

Responding to a Disclosure – The 4 Rs

The 4 Rs are a useful way to remember how to respond to a disclosure:

Recognise → Respond → Record → Refer

Recognise

- ✓ Accept and take seriously what is being said, without displaying shock or disbelief.
- ✓ Let the person tell their story and don't push for information or ask leading questions.
- ✗ Do not interrogate or decide if they are telling the truth.
- ✓ Be alert to signs and symptoms of abuse.

Respond

- ✓ Reassure the individual that they have taken the right step in sharing this information and they are not to blame.
- ✓ Be honest; never make promises to keep what you are being told confidential. If abuse is involved, you will need to tell someone.
- ✓ Tell them what you will do with the information they have shared, and that they will be kept informed.
- ✗ Do not introduce personal information from either your own experience or that of others.
- ✗ Do not investigate the matter any further for yourself, or approach the person about whom allegations may have been made.

Record

Write down, concisely, exactly what is seen, said or heard and make clear where you have added your views or interpretation. Remember that this is your information, and that you are responsible for passing it on to the person with safeguarding responsibility. Be mindful that your written comments may be needed in the event that further legal or disciplinary action is taken.

You may find it helpful to use the 4 Ws, as follows:

- ✓ WHO was involved? Name the key people.
- ✓ WHAT happened? Facts not opinions.
- ✓ WHEN did it happen? Date and time.
- ✓ WHO have you referred the issue on to?

When recording a second- or third-hand account, it might be helpful to clarify that "what happened" refers not to the alleged incident but to what occurred in your presence – in other words, the date, time and manner in which the issue was reported/disclosed to you. It should not be an attempt to describe the event/situation as if you had witnessed it yourself.

Only pass the information on verbally if it is an emergency situation. Even so, you must also find time as soon as possible to write it down and send it on to the relevant person.

Refer

- ✓ Pass the information to the Safeguarding Lead or Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor in your setting within 24 hours.
- ✓ In case of an emergency call the Police or dial 999.