

Responding to a disclosure of abuse

If an adult discloses to you that they are being abused or neglected, please remember the following as you **RESPOND** to them:

1 RECOGNISE

You need to feel confident in recognising that what you have seen or what has been described to you is abusive behaviour (see Signs of Abuse Booklet).

2 LISTEN and 3 REASSURE

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 clarifying question, ensure that it is not a closed question – use words such as when, why, how, where within sentences that don't invite a single response. 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?

Here are some other good things to remember as you **LISTEN**:

- Remember it is never your role to investigate, just gather information to aid those whose job it is, e.g. police or social services.
- 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. You could do this by thanking the person for sharing and acknowledging the courage that took.
- 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).
- 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.
- Be honest, never make promises to keep what you are being told confidential. If abuse is involved, you will need to tell someone.
- 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.

4 RECORD

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 person used – not your interpretation of what has been said. Sometimes we misunderstand what we have been told 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. Correctly identify and record 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 a Diocesan Safety Adviser and check it has been received and saved securely by them.

5 REPORT

You need to REPORT what you have been told (or seen) to a Diocesan Safety Adviser who will be able to offer advice on next actions. Roger Wigglesworth leads the Diocesan Safety Adviser team. He can be contacted at safety@anglicanmovement.nz or roger@anglicanmovement.nz or 021 541 618. However if the risk is serious and immediate action is required to ensure safety, call the Police on 111.

6 REFER

The Safety Adviser can help and support you to REFER concerns to the appropriate authority.

SUMMARY

RECOGNISE	the signs that could indicate abuse is happening to the person
LISTEN	sensitively to the person and to what they have to say; don't ask closed questions or attempt to investigate
REASSURE	them that they aren't to blame for what has happened
RECORD	what you have been told, factually and accurately, using the language used by the person disclosing, within an hour
REPORT	immediately to a Diocesan Safety Adviser, who will know who to seek support from, unless the person is in immediate danger, in which case call the Police on 111
REFER	to the appropriate statutory authority, with the help of a Diocesan Safety Adviser.

Diocesan Safety Adviser Team

The Diocesan Safety Adviser Team is led by Roger Wigglesworth. The team can be contacted at safety@anglicanmovement.nz. You can also call Roger on 021 541 618, or email roger@anglicanmovement.nz.