

Safeguarding for Children and Young People: **Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy**

1. Introduction

GCAT has written and adopted this policy for its Youth Groups and other activities concerning children and young people under Scottish government guidance and expects every adult working or volunteering with children and young people at GCAT to support it and comply with it. **Consequently, this policy applies to all staff, managers, board members, freelancers, practitioners, volunteers, students or anyone working on behalf of GCAT in this area.**

This policy has been reviewed in November 2023 in order to ensure consistency with Scottish Government policies and frameworks, including GIRFEC (Getting it right for every child) and the 2023 updates to the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland. It is also consistent with Creative Scotland's 'Creating Safety' document.

2. Purpose of the Policy.

This policy is intended to protect children and young people who receive any service from us, including those who are the children of adults who may receive services from us. Under this policy, the term 'children' shall mean any person who is under eighteen years of age.

GCAT believes that no child or young person should experience abuse or harm and is committed to the protection of children and young people. This policy is intended to provide guidance and overarching principles to ensure this.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the GCAT 'Code of Conduct for Practitioners', which sets out the expectations on behaviour of all adults working with or for GCAT with children, as well as other relevant Policies listed in Section 15.

This Policy also expresses the commitment within our Youth projects to the 4 key principles of working with children and young people:

1. The best interests of the child must always be a primary consideration.
2. All children and young people should be treated fairly and with dignity and respect.
3. All children and young people have the right to protection from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation.
4. All children and young people have the right to express their views on matters that affect them.

3. The Risks to Children

It is important to recognise that abuse and harm of children can cover a wide range of circumstances and behaviours. For example, children can be at risk of:

- physical or emotional abuse
- neglect
- sexual abuse
- female genital mutilation (FGM)
- grooming and exploitation.
- trafficking and modern slavery
- exposure to or infliction of domestic abuse
- bullying or cyber bullying, including via the mis-use of digital images of them.
- exposure to inappropriate content or behaviour, such as violence or criminal behaviour
- self-harm
- physical harm when engaging with activities

Children who suffer neglect or emotional abuse are in need of protection as much as those who are physically or sexually abused.

It is also important to note that children with disabilities are more vulnerable to abuse as they are more dependent on personal care and sometimes less able to tell someone about an abusive situation.

4. Safeguarding Principles

Safeguarding children from harm and abuse is an essential responsibility for all members of the GCAT team. We are committed to ensuring that any child who comes into contact with our services is properly safeguarded.

Every person under this policy must ensure that they play an active role in ensuring that children are properly safeguarded.

Every person under this policy holds responsibility for:

- remaining alert and aware of possible safeguarding risks to children.
- **escalating all safeguarding concerns** – you do not have to be ‘right’ or certain of the circumstances before you highlight concerns.
- guarding children against harmful environments with appropriate actions (for example, adequate supervision or ensuring safe environments).
- taking positive steps to maintain the safety and wellbeing of children engaging with us.
- understanding the duty to report specific concerns expeditiously and appropriately (and understanding how this interplays with confidentiality).
- challenging any inappropriate or harmful behaviour of any other adult or child and reporting this accordingly.
- not taking any inappropriate risks.
- acting appropriately in the presence of children.
- not taking any form of illicit substances in the presence of children, encouraging them to smoke or vape, or setting a poor role model with respect to alcohol.

5. How concerns might be raised

An adult might become aware of a safeguarding issue either through:

- Witnessing something firsthand, such as:
 - Signs of physical maltreatment
 - Change in behaviour or mental health
 - Inappropriate interactions between adults and a child
 - Child-on-child abuse, including bullying or sexual harassment.

- Receiving information from another source, such as:
 - Being directly alerted by another adult such as a parent or carer.
 - Overhearing adults or children sharing concerns.
 - A child making a disclosure to you.

In all such cases, regardless of how the concern has come to light, it must be escalated as per the procedures below.

