

Managing safeguarding concerns, responding and reporting

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and it is vital that, if you are in contact with vulnerable groups (children, young people and vulnerable adults) as part of your role in church, you have undertaken safeguarding training. If you haven't yet completed this, please talk to your Church Safeguarding Officer or parish priest who will be able to advise you how to access this.

Training will allow you to **RECOGNISE** some of the signs and symptoms that could suggest abuse is taking place and allow you to share your concerns appropriately, ensuring that the correct authority is made aware so that the concern can be followed up (we never investigate).

It is also possible that someone (child, young person or adult) will want to talk to you about abuse that they have suffered. It may still be happening currently or could be historic and have happened in the past, all disclosures should be dealt with in the same way.

If someone discloses to you, please remember the following as you **RESPOND** to them:

1. **LISTEN**. Let the person tell their story and don't push for information. Repeat back what they have said to ensure clarity if that will help. If you need to ask a question, ensure that it isn't a closed question – use words within sentences which don't invite a single response (when, why, how, where). Some examples of open questions are –

Would you tell me more about _____? I'd be interested in knowing _____? I'm not certain I understand _____. Can you give me an example? When you say _____, what do you mean? I'd like to help you find the best possible information. Can you tell me more about your subject?

Please note, these are not examples of questions to ask – just a demonstration of what an open question looks like.

1. Remember it is never your role to investigate, just gather information to aid those whose job it is (police / social services).
2. Always show acceptance of what you are being told, whatever your personal opinion might be. It takes a lot of courage to disclose abuse so the discloser will need to feel believed.
3. Keep calm and reassure the person that they aren't to blame for what has happened to them (victims / survivors of abuse frequently feel that they are).
4. Make sure you maintain eye contact to demonstrate that you are listening even if the discloser isn't always looking at you – this will be a difficult process for them.
5. Be honest, never make promises to keep what you are being told confidential. If abuse is involved, you will need to tell someone.
6. Try to involve them as much as you can in the ongoing process, let them know who needs to be told and what will happen, involving them in decisions where appropriate. Never forget the in the case of a child, their welfare comes before anything else; they are at the center of everything.

Once you have heard the disclosure, it is very important that you **RECORD** in writing what you have been told as soon as possible – within one hour if at all possible. This will allow you to record what you've heard as accurately as possible.

Make sure you:

1. Use the words that the child / adult used – not your interpretation of what has been said. Sometimes we misunderstand what we have been told (especially with children who may not have the vocabulary to accurately describe what has happened to them) and are tempted to re-phrase what we have been told. Ensure this doesn't happen.
2. Include any responses that you made.
3. Keep the report succinct and to the point.
4. Make sure the names of all those involved are clear.
5. Record the date, time and place of the disclosure.
6. Record what actions you have taken and your rationale for taking these actions.
7. Make sure your name is clear at the end of the record.
8. Send a copy of the record to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser and keep the parish record securely within the parish (the incumbent or church safeguarding officer will store these safely).



You will need to **REPORT** what you have been told (or seen) to your Church Safeguarding Officer who will be able to offer advice on next actions and support you to **REFER** your concerns to the appropriate authority. They should also contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser to report the concern and for any further advice.

So to summarise:

RECOGNISE : the signs that could indicate abuse is happening to a child / young person / vulnerable adult

RESPOND: sensitively to the person and listen to what they have to say, don't ask closed questions or attempt to investigate

RECORD: what you have been told factually and accurately using the language used by the person disclosing within an hour

REPORT: immediately to your Church Safeguarding Officer who will know who to seek support from

REFER: to the appropriate statutory authority and the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser