

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Introduction

As an organisation we are committed to ensuring:

- children's and young people's rights to care and protection from harm in any form are firmly upheld as outlined within United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC);
- we fulfil our legislative duties related to safeguarding, including child protection;
- the interests of all The STAR Centre: Rape Crisis Ayrshire staff are safeguarded as they go about their work and engage with children of all ages; and
- all staff within The STAR Centre: Rape Crisis Ayrshire, are suitably trained in how to respond to safeguarding matters.

Safeguarding Policy

This policy provides the framework within which The STAR Centre: Rape Crisis Ayrshire staff, individually and collectively, can understand their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding, child protection and promoting the welfare of children.

Differing legal definitions of the age of a 'child' can be confusing. The priority is to ensure that a vulnerable young person who is or may be at risk of harm is offered support and protection. References within this policy to children are intended to refer to children and young people up to the age of 18 years.

What do we mean by Child Protection and Safeguarding?

Child Protection - The processes involved in consideration, assessment and planning of required action, together with the actions themselves, where there are concerns that a child may be at risk of harm from abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Safeguarding - This is a much wider concept than child protection and refers to promoting the welfare of children and young people. Safeguarding refers to activities undertaken to prevent children suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. It encompasses protecting from distress or maltreatment and the provision of safe and trauma-informed services.

In all our work, the needs, interests and wellbeing of children and young people (and protected adults) must be put above the needs and interests of all others.

This policy aims to ensure that:

- The STAR Centre: Rape Crisis Ayrshire operates a robust and safe selection and appointment process which requires all employees who have opportunities to engage regularly with children in the course of their normal duties be members of the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme and to participate in relevant professional learning;
- during all forms of engagement, we create a safe environment for children and young people;
- The STAR Centre: Rape Crisis Ayrshire staff are equipped with the information, knowledge, support and guidance to keep children and young people safe and protected; and
- we take account of local child protection guidelines and each local authority's legal obligation to safeguard and protect any group at risk, including children and young people.

Principles of this Policy

- The welfare and rights of all children and young people are always the primary concern;
- Protecting children and young people is everyone's responsibility;
- Every child and young person should be treated as an individual and has a right to a positive sense of identity. UNCRC Article 8 (right to preserve identity);
- All children and young people have the right to be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation. UNCRC Article 19 (protection from all forms of abuse or neglect);
- All children and young people have the right to express their views on matters affecting them. UNCRC Article 12 (right to have views taken into account on all matters that affect them).

To promote these principles we will:

- treat all children and young people with respect;
- respect confidentiality and only share information and concerns about children and young with those who need to know;
- refer our concerns, not investigate.
- Ensure that no member of staff deals with child protection concerns alone; two people must always be involved in deciding any next steps.

Roles

The STAR Centre: Rape Crisis Ayrshire has appointed the Centre Manager as lead child protection officer who will offer support and direction about the appropriate action following a child protection concern being raised. If the Centre Manager is unavailable, then the Advocacy Lead will be the next point of contact.

In coming to a decision about action the Child Protection Officer will take the following into account:

- The legislative and policy requirements regarding the need to refer to social care;
- The best interests of the child/young person;
- The nature and context of the alleged abuse;
- The safety of the child/young person concerned;
- The safety of the person/child/young person who has made the disclosure;
- The effect upon the child/young person of taking or not taking action;
- The relationship between the child/young person and the abuser.

The responsibility of the child protection officer:

- To know and to follow The STAR Centre: Rape Crisis Ayrshire's Child Protection and Safeguarding policy;
- To ensure that all staff are members of the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme before they are appointed;
- To act on concerns and ensure reports are made to social care if necessary ;
- To act on concerns and ensure 999 is called if there is an immediate

threat to life;

- To ensure that careful records are kept in line with The STAR Centre: Rape Crisis Ayrshire Data Protection policy;
- To support staff who have reported concerns and help them understand the necessary next steps;
- Ensure annual refresher training is undertaken by all staff.

Note: The Child Protection offer must not make any decision as to whether or not abuse or neglect is taking place – that is the responsibility of the social work department and/or police.

