safeguarding more directly? Kevin, and then we'll go on to Sarah.

Kevin Hartley: Yeah, I guess obviously a big part of the work that we do at the NSPCC. And as I said, you know, it's twelve years ago it wasn't mentioned in keeping children safe at all. And now we're it's a central part of the work that anyone in Safeguarding does. And I think the risks the various risks of harm are well documented, in in different ways.

And I think what AI has done is exacerbated some of those and brought some new concerns as well. I think probably the most prevalent in that's emerged in the last couple of years is the way AI can be used to generate sexualised images of children, either from scratch or to take existing images of young people and to use in your new AI apps and so on to create sexual images. And I think that not only concerns adults, but it concerns children themselves as well. And you know, when you listen to the voice of

children, that's something they are very alert to and aware of and are experiencing. So that's one thing. And in terms of how that might impact organisations listening to this, you know, think about how you are using images of children on your websites. How are you using images of children on social media? Do you have an image policy, and has that been reviewed? Are you taking guidance on that? And alongside that is cybersecurity, because that's again something which organisations have suffered from, and people will target lots of organisations trying to find one that's got the weaknesses, and you don't want to be the one that has the weaknesses. So yeah, I think AI is still emerging, but what we're seeing is that the way it's been misused to create sexualised images is one thing there. And therefore advice to schools and other organisations is really around images, policies and protecting what you can, really.

Sarah Baumann: Yeah, I think for me, kind of thinking about interaction with technology in a more general sense, one of my favourite books, which I recommend, is 'The Anxious Generation' by Jonathan Haidt, which is just so brilliant in articulating how much the world has changed for young people; their experience of the world has changed. And I think sometimes people who grew up not in a situation where everything that they did and interacted with was through a screen or through social media, it can be quite difficult to comprehend what a different life the young people that we work with live and how their day-to-day experiences are. And I think it articulates so clearly the change in risk and how that how that really leads to anxiety and stress for young people in a really, really enormous way. We see it in kind of this dual balance of we want people to be safeguarded; we want clear, robust frameworks in place that prevents harm, but there is a reality that really, really wool-wrapping children, for want of a better term, causes its own different type of harm. And it's a tightrope walk for all of us who work with young people to do, because the rate of change of technology is faster than any of us can keep up with. And there's a reality to that. But it is how young people interact with the world.

And we will await with interest to see the specifics of the social media ban, for example, and what that's going to mean, how we manage and implement that, and what remits and restrictions will be alongside that. Because that will certainly make quite a big difference in terms of how we safeguard people and young people around technology.

Kevin Hartley: I think just to add to that, Sarah, I think that as people working in the music sector, music's one of those ways that people express themselves genuinely. And I think you've got an advantage in that world, and that you're allowing young people to learn how to express themselves in a way that's unique, creative, individual, and is not necessarily reliant upon the filtering we sometimes see. So yes, I think you guys are in a great position.

Yusef Sacoor: But interestingly, if you want to progress into contemporary music, social media has become more and more important. I did I did wonder, because we're sort of moving on to a separate part of the conversation, but the is new technology,

social media, AI sort of the new big concern and are there others that are more prevalent. So sort of, you know, 5-7 years ago County Lines was a big was not necessarily a new thing, but was still the big new worry. I don't know if there's any sort of other things that people should be looking out for.

Kevin Hartley: Well, I mean do you mean specifically in the music sector, what do you mean online in the online space?

Yusef Sacoor: I think I mean both, and I think I mean sort of like in the way that the young people are, not just in terms of technology, but just are there new issues that you weren't or issues that you were seeing on a much smaller level a decade ago, five years ago, that you're now seeing in as a big deal.