6. Escalation through Designated Safeguarding Roles

Safeguarding Officer

Any question, report or concern in relation to the safeguarding of children should be shared in the first instance with:

Name: **Catherine Campbell**

Job Title: CatStrand Young Creatives Programme Lead

Email: catherine@catstrand.com

Telephone: 01644420374

They will then liaise with the GCAT

Designated Safeguarding Lead

Name: **Helen Keron**

Job Title: GCAT Executive Manager

Email: helen@catstrand.com

7. Training Requirements

- The Safeguarding Lead should be trained to Safeguarding Level 3 within 2 months of taking up the role.
- The Safeguarding Officer should be trained to Safeguarding Level 2 within 2 months of taking up the role.
- All Youth Group practitioners / deliverers with a contract with GCAT longer than 12 months should be trained to Safeguarding Level 1 within 2 months of taking on the contract.
- The Safeguarding Officer and any Youth Group practitioners / deliverers with a contract with GCAT longer than 12 months should have a current Paediatric First Aid certificate.

8. Confidentiality and Data Protection

All personal information that we process relating to children shall be processed and stored in accordance with GCAT's Data Protection policy.

9. Responding to a Safeguarding Concern

Where a child is at immediate risk of serious harm, any adult present should call 999. Thereafter, the Safeguarding Officer should be contacted as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Where there is a safeguarding concern but no immediate risk of serious harm, the adult who has heard or witnessed this concern should consult with the Safeguarding Officer as soon as practicable *and by no later than the end of that same day*.

If the Safeguarding Officer cannot be contacted, then the Safeguarding Lead should be informed instead.

Upon receipt of any safeguarding concern, the Safeguarding Officer shall consult with the Safeguarding Lead and any other relevant persons and will make any appropriate referrals to the relevant authorities, such as the applicable Local Authority Children's Services department (see Appendix 3)

Where any child makes a disclosure relating to harm or abuse to an adult, it is important for that adult to listen calmly and carefully, showing that their views are taken seriously. Also to follow the Dos and Don'ts listed in Appendix 1.

Be aware that children very seldom make false allegations that they have been abused.

Concerns raised about a child must **always** be shared with that child's parents or carers, unless to involve them would be to put the child or someone else in danger. Parental consent is required for all referrals, apart from child protection concerns.

10. Reporting Concerns About Other Adults

Where any person has a concern regarding the conduct of an adult connected to the Young Creatives that poses or may pose a safeguarding risk to children such as:

- harming a child either physically or emotionally.
- exposing a child to behaviour which may cause physical or emotional harm.
- engaging in criminal activity concerning a child.

This must be raised in the first instance with the Safeguarding Officer (or where this is not appropriate or possible, the Safeguarding Lead) so that the next appropriate steps may be agreed and actioned.

We recognise that there could be circumstances where a person may need to report a matter that has taken place in a setting outside of the person's engagement with GCAT. This will also be dealt with by the process above, involving other organisations as required.

Further initial enquiries will be required following a safeguarding referral and possible routes thereafter could include:

- escalation to the applicable Local Authority Children's Services department for assessment, and/or the police for investigation.
- instigation of any appropriate disciplinary, formal investigation processes and suspension of any person concerned with GCAT.
- a referral to Disclosure Scotland, or any other relevant regulatory bodies.

Any person within the GCAT team who has allegations made against them shall be informed properly in a formal meeting of the particulars of the allegations and the relevant next steps which shall be taken. Such a meeting should ordinarily be held by the Safeguarding Lead. On certain occasions, such a meeting may not be convened until this has been approved by any authorities involved (such as the police or the relevant Local Authority).

Any person from within the GCAT team who has allegations made against them shall be treated fairly. All enquires, investigations and decisions taken shall be just and fair, with the safety of any child concerned at the heart of the process.

Any person from within the GCAT team who makes an allegation against another person from within the GCAT team shall be listened to, taken seriously and shall be treated fairly and justly throughout the process of enquiries, investigations and decision making.

11. Recording concerns

The Data Protection Act and GDPR does not prevent the sharing of information in order to keep children safe.

All concerns about children's safeguarding or adult behaviour should be logged as per Appendix 2, stored securely and shared as necessary to keep children safe.

The record should also include a log of actions taken, other organisations involved and decisions made.

12. Disclosure Scotland Checks and Reporting (PVG)

See the GCAT Disclosure Policy for full details.

