

The GAS Agreement

Welcome to GAS- Glasgow Autonomous Space, a warehouse space that hosts groups struggling against capitalism and other forms of oppression. It aims to be a safe space for all and a resource to aid groups in their aims. It is run by those using the space, non-hierarchically and not for profit. It is autonomous – not funded by the state or other institutions whose aims are incompatible with ours.

The space is used by a number of groups and we welcome people to get in touch who need access to free space for their work against capitalism and other forms of oppression. It is expected that all groups using GAS will have thought about keeping people safe within their groups. This working together agreement aims to outline how we should treat one another when we are in the space.

We know that sometimes ‘policies’ intended to help with safety can feel alienating in theory and/or useless in practice. We know that everyone’s idea of what ‘safety’ is feels different. We want to do things differently at GAS.

We built a place where everyone can make their own noise, but to enable that to happen, we first have to be aware of our own volume, why it might be set at that level, how to turn down so others can be heard, and most importantly, be ready, willing and able to share the controls! GAS is committed to amplifying the voices of people who, outside of this place, do not always get heard as loudly, or whose experiences and opinions are all-too-often thought of as less important or valid. Even (and especially) in spaces with no bosses, people can still find ways to take power from each other. Sometimes, we might be taking that power ourselves, with or without realising.

As people who use GAS, we want everyone to agree to a way of being, doing and interacting in the space so that we can work together to make some amazing stuff happen. We call these ideas “The GAS agreement”. There is a short version of the agreement which you will see around GAS, and a longer version that gives more details.

The GAS Agreement (short version)

This agreement applies to anyone who enters GAS, attends events, meetings, online spaces associated with GAS (forums, blogs and social networking pages), publications and all forms of communications.

- We are a not-for-profit, we oppose hierarchy and organise collectively

- We provide space for non-hierarchical groups, community & worker-led activities, or grassroots & DIY projects to hold their activities.
- The space aims to be a safe and supportive place for individuals, groups and campaigns to meet, talk, and learn from one another.
- Specifically we welcome people who are part of a marginalised or side-lined group such as those from an oppressed ethnic backgrounds, those oppressed by gender, asylum seekers & refugees, those in the LGBTQ community, sex workers, those facing financial difficulties, those leaving prison, any facing discrimination due to physical & mental ability, or people who undertake a duty of care to others.

Working together agreement

- On entering Glasgow autonomous space, we each agree to, to the best of understanding and ability
 - o communicate in an open, clear simple way.
 - o approach every situation with an open mind.
 - o come from a place of belief. When people share experiences, we will support and believe them.
 - o accept that others' lives and histories outside the space may be different to our own.
 - o stay mindful of how much space we take up (both bodies and voices) and of how we act or speak might be affecting other people around us.
 - o take on board other's points of view, be responsible for our actions, and ready to make amends in the ways are asked of us.
 - o not drink alcohol, take drugs or smoke in the space
 - o not to inflict harm upon other users of the space

We might end up repeating oppressive behaviours (such as sexism or racism) that we learned elsewhere. To recognise when we do this, and to help prevent this happening, we must collectively develop an understanding of how they work. On entering Glasgow autonomous space, we agree that if we breach this agreement then we must enter into an accountability process which may result in an end to our access to the space.

What to do if you need support or need to report an incident

If you need immediate support during an event find any GAS crew member or event organizer wearing a blue badge. If you'd like to raise any issue at all feel free to email GAS Agreement Working Group (AWG) in confidence for support, some options, and more info about next steps. You can also submit an anonymous (or named) concern into the GAS Agreement postbox using the feedback forms. Translation is available for this (although your confidentiality may be affected). All incidents are recorded.

The GAS Agreement (long version)

1. Why not a safer spaces policy?

The GAS agreement is a code of behaviour that all people using GAS agree to adhere to and embrace on using the space. The text of the agreement is displayed on posters and flyers throughout space.

