

NEWCASTLE BACH CHOIR - POLICY MANUAL, APRIL 2025

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1. COMPLAINTS POLICY

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that any complaint relating to choir activities is addressed promptly and fairly, and that steps are taken to remedy problems and prevent similar issues arising in future. It applies both to complaints raised by choir members and complaints brought by members of the public.

Complaints Procedure

- a) Complaints should be addressed to either the Chair chair@newcastlebachchoir.org.uk or the Membership Secretary secretary@newcastlebachchoir.org.uk.
- b) The Chair or Membership Secretary will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 7 days and give an indication of the timescale for a response. They will share the details with the trustees who will agree how to address the issue, initiate remedial action, and communicate their response to the complainant.
- c) During term time, the choir aims to resolve most complaints within two weeks. In holiday periods it may take a little longer.
- d) More serious complaints may require further investigation and consultation with the complainant before they are resolved.
- e) All complaints will be reported to the next trustees meeting and a record of the complaint and the action taken will be minuted.
- f) In dealing with complaints, the trustees must act in line with the choir's charitable purpose and must try to avoid exposing the choir to reputational or financial risk.
- g) If the complainant is not satisfied with choir's response, the matter can be referred to the trustees for further consideration. If there is still no agreement, the trustees may nominate two members of the choir to carry out an independent review of the complaint and suggest steps to resolve the matter.
- h) Complainants who are not satisfied have the right to contact the Charity Commission.

2. CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

This policy applies to all trustees of Newcastle Bach Choir. A 'conflict of interest' arises when the best interests of an individual trustee are, or could be, different from the best interests of the charity itself.

The trustees acknowledge that it is inevitable that conflicts of interest may occur. Conflicts can arise from directorships/ trusteeships held, contracts awarded, payments or gifts received amongst other things.

If a trustee is unsure what to declare, they should discuss the matter with the Chair in confidence.

The trustees are committed to managing conflicts to avoid any impropriety or appearance of impropriety. It is the policy of the choir to ensure that trustees understand what constitutes a conflict of interest and that they are declared and managed appropriately, so that decision-making processes are free from personal bias and do not unfairly favour any individual. Conflicts and the steps taken to manage them will be fully documented.

When a trustee identifies that they have a conflict of interest they must:

- Declare it as soon as they become aware of it.
- Ensure it is entered in a register of interests kept by the Minutes Secretary.
- Not take part in any discussions or decisions relating to the issue where they have a conflict.
- Leave the room during the discussion unless there is good reason for them to stay.
- Not be counted in the quorum for decision making related to the matter.

The minutes of the meeting should record the declared conflict of interest and the fact that the trustee withdrew from the discussion, as well as any other actions taken to manage the conflict.

3. DATA PROTECTION POLICY

Introduction and scope

Newcastle Bach Choir needs to collect personal information about individuals, including choir members, volunteers, supporters, audience members and other contacts. This policy explains how data should be collected, processed and used in a way that follows good practice and complies with data protection law. It aims to protect the rights of members and supporters and to minimise the risk of a data breach. It applies to all personal data held by the choir.

Statement of policy

The choir will follow the key principles of data protection:

1. We will process personal data fairly and lawfully

- The choir will only collect data necessary for the legitimate purposes of the group.
- We keep contact details of choir members (address, email and phone number) and use them to contact members about choir business and activities.
- Other details may be held such as payment history any Gift Aid details, for payment of subscriptions.
- Personal data relating to supporters and audience members may be collected at any time (including when booking tickets) and, with their consent, may be used for marketing and communications about concerts and events. Every marketing communication will contain an option to 'unsubscribe'.
- Photographs or videos of the choir may be taken for promoting the choir and concerts. When a photograph or video allows an individual to be identified, their permission will be sought before making the picture public.

2. We only use data for specified purposes

When collecting data, the choir will always explain to the subject why it is required and what it will be used for - e.g. *'Please enter your email address in the form below. We need this so that we can send you email updates for group administration including about rehearsal and concert schedules, subs payments and other business.'* We will never use data other than for the stated purpose.

3. We will not collect excessive data

The choir will not collect and hold more data than is required for its intended legitimate purpose.

