



Compassionate Distress Response Service Revised Standard Operating Procedures for services accessing the 14-25¹ pathway (May 2025-March 2026) (updated November 2025)

Introduction

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde [Multiagency Distress Collaborative](#) (April 2016 to March 2019) defined distress as “*an emotional state, not an illness, which is expressed and comes to our attention when a person’s internal capacities and external supports cannot contain something*”. The Collaborative recommended an alternative, non-clinical response to people experiencing distress. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde commissioned Glasgow Association for Mental Health to deliver such a response in January 2020. The Compassionate Distress Response Service (CDRS) opened to out of hours referrals on 25th May 2020, funded to support action 15 of Scotland’s [Mental Health Strategy](#) 2017-2027. The service was extended to referrals from General Practice on 7th September 2020 as part of Glasgow City HSCP’s [Primary Care Improvement Plan](#). An enhanced pathway for 16 to 25¹ year olds is supported by funding previously received as part of the [Community Mental Health Supports & Services Framework](#).

Overview of service

Contracted by Glasgow City HSCP, CDRS provides an immediate response listening service to alleviate acute emotional distress, with follow up support in place for up to one month following. Over 6000 people engaged with CDRS from 2020-2022. Support is provided through three referral pathways. This document focuses Young People’s (YP) CDRS pathway for young people aged 14-25¹.

The aims of this document:

1. Establish standardised processes for access by young people to CDRS’ three pathways;
 - a. Young People’s Pathway
 - b. Primary Care Pathway
 - c. Out Of Hours Pathway
2. Establish standardised processes for escalation from each of these pathways
3. Provide information on the governance of CDRS, including reporting and information sharing.

Access for young people aged 14+

Young people aged 14-25¹ can be referred to YP CDRS from **9am to 5pm Monday to Friday** by CAMHS, YHS², School Nursing, selected secondary schools and Social Work. Referrals made out with these times will be responded to on the next working day.

¹ 16-26 if care experienced

Access for young people aged 16+

In addition, young people aged 16+ can also be referred to CDRS in the following ways:

- Professionals in CAMHS, YHS, School Nursing, Social Work, Secondary, Higher and Further Education, Sandyford Sexual Health Service, Mental Health Assessment Units, and Third Sector partners can refer young people aged 16+ to **YP CDRS Monday-Friday 9am-5pm**.
- Staff in General Practice can refer young people aged 16+ to **In-Hours CDRS Monday-Friday 9am-5pm**.
- First responders³, Mental Health Assessment Units, and out-of-hours Health Service staff (eg. YHS GPs and nurses) can refer young people aged 16+ to **Out Of Hours CDRS, Monday-Sunday 5pm-2am**.

Risk management

For anyone who is identified as being at risk to self or others

1. Escalation to emergency service police/ambulance, as required.
2. Referrer is notified.
3. Individual discharged if not appropriate for service. Individuals *may* continue to get service in exceptional circumstances.
4. CDRS Service Manager completes an internal Incident Form.
5. AP1 Child/Adult Protection referral is made if an individual is identified as at potential risk, in line with GAMH Policies and Procedures.

For young people aged 14-15, where CDRS is not deemed to be an appropriate response but where the young person is not at immediate risk, CDRS will inform the referrer and will escalate to CAMHS if appropriate.

Accessibility

The service uses a 3-way interpreting service to enable speakers of other languages and BSL users to access support. There is disabled access to the venue for face to face appointments.

Reporting

NHSGGC's mental health services for Glasgow City are the contracting department for the service and at least one representative from mental health services forms the contract management group along with a representative from Health Improvement (on behalf of Tier 1 and Tier 2 Group). This group provides ongoing support to the delivery of the CDRS contract. Quarterly monitoring of the contract is primarily from this group with wider stakeholders invited to attend 6-monthly reporting meetings. This includes, but is not limited to, representatives from the referring bodies and funders.

Data collection and monitoring

CDRS use a secure case management system which initiates a new case when information is provided by the referrer. This is then added to by CDRS staff as the service is provided. Following the end of support any other information identifying the service user will be retained for a period of 3 years after which it will be deleted from all electronic databases and all hard copies will be destroyed safely. A guidance checklist is provided to staff to ensure information has been destroyed and deleted from all potential storage sites within GAMH systems.

² YHS staff making referrals after 5pm should use the YHS end-of-evening email to pass on relevant information to a member of staff who can make the referral the following day, or use the secure NHS email address provided below to send completed referral forms.