We chose the formation of an agreement and collective accountability process over a 'safer spaces' policy because:

- We were concerned about making information as accessible as possible
- as a collectively-run space, we felt that the idea that any one person or grouping within that space holds the power to 'keep' others safe is flawed
- what 'safety' looks and feels like is entirely unique to every individual.
- many critiques of safer spaces hold that until the much larger systems of oppression have been toppled, no space is truly safe.

For the purposes of a self-organizing space like GAS, we can best hold each other to account through a shared agreement that doesn't focus on a list of 'isms' or 'phobias,' but on individual behavior and an open, generative culture of care.

2. What is the Agreement Working Group?

The GAS agreement working group (AWG) is an independent mechanism and 'working group' within GLASGOW AUTONOMOUS SPACE (GAS) that acts as a sounding board and a confidential, friendly ear for people or collectives that are handling any issues about someone's behaviour. The working group has drafted, and had approved by the whole of GAS crew, an accountability agreement. The agreement is reviewed regularly and we are open to suggestions for its improvement.

Likewise, GAS has hundreds of users, all of whom should have read the GAS Agreement upon entering the space. This creates an expectancy amongst users. If the agreement is seen to have been breached, we can take action to make sure that all parties feel that an appropriate outcome is reached.

We want to make sure everyone is as welcome in the space as possible, so we see holding each other to account the responsibility of the GAS crew (people working on the logistics of the

space), GAS collectives (groups using the space) and the GAS community (anyone using the space).

The AWG will help the GAS community to do this by

- Looking at any issues in an objective and timely manner
- prioritizing the needs of those harmed
- acting in good faith and avoid cynicism
- providing resources for individuals whose behavior or language has been questioned with which to educate themselves.
- Respecting confidentiality (saying NO to gossip)
- Investing in our skills with appropriate training

While we will seek to manage situations within the AWG, any member of the group can step down at anytime and choose not to take part in a particular process- this may be particularly relevant if they have social connections to the people involved. We may not be able to manage every situation and we may seek support from outside the working group if we deem it necessary, from the wider GAS community or external organisations such as the [Activist Mediation Network](#).

3. About Accountability

The GAS agreement is founded on an ‘accountability process’.

Accountability means lots of different things to different people. In a community context, accountability could be described as a strategy to address violence, abuse, or harm that creates safety, justice, reparations, and healing—most significantly as an alternative to legal frameworks.

GAS has a community accountability system that allows all users to be held to an agreement about their conduct, both within the space and as individuals in the wider world, and for members to help each other in situations where this agreement has not been upheld.

Members from individual collectives will be given help and support to work both with the person who has been harmed and the person who has caused harm to push for appropriate outcomes. The nature and depth of this work is entirely dependent on the nature of the harm caused.

This guide will provide information about how you, as a member of the GAS community, can help to hold another member to account, either from within a collective or as a general user of the building, and about what help the AWG can give you.

In practice, the GAS accountability process requires the community to:

- acknowledge and validate the hurt and harm caused
- start by listening to the person who has been hurt and prioritizing their needs
- enact consequences for the person who caused harm and provide opportunities for them to learn and change
- help address the root cause of why this has happened whilst recognising that we cannot fix everything!
- create safe boundaries and substantive consequences for different types of behaviour, which can include 'cooling off', temporary requests to stay away, and outright bans if considered serious enough.

This model holds that those who perpetrate harm are complex individuals who are often part of our community, and that our community is made stronger by holding these people to account (should they choose to engage), rather than by shutting them out without the resources to learn and change. However, while the 'transformative' element of the process is important, we must prioritize the overall safety of the GAS community in any decisions we make.

GAS believes in the fundamental right of those who have been hurt or harmed to take back power in situations where that power has been taken away from them, to steer the terms of their healing, and remain as involved as they want to be in the process of holding a person who has caused them any kind of harm to account. This includes respecting that someone may share information with GAS about a person who has caused harm in the past.

4. Process for reporting harm

All reports of harm will be dealt with seriously and with in line with the GAS Agreement policy.