Kevin Hartley: I think the I mean the risks of harm to children, the ones that are most common are the same, you know, neglect, physical harm, sexual abuse, emotional harm. They are still there. They're not changing. The online spaces sometimes affect how that can happen. So online grooming, for example. And as you rightly say, there's you know, a few years ago, I know when I was working in schools, the County Lines would be more awareness of that and exploitation and that's still a concern and still continuing. I think one of the things we've sort of seen recently in our work is around the rise and growth of what's called Com Networks, and these are networks online where vulnerable young people are targeting other vulnerable young people to harm them, to perform acts online, to gain status. And they can be very extreme, and they often affect isolated young people that are struggling themselves. So you might have someone who's both causing harm to others but also a victim of harm themselves. And this is quite a new and emerging and complex area. There's some new guidance being published by COPS around this, which is quite useful for those professionals to understand it, but also different versions for parents to kind of understand it in that context as well. So there are always things that are changing. And one of the benefits of being an organisation like NSPCC is that we were kind of alert to those things and we hear about things quite quickly because we hear from children. Children call us up and speak to us about the concerns that they've got.

And online concerns are definitely one of those. But we also have adults, so adults who can reach out there as PCC and helpline. And the sorts of things they talk to us about again are broadly similar, you know, neglect and harm to children, but often around online grooming, exploitation and those things as well. And obviously that's not unique to the music sector, but it is about being, you know, you have a relationship with young people. If you spot things are changing, you spot that they're worried about being online or so on. It's interesting that in one of our current training materials we have a scenario where the person that noticed something wrong is actually a guitar teacher, and it's actually in a music setting. And it's that relationship that he's developed with the young

person which allows him to notice something is now different, and that allows the young person, because of the trusted relationship, to share what it is that's going on.

So I think music's a setting where, for obvious reasons, that connection is really powerful and can be used in a way which allows trust to develop and allows young people to speak about what's worrying. And I think, as Sarah's right said earlier on, people have been equipped and knowing what to do if they are in that situation is really important.

Sarah Bauman: Yeah, I think it definitely changes the communication routes, I guess, for lots of things. I think one of the most challenging things for me personally that I see is around misinformation and radicalisation and the way that people interact with social media; it serves them content that they have indicated that they want to see more of. So it can take people down a real rabbit hole really quickly and can get some really, really ingrained views from impressionable young people very, very quickly in a way that you just wouldn't have had access to that rate of information to do that. Or you've had to have had that quite close to home or within a network to be influenced in quite that way. And I think examples around the Manosphere and, you know, that kind of area, but also in other ways around, you know, Tradwife, kind of Instagram trends; these young people will be seeing these too and will be influenced by them, and social media will naturally take them down a track of seeing more of that and ingraining those views. But that can be hard, hard to challenge.

But as Kevin says, signs that young people display will be, you know, will be similar if they, if they become, very, introverted, don't want to talk about what's going on, or feel very concerned or anxious around technology and social media. These are all common things to raise a flag that something isn't right.

Lucy Davies: So we'll talk now a little bit about the role that organisations within the music sector, so hubs, services, sector bodies, et cetera, can play in creating safer environments for children. So not just your reporting, but how you can actually foster those sorts of environments, how you can make sure children are aware of the role they can play in creating and fostering those sorts of environments. I will come, I think, to Sarah first for this one.

Sarah Baumann: Yeah, so obviously for us, the bread and butter of our work is making life easier for people who want to make music and who have really, really limited time and capacity to digest a lot of this really, really meaty information. So for me, one of the most important roles that sector bodies and support organisations can play is making the resources that they provide specific for the context that those accessing it are going to be using them.

The requirements of community organisations are different to the requirements of schools and it's important that we aren't pushing organisations down a track that's

actually far too advanced than what they need and the context that they need. So most of our work is based on the voluntary and community standards, but obviously we bring in a lot of specific guidance that is relevant for when there will be that kind of, I guess, crossover interaction with community organisations in schools. So maybe if they're visiting or they're coming to deliver an assembly or they do happen to have a stream of work where they do deliver in schools, which some of our members do, but making sure that they really understand what's right and relevant for them. I think we also have a role in championing the importance of this work. And I think Brass Bands England are unusual in that in that safeguarding is one of our core services. That's the Band Safe training and resources is part of that, but also DBS checking and just making it as easy as possible for members to come to us to make that happen.