³ Police Scotland, British Transport Police, Scottish Ambulance Service, NHS24, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Data is shared with the contract management team for monitoring purposes and to ensure equity of access to the service. People engaged or referred are anonymised but information on referrers is provided to support monitoring of pathways. Sharing of information between NHSGGC and GAMH is supported by an Information Sharing Agreement and Data Protection Impact Assessment.

Serious adverse events

CDRS staff will follow GAMH's internal processes when a serious incident occurs. If GAMH or the contract management team become aware of any death by suicide following engagement with CDRS then this will be reviewed by the HSCP's Specialist Services Incident Review Group in partnership with representatives from the contract management group. This will apply where the individual is not known to HSCP services and will therefore not be part of any HSCP initiated review process.

More information on the three Referral pathways

Young People's Pathway

Specialist Childrens Services, Youth Health Service, Sandyford Sexual Health Service, staff in secondary, further and higher education institutions, Social Work Services staff and Third Sector organisations can refer 16-25¹ year olds, Monday to Friday from 9am to 2am and Saturday and Sunday from 5pm to 2am.

Young people aged 14-15: we are continuing to extend the Young People's pathway only, to include 14 and 15 year olds, from May 2025-March 2026, for a limited number of referral sources. These are currently **Specialist Children's Services, Youth Health Service, Social Work Services and staff at secondary schools where an agreement is in place.** These services can refer young people aged 14-25¹. Young People will receive a response within 24 hours during normal service hours (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm); referrals made to YP CDRS out of hours or on weekends will be responded to on the next working day.

The service does not provide routine feedback to referrers, however can be requested by the referrer and provided with the consent of the person referred.

Primary Care Pathway

GPs and their multi-disciplinary teams can refer people aged 16+ via SCI Gateway or telephone, 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Referrals made out with these times will be processed the next working day. CDRS Distress Response Workers will respond to individuals referred within 24 hours.

Routine feedback to referrers is not provided however can be requested by the referrer and provided with the consent of the person referred⁴. Routine feedback is provide to GPs for this pathway.

Out of Hours Pathway

First responders, Mental Health Assessment Units, Urgent Care Resource Hub, Out of Hours GP services, Emergency Departments at QUEH and GRI and Glasgow and Partners Emergency Social Work Services can refer people aged 16+, Monday to Sunday, 5pm to 2am via telephone or email. The service does not provide routine feedback to referrers, however this can be requested by the referrer and provided with the consent of the person referred.

For further information contact Barbara.Adzajlic@ggc.scot.nhs.uk for YP CDRS or Janice.Mitchell3@ggc.scot.nhs.uk for Primary Care and Out Of Hours CDRS

The aim of the Compassionate Distress Response Service (CDRS) is to support people who do not require a medical or specialist psychiatric assessment in their period of emotional distress. Our team of Distress Response Workers and Coordinators will provide a listening ear to those referred into the service and support them to develop a plan of action to help alleviate their feelings of distress. If agreed with the individual we will follow up with a telephone calls or face to face support. Individuals can be supported for up to a month and longer depending on individual circumstances. We will provide onward referral if required. Individuals will be contacted within **24 hrs** if referred during the day and **1 hr** if referred to our OOHs service.

Referral criteria

- Person aged 16+ (see additional detail on YP pathway)
- Individual is currently within Glasgow City HSCP area
- Individual cannot be supported within your setting
- Individual does not require immediate medical attention
- Individual gives consent for CDRS to be contacted

Primary Care Pathway

24-hour response

16+

GPs and their multi-disciplinary teams can refer people aged 16+. This is via SCI Gateway or telephone, 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Referrals made out with these times will be processed the next working day. CDRS Distress Response Workers will respond to individuals referred within 24 hours.

Out of Hours Pathway

1-hour response

16 +

First responders³, Mental Health Assessment Units, Urgent Care Resource Hub, Out of Hours GP services, Emergency Departments at QUEH and GRI and Glasgow and Partners Emergency Social Work Services can refer people aged 16+, Monday to Sunday, 5pm to 2am via telephone or email.

Young People’s Pathway

24-hour response

16-25¹

GPs and their multi-disciplinary teams, First Responders, Mental Health Assessment Units, SCS, Sandyford Sexual Health Service, Youth Health Service, agreed contacts in secondary schools, further education and higher education institutions, Social Work Services staff and third sector organisations can refer 16-25¹ year olds, Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm.

14-15

SCS, YHS, Social Work, School Nursing and agreed secondary schools can refer 14-15 year olds, Mon-Fri 9am-5pm.

9am to 5pm Monday to Friday

Use SCI Gateway (if within general practice)

5pm to 2am Monday to Sunday

Email: cdrs@gamh.org.uk

9am to 5pm Monday to Friday

Email: ypcdrs@gamh.org.uk