13. Safeguarding Children at Events and Activities

Responsibilities and Planning

Typically, we arrange the following types of activities and events for children and young people:

Drama Clubs, Art Clubs, excursions, 1-to-1 Mentoring, music lessons, undirected group activities, informal sports activities, outdoor activities.

The Safeguarding Officer holds ultimate responsibility for the safety and appropriateness of these activities and events.

They may however appoint a delegate for delivery of specific events and activities, so long as that delegate is fully aware of their responsibilities and the relevant policies.

Although the Safeguarding Officer and any appointed delegates hold responsibility for the safety of children at GCAT events and activities, all individuals under this policy must also play an active role in ensuring the safety of children at all times.

The Safeguarding Officer will issue such additional Codes of Conduct and policies under this Policy to attendees, parents and carers, volunteers and practitioners as required. They will also ensure that all GCAT events and activities for young people are full risk assessed and the risks minimised.

Risk assessments must be carried out for all one-off activities and regular events, with the regular event assessments being reviewed at least annually. They should cover the risks to health and safety as well as safeguarding risks.

Venues

The GCAT venues for children's events and activities are:

- CatStrand, New Galloway
- The Smiddy, Balmaclellan

We have carried out a health and safety risk assessment of these locations in reference to their safety and suitability for children, including Fire Safety and location of First Aid materials. Any accident or injury concerning a child should be brought to the attention of the nearest first aider and should thereafter be formally reported to the Safeguarding Officer.

However, we also carry out events and activities in external venues (including the outdoors) and health and safety risk assessments will be held for each of these, updated at least yearly for regular activities and before each event.

Consent Forms

We will always obtain written consent from a parent or carer for any event which takes place with children in attendance without their responsible parent or carer present. Consent will be obtained via:

Consent forms that include emergency contact details and request details of any specific safety needs / requirements for children. Consent forms will be tailored to the activity or event and the age of the children attending.

All consent forms will be processed and stored in accordance with GCAT's Data Protection policy.

See also the GCAT Walking Home policy for permission slips for walking home.

Staff : Children Ratios

These are in accordance with the National Care Standards recommended ratios:

- For children aged 5-7 years: 1 staff member to 10 children.
- For children aged 8-11 years: 1 staff member to 12 children.
- For children aged 12-16 years: 1 staff member to 15 children.

Where we hold any events or activities whereby a child attends alongside their parent or carer, parents and carers retain overall responsibility for the health and wellbeing of their child.

14. Managing Behaviour of Children.

Whenever any adult engaged by us is faced with challenging or inappropriate behaviour from a child or with conflict between children, they must:

- treat each child fairly and equally.
- approach the situation in a calm and neutral manner.
- consider whether the issue has arisen due to mis-communication between neurodiverse children, and de-escalate / mediate appropriately.
- only ever use physical restraint/intervention in order to protect the immediate safety of a person, for example to prevent an injury or harm either to the child or others.
- wherever it is justified to physically restrain a child or to physically intervene, the amount of force used should be kept to the absolute minimum taking into account the risk posed.
- make a written record of the incident and ensure this is reported appropriately to the Safeguarding Officer.

The Safeguarding Officer will issue the GCAT 'Code of Conduct for Children and Young People' to all participants yearly.

15. Managing Risks Posed by Other Children

It is important for all adults engaged by us to recognise that children can face harm from their peers. This can commonly take the form of bullying. Bullying can be defined as any behaviour which is:

- repeated; and
- has the intention of hurting somebody either physically or emotionally.

Bullying can sometimes be motivated by prejudices based on certain groups, for example gender, race, religion or sexual orientation. Bullying can often include:

- physical harm perpetrated against another child.
- name calling and threats.
- online bullying

Any instance of bullying, or concern relating to possible bullying, between children will be dealt with as per the GCAT Anti-bullying Policy.

All steps taken in relation to the prevention or management of bullying should be alerted to the Safeguarding Officer.

16. Photography

On some occasions, we may take photographs featuring children. We recognise that photography of children carries risks and we manage this through our Photography and Social Media Policy.