4. We will ensure data is accurate and up to date

- The choir will ask people whose personal information it holds to check and update their data on an annual basis. Any individual will be able to access and update their data at any point by contacting the Membership Secretary.
- People can request in writing to see data about them stored by the choir, and can request that inaccurate details are updated.
- Anyone can request to stop receiving marketing communications.
- People can object to storage or use of their data if it might cause them substantial distress. Such objections will be considered by the trustees and a decision communicated within 30 days.
- The trustees will keep an up to date list of the types of data they hold (e.g. membership contact details, marketing database etc).

5. We will not keep data longer than necessary

- If a member informs us that they are leaving the choir, their data will be deleted from the membership register straight away by the Membership Secretary.
- Records are reviewed annually and anyone who has not attended rehearsals in the past year is contacted. If they confirm that they have left (or if no reply is received) their data is deleted.

- The above points on deleting data are subject to any legal requirement to keep records. Where there is a legal requirement (for example, to keep financial information for 6 years for HMRC) this will be observed.
- If a person on the marketing mailing list unsubscribes, they will be removed within 30 days.

6. Integrity and confidentiality

- The choir will ensure that data it holds is kept secure.
- Electronic data will be held within a secure, password-protected environment. Physical records will be stored safely and not shared with third parties.
- Access to data will only be given to relevant trustees where necessary for the running of the choir.
- The choir may need to facilitate communication between members. In this case, a member's explicit consent must always be sought before passing their contact details to anyone else.
- If a data breach occurs, the trustees will deal with it in accordance with data protection rules, including deciding whether the ICO should be notified. A record will be kept of any breach and the actions taken.

Who is responsible

Everyone who has access to personal data as part of the choir has a responsibility to adhere to this policy. The Data Controllers for the choir are the Chair and the Membership Secretary. The trustees are responsible for determining what data is collected and why, and how it will be used. The Membership Secretary is custodian of the data and deals with day-to-day operational issues.

4. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY

This policy documents the measures we take to avoid and eliminate discrimination, as required under the Equality Act 2010. Discrimination denies human dignity and essential freedoms and we will not tolerate discrimination on any grounds.

The Newcastle Bach Choir aims to be an open, welcoming and inclusive environment, in the following ways:

- We will ensure that no potential or current member, supporter or volunteer receives less favourable treatment (either directly or indirectly) on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/belief, sex or sexual orientation.
- We will not allow any member, supporter or volunteer to be disadvantaged on any of the above grounds that are not justifiable in law.
- We promote equality of opportunity for members and potential members in access to musical activities and opportunities.
- We treat all our members, supporters and volunteers equally and we encourage everyone to treat each other with dignity, inclusion and respect.
- We seek to provide an environment in which the contribution and needs of everyone are fully valued and recognised.
- Inappropriate, violent or abusive behaviour or offensive and inflammatory remarks are not acceptable. These constitute harassment, and have no place in the Newcastle Bach Choir.
- We aim to use venues that are accessible to all for rehearsals, concerts and other activities or events.

5. EXPENSES POLICY

Trustees and members may claim reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred in the performance of their duties on behalf of the choir.

In the case of travel expenses, travel by bus or standard class rail may be claimed. Trustees may use their own vehicle for choir business at their own risk. Mileage may be claimed at 45 pence per mile. Taxis should not be used except in exceptional circumstances. Other expenditure on behalf of the choir should be approved by the Chair or the Treasurer in advance.

Claims should be itemised and supported by receipts, and should be submitted within 30 days of expenses being incurred wherever possible. Claims from members may be authorised by the Chair or the Treasurer. Claims by trustees should be authorised by two other trustees.

6. FINANCIAL POLICY

i) Introduction

Newcastle Bach Choir is committed to ensuring that robust financial policies and procedures are in place to safeguard the assets of Newcastle Bach Choir. The aim of the policy is to:

- ensure the trustees have proper financial controls of the organisation.
- provide a clear framework for our trustees and volunteers to work with when dealing with money.
- ensure the organisation meets its legal obligations in relation to accounting and financial reporting to the Charity Commission and HMRC.
- ensure the organisation meets the contractual obligations and requirements of funders.

ii) Accounting basis and record keeping

- The accounts will be kept on an accruals basis
- Accounting records
 - A cash accounting spreadsheet analysing all transactions on the bank accounts/ software (Excel)
 - Bank statements
 - A record of invoices received and issued
 - Receipts for payments made
 - A list of amounts owed and owing
 - Expense claim forms
 - Cheque book stub receipts
 - A petty cash book

The financial year end date is 31 July.

