

07. WHAT TO DO IF...



Safeguarding Responsibilities

If someone knows or suspects that a child or adult at risk is being harmed, has been harmed, or is at risk of significant harm, then they have a responsibility to report this. **Don't forget that this can include neglect as well.**

It is so important to remember that it is **NOT** your role to investigate or assess whether or not abuse has occurred. Your responsibility is simply to pass on your concerns.

This can be hard. It can feel like a vulnerable thing to report something; you may be wary of unintended consequences; you may feel disloyal for doing so, or like you are betraying someone. You may not be sure about confidentiality. There are a host of emotions and thoughts that make passing on concerns feel difficult. But we have to. It's our responsibility and it's policy. And it's exactly the thing to do if we are to be the Church.

Now, you could encounter a safeguarding concern in different ways. A disclosure of a concern can be simple or complex, disclosed verbally or non-verbally, directly or indirectly, partially or fully, and purposefully or accidentally.

If someone makes a non-verbal disclosure (for example, changes in how they present themselves or behave), then refer or discuss this with the Provincial Safeguarding Team, who can offer advice and even follow it up.

If someone is telling you something, it's important that you create the right kind of environment for them to do so.

There are a few simple things you can do to make it a safe place for them to share:

1. **Listen and be supportive – don't directly question them.**
2. **Allow the child or adult to recall significant events in their own words.**

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3. **Don't push them to say more than they wish.**
4. **And... seek clarification on things that are unclear, where necessary.**

Seeking clarification means that you should not