During an event

In person to

- GAS Agreement working group members
- GAS crew members
- Event organizers
- Members of the wider GAS community

After and event or in regards to an ongoing issue

In person to

- GAS Agreement working group members (blue badges)
- GAS crew members (blue badges)
- Event organizers
- Members of the wider GAS community

Written

- Via feedback forms and the 'GAS agreement' postbox
- Via the online form on the website (www.glasgowautonomousspace.com)
- Via email to gasagreement@gmail.com

5. GAS Accountability Procedures

In the accountability agreement posters, GAS lets everyone know they can seek immediate support from a GAS crew member who is working at the space, or any member of the GAS community who is present during an event if they feel they need to. Someone who approaches you in this way is already feeling in need of support, so it is important to make sure this person does not regret reaching out to you. Everyone who uses GAS- and particularly organizers of events or meetings, should be aware of the following procedure.

On the spot support- preparing for disclosures of harm

Someone approaches you during an event to disclose harm, what do you do? You may personally feel worried or panicked—try to hold onto and regulate this emotion. This person has come to you for support; focus on their experience, stay calm, and know that others in the space will support you—never try to deal with a situation by yourself.

1. Find a safe place to chat (upstairs or even outside- away from the action)

The person causing harm may be known to the reportee, so be discreet and sensitive about this maneuver.

2. Offer a warm, empathetic, human response to whatever they tell you

3. Believe them, listen, & validate. Say things like

“That sounds really annoying/difficult/frustrating”

“ Thank you for telling me.”

“That's not okay.”

“That should not have happened, I'm really sorry to hear that it did.”

NB: When discussing someone's behavior, practice using 'They' pronouns for everyone, all the time, until you're directly told otherwise.

4. Don't make assumptions and stay calm, try not to rush into anything.
5. Based on the kind of harm, give them options for what can happen next. “We can handle this however makes you feel most comfortable. One option would be we could X , the other is that we could Y . Which would be best for you right now?” If a course of action seems obviously most relevant, try “How would you feel about X ?”
6. If the person reporting the harmful behavior **does** want you to intervene with the person who's caused the harm directly, you will need to pair up with another member who will need to be briefed about the situation to support you.
7. If the person reporting the harmful behavior **does not** want you to intervene, you can validate and offer to be there if they change their mind and do want us to act.
8. **Record keeping:** Let them know you need to make a note of your conversation as part of our accountability work so we can make sure that, if anyone else speaks up, we can

coordinate. With the consent of the person who approached you, make a confidential note of your conversation by emailing GASAWG@riseup.net

9. If they do want action to be taken on their behalf, we need to know who they are i.e. their name and any collective they are associated with.

6. Options for action - Consequence levels for people who have caused harm

These levels are here to give us all a guide of where to locate a situation that has occurred, and to help us decide what action is appropriate, and who should lead the process.

In all of these situations you are going to need to separate the person causing harm from any peers and ask to speak to them. Try phrases like

“Hi, we need to have a quick chat.” “Can I borrow you for a second?”

“Excuse me, can we have a word please?”

Do not swear, raise your voice, or use aggressive posture. If you don't trust yourself to be able to speak neutrally to the person in question, delegate the task.

Level 1 – Check In Chat

A check-in is the lowest level of intervention possible. Checking in can be used when a person causes harm through the use of language that oppresses or hurts others. It can also be used when behaviors (such as interrupting during a meeting) cause harm. Checking in is a way to reach out to a person to let them know they have breached the agreement and start a dialogue about why we have it, or just a reminder, and to be mindful about their behaviour in the future.

Level 2 – Call In Chat

This method is more likely to be applicable if someone has perpetrated any kind of physical, sexual or psychological violence.

Level 3 – Call Out

Mostly consequences, no chat!

For serious breaches, where it is felt that immediate safety of members is at risk.

It may be that the person reporting severe physical or sexual violence may wish to contact the police. In this case then this should be supported. If people are in danger, and cops are the only way to prevent it, then you should call the cops. This may also be a consideration in cases where children or others are at risk.

Who is responsible for responding to harm?

This is labour that is essential to the maintaining of social spaces and communities that offer alternative ways of doing things. Be aware of who is bearing the brunt of this labour- Do not expect others to do the work for you, take ownership of the process.

