

THE GIRLS' BRIGADE SCOTLAND

Safeguarding Policy

The purpose and scope of this policy statement

The Girls' Brigade in Scotland is an autonomous member of a worldwide organisation for girls and young women working within a framework of Christian principles. All girls and young women are welcome at Girls' Brigade no matter who they are, where they come from. Our members come from diverse backgrounds and from all faiths or none, but what is important is that each girl is unique and has the opportunity to learn, make friends, try new challenges and grow into strong confident young women during their Girls' Brigade experience. Children have a lot to gain from participation in the Girls' Brigade programme. Their natural sense of fun and spontaneity can blossom in a positive environment created by the Girls' Brigade. It provides an excellent opportunity for them to learn new skills, become more confident and maximise their own unique potential.

The purpose of this policy statement is:

- To protect children and young people who receive Girls' Brigade's services.
- To protect vulnerable adults who may continue as a volunteer with Girls' Brigade after being part of Girls' Brigade as a young person.
- To provide staff and volunteers, as well as children and young people and their families, with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection.

This policy applies to anyone working on behalf of Girls' Brigade, including the board of trustees, paid staff, and volunteers. It does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it at any time. It has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children in Scotland, which is available at [Child protection system for Scotland | NSPCC Learning](#).

This policy should be read alongside our other organisational policies, procedures, guidance and other related documents, including our Policy for Resolving Volunteer Problems and Concerns, Anti-Bullying Policy, Social Media Policy, Managing Volunteers Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy, Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, and Privacy Notice.

We believe that:

- The welfare of children and young people is paramount in all the work we do. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, to keep them safe and to provide our services in a way that protects them.
- All children, young people, and vulnerable adults, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity, have an equal right to protection from all types of harm or abuse.
- It is everyone's responsibility to report any concerns about abuse, as per the Girls' Brigade regulations, and the responsibility of the Church, Social Work and the Police to conduct, where appropriate, a joint investigation in cooperation with Girls' Brigade.
- All incidents of alleged poor practice, misconduct and abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

We will seek to keep children, young people, and vulnerable adults safe by:

- Valuing, listening to and respecting them.
- Adopting child protection and safeguarding best practice through our policies, procedures, and code of conduct for staff and volunteers.

- Ensuring all volunteers hold enhanced Disclosure as part of their membership of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) scheme prior to working with children, young people, and vulnerable adults.
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support, training and quality assurance measures, including induction and safeguarding training for all new volunteers, so that all staff and volunteers know about and follow our policies, procedures and behaviour codes confidently and competently and are aware of the roles and responsibilities of being a Leader in Girls' Brigade.
- Recruiting and selecting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made including an interview and checking of references.
- Recording, storing and using information professionally and securely, in line with data protection legislation and guidance.
- Making sure that children, young people, vulnerable adults, and their families know where to go for help if they have a concern.
- Using our safeguarding and child protection procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving children, young people, parents, families, vulnerable adults, and carers appropriately.
- Using our procedures to manage any allegations against staff and volunteers appropriately.
- Creating and maintaining an anti-bullying environment and ensuring that we have a policy and procedure to help us deal effectively with any bullying that does arise.
- Ensuring that we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place.
- Ensuring that we provide a safe physical environment for our children, young people, staff and volunteers, by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance.
- Building a safeguarding culture where staff and volunteers, children, young people and their families, treat each other with respect and are comfortable about sharing concerns.
- Promote the health and welfare of children and adults by providing opportunities for them to take part in Brigade programmes safely.
- Reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

As part of our commitment to keeping children, young people, and vulnerable adults safe, an adult volunteer or staff member should not normally be present alone with children, young people, and vulnerable adults.

RECOGNISING HARM IN CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

While many concepts of harm will be the same for children and young people as for vulnerable adults, the legal definitions can be slightly different, as can the nature of harm, occurrences of harm and signs. The below paragraphs contain a summary of what constitutes child abuse; a full NSPCC guide is available at <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/1188/definitions-signs-child-abuse.pdf>.

