



**Young
Speakers
Scotland**

Communicate
with Confidence

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Child Protection and Safeguarding

When Young Speakers Scotland (YSS) comes into contact with children and young people, it is always with teachers present and always in groups. Access to YSS events is limited to those who have been invited. There are few, if any, situations where a YSS member of staff or volunteer is the only adult present with children or young people – perhaps when an accompanying teacher has left for a toilet break, or a judge is giving feedback to a debater as everyone else is leaving a room; in each case this is for a very brief period of time. YSS does not communicate with children or young people individually; all contact is made through teachers or parents as intermediaries.

It is therefore unlikely that YSS staff or volunteers will be the sole observers of a sign of child abuse, or that a disclosure of abuse or concern will be made to them. However, it is important that we are alert to these possibilities and know what to do should such an occasion arise.

The pages below set out the procedures to follow, should any YSS member of staff or volunteer be alerted to cause for concern about a child or young person's safety or well-being. There is a one-page quick-reference guide on page 8.

YOUNG SPEAKERS SCOTLAND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Introduction

Young Speakers Scotland (YSS) is an educational charity which provides opportunities for children and young people to learn and practise skills of public speaking and debate and to participate in other competitions, events and activities under its aegis.

It takes its responsibilities for the protection of children and young people very seriously and has established protocols and training opportunities which are designed as far as possible to ensure:

- That the risks to children participating in activities organised or promoted by YSS are minimised
- That staff and volunteers of YSS know how to respond should any disclosure be made to them in the course of their contact with any child or young person

The YSS Child Protection Statement

The Statement sets out the approach to Child Protection taken by YSS. It is widely publicised on YSS material.

(a) Governance

There is at all times at least one Trustee of YSS who is trained and experienced in Child Protection and has clearance under the Disclosure Scotland PVG Scheme. This Trustee has the responsibility of overseeing the operation of this Child Protection policy and compliance with it. The Child Protection Trustee should have the opportunity of making a report to the Annual General Meeting of YSS on the operation of this policy should he/she feel it necessary.

The Child Protection Trustee would receive any disclosures concerning staff members or other Trustees and provide support for the Programmes Director in dealing with any child protection matters.

(b) Child Protection Trustees

The Child Protection Trustee	:	Jennifer Broadley
The Deputy Child Protection Trustee:		Jane Scott

Operational Matters

It is the Programmes Director's responsibility to ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of the YSS Child Protection Statement and their responsibilities under it.

Review

The Board of Trustees will carry out a review of the YSS Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Procedures and Protocols, and of events affected by these, on an annual basis. **This policy was last updated in March 2025.**

YOUNG SPEAKERS SCOTLAND CHILD PROTECTION STATEMENT

Young Speakers Scotland (YSS) takes its responsibilities for the protection of children and young people very seriously and has established protocols and training opportunities which are designed as far as possible to ensure:

That the risks to children participating in activities organised or promoted by YSS are minimised

- Staff are appointed and volunteers recruited with the safety of children and young people clearly in mind. YSS staff are required to obtain PVG/Disclosure Scotland clearance if they do not already have this. Members of the Board of Trustees who undertake regulated roles with children and young people are also required to obtain this. Volunteers are often teachers, who must have such clearance as a condition of their employment. In the case of non-teachers, for example undergraduate students who may act as judges or mentors, these volunteers are given training which includes how to give feedback in a way that is appropriate; the choosing of judges for YSS events involves assessing how mature and appropriate they are in their conduct. Where feasible, at the start of each debating competition an “equity briefing” is delivered to all volunteers and other participants. This covers issues such as bullying and intimidation, as well as inappropriate behaviour in general. There is an “equity officer” – usually the Programmes Director – to whom participants can come if they have any concerns.
- All children and young people who attend YSS events should be accompanied by school staff or parents/carers, who have principal responsibility for their care. Should a situation arise where school staff or parents are unable to attend an event and take responsibility for the care of their child/children, the member of staff running the event must refer the matter to the Child Protection Trustees who will formulate a plan to ensure the safety of all parties to the event.
- All participants will be registered on arrival with a YSS staff member.
- All adults, including staff, Trustees, teachers, parents, volunteers, will register on arrival with a YSS staff member and for the duration of the event, wear a YSS badge clearly identifying their name and role.
- YSS staff and mentors who undertake regulated roles with children and young people are members of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme.
- YSS staff are required to update their own Safeguarding and Child Protection training once every two years.
- YSS Trustees are required to update their own Safeguarding and Child Protection training once during each term of office, which is 4 years under the current constitution.
- All volunteers or staff who attend YSS events for children and young people are sent a copy of the *YSS Code of Conduct* and, where appropriate, the *YSS Online Competition Protocol*.
- The *Code of Conduct* is issued to all participants in YSS events, which they are required to sign before taking part. The Code so signed is considered valid for the academic year in question. Representatives of schools may be asked to sign on behalf of all those from their organisation who will be taking part during the year,

and it is the responsibility of these representatives to make the content of the Code known to all their participants.