All financial records will be kept for 6 years from the financial year end date they relate to.

iii) Annual accounts

- Accounts must be drawn up at the end of each financial year within 3 months of the financial year end. These will include:
 - Final reconciliation of income and expenditure with bank statements
 - A summary of the financial position at year end
 - An income and expenditure statement
- Scrutiny of accounts
 - Accounts will be subject to Independent Examination
 - They will be presented for approval to members at the AGM
 - They will be sent to the Charity Commission within the required period after the financial year end: currently 10 months

iv) Budget

- Before the start of each financial year, the trustees will approve a budgeted income and expenditure account for the following year.
- The trustees will review actual income and expenditure compared with the budget at least quarterly and reforecast the budget as necessary.

v) Budget holders and approved spending limits

The following people are approved to sign off expenditure within their budget limits. Any costs over these limits require the Treasurer’s approval in advance. Budget holders must keep the Treasurer informed promptly of expenditure incurred.

| Budget area | Budget holder |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Advertising costs | Publicity lead |
| Choir music hire/purchase | Librarian |
| Coaching / workshops | Music Director |
| Concert management costs | Concert Manager |
| Fundraising costs | Treasurer |
| IT infrastructure/website | Website manager |
| Management & administration | Chair |
| Orchestral music | Music Director |
| Performance costs / artists | Music Director |
| Programme costs | Music Director |
| Rehearsal costs | Membership Secretary |
| Social events | Social event co-ordinator |

vi) Bank accounts

Newcastle Bach Choir has a Community Directplus Account with The Co-operative Bank. All payments require two signatories. Account details:

- Account number: 65049941
- Sort Code: 08-92-99

There will always be a minimum of three signatories who must be trustees. Current signatories are:

- Jessica Anderson, Treasurer
- Gill Clancy, Trustee, Vice-Chair
- Alexandra Blenkarn-Durning, Minutes Secretary.

Newcastle Bach Choir also currently has a Business Savings Account with Barclays Bank. All payments require two signatories. Account details:

- Account number: 33470776
- Sort Code: 20-59-61

There will always be a minimum of three signatories. Current signatories are:

- Gill Clancy, Vice-Chair
- Sue Coulson, former Trustee
- Tessa Sayers, former Trustee

vii) Income / receiving payments

The following procedures apply to all Newcastle Bach Choir trustees, volunteers and freelancers taking and making any payments on behalf of Newcastle Bach Choir.

Ideally all payments due to Newcastle Bach Choir should have an accompanying invoice issued to the payee. Where this is not possible the payee should be issued with a receipt confirming payment has been made and what it was for (this could be via email or a digital scan of the receipt)

For any cheque or cash payment received:

- Report receipt of the payment to the Treasurer in writing (email) as soon as practically possible. The amount and reason for payment should be recorded.
- Pay any cash or cheques into the bank account within e.g. 5 days of receipt.
- Notify the treasurer that the payment has been made to the bank in writing (email)
- An account signatory must check and confirm the amount paid into the bank has been received within 7 days.

All payments received into the bank account will be recorded and accounted for in the charity accounts within 1 month of receipt of the payment.

viii) Expenditure – payments made by the charity

Trustees can approve spending in line with the approved spending limits above. Where a cost exceeds the approved limit, the Treasurer must approve the cost in writing (email) before a commitment is made.

All payments made from the Newcastle Bach Choir bank account will have a matching corresponding invoice, order form or expense claim form.

Where possible payments will be made by BACS.

Dual authorisation

All payments made from the bank account must be authorised by 2 signatories.

- Online BACs payments must be done using the online banking dual authorisation system.
- All cheques must be signed by two signatories
- Blank cheques must never be signed
- Where the payment is for a signatory's expense, the signatory claiming the expense cannot be one of the approving signatories.
- Petty cash can be available for cash payments:
 - At least two trustees must pre-approve general petty cash payments - this pre-approval can cover an extended period of time and for a range of purposes.
 - The maximum amount for a single cash payment is £20.
 - All cash payments must be recorded in the petty cash book.
 - If an individual is holding petty cash and will not have a reason to use it within 2 months, they must return the cash and any records to the Treasurer.
- All payments made from the bank account must be recorded and accounted for in the charity accounts within 1 month.