Taking ownership here means leading on decisions, handling direct communication, and setting boundaries and goals with both the harmed person and the person who has caused harm. It is very important that leadership and understanding are both shown from the outset.

The AWG and its members are not the cops of GAS; every GAS community member has a responsibility to step up when a problem arises, and this responsibility should be shared. If you have, or hear of, an experience that makes you think of the GAS Agreement - please ask for advice and support – and consult this handbook!

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Who? Anyone can do this, on their own or in a pair

How? This can be done in person at an event, or over email

Before action

Establish what the person reporting wants. Find out from them if it's okay for the person you're going to approach to speak with them afterwards, as it's likely they will want to. You can then pass this information on.

Explain the options for action

- We can have a word with this person about the language they're using.
- We can ask this person to be more mindful of the space they take up.

The action

1. Give your name and ask theirs.
2. Be warm and open to the confusion or embarrassment someone may feel as a result of the check-in.
 - “Hi, I'm [NAME], I do x, y, z at GAS. Have you seen our GAS agreement? One of our members has let us know that you're acting inappropriately/that you're speaking in a way that's making people feel uncomfortable. Because of that, we'd like to ask you to consider how you're talking more carefully. Is that ok?”
3. Keep it casual and human, but also clear. If they engage with what you say, thank them for their time, explain to them too that you have to make a note of the conversation, and give them an accountability agreement flyer.

4. Hold your ground in communicating what you need to. Offer to provide learning resources. **The Rattle Library have an accountability resources shelf that people can be directed to.** If they would like to continue the conversation, suggest “I'd be happy to send you some more info if you have an email.” This can then be passed to AWG who can share resources with them.

- Remember : The majority of people will feel embarrassed and want to make amends. Be empathetic to this, remember we are all capable of oppressive behaviour.
- Remember : you are not facilitating or pre-empting a conversation between these two people. This is NOT a negotiation. This is about you representing GAS and upholding the GAS agreement.

4. Discreetly check back in with the person who disclosed

Level 2 – Call In Chat

This method is more likely to be applicable if someone has perpetrated any kind of physical, sexual or psychological violence.

Who? AWG members, GAS crew members, Collective organizers, Event organizers and (if no other option is available) community members.

How? In person, but only if there is capacity to approach perpetrator in a pair.

If disclosure is over email, then email may also be an option.

Before Action

Establish what the person reporting wants. Find out from them if it's okay for the person you're going to approach to speak with them afterwards.

The options for action are:

- We can firmly remind the person that their violent words or behaviour are unacceptable in this space.
- We can ask this person to take some time out from the room/meeting/gig.
- If the person hurt explicitly says they would appreciate an apology, suggest that the person who caused harm apologies , and offer to act as a witness to that or be on hand for support if needed.
- We can ask them to stay away from the person they hurt, or give them space as appropriate.

If the person disclosing wants you to take action, form your conversation goals:

1. This person will know they've hurt someone else.
2. This person will reconsider their behaviour.
3. This person will not hurt anyone else
4. This person will stay away from the person they have hurt and not approach or speak to them.

The Action

1. Confer with your buddy first about what your aims for the conversation are. Agree on an end signal for the conversation e.g. 'Thanks for listening.'

2. A good way to engage someone in this context is to introduce yourself and then ask a question. You could bring the accountability agreement flyer with you so you have something to give them and to engage with.
3. Outline why you're talking to them; avoid specifics, but don't be evasive. Ideally you should have no social link to this person. Defensive psychology means they will listen to you less if you do!
4. "Hi, I'm [NAME], I do x, y, z at GAS. Have you seen our accountability agreement? One of our members has let us know that you're acting inappropriately/that you're speaking in a way that's making people feel uncomfortable, and would like you to stop, and apologise to them. Is that ok?"
5. Hold your ground in communicating what you need to. Offer to provide learning resources. **The Rattle Library have an accountability resources shelf that people can be directed to.** If they would like to continue the conversation, suggest "I'd be happy to send you some more info if you have an email." This can then be passed to AWG who can share resources with them.
 - Remember : This is NOT a negotiation. This is about you representing GAS and upholding the GAS agreement.
6. Discreetly check back in with the person who disclosed

Level 3 – Call Out

Mostly consequences, no chat!