- *Photography.* A consent form is sent out with competition entry forms, which allows participants to give consent to having their pictures used. This consent can be withdrawn at any time. When debates are recorded, permission is sought from all participants at the start of the debate and can be withdrawn afterwards for any reason.

That staff and volunteers of YSS know how to respond should any disclosure be made to them in the course of their contact with any child or young person

- Where representatives of YSS have concerns about a child or young person, either through a disclosure or through actions/observations, they should share their concern, without delay, with the Programmes Director of YSS. See the **Child Protection Protocol** on page 8 below.
- If the concern relates to the actions of the Programmes Director then the concerns should be raised with the Child Protection Trustee or his/her Deputy.
- Where a disclosure in respect of the welfare or safety of a child or young person is made to a representative of YSS, the matter will be referred by the Programmes Director to the Child Protection Officer of the school attended by the child or young person.
- If the disclosure or observation relates to the actions of a representative of YSS then they will be suspended from their role, without prejudice, while an investigation takes place. This investigation will be conducted by the Programmes Director in consultation with the Child Protection Trustee, or his/her Deputy, in consultation with the child or young person's school.
- Accurate records of any disclosure, observation and investigation must be made and stored securely in line with the YSS Data Protection Policy. These records may be shared with the Child Protection Officer of the school attended if deemed necessary for the pupil's welfare and safety.

Contact Details

Programmes Director

Jordan Pfothenhauer

E: jordan@youngspeakersscotland.org.uk

T: 07477 852 703

Child Protection Trustee

Jennifer Broadley

E: jbroadley@youngspeakersscotland.org.uk

T: 07745 120797

Deputy Child Protection Trustee

Jane Scott

E: jane@youngspeakersscotland.org.uk

T: 07792 027173

The Legislative Context in Scotland

(Ctrl + click to follow links electronically)

The Scottish Government is responsible for child protection in Scotland. It sets out policy, legislation and both statutory and non-statutory guidance on how the child protection system should work.

Child Protection Committees (CPCs) are responsible for multi-agency child protection policy, procedure, guidance and practice. Within each local authority, CPCs work with local agencies, such as children's social work, health services and the police, to protect children.

The Children (Scotland) Act 2020 was passed by The Scottish Parliament in August 2020. When implemented it will amend many aspects of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 1995, bringing the law further into line with children's rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The most recent, non-statutory, Guidance is [National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021](#).

The national approach to improving outcomes for children and young people in Scotland is **Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC)** (Scottish Government, 2015). This provides a framework for those working with children and their families to provide the right support at the right time.

The key guidance for anyone working with children in Scotland is the [National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021](#).

In Scotland, a child legally becomes an adult when (s)he becomes 16, but statutory guidance which supports the [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#) includes all children and young people up to the age of 18. Where concerns are raised about a 16 or 17 year old, agencies may need to refer to the [Adult Support and Protection \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#), depending on the situation of the young person at risk. It is important to note that for the purposes of the UNCRC [The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child], the rights apply to anyone under the age of 18. Article 1 states that this is the case unless majority is attained earlier under the law applicable to the child. The Scottish Government intends to incorporate UNCRC within domestic law.

When should we be concerned?

Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)

GIRFEC notes that it's everyone's responsibility to ask five key questions when they have concerns about a child.

- What is getting in the way of this child or young person's wellbeing?
- Do I have all the information I need to help this child or young person?

- What can I do now to help this child or young person?
- What can my agency do to help this child or young person?
- What additional help, if any, may be needed from others? (Scottish Government, 2014a).

If anyone connected with YSS is concerned about a child, (s)he should raise his/her concerns with the Programmes Director as soon as possible. No concern is too small to raise, and sometimes concerns can be allayed quickly with the help of the parent(s) or teacher(s) accompanying the child.

If the concern is more difficult to address, and does not involve a complaint against the child or young person's school, it will be passed to the school's child protection officer or other responsible adult, for example Year Head, Guidance Teacher or Head Teacher. At this stage the Programmes Director will ensure that the Child Protection Trustee or his/her Deputy is informed of the concern.

Concerns about the Programmes Director should be raised with the Child Protection Trustee or his/her Deputy (see Contact Details on page 4, above).

Should it be inappropriate to inform the child or young person's school of the concern, it will be raised with the Local Authority, the Care Inspectorate or the NSPCC as appropriate.

Any concern for a child or young person's immediate safety should of course be reported to the police.