We also have an important role in advocating for change as well. And making sure that the needs of our sector are heard really loud and clear for those who are creating legislation to make sure that there's not inadvertent barriers being put in place by very well-meaning legislation that comes into play. So that's something that we're doing more of at the moment to make sure that community music and music education more generally continues to be a safe place for children and a place that they can really thrive making music which should be a right for every child.

Kevin Hartley: Yeah, I think I think I'd echo what you just said there about feeling safe because if children feel safe, that's gotta be fundamental to unlocking the creativity they need. You know, they need the same in schools, you can't you can't learn unless you feel safe. And it's the same in music, isn't it? You can't I'm sure you can't do your best unless you unless you feel safe. So we talk about a lot of our training about safeguarding culture, which we've touched on a little bit already today. Where those policies and practices which you know they're documents, but they're actually embedded, and they're lived and those that in organisation understand them and subscribe to them and kinda live the way they're meant to be really. And in those settings, in those organisations, children and young people need to know that if they've got a concern or they raise a concern, they'll be listened to and that'll be taken seriously and acted upon. And you know, that's the sort of the what we mean by that culture whereby they can turn to anyone really and hopefully anyone will do the right thing and pass that on, so that they themselves feel safe, but also they feel part of an organisation that's safe. And the other thing I think you'll know yourselves and working with young people, they look out for each other really well. And they may sometimes feel less confident to share their own concern, but they're often quite happy to say 'my friend's got an issue I'm worried about' and they'll pass that thing on as well. So having an environment where that's common as well, where you look after each other. And I think that goes; that's part of that is modelling as adults. You know, we model that behaviour, we speak about safeguarding, we're not scared of it.

We talk about well-being, we talk about welfare, you talk about inclusion earlier on, Sarah, and we kinda make the fact that everyone is welcome and everyone's included and everyone has a right to feel safe, and everyone has a right to create and make music. I think that's what's a good point to be.

Yusef Sacoor: I suppose that environment is so key, isn't it? And I was wondering how much you feel that that filters in into adulthood or older young people as they go into different situations, perhaps where you're not safeguarding them. And yeah, how does how do you what do you think your role is in sort of I suppose preparing them for safeguarding themselves as adults?

Sarah Baumann: Yeah, I think it's so important to be setting that standard, I guess, that knowing that there's somewhere to go to talk about and really signposting that there are support organisations of all kinds there for you. But I think it is important as well that safeguarding isn't just for children at all. It should be a lifelong responsibility for anyone interacting with people and who care about people. And I think we generally would go to the Anne Craft Trust, which is a specific charity for safeguarding advice for adults at risk.

But I think it's important that any of us could become at risk or vulnerable any part of our lives. And we should feel confident to be able to support and safeguard the adults that we work with as well. And I think often the language around safeguarding becomes very, very child specific, but actually it's a right for all of us to feel safe as we operate in the world and particularly not to be a victim of discrimination and abuse. And we all have a role to play in making the world we live in, the music spaces that we exist, play and work in, places that people feel comfortable to be themselves. And I think all of those principles that exist in safeguarding children should carry through as well.

Kevin Hartley: Yeah, and we're a children's charity that we work beyond eighteen-year-olds in our training and in some of the policies we work with because you don't suddenly stop being vulnerable as a child at eighteen and as you rightly say, sir, anyone can be at risk of harm or abuse at any time. So, I think setting that those values, and that kind of awareness that even if you're not a child, there are places you can go to and there are people that will listen to you and sometimes offer direct help, sometimes signposting to services that can offer help is something there. But I think yeah, I think and I've done some work with the Anne Craft Trust myself and it's interesting that they the principles of safeguarding in terms of recognising the harms and responding to those harms are the same. I mean there are obviously differences with adults in terms of things like consent and so on, but the basic principles of looking after people are there.