Direct Debits and standing orders (not currently applicable)

All Direct Debit and standing order payments and any change to the amounts must be approved by two signatories. Payments must be reviewed annually.

ix) Fixed assets

The trustees have agreed that assets costing more than £1,000 are treated as capital expenditure, recorded as fixed assets on the balance sheet and depreciated (the cost spread) over the estimated useful life of the asset class.

x) HMRC and tax

Newcastle Bach Choir is a charity and can claim the charity tax exemption on activities related to its primary activity. Any trading that is secondary to its primary activity is expected to be below the exempt trading limit and registration limit for VAT and so will also be exempt from tax. As such Newcastle Bach Choir does not have to submit an annual tax return to HMRC or register for VAT.

However:

- If HMRC request we file a corporation tax return we must comply and can apply a charity tax exemption.
- If non-primary trading activity exceeded taxation limits then a tax return would need to be filled and tax may be due.
- If business income exceeded VAT registration thresholds, the charity must register for VAT.

Gift Aid

Newcastle Bach Choir claims Gift Aid on donations received from the public and on membership subscriptions paid by members. It can also claim Gift Aid on cash received under the Gift Aid Small Donations scheme (GASDS).

All Gift Aid claims related to donation and membership subscriptions must be supported by an appropriate Gift Aid declaration.

Gift Aid is claimed during the financial year.

An annual assessment on the eligibility of membership subscriptions for Gift Aid is carried out each year.

7. HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY

The choir is committed to providing a healthy and safe environment for all its activities. Responsibility for health and safety sits with the trustees.

The trustees will ensure that risk assessments are completed for specific events and activities, and that any remedial actions identified are followed up. Records of these are kept by the Chair. Members and volunteers will be made aware of any issues, especially for new venues or activities. We will ensure that all equipment, including hired equipment, is safe to use.

We will ensure that appropriate emergency procedures are in place, e.g. evacuation in case of fire or other significant incident. The concert manager is responsible for knowing fire procedures for hired venues and for communicating them to those present.

We will endeavour to ensure that first aid equipment is available at all venues and events. As part of the risk assessment process, the Concert Manager will consider the availability of first aiders for any given event.

The trustees will engage with choir members and volunteers in relation to health and safety issues and listen carefully to any concerns raised. Any concerns can be raised with the Chair who will consult with the trustees.

8. RESERVES POLICY

Background

Charity trustees are required to publish and implement a reserves policy to comply with their legal duties to safeguard the interests and assets of their charity. All charities must include their policy on reserves in the annual report, stating the level of reserves held and why they are held. In practice, this means that trustees should develop a reserves policy that:

- Explains the business of the charity and how its finances are managed to ensure it fulfils its purpose.
- Justifies and clearly explains keeping or not keeping reserves.
- Publish a reserves policy (even if not required to by law) which clearly indicates the financial risks that the society faces.
- Makes clear the potential consequences for the charity of not being able to make up any shortfall if reserves are insufficient.

Target reserves level should be informed by:

- Expected (and reliability of) income for current and futures years.
- Expected expenditure for the current and future years on the basis of planned activity.
- The trustees' analysis of any future needs, opportunities, commitments or risks which exceed normal income.
- The likelihood of a shortfall arising and the potential consequences for the charity of not being able to make up the shortfall.

In summary, the financial risks the trustees identify should influence the amount of reserves they target and the strategy should be clearly explained in the reserves policy. The treasurer will review the reserves policy every two years and present any changes to the trustees for approval.

Suggested reserves levels 2025/26

Business of the Charity

Newcastle Bach Choir performs 3 or 4 public concerts annually with the purpose of promoting knowledge and understanding of arts and culture (choral music in particular) for the benefit of the general public.

To enable this, the charity rehearses regularly with their Music Director and accompanist, hires venues, publicises concerts, engages professional singers and other musicians to support and fulfil their endeavours.