Concern may be raised by a **disclosure** from a child or young person to a YSS member of staff or volunteer. Such concerns should be listened to and the child or young person assured that his or her concerns will be addressed. The child or young person should not however be promised confidentiality, as it will be necessary to involve those who can help him or her. As far as possible, questions should not be asked of the person making the disclosure, as these can influence the account being given. As soon as possible after the disclosure, the member of staff or volunteer should make a note of what was said and pass this to the Programmes Director after making an initial verbal report.

Paperwork in connection with a Safeguarding or Child Protection concern, and which is not passed to the appropriate authorities, will be kept in accordance with the YSS Data Protection Policy.

YOUNG SPEAKERS SCOTLAND CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING PROTOCOL

If you are present at, or otherwise involved in, a Young Speakers Scotland (YSS) event and have reason to be concerned about a child's or young person's wellbeing, inform the YSS Programmes Director – Jordan Pfothenhauer – of your reasons for concern. If he is not contactable, or if the concern is about him, inform any other member of YSS staff or the Child Protection Trustees (see p5).

If you believe that a child or young person is in immediate danger, you should of course contact the police.

Why might you be concerned?

Sometimes a child or young person will reveal – either deliberately or unintentionally – **physical signs of abuse**. This can be self-inflicted or the result of actions by another.

A child or young person's **behaviour and/or language** might concern you if it is inappropriate for his or her age, or for the setting in which it occurs. Detailed references to sexual behaviour, especially if the behaviour is unpleasant or harmful, may be of concern. (Debates can cover some difficult issues – crime, drugs, social issues, *etc.* YSS takes care to challenge young people but still to set topics that are age-appropriate.)

A child or young person may tell you about something which you believe requires investigation. This is called **disclosure**. It is important not to ask leading questions of the child or young person; if there is to be an investigation it will be carried out by suitably qualified professionals. Do not promise her or him confidentiality even if you are asked for it; explain that it may be necessary to pass on what you have been told in order to help the child or young person, and possibly help others too.

Notes

When you have time, and as soon as possible, make a note of your concern and the reasons for it. Pass on these notes to the Programmes Director.

YOUNG SPEAKERS SCOTLAND CODE OF CONDUCT (as at March 2025)

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Code of Conduct

Throughout the year Young Speakers Scotland (YSS) runs a series of competitions and programmes. These may take place at a variety of locations including, but not limited to, YSS premises and host venues. It is very important that all the participants in YSS events have a common understanding of the standards of behaviour expected of them in order to maintain a safe and enjoyable event for everyone involved. The purpose of this Code of Conduct is thus to help maintain a pleasant, safe and healthy environment for all participants in our events.

1.2 To whom does the Code of Conduct apply?

This Code of Conduct shall apply to the following participants in YSS events:

- (a) pupil participants, including pupil spectators
- (b) YSS staff and volunteers
- (c) school teachers and coaches
- (d) any external volunteer involved in administering a YSS event

1.3 All participants must agree to abide by this Code of Conduct

- (a) At the start of every school year or whenever an individual begins work with YSS, he/she will be required to sign the undertaking at the conclusion of this Code of Conduct to indicate that (s)he will abide by it for the remainder of the year.
- (b) No participant shall be allowed to be involved in a YSS event unless he/she has signed such an undertaking.
- (c) In the case of schools, the relevant teachers in charge of debating will be required to sign this undertaking on behalf of themselves and all participants they bring along to YSS events.

1.4 What do the terms in this Code of Conduct mean?

- (a) “**YSS event**” refers to any event, competition, workshop or programme run by YSS. This includes YSS events taking place at host venues, as well as online events run by YSS.
- (b) “**Participant**” refers to anyone defined by 1.2 (a)-(d).
- (c) “**Adult**” refers to any participant over the age of 18.
- (d) “**Sexual harassment**” means any unwanted, unwelcome or uninvited behaviour of a sexual nature which makes a person feel humiliated, intimidated or offended. Sexual harassment can take on many different forms and may include physical contact, verbal comments, jokes, propositions, the display of offensive material or other behaviour which creates a sexually hostile environment. Examples of sexual harassment include but are not limited to uninvited touching, smutty jokes or comments, sex-based insults, repeated invitations to go out after prior refusal or persistent insinuations about a person’s private life.

2.1 What participants must do

During YSS events, all participants must:

- (a) behave in a respectful and courteous manner towards other participants in the event and members of the public in attendance.
- (b) Abide by any rules imposed by their school or the venue hosting the relevant YSS event.