Lucy Davies: So just to revisit something that applies to safeguarding in a context, sort of across age ranges. So as you mentioned, Sarah, safeguarding has a tendency to become quite young person focused, but it's actually something that applies to people of all ages. What things can be done to kind of maintain these very trusting relationships

that have to built for safeguarding to be effective whilst also kind of maintaining professional boundaries.

Kevin Hartley: When I I was a teacher in my previous life and I think that taught me that children and young people want and need professional boundaries. they need to see us as adults, not friends, but they also need to see adults who can act for them and speak up for them. And I suppose in terms of how you establish that I would kind of recommend that you pay attention to the small stuff, you know, if you listen to and pay attention to the small stuff. They notice and then they're more likely then to come to you for the big stuff when they need to do so. So even small things like, it's a bit crowded in here, or it's a bit hot today, or I'm feeling tired, you know, if you're paying attention to those things, you know, they're not safe kind of concerns, but they are concerns. And if that young person learns that 'when I've got a worry, the adults around me listen', they will be more inclined to when they've got a worry they need to tell you about because they need help.

They were more inclined to do that. So those professional boundaries are there to establish that. That we're not we're not friends, we're friendly, but we're not friends. We are the adults and we are the people that will help you when you need to get help. So I think that's really important. And I think that professional boundaries doesn't just refer to children, it can refer to colleagues and parents and other adults too. So as I said earlier on, modelling the behaviours and modelling the values and modelling the language that we want to promote, I think, are really important and powerful. And I think as people that are in the roles of perhaps leading organisations or in key roles, they set the standards for that so that people then can follow throughout the organisation, whether big or small.

Sarah Baumann: Yeah, and I think the way that we communicate with children in particular should also always be carefully considered, the method of communication, the language that we use to reiterate those boundaries, to make that really clear. But, you know, it's not in community settings, but also in other settings as well. You are sometimes put in a situation where you have a relationship, a family relationship maybe with a child or friends and family in a completely different context. And then they're parachuted into your professional world. And that can be really challenging too, and to balance that. But again, that modelling behaviour and showing that we're in this space, this is how the adults in your world interact with you, but still acknowledging that relationship is there, is really important to maintain that consistency to that child, but also the other children in that setting. So that there's not, I guess, misinterpretation around what that relationship should be in that context.

Yusef Sacoor: Thank you so much guys. I think that really leads us to our final point, which is well, if you were to recommend one resource, one place to go to listeners to

help inform them further about safeguarding, what would that be? We're saying one, but you know, you can you can you can put out a few more if you really want to.

Sarah Baumann: I would not be doing my job well if I wasn't recommending Brass Bands England's resources, obviously. So they are our band-safe toolkit and training. It's really specific for community music organisations and lots of practical toolkits and resources to help you get your safeguarding armoury together. I do also really, really like Youth Music's Safeguarding Hub. I think it's really easy to access and has quite a big range of resources that really champions youth voice within their safeguarding practices. So I do always like to keep an eye on what they're going on to.

Kevin Hartley: Yeah, and I think I'd also be biased as well, but I'll have to recommend our own one. So we've got a helpline which is 0808 8005,000 to any adult with a concern about a child. Our NSPC Learning website has information and newsletters and lots of free stuff and lots of guidance, which kind of underpins the safeguarding things we're talking about today.

And beyond us, there's a chap called Andrew Hall who has a safeguarding newsletter each week. And if you can subscribe to his newsletter that comes in your inbox on Monday morning and he gives good advice and seems to have up to date information all the time. So that's an external one I can recommend as well. So yeah. But start with the NSPCC.

Yusef Sacoor: Thank you so much. Sarah and Kevin, you have been a font of knowledge today.

Lucy Davies: That's it for Part 2 and the end of this episode. Thank you to our fantastic guests and to you for listening. We'll be on the air again in a couple of weeks, chatting to more brilliant guests about Celtic music. Follow us wherever you get your podcasts, so you don't miss it, and if you've found this episode helpful, why not share it with a friend or colleague? Thanks again for listening and we'll catch you next time on Make Your Mark: Notes on Music Education