Dealing with child abuse is rarely straightforward. Even for those experienced in working with child abuse it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. Girls' Brigade acknowledges that staff members and volunteers are not experienced in recognising these situations. As such, any concerns that arise with respect to the safety and welfare of a child should be discussed immediately with your Captain/Leader-in-Charge, the Safeguarding Coordinator at your local Church and/or the Chief Executive of Girls' Brigade Scotland who is the lead person with responsibility for Safeguarding in the organisation.

It is not the responsibility of those working or volunteering within Girls' Brigade to decide that child abuse is occurring, but it is their responsibility to follow through on any concerns they may have regarding the welfare of a child.

Harm in children and young people can commonly (but not exclusively) take the following forms:

- Physical: for example when a child or young person is deliberately hurt by someone else;
- Sexual: for example when a child or young person is being sexually harassed or assaulted;
- Psychological: for example when a child or young person is being bullied;
- Neglect: for example when a child or young person is not dressing, washing or eating properly or is not being adequately cared for.

Recognising harm can be challenging in itself. Harm may present in very different ways depending on the type of harm, and individual circumstances. The following are some common (but not all) possible indicators of potential harm in children and young people:

- Being afraid of particular places or making excuses to avoid particular people;
- Knowing about or being involved in 'adult issues' which are inappropriate for their age or stage of development, for example alcohol, drugs and/or sexual behaviour
- Having angry outbursts or behaving aggressively towards others;
- Becoming withdrawn or appearing anxious, clingy or depressed;
- Self-harming or having thoughts about suicide;
- Showing changes in eating habits or developing eating disorders;
- Regularly experiencing nightmares or sleep problems;
- Regularly wetting the bed or soiling their clothes;
- Running away or regularly going missing from home or care; and/or
- Not receiving adequate medical attention after injuries.

You should also look out for any changes in behaviour or wellbeing and act on any concerns, even if you think you may be being overly sensitive – you should not ignore safeguarding concerns.

RECOGNISING HARM IN VULNERABLE ADULTS

Many vulnerable adults have to rely on others to help them with basic day-to-day living. Whilst the majority have excellent care provision, some are at risk of harm. This could be due to another person, or people, deliberately taking advantage of the adult. But it could also be the adult who is unintentionally putting themselves at risk, simply because they don't have the right level of support in place. The below contains a summary of the signs and types of abuse in vulnerable adults, and <https://www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding/adults/introduction/types-and-indicators-of-abuse> should be consulted for further details.

Harm in vulnerable adults can commonly (but not exclusively) take the following forms:

- Financial: for example when a vulnerable adult is the victim of theft;
- Physical: for example when a vulnerable adult is deliberately hurt by someone else;
- Sexual: for example when a vulnerable adult is being sexually harassed or assaulted;
- Psychological: for example when a vulnerable adult is being bullied;
- Neglect: for example when a vulnerable adult is not dressing, washing or eating properly, or is not being adequately cared for.

Recognising harm can be challenging in itself. Harm may present in very different ways depending on the type of harm, and individual circumstances. The following are some common (but not all) possible indicators of potential harm in vulnerable adults- where a vulnerable adult:

- Gives money to someone for reasons that concern you;
- Is unclear or confused about where their money has gone;
- Is stressed about money issues or debt;
- Has cuts, bruises or other marks they can't properly explain;
- Tries to hide injuries or refuses to talk about them;
- Is fearful or withdrawn around certain people or in certain situations;

- Is persistently having friends or strangers ‘hanging out’ at their house;
- Is being verbally bullied by others;
- Appears to be encouraged by others to take part in illegal or socially unacceptable activity;
- Appears nervous, withdrawn or intimidated in the presence of others;
- Becomes tearful or upset when their relationship is mentioned;
- Is becoming socially isolated; and/or
- Can no longer look after themselves or their property.

You should also look out for any changes in behaviour or wellbeing and act on any concerns, even if you think you may be being overly sensitive – you should not ignore safeguarding concerns.

PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEOS, MEDIA AND THE INTERNET

As set out in our Privacy Notice, during the course of meetings events photos or videos of activities and participants may be taken using Girls’ Brigade devices and where those pictured in the photographs have given their consent for this to happen (or, in the case of children, whose parents have given consent on their behalf). Consent for photographs is subject to annual renewal and may be withdrawn at any time.

These may be used on Girls’ Brigade websites or social media profiles in accordance with our Social Media Policy, which also sets out expected standards of communication between volunteers/staff and children and young people or their parents.

PVG / DISCLOSURE SCOTLAND

To ensure we are adopting safe recruitment and selection measures the Girls’ Brigade is committed to complying fully with the provisions of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 (PVG Act). The Act is designed to give statutory protection to children and protected adults from harm, when they are in the care or responsibility of a Girls’ Brigade employee or volunteer. The Act introduces the ‘PVG Scheme’ which is administered by Disclosure Scotland as an Executive agency of the Scottish Government.

The PVG Scheme ensures that those who have regular contact with vulnerable groups through the workplace, or who are otherwise in regulated work, do not have a history of inappropriate behaviour (through PVG Scheme Membership). The PVG Scheme excludes people who are known to be unsuitable, on the basis of past behaviour, from working with children and/or protected adults and detects those who become unsuitable while in regulated work (through the creation of lists of people barred from working with children and protected adults).

Girls’ Brigade will ensure that all volunteers, unless classified as ‘vulnerable adults’ themselves under the legislation, have completed a PVG Check with Disclosure Scotland. Where a volunteer is already a PVG Scheme Member within their local congregation, they will be required to complete a PVG Scheme Record Update. Volunteers should not engage in volunteering with children or vulnerable adults until a satisfactory PVG check has been received.

Girls’ Brigade will use PVG or Disclosure information only for the purpose for which it has been provided, i.e. to determine suitability for volunteering with children and young people. This information will be kept securely and not used or disclosed for any other purpose.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE IN RESPECT OF CHILD PROTECTION ISSUES

The procedures noted below should be used by any Parent, Guardian or Leader if they have any concerns about the wellbeing of any child, young person, or vulnerable adult who is part of the Girls’ Brigade.

The decision to react to allegations of, or suspicions about, harm and abuse can be a very difficult one. There is, however, a responsibility to act appropriately to protect the individual in order that appropriate agencies can then make enquiries and take the necessary action. Individuals should not be afraid to raise concerns and can also be reassured that all referrals are discussed thoroughly by the statutory agencies prior to any action being taken.

Any concerns that a child, young person or vulnerable adult has been abused by either a member of the public, staff member or volunteer should be reported to the Captain/Leader-in-Charge immediately, unless the Captain/Leader-in-Charge is implicated in the complaint in which case the Chaplain of the Company should be contacted. This person shall take steps to ensure the safety of the child, young person, or vulnerable adult in question and any other child, young person, or vulnerable adult who may be at risk.

What to do in the event of Disclosure by a Child or Vulnerable Adult

If a child, young person or vulnerable adult says or indicates that they are being abused or information is obtained which gives concern that abuse has or is occurring, the person receiving this information should:

- Remain calm and do not rush into any inappropriate action. Do not show anger, disgust, and/or disbelief as the individual may stop talking.
- Listen to the individual and take them seriously. Give your full attention to the child or young person and keep your body language open and encouraging. Be compassionate, be understanding and reassure them their feelings are important.
- Reassure the individual that they are not to blame and have done the right thing by telling someone.
- Allow them the time to speak. Respect pauses and don't interrupt the child – let them go at their own pace. Recognise and respond to their body language. And remember that it may take several conversations for them to share what's happened to them.
- Make it clear you're interested in what the child is telling you. Reflect back what they've said to check your understanding – and use their language to show it's their experience.
- Avoid asking questions other than to clarify the situation. It is not the role of the employee or volunteer to investigate any issues arising from the discussion.
- Reassure the individual of discretion, using appropriate language that they are likely to understand but do not make promises of confidentiality, which might not be feasible in light of subsequent developments.
- As soon as practical write down everything the individual has said, in their own words if possible.
- Share the information with the Captain/Leader-in-Charge, Chaplain, and/or Safeguarding Coordinator as soon as possible. Thereafter the information should only be shared with those who need to know to protect the child, young person or vulnerable adult.
- It is not the role of the employee or volunteer to determine if a child, young person or vulnerable adult has been abused. It is the responsibility of employees and volunteers to share concerns regarding the protection of children, young persons or vulnerable adults.
- If the situation is clearly an urgent case, i.e., child, young person or vulnerable adult is too frightened to go home, or there are very serious doubts about the child, young person or vulnerable adult's safety, decisions should be taken by the Captain/Leader-in-Charge immediately which are likely to involve contacting the police on 999.

