

Loreto Sisters

Guidance on Responding to an Adult Making an Allegation of Abuse

The role of the DLP is to receive all safeguarding concerns and to pass on to the statutory authorities those that reach the threshold of reasonable grounds for concern. It is often very difficult for people to talk about abuse, so it is important to make sure that a safe environment of listening carefully and actively is created, in which a complainant feels able to disclose as much as they can remember. This will help those people whose responsibility it is to investigate the incident do so as thoroughly as possible.

People may tell you about:

- Abuse that happened to them when they were a child.
- Something they've been told by someone else and that they strongly believe is true (disclosure).
- Seeing signs of abuse, such as physical injuries on a child.
- Something they have witnessed that makes them feel uncomfortable.

Where information is given in person, consider the following:

- Adopt a listening style that is compassionate, calm and reassuring. If the information given to you shocks, disgusts or distresses you, do not allow these feelings to show. If you do, you may inadvertently dissuade the person from giving any further information.
- Listen carefully to that person, but do not ask intrusive or leading questions.
- Stay calm, take what the person raising the concern says seriously, and reassure them
- Allow the person to continue at their own pace.
- Check with the person to make sure that you have understood what they actually said. Do not suggest words – use theirs.
- Make no promises that cannot be kept, particularly in relation to confidentiality, but listen carefully to what is being sought in this regard.
- Explain the referral procedures to the person.
- Offer the services of a support person, if the support person is not present.
- Do not make any comments about the respondent; do not make assumptions or speculate.
- Be aware that a person's ability to recount their concern or allegation will depend on their age, culture, nationality or any disability that may affect speech or language.
- Avoid statements about your reaction to the information given.
- Do not question beyond checking what has been said. It is the responsibility of Tusla / HSCT and An Garda Síochána / PSNI to investigate. There should be no probing for detail beyond that which has been freely given.
- Do not offer wording or language to the person making the allegation that may assist in the provision of an account of the concern or allegation.