For serious breaches, where it is felt that immediate safety of members is at risk.

It may be that the person reporting severe physical or sexual violence may wish to contact the police. In this case then this should be supported. If people are in danger, and cops are the only way to prevent it, then you should call the cops. This may also be a consideration in cases where children or others are at risk.

Who? AWG members, GAS crew members, Collective organizers, Event organizers and (if no other option is available) community members.

How? In person, but only if there is capacity to approach perpetrator in a group of three or more. If disclosure is over email, then email may also be an option.

Before Action

Establish what the person reporting wants. Sometimes the person reporting may not want the person they are reporting removed for their own safety and for fear of recriminations. In this instance, we should respect these wishes and the AWG will attempt to open communication via email with the perpetrator after the event.

In cases of physical violence, we need to know who the perpetrator is and what they look like in order to remove them (i.e. a name if they will give it, and if they are a guest of a member, we need to know who that member is).

If the perpetrator's identity is not known to the person reporting and they have specifically said they do not want us to remove them, then the perpetrator can be monitored until they are ready to leave and spoken to about their behaviour at that point. Again, always work in twos.

Explain the options for action

- We can ask this person to leave the building altogether.
- We can ask that person to leave and not return for a set period of time - the period is set by the AWG in consultation with the person

The Action

1. In a pair, with other people aware of what you are doing, approach the perpetrator
2. Ask the person for their contact details and let them know that under the terms of the AA you need to ask them to leave the building at this point in time.
3. Give them an AWG card and ask them to contact the AWG via email about their next visit.
4. Make it clear they must enter into dialogue via email (or off site meetings) if they hope to return to GAS in the future. This is so that people who have been called out at this level realize they cannot just return with no consequences. We can look to ban the member from the space for the foreseeable future. Under the terms of our rules, this can only be done via consensus across the AWG and GAS crew.
5. "We need to let you know that physical violence is not allowed in GAS. We are going to have to ask you to make your way out."
6. Arrange to physically remove the violent person from the space, as a last resort.

7. Longer term support and interventions

How to manage complaints against members of the GAS community who are involved in running the space or elements of the space.

Complaint against a someone who is an active volunteer or part of a collective, or a number of collectives.

Any two collective members are identified to take ownership and enact process with support and guidance available from AWG. They can choose whether to be named or not and it should always be clear they have been appointed to act on behalf of whole collective. It is best if they have as little social connection with the person as possible.

Once these people are identified, a collective accountability process should begin and be documented. If a member of GAS organizing crew or collectives is going through an accountability process as part of another organization, GAS should request details of the outcome of that process and the person's role within GAS organization should be suspended until the process is resolved and outcomes identified.

Once the decision has been made to start a Collective Accountability process

Speed is important. Steps 1–3 should be completed within one month of the decision to begin the accountability process.

STEP ONE:

- Acknowledge and validate the hurt / harm caused between members
- Coordinate two members of the collective to liaise with the two or more parties in the dispute (via email or meeting) and keep a record of this.
- Send an initial email to the person/s asking for a written account of the issue/s. Reiterate confidentiality and that we will always ask before sharing info.
- Ask AWG for help with wording and cc AWG if helpful.

STEP TWO:

- Listen to the person who has been hurt and prioritise their needs
- Explain we will do our best to meet their requests as far as possible
- Explain timelines and boundaries (e.g. if they have a number, agree when is ok to call).
- Check in with the person who has experienced harm during the process/they can let someone know if they are having any issues. Sometimes processes can end up causing further harm.
- Signpost person/s to counselling and other support services if needed.
- Be honest about anything that is beyond the remit of GAS, explain that this is being handled collectively.
- Common requests could be:
 - o A written apology from the person who has caused harm
 - o That they no longer volunteer at GAS, stop for a while
 - o That they tell their partners and friends that they are in an accountability process as a result of their behavior

STEP THREE:

- Engage with the person who caused the harm
- Draft an email (cc AWG) from the collective explaining the harm caused and any resultant consequences there may be for them in a clear, fair way.
- Start with what the person harmed has asked for, and see how this sits with GAS policy (the 3 Levels of consequence).
- Resist any urge to be punitive, remember that it takes strength to admit you have hurt someone.
- GAS operates a standard 3 month break from the space for any collective members with more than one complaint against them.