If an adult connected with GCAT becomes aware of photos of children or young people being mis-used in anyway, this should be dealt with as per Section 9.

17. Other relevant Policies

This policy should also be read in conjunction with GCAT Policies:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Data Protection
- Safer Spaces Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Walking Home Policy
- Disclosure Policy
- Photography and Social Media Policy
- Code of Conduct for Practitioners
- Code of Conduct for Children and Young People.

18. Review and Monitoring

This policy will be regularly reviewed and updated at least yearly to ensure its effectiveness in ensuring child protection within GCAT youth group contexts. Feedback and suggestions from participants, parents, staff and relevant stakeholders will be sought to continuously improve our efforts.

Created: June 2018
Last updated: December 2023
Next review: December 2024

Appendix 1: A best-practice approach to reacting to a disclosure by a child.

Do:

- Remain calm – don't let the child or young person see that you are shocked or angry.
- Reassure them that they have done the right thing in coming to see you, that they are not to blame and that they have been very brave.
- Let them know that you are taking what they are saying seriously.
- Be aware that children very seldom make false allegations that they have been abused.
- Listen well – don't rush them and don't speak over them.
- Let them know what will happen next. Say that you will seek help for them.
- Make a (secure) note of what they have told you as soon as possible. Use their exact words as much as possible. If the age of the young person and circumstances allow, ask them to read over your record so that they are comfortable with it.
- Refer all relevant information to the Safeguarding Officer as soon as practicable afterwards, and by no later than the end of the same day.

Don't:

- Promise to keep the information confidential – that will not be possible, as it will have to be referred onwards.
- Make assumptions about the child or young person's experience.
- Ask 'leading' questions or try to interview them – just let them talk and make a written record of the information as per Appendix 2.
- Make an audio or video recording of the interaction.
- Use negative language about the alleged abuser.
- Use jargon, acronyms or language the child or young person won't understand.
- Talk to anyone else internally or externally about the allegations other than the designated safeguarding roles within GCAT.

Appendix 2: Suggested information to record in relation to a child protection concern.

(from the National Guidance for Child Protection Scotland 2021, updated 2023)

Key contacts

- Name, role, contact details of the person reporting the concern.
- Name, date of birth and home address of the child if possible.
- Name, address, phone number of parents/carers or guardians.
- Name of child's school, nursery, early learning centre or childcare.

Immediate considerations around the child

- Where is the child now and are they safe? If not, in your view, is there action that might be taken to make them safe?
- How is the child physically? Do they have any known injuries or immediate health needs and do they require medical treatment?
- How is the child emotionally? What do they need immediately for their reassurance/understanding?
- Are there any aspects of the child's culture, language or understanding that might require additional consideration or support?
- Is it known if the child is on the child protection register?

Record of concerns

- What is the nature of the child protection concerns?
- How did the concerns first come to light: for example, because of an injury, through what this or another child has said, because of how a child appears or due to e.g. parental behaviour?

What happened?

- Is a person/are people believed to be responsible for harm to a child? If so, is/are their name, address, occupation and relationship to the child known?
- Are you aware if this person/those people has/have access to other children? If so, do you know the name, age and address of such children?
- If the concern was raised by this child, who has spoken to them and when?
- What has the child been asked and what have they said?
- If the child or young person spoke with someone else, is that person available to be spoken with?
- If concerns were not reported when they first arose, was there a reason for this and what has prompted reporting now?

Appendix 3: Reporting a safeguarding concern to Dumfries and Galloway Council

From: [Child protection - Dumfries and Galloway Council \(dumgal.gov.uk\)](http://dumgal.gov.uk)

The Social Work Access team is the single point of contact to report concerns. Call us on 030 33 33 3001 and ask for the Social Work Access team or email us at Accessteam@dumgal.gov.uk

We'll ask you for some basic information so we can look into your concerns, this includes:

- information about the child and their family
- details of what you saw or heard which worried you
- if you think the child is in immediate risk

We'll always treat your information seriously and your details with great care. You can remain anonymous but it makes it harder for us look into your concerns.

Other ways to contact someone:

- Out of hours service - call 01387 273660
- Police non-emergency line - call 101