



GIRL ON FIRE

# 1. Safeguarding And Child Protection

Owner: DSL | Applies whenever children attend or engage with GOF

## Purpose and commitment

GOF puts children's welfare first and acts on concerns about abuse, neglect, exploitation and unsafe practice. We listen to children, take concerns seriously and do not dismiss risk because an activity is brief, a child appears confident or the alleged person is trusted. This includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse; neglect; domestic abuse; child-on-child abuse; grooming; online harm; exploitation; and harmful practices such as forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

## Prevention

Before a children's course begins, the DSL verifies safer recruitment, role-appropriate training, safeguarding cover, risk assessments, emergency contacts, consent arrangements and accessible reporting routes. Staffing and supervision are determined by age, needs, activity and venue risks; no universal ratio is assumed. Children and carers receive the reporting contacts and an explanation of confidentiality limits. Activities must not require disclosures of traumatic experiences.

## Responding to a concern or disclosure

1. If there is immediate danger or urgent medical need, call 999 and secure safety. Do not wait for internal approval.
2. Listen calmly. Tell the child they have done the right thing by speaking. Do not promise secrecy, interrogate, ask leading questions or confront an alleged perpetrator.
3. Explain that information will be shared with people who can help. Record the child's exact words, observations, dates and actions promptly, distinguishing facts from interpretation.
4. Notify the DSL immediately, or the deputy/independent route if unavailable or implicated. GOF's internal target is the same day; it must never delay external protection.
5. The DSL considers immediate referral to children's social care and/or police using current local procedures. Any person may refer directly if the DSL cannot be reached, is implicated, or fails to act appropriately.
6. Seek advice before telling parents where notification could increase risk, compromise an investigation or expose the child to retaliation. Record the decision and rationale.
7. Follow up referrals, record outcomes and use local escalation arrangements if the response leaves risk unresolved.

## Allegations about staff or volunteers

Report immediately to the DSL/director, using the independent route if necessary. Consider interim measures to protect children without prejudging findings. Contact the LADO promptly in accordance with local procedures, ordinarily within one working day where the allegation meets the relevant threshold. Seek advice before undertaking an internal investigation that may interfere with statutory enquiries. Preserve evidence and consider relevant DBS referral duties when conditions are met, including where a person leaves before a decision. Report lower-level boundary concerns and assess patterns; they must not be ignored.



### **Child-on-child concerns**

Protect and support affected children separately. Do not force mediation in cases involving abuse, sexual harm, intimidation or a power imbalance. Consider external referral, supervision changes and safeguarding needs of all involved.

### **Records and accountability**

Keep safeguarding records separately with restricted access and a defensible retention schedule. The DSL maintains a confidential concerns log and records referral decisions. Directors receive proportionate oversight information, avoiding unnecessary identifying detail. Review lessons and actions after incidents. Staff complete induction before working with children and refresher training at intervals set by the DSL and current local guidance.