- This will not always affect their collective membership, decisions about how they interact with the collective during this period should be made on a case by case basis and prioritise collective comfort and safety.
- Be clear and fair; is your email passive aggressive?
- Always offer a face to face meeting or telephone call if needed.
- If engagement breaks down, AWG can step in to act as mediators or external mediators can be identified.
- Physical violence should generally result in a plan to implement a foreseeable ban from the space depending on the needs of the person affected and attitude of the violent person with regard to the incident. In this incidence, remember to GET NAMES and give all parties involved an AWG card to contact the space directly - ESPECIALLY if they are being ejected. "Please email this address before returning as we need to discuss."

STEP FOUR: Root Causes

This means reflecting together on the situation and looking to make changes. It could mean enacting a new policy or instigating a collective group discussion on power dynamics, language, shared procedures, boundaries, racism, etc. to help address the root cause whilst recognizing that we cannot fix everything!

When starting to engage with a person who may have knowingly or unknowingly breached the accountability agreement, it may be useful to consider that these are the usual stages a person will go through in the process of transformative learning:

1. Disorienting dilemma (i.e being challenged on behaviour, words, actions)
2. Self-examination (including denial – that's not racist etc.)
3. Sense of alienation (others around me don't speak/act like this?)
4. Relating discontent to others (Usually/often defensive)
5. Explaining options of new behaviour (What is a better word I could use instead?)
6. Building confidence in new ways (Trying out monitoring how much I speak in meetings)
7. Planning a course of action (Starting to build this behaviour into my everyday actions)
8. Knowledge to implement plans (Reading learning points and resources via email)
9. Experimenting with new roles (Becoming an ally or supporter)
10. It is not your responsibility to guide someone through these steps, but we can all play a part in helping each other to learn, grow and be accountable for our own behaviour. Being open, direct and fair to everyone you work with as part of an accountability process is key.

8. Learning resources

The GAS Anti-Oppression Reading List, which where appropriate can from

part of the 'Root Causes' work as an outcome - i.e sharing these links as learning work for the person who has caused harm.

- So you've been called out:

<http://fruitiondesign.com/dealwithit/02wispy.php>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/comment/reply/56214/844982>

- What's the deal with accountability anyway?

<https://saferspacesnyc.wordpress.com/resources>

<https://supportny.org>

<https://projectsalvage.wordpress.com/>

<https://communityaccountability.wordpress.com/resources/>

- 'Taking up space'

<http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/09/6-ways-men-dominate-space/>

- Microaggressions

- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/microaggressions-in-everyday-life/201010/racial-microaggressions-in-everyday-life>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/microaggressions-in-everyday-life/201011/microaggressions-more-just-race>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/microaggressions-in-everyday-life/201102/how-does-oppression-microaggressions-affect>

- Bullying

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/microaggressions-in-everyday-life/201101/bullying-microaggressions>

- Sexual assault and rape - Consent and boundaries

<http://www.bishuk.com/sex/consent-innit/>

- Racism

<http://www.bustle.com/articles/124681-5-things-you-might-not-think-are-racist-but-are>

- Gender, trans, and non-binary identities

<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/sexual-orientation-gender/trans-identities>

- Cultural appropriation

<http://everydayfeminism.com/2016/05/defending-cultural-appropriation/>

<http://www.makezine.enoughenough.org/mohawksdreads.htm>

- Mental Health awareness

<http://thoughtcatalog.com/samantha-pugsley/2014/11/how-language-impacts-the-stigma-against-mental-health-and-what-we-must-do-to-change-it/>