Relevant target level criteria

- **There is a risk that one or more concerts might incur a much larger loss** than anticipated leading to a **cash-flow problem** for the remainder of the season
- The Choir may need to raise the Subscriptions in the future and is keen to ensure that no member is excluded due to inability to pay the full amount.
- Therefore, **we have decided to allocate a proportion of the reserves to cover any such needs.**
- The choir has to **undertake commitments and make payments several months in advance of concerts.** Particularly at the beginning and end of the season it is essential that there are sufficient funds available to cover these costs. Subscriptions can come in slowly and ticket income is volatile.
- There is always a risk of unforeseen emergency, such as: Cancellation of a concert; illness of the Musical Director or extreme weather events.
- Uncertainty over future income might mean having reserves equivalent to a number of months of income set aside.
- Planning of major events or working with musicians normally out with the choir's normal budget.

How much we hold in reserve should also be informed by:

- Annual financial commitments
- Expected expenditure for a minimum of one concert
- Contingency fund in case of illness of the Director or the Accompanist
- Contingency fund in case of Kings Hall (or alternative venue) being unavailable for a prolonged period

We need to hold the following level of reserves so that the charity can honour its commitments to its members and its contractual obligations in the event of financial shortfall:

| Suggested Reserves Level | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Annual Financial Commitments | 6,000 |
| Exp. Concert 1 | 8,000 |
| Unexpected loss contingency | 2,000 |
| Anticipated loss | 5,000 |
| Access | 1,000 |
| - - - - | <u>22.000</u> |

NB This table does not include any contingency for illness or the cost of alternative rehearsal venues.

9. SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Commitment to safeguarding

The Newcastle Bach Choir (NBC) believes that a child, young person or adult at risk should never experience abuse of any kind. We recognise that we have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children, young people and adults at risk. We are committed to safeguarding the well-being of all children, young people and adults at risk we come into contact with and to protecting them from harm.

Policy overview

This policy applies to all members and anyone working on behalf of NBC or taking part in NBC activities.

The purpose of this policy is to provide the overarching principles that guide our approach to the protection of all vulnerable people.

This policy recognises vulnerable people as:

- Children up to the age of 16 or young people aged 16-18.
- Adults aged over 18 at risk as defined by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006. This might include adults with a learning or physical disability, a physical or mental illness, chronic or otherwise, including an addiction to alcohol or drugs, or reduced physical or mental capacity. This policy also recognises risk is determined by the activity an adult is taking part in and not solely on the personal characteristics or circumstances of the adult, as such any adult can be at risk, and the risk can be temporary.

This policy aims to:

- Protect children, young people & adults at risk who are members of NBC or assist in its activities.
- Ensure members, and anyone working on behalf of NBC, whilst working with children, young people and adults at risk are carefully recruited and understand and accept responsibility for the safeguarding of those vulnerable individuals they are interacting with.
- Ensure that safeguarding of children, young people and adults at risk is a primary consideration when NBC undertakes any activity, event or project.

How NBC might work with vulnerable people

Membership is open to those over 16 years of age. We run regular rehearsals for members and put on concerts for the public. As such our involvement with vulnerable people might include, but is not limited to:

- Members of the choir who attend rehearsals and concerts
- Relatives and friends of members who attend rehearsals and concerts in a volunteering capacity
- Audience members at public concerts.

Safeguarding lead

Bill Tarpy has responsibility for safeguarding issues. All queries and concerns relating to safeguarding should be referred to him in the first instance. The trustees will ensure that there is always a named safeguarding lead and will keep a record of their relevant training and the reference number of their DBS certificate.

Any projects, events or other activities that will involve vulnerable people must be planned with the involvement of NBC Trustees and in line with established procedures and ground rules (see below).

Ground rules, ways of working and procedures

Recruitment practices around safeguarding

If anyone working on behalf of NBC will be working with vulnerable people as part of the NBC activities the appropriate level of DBS will be requested before that work is undertaken.

The level of DBS check required will be decided by the trustees in line with DBS rules regarding regulated activity. The results of any check to inform a decision will be used confidentially.

