**Appendix H: Responding to a disclosure**

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| **Responding to disclosures, suspicions and allegations**  If a young person says, or indicates, that they are being abused, or information is obtained that gives concern that a person is being abused, immediate action must be taken.  As stressed, it is not the obligation of an employee to take individual responsibility for deciding whether child abuse is taking place. However, it is the responsibility of staff to protect children by reporting these concerns in order that appropriate agencies (e.g. local Social Services) can make enquiries and take any necessary action. It is crucial that all employees are aware of the steps used to recognise signs of child abuse (see Appendix M).  **Dealing with allegations**  What to do when responding to allegations of abuse or bullying  Children who are being abused will only tell people they trust and with whom they feel safe. By listening to, and taking seriously what a child is telling you, you will already be helping to protect them. It is useful to think in advance how you might respond to this situation. Here are some brief guidelines.  Create a safe environment by:   * Staying calm and not rushing into actions that may be inappropriate. * Confirming you know how difficult it must have been for them to confide in you and that they have done the right thing. * Reassuring the child and stressing they are not to blame. * Listening to what the child says. Show you are taking what is being said seriously. * Where possible remain in view, do not go somewhere on your own. * Be honest and do not make promises you cannot keep. Explain you will have to tell other people to stop what is happening. * Ensure you are clear about what the child says so you can pass it on to child protection professionals. Keep questions to a minimum and avoid leading questions (i.e. ones which are answered by a single ‘yes’ or ‘no’). Use open questions to encourage the child to use their own words. The law is very strict, and a child abuse case can be dismissed if it appears the child has been led or words have been suggested. * Record exactly what the child has said to you by completing an Incident Report Form (Appendix B), as soon as possible after the incident. Stick to the facts and do not give your opinions. * Report the incident to the DSL and pass a copy of the report onto them (see flowchart -appendix I, if the DSL is not available) * Maintain confidentiality. It is extremely important that any allegations are not discussed (unless necessary) as any breaches could be damaging to both the child and to any investigation that may follow.   Often concerns are not made directly by the child being abused, but a non-direct disclosure is made by a girlfriend/boyfriend, parent, other coach, friend etc. If this happens, you must follow the same guidelines detailed above.  It is recommended that the person receiving the information DOES NOT:   * Panic * Allow your shock or distaste to show. * Probe for more information than is offered. * Speculate or make assumptions. * Make negative comments about the alleged abuser. * Judge or investigate.   **Timescales**  All incidents of suspected abuse or poor practice must:   * Be reported within 24 hours * Concerns involving the immediate safety of a child must be referred immediately to the DSL (by telephone, or face-to-face) or police as appropriate and followed up within 24 hours by a completed Incident Report Form (Appendix B) as an agreed action. * The DSL will report the incident to the relevant agency with 24 hours and report outcomes to those necessary, e.g. coach, manager, within seven days. * If timescales slip (which may be necessary to ensure the best outcome for an incident) then communication must be provided with valid reasons given.   **Dealing with the media**   * All staff and volunteers should be made aware that the media are very quick to respond to hints of an allegation and will often make extreme attempts to obtain information. Therefore, it is important that all staff and volunteers are expectant and alert to any media approaches. * In an instance where enquiries arise from members of the public (including parents) and any branch of the media, it is vital that all staff be briefed that they are not at liberty to make any comments regarding the case, but that they have been told to relay all enquiries to the DSL or the CEO. The DSL or the CEO should then meet all questions with the ‘no comment’ response. Under no circumstances should any other response be given. * If the DSL or CEO is contacted, they may either give an agreed statement (negotiated within the authority) and discussed with social services and/or the police or meet any enquiries with the ‘no comment’ response.   **Confidentiality**  Confidentiality is a key issue in child protection work. In dealing with any case, suspicion or allegation relating to child abuse, all staff should be made aware that any breaches in confidentiality can be very damaging to the child, family and any child protection investigations that may take place. Whilst information should not be shared freely, it must be shared with appropriate agencies to ensure that a child is not left unprotected. Decisions on who needs to be informed should be taken by the DSL, after discussions with Social Services.  Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with Data Protection Act (2018).  **Do not share concerns with parents / carers**  It is not your responsibility to decide whether child abuse is taking place or not, but to report where you have concerns, or an allegation has been made to protect a child. It is not your responsibility to discuss any issues with anyone outside of the Flow Chart advice. You should not share concerns with Parents / Carers. If you have concerns about a child, please inform the DSL, or a Deputy Officer. If they are not available, please follow the information on the Flow Chart (Appendix I).  Contact details  Appendix holder  Name: Nicky Harverson  Children and Young People’s Designated Safeguarding Lead  Phone/email: 01452 393607 [nickyharverson@activegloucestershire.org](mailto:nickyharverson@activegloucestershire.org)    NSPCC helpline 0808 800 5000 We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.    Key compliance dates:     |  |  | | --- | --- | | Last Review | November 2023 | | Next Review | November 2024 | |