

Annex 4 - Handling a disclosure - practical advice

If a person decides to make a disclosure concerning abuse, harm or exploitation, this will likely have overcome many barriers before they chose to speak. They will have decided to disclose this information because they trust you and believe that you will act. They may simply wish to share the information so someone else is aware. Disclosures don't always happen to the designated safeguarding

lead. They could happen to any volunteer or member of staff within an organisation, so it is important that everyone in the organisation receives training on how to handle a disclosure; please feel free to share this document with everyone in your team.

- **Listen carefully to the person who is making the disclosure.** Avoid expressing your own views on the situation or asking any leading questions. Reacting with shock or disbelief could cause the person to stop talking, freeze or retract their statement.
- **Reassure the person they have done the right thing by speaking with you.**
- **Say you will take them seriously.** It takes a lot of effort to disclose information of this nature. They have told you because they want help and to be listened to.
- **Stay calm and open-minded about the information being disclosed.** Try not to write notes as the disclosure is happening, as this removes eye contact and approachable body language and may break up the flow of someone speaking.
- **Never promise confidentiality.** Clearly explain what you will do next and say that if the information that has been disclosed puts the individual or anyone else at risk, that you will need to pass this onto someone else who can support them and is responsible for these incidents. Never promise to keep it a secret.
- **Don't delay in reporting.** After speaking with the individual, write down a written report, with as many details as possible whilst it is fresh in your mind. Follow relevant reporting procedures.
- **Don't ask leading questions.** Allow the child/ adult who is speaking freely to do so, making prompts such as 'Can you say some more about that?' to seek clarity.
- **Don't stop the child/adult who is speaking freely**
- **Record the information as soon as possible.** Make sure you make an accurate recording of the disclosure as soon as possible, quoting words used by the person. Sign, date, and record the time of the disclosure and anyone else who was present.