

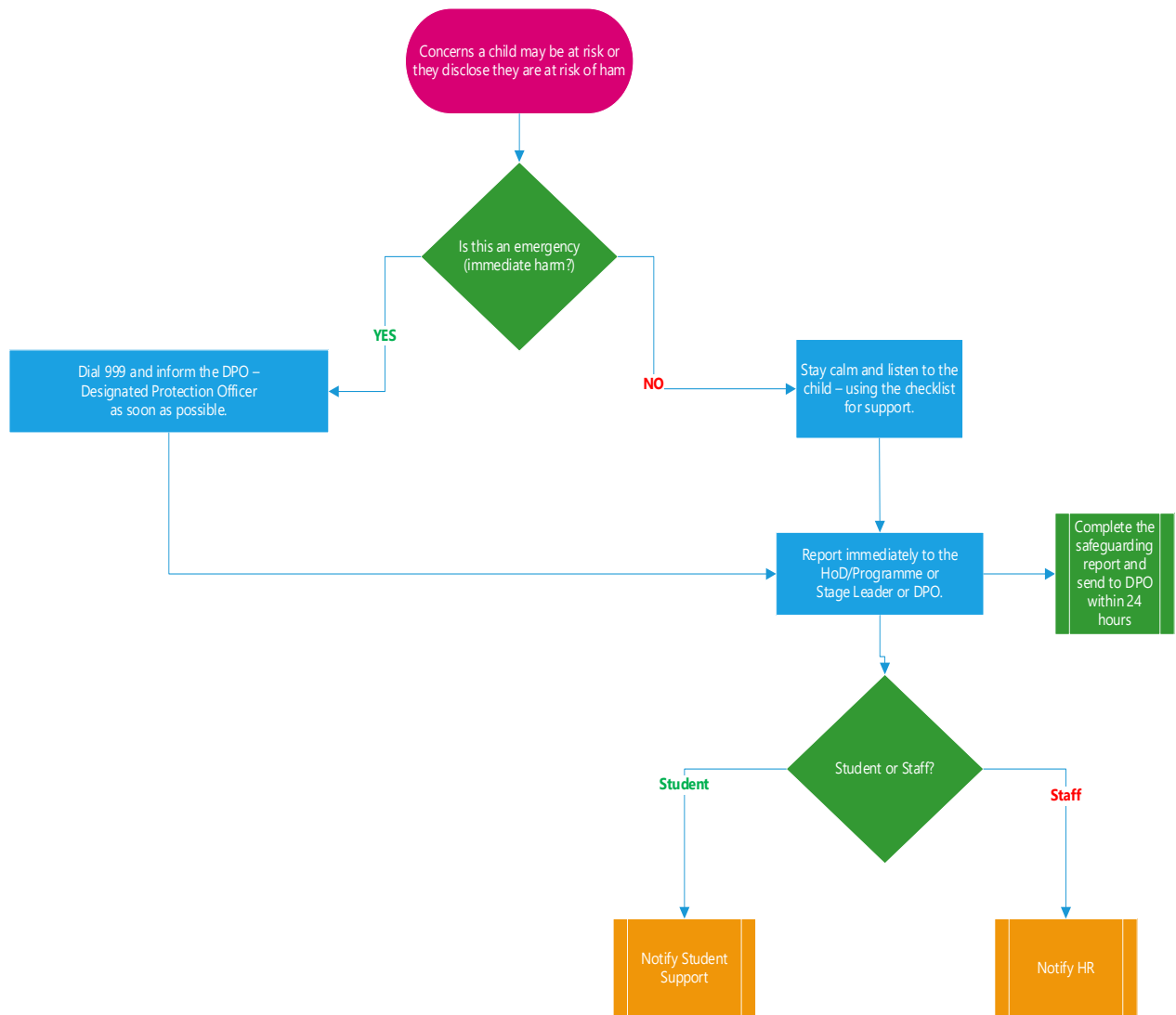
Child Protection Policy (revised)

November 2025

Policy control

Date approved	Refresh policy November 2025
Approving Bodies	Senior Leadership Group
Implementation Date	November 2025
Supporting policy	Adult Protection Policy, Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme Policy
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Author	Louise Higgins, Interim HR Manager
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Benchmarking	University of Edinburgh University of the Arts, London Falmouth University Royal College of Art Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

PROCESS MAP



Child Protection Policy

1. The Glasgow School of Art (the GSA) is committed to ensuring a safe and supportive environment for all students and staff. This policy sets out the GSA's approach to protecting and safeguarding the children and young people with whom the GSA works.
2. Our approach is guided by ethical leadership practice and by the GSA values detailed in the Strategic Plan. These values translate into core behaviours — how we make decisions, how we treat each other, and how we work together. They underpin an empowering, responsible, and caring culture that places the safety and wellbeing of people at its centre.
3. Safeguarding is distinct from general pastoral care. While pastoral care provides support, advice, and guidance to promote the well-being of students and staff, safeguarding specifically relates to protecting children and young people from harm, abuse, and neglect, and ensuring concerns are acted upon promptly and appropriately. For further details, please refer to the **Child Protection Procedure** [HR Policies and Forms](#).

Policy Objectives and Context

4. The purpose of this policy and related procedure is to:
 - Clarify safeguarding responsibilities as distinct and in addition to pastoral care.
 - Clearly define roles and responsibilities, including escalation routes.
 - Assure staff and students that safeguarding the children and young people with whom GSA works is a priority.
 - Ensure consistency with statutory guidance and sector best practice.

Principles Guiding Protection

5. GSA is committed to the four principles of the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**:
 - I. The best interests of the child are of primary importance.
 - II. Every child should be treated with dignity and respect.
 - III. All children have the right to protection from harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
 - IV. All children have the right to express their views on matters that affect them.

Legal and Statutory Context

6. Scottish Government's **Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme** ensures people working with children do not have a history of harmful behaviour. GSA's **PVG Policy** [HR Policies and Forms](#) provides further guidance.
7. Safeguarding at GSA is underpinned by Scottish and UK legislation, including but not limited to:
 - Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 and the PVG Scheme.
 - Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007.
 - Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.
 - Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011.
 - National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021).
 - Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) framework.

- Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998.
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

8. This legal and policy framework ensures that the GSA’s safeguarding responsibilities align with statutory duties, sector best practice, and the rights of children and young people.

Definitions

9. Child:

- For the purposes of this policy, a *child* is defined as a person who has not yet attained the age of 18. For the purposes of safeguarding at GSA, any individual under the age of 18 will always be treated as a **child** and afforded child protection safeguards.
- Young people aged 16–17 may also, in certain circumstances, meet the statutory definition of an **adult at risk** under the *Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007*. This applies where all three statutory criteria are met:
 - they are unable to safeguard their own wellbeing, property, rights, or interests;
 - they are at risk of harm; and
 - they are more vulnerable to being harmed because of disability, mental disorder, illness, or physical/mental infirmity.
- Where both child protection and adult protection duties could apply, **staff must always follow the procedure that provides the higher level of protection and support**. This ensures that young people aged 16–17 are safeguarded to the fullest possible extent.

10. Pastoral care:

- The support and guidance provided to students to help them manage academic, personal, and social challenges, and to promote their general well-being. This may include listening, signposting to services, and fostering a supportive environment. [link](#) to Mental Health and Wellbeing Champion Network’ will be inserted if approved at SLG.

11. Safeguarding:

- For the purposes of this policy *Safeguarding* means protecting children and young people from harm and neglect, promoting their welfare, and ensuring they can learn and develop in a safe environment.
- Staff should provide pastoral care where appropriate but must escalate to safeguarding procedures whenever there is a concern that a child or young person may be at risk of harm.

Scope and Duty to Act

12. In practice, pastoral care and safeguarding often overlap. For example, a student may initially present with a pastoral need (stress, housing, financial worries) which, if left unaddressed, may escalate into a safeguarding concern (risk of harm, neglect, or exploitation). Staff should provide pastoral care where appropriate.

13. However, any suspicion, disclosure, or evidence of a child or young person being at risk of harm **must be treated as a safeguarding concern** and escalated without delay in line with the Child Protection Procedure.
14. This duty applies equally to in-person and online contexts. GSA has a responsibility to protect children and young people from online harm, including risks associated with social media, digital communication, third-party platforms, and online grooming or exploitation. While pastoral care may include supporting students with digital wellbeing (such as managing online pressures), safeguarding procedures must be followed whenever online activity presents a risk of harm.
15. This policy applies to activities organised and delivered by GSA on its own premises or those of another organisation. Where GSA staff, students or volunteers take part in activities run by another organisation (e.g., schools, hospitals, or universities), child protection matters will be addressed under that organisation's policy.
16. This duty is supported by GSA's recruitment and vetting processes, mandatory safeguarding training, IT policies on online use, and the detailed guidance set out in the Child Protection Procedure.

Risk and Harm

17. Mitigating risks to children is a core component of safeguarding:
 - *Significant harm* may include: physical, sexual, or emotional abuse; neglect; exploitation.
 - Other harmful practices may include honour-based violence, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, or online grooming.
 - Abuse and neglect may occur in family, institutional, or community settings, and may be perpetrated by those known to the child or by strangers.
18. While pastoral care may address many wellbeing concerns (for example, stress or financial difficulty), concerns must be escalated to safeguarding procedures whenever they indicate or reveal that a child or young person may be at risk of harm.

Roles and Responsibilities

19. Many roles at GSA involve providing pastoral care to support student wellbeing, and this responsibility remains important. Staff should continue to offer appropriate support, advice, and guidance within their role.
20. However, pastoral care does not replace safeguarding. When pastoral concerns suggest a risk of harm, they must be treated as safeguarding concerns and escalated in line with this policy and procedure.
21. In all cases, safeguarding concerns must be escalated to the Designated Child Protection Officers, who retain overall responsibility for safeguarding. Where safeguarding concerns relate to a student, the Student Support team will normally act as the coordination point; where they relate to a member of staff, Human Resources will normally act as the coordination point.
22. Everyone who works with children and young people at GSA has safeguarding responsibilities, supported by:

- Recruitment and vetting processes.
- Mandatory training for all staff, with enhanced training for designated roles.
- Guidance set out in the Child Protection Procedure.
- IT policies covering online use, monitoring, and filtering.

23. The **Child Protection Procedure** [HR Policies and Forms](#) provides full details of roles, escalation routes, and training requirements.

Employee Support

24. All employees can access the **Employee Assistance Programme** [Employee Assistance Programme](#) for confidential support, available at any time.

Information Sharing and Data Protection

25. Safety and protection of the child takes precedence over confidentiality. Information sharing with statutory services must be relevant, necessary, and proportionate. All information will be stored securely in line with data protection legislation.

Review

26. This policy will be formally reviewed every 3 years to ensure compliance with legislation and best practice. Interim changes must be agreed in partnership with the Trade Union Forum and approved by the People & Culture Committee.