2.2 What participants must not do

During YSS events, participants must not:

- (a) make insulting comments, jokes, insults, or insinuations about another person's culture, race, religion, gender or sexual orientation or which may be construed as being derogatory or as harassment, whether in the presence of that person or in any other forum in which the person may not be present.
- (b) stalk or physically harass another individual.
- (c) engage in any form of violence or threats of violence.
- (d) engage in any form of sexual harassment [as defined in paragraph 1.4 (d)].
- (e) take or use other people's property without permission.
- (f) intentionally cause damage to the property of other individuals or of any host venues.
- (h) consume or be under the influence of alcohol or drugs in a way which may bring YSS into disrepute.

2.3 Behaviour during debates

- (a) Participants in YSS events, especially coaches and debaters, must not confront adjudicators in an aggressive manner before, during or after a debate.
- (b) Feedback between teams and adjudicators must be given and received in a constructive and non-confrontational manner.

2.4 Behaviour during online events

Participants in online YSS events must:

- (a) ensure they abide by all usual parts of this Code of Conduct.
- (b) remain appropriately dressed at all times.

Participants in online YSS events must not:

- (c) instigate or request private online contact with other participants.
- (d) engage in any form of sexual harassment [as defined in paragraph 1.4(d)].
- (e) require any participant to turn on their camera.
- (f) require any participant to give up personal contact information.

In addition, adult participants in online YSS events must not:

- (g) engage in any communication with participants in a forum without a YSS staff member present. This includes:

- I. Private chat messages.
- II. Interaction on private rooms.
- III. Instigating private calls.
- IV. Emailing feedback directly to a participant.

Enforcement of the Code of Conduct

3. What happens if a participant breaches the Code of Conduct?

3.1 Breaches can be reported to YSS

If a participant believes that another participant has breached this Code of Conduct, s/he may report the breach to YSS. Complaints can be emailed to the Programmes Director jordan@youngspeakersscotland.org.uk. If the complaint involves the Programmes Director, it can be emailed to Child Protection Trustees – Jennifer Broadley jbroadley@youngspeakersscotland.org.uk Jane Scott jane@youngspeakersscotland.org.uk

3.2 Breaches will be dealt with by YSS

YSS will be responsible for:

- (a) investigating any breaches reported.
- (b) Supporting the complainant, including possibly referring him/her to other authorities when appropriate.

3.3 An update on all reports will be delivered to the individual who made the report within four weeks of the report being made.

3.4 YSS will never publicly reveal the identity of anyone reporting a breach of the Code of Conduct, but we may be required to share this information internally or with a relevant authority.

Undertaking

Undertaking required to be signed by all participating in YSS events.

If signing on behalf of school, put both your name and your school name in the name section.

I _____

undertake that:

- (a) I have read and understood the Code of Conduct above and
- (b) I will abide by the Code of Conduct for the duration of Young Speakers Scotland's 2024/2025 events.

Signed

Dated

YOUNG SPEAKERS SCOTLAND ONLINE COMPETITION CHILD PROTECTION PROTOCOL (as at March 2025)

To ensure that the children and young people who work with us remain safe and protected during online events and that we remain GDPR compliant, YSS has instituted a Child Protection Protocol for online competitions. This protocol is a supplement to our already-existing policies and does not negate or undo anything in those documents.

Platform

All online events will be run using *Microsoft Teams*. This is a platform approved by the majority of Local Authorities in Scotland. Meetings, calls and broadcasts will always be hosted by a YSS staff member or approved volunteer. Only YSS staff or approved volunteers will be allowed to create groups.

Participant Authorisation

All participants and observers will be required to reply to event invitations and will only be permitted to join a call if they are on the list for the event.

Chaperone Involvement

Teachers and other chaperones are allowed to observe all of our online events. There will never be a situation where we have access to pupils but teachers/chaperones do not. Any part of our events that a pupil can access, teachers and chaperones will be allowed to access too.

Volunteer Conduct

All volunteers will be sent a code of conduct to sign prior to their involvement in an online competition.

All feedback will be given collectively, to an entire debate room. Volunteers are not permitted to contact pupils individually. If volunteers wish to give individual feedback, or if a pupil requests individual feedback from a volunteer, this can be facilitated through YSS. No contact information will be shared between volunteers and pupils.

Use of Video

Pupil participants of online events will be informed beforehand about whether the event will use video. Participants may request to opt-out of video and use only audio in our online events. Adult participants will not use video either, except in limited approved circumstances – such as lectures – which will be communicated to all participants beforehand.

Recordings

Debates will not be recorded unless consent from all participants is obtained beforehand. Consenting to be recorded will never be a prerequisite for progression at a tournament: for example, we will never require participants in a final to consent to the final being recorded.

Complaints

Complaints can be emailed to the Programmes Director at jordan@youngspeakersscotland.org.uk.

If the complaint involves the Programmes Director, it can be emailed to the Chair of Trustees, Gurvinder Brar: g.s.brar@hotmail.com or the CP Trustee, Jennifer Broadley: jbroadley@youngspeakersscotland.org.uk