Ground rules and ways for working regarding safeguarding of vulnerable people

When NBC organises an activity or event where they will be responsible for vulnerable people we will ensure:

- Planning is carried out in line with this policy and procedures.
- The event is attended by at least one DBS checked adult.
- There is a contact for safeguarding on the day - this will be an individual who has been DBS checked.
- The safeguarding contact has access to emergency contact details and other relevant details (e.g. information about picking up arrangements for vulnerable people).
- A vulnerable person is not left alone with an adult, unless that adult is DBS checked and carrying out regulated activity.
- At least one DBS checked adult will remain at the venue until all known vulnerable people have left.

Working with parents/guardians

If a child or vulnerable adult wishes to take part in NBC activities written permission (email is fine) should be obtained from parents/carers before the activity takes place. This should include emergency contact details and arrangements for who is picking up the child or vulnerable adult or how they are getting home.

Working with external youth organisations, schools and colleges

When NBC organises an activity in conjunction with a youth organisation, school or college, it is the responsibility of the youth organisation, school or college to ensure proper safeguarding arrangements.

Procedures for raising safeguarding concerns and incidents of abuse

If any member, or anyone working on behalf of NBC or taking part in NBC activities, witnesses, suspects or is informed of a witnessed or suspected case of abuse they should immediately report it to the named safeguarding officer. If the named person is not available, or is involved in or connected to, the abuse, it should be reported to the Chair of NBC.

If an individual wishes to report an incident of abuse against themselves they should report it to the named safeguarding officer or an individual they trust.

Procedures for dealing with concerns and incidents of abuse

The named safeguarding lead will first assess the concern based on the following factors:

1. If the vulnerable person is in immediate danger or needs emergency medical attention – call the police and/or ambulance service.
2. If the person at the centre of the allegation is working with vulnerable persons at the current time – remove them, in a sensitive manner, from direct contact with vulnerable people and follow the procedures below.

If none of the above applies, the safeguarding lead will:

- Make a note of the concerns reported to them.
- Speak with trustees to decide how to handle the reported abuse, excluding any trustees who of involved in the incident.
- Escalate the report by either:
 - Raising concerns with the police – for serious or possible criminal offences.
 - Requesting an assessment by the local authority social care department about whether a vulnerable person needs protection.
 - An internal investigation – for less serious incidents where they feel internal mediation will be successful.

Where cases are escalated the trustees will cooperate with the police or local authority in dealing with the reported incident.

Where an internal investigation takes place, the trustees will:

- Inform all parties involved of the reported abuse as soon as possible.
- Inform the family/guardians of the person reported as being abused of the incident.
- Arrange separate meetings with both parties within 10 days of the reported incident. A joint meeting may be arranged if appropriate.
- Both parties should be given the chance to bring a friend or representative to the meeting.
- Meetings will be attended by the named safeguarding officer and at least one other trustee.
- All parties will also be invited to submit a written statement in advance of the meeting.
- Once meetings have taken place the trustees will decide on next steps and communicate them to all parties in writing within 5 days. They will be either:
 - Escalate the incident to the relevant authority.
 - Further investigation – with established procedures and timelines to work towards a resolution.
 - A decision or resolution.

Resolution and disciplinary action

If abuse is found to have taken place any final resolution or decision will be taken in the best interest of the person who has suffered the abuse and the best interests of the NBC. Any disciplinary action will be taken in line with the NBC constitution.

10. SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

The Newcastle Bach Choir uses social media to promote itself and to advertise concerts and events, as well as for interactions between members. Social media can be a very useful tool, but it also carries risks. The following guidelines are provided for members:

- Choir members must not use social media to make critical, defamatory or derogatory comments about the choir or individual members. These could constitute bullying, harassment or discrimination. Such uses of social media are damaging to individuals and to the choir's reputation
- Any choir member alleged to have brought the choir into disrepute in this way will be investigated by the trustees. It will be the responsibility of the trustees to decide what action is required and their decision is final.
- The trustees are responsible for choir publicity and for posting content on the choir's social media pages. Publicity material will be posted which members of the choir are encouraged to share on their own social media accounts.
- Our policy in relation to the use of photos and videos of the choir on social media is set out in the Data Protection Policy. No image that identifies an individual should be made public without that person's knowledge or consent.

Newcastle Bach Choir

Approved: March 2025

Review date: March 2027