Key messages:

- Listen to the child, young person or vulnerable adult.
- Take all concerns seriously and act promptly.
- Do NOT investigate concerns by, for example, taking photographs of injuries or asking leading questions.

- Share concerns with the Captain/Leader-in-Charge immediately.
- Record the information in writing as soon as possible and pass this on to the Captain/Leader-in-Charge who will then prepare a report for sharing with the Safeguarding Coordinator.
- Always seek advice if unsure.

Managing allegations against an employee or volunteer working with children, young people, or vulnerable adults

Girls' Brigade will take allegations of abuse of a child, young person or vulnerable adult by an employee or volunteer seriously. Any person under investigation in respect of a child protection/safeguarding issue will automatically have their commission/appointment suspended temporarily. This means that they should not be involved in any form of Girls' Brigade activities during the period of the investigation. The Company Chaplain, Captain/Leader-in-Charge and Divisional Commissioner will be advised of the temporary suspension but not the detail of why this is in place.

Girls' Brigade will not condone any actions by an employee or volunteer who has

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, young person or vulnerable adult, or may have harmed such person.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, young person or vulnerable adult.
- Behaved towards a child, young person or vulnerable adult in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm.

An accused employee or volunteer will be:

- Treated fairly and honestly and helped to understand the concerns expressed and processes involved; and
- Be kept informed of the progress and outcome of any investigation and the implications for any disciplinary process.

When the investigation has been completed the suspension will be lifted if there is no case to answer but there may be a recommendation for further training in particular areas to help build the skills and knowledge of the individual. If the investigation confirms that the complaint is upheld the commission/appointment will be withdrawn with immediate effect. Thereafter, the normal safeguarding and legal processes would occur.

Role of the Captain/Leader-in-Charge or Chaplain

The role of the Captain/Leader-in-Charge or Chaplain is to listen and acknowledge that a complaint is made. It is not the role of the Captain/Leader-in-Charge or Chaplain to investigate, pass comment or make a judgement on any of the individuals involved.

The Captain/Leader-in-Charge or Chaplain should make a written note with full details of the complaint on the day on which this was made and pass this note, together with copies of any written correspondence to the Safeguarding Coordinator or person appointed for this purpose within the Church who will then take the appropriate action. At this stage the Church, via the Chaplain or Safeguarding Coordinator should advise Girls' Brigade Scotland that a problem has arisen. Girls' Brigade Scotland's role at this time, along with the Church, will be to ensure that there is adequate staffing and support for the staff of the Company.

The Safeguarding Coordinator, or their equivalent, will then take the appropriate action by referring this to the Child Protection Panel, or their equivalent, within the Church. The Coordinator will then establish telephone contact with the appropriate authorities, namely the Police and Social Work Department to

seek their advice. Girls' Brigade Scotland should be informed, as a courtesy, that this action has been taken.

The Safeguarding Coordinator, or their equivalent, will then follow the advice of the authorities, taking the advice given by them. The authorities will also advise as to who will inform the leader affected by the complaint and their responsibility for any further action taken. No action should be taken by any other member of the Company or Church at this stage. Again, Girls' Brigade should be informed what has been decided.

Where action under the Disciplinary Code is required, this is the responsibility of the Kirk Session, or other equivalent court of the Church. At this time, Girls' Brigade Scotland would be asked to work in conjunction with the Kirk Session, or their equivalent, to ensure that appropriate action be taken, as advised by the authorities. In the case of Church of Scotland Companies, this process should be undertaken in conjunction with the Safeguarding Office and a referral to the List, if required, would be undertaken on a joint basis by the Church and Girls' Brigade Scotland.

If the Safeguarding Coordinator, or their equivalent, has been advised by the Police and Social Work Department that no further action requires to be taken there may still be grounds for the local Child Protection Panel, or their equivalent, to follow up the issue with the individual concerned. This may come in the form of a discussion, further training or offering support to the person to equip them for their continuing work with young people, in conjunction with Girls' Brigade Scotland.