The responsibility of all staff:

- To be alert for concerns about the welfare of children/young people;
- To report such concerns to the child protection officer the same day;
- Make reports if necessary social work or if there is immediate danger / threat to life contact the police;
- In conjunction with the child protection officer, to plan to support the person or child making the allegation in a manner appropriate to the situation;
- Report any suspicion of misconduct within the organisation about child protection;
- To support co-workers who have reported concerns;
- To ensure that careful records are kept in line with The STAR Centre: Rape Crisis Ayrshire's Data protection policy.

Recruitment

All staff will be members of the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme prior to appointment. The STAR Centre: Rape Crisis Ayrshire will ensure that all support staff are carefully selected, trained, supervised and supported.

Confidentiality

We will keep information that children and young people share with us confidential within the organisation, with the exception of concerns about child

welfare or where action has been taken to end life by suicide. All children and young people will be made aware of the limits of confidentiality at the onset of their support with us.

Minimising misunderstandings

- Staff should be aware of the potential for misunderstanding when touching a child. It may be appropriate at some point to offer comfort by touching such as a hand on shoulder but staff should always ask for consent before any physical touch;
- Staff should never take a child in their car;
- Staff must never share any personal details with a child using the service e.g. personal telephone number, social media account details or address;
- Staff must make the limits of their support explicit e.g. workers can only be contacted during office hours on office devices/contact numbers;
- Staff must report any concerns that they may have about other workers.

Referral Contact Information

North Ayrshire	<p>Social Services</p> <p>Irvine & Kilwinning: 01294 310300 or Email: RSIrvine@north-ayrshire.gov.uk</p> <p>3Towns: 01294 310005 or Email: RS3Towns@north-ayrshire.gov.uk</p> <p>Kilbirnie: 01505 684551 or Email: RSKilbirnie@north-ayrshire.gov.uk</p> <p>North Coast: 01475 687592 or Email: RSLargs@north-ayrshire.gov.uk</p> <p>Arran: 01770 600742 or Email: RSArran@north-ayrshire.gov.uk</p> <p><i>(If unsure what team to contact then please contact the Irvine & Kilwinning Team)</i></p> <p>Ayrshire Out of Hours Service: 0800 328 7758</p>
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	If you have a concern in the evening, weekend or on a public holiday, please contact Ayrshire Urgent Care Service.
South Ayrshire	<p>If you have any concerns about the care or wellbeing of a child or young person you can call the Initial Response Team on 01292 267675.</p> <p>Ayrshire Out of Hours Service: 0800 328 7758</p> <p>If you have a concern in the evening, weekend or on a public holiday, please contact Ayrshire Urgent Care Service.</p>
East Ayrshire	<p>Social Services (Kilmarnock) The Johnnie Walker Bond 15 Strand Street Kilmarnock East Ayrshire KA1 1HU Telephone: 01563 554200 Email: social.work@east-ayrshire.gov.uk</p> <p>Social Services (Cumnock) Rothesay House 1 Greenholm Road Cumnock East Ayrshire KA18 1LH Telephone: 01290 427720 Email: social.work@east-ayrshire.gov.uk</p> <p>Ayrshire Out of Hours Service: 0800 328 7758</p> <p>If you have a concern in the evening, weekend or on a public holiday, please contact Ayrshire Urgent Care Service.</p>

Child Protection Concerns in Schools

Where staff become aware of a child protection concern during the course of our work within schools, this will be immediately passed to the school's designated child protection officer as the school retains ultimately responsibility for their students. However, if we have any suspicion that our concerns have not been treated seriously then we will refer to social care ourselves.

Date:	
Date of next review:	February 2026

Legislative & Policy Framework

National

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 sets out duties on a range of public bodies to report on how they are taking forward children's rights as set out in the UNCRC. Moreover, ratified by the UK Government in 2009

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/children-young-people-scotland-act-2014-national-guidance-part-12/pages/3/>

National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 - updated 2023.

This guidance describes the responsibilities and expectations for all involved in protecting children

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland-2021-updated-2023/documents/>

Equally Safe National Strategy is Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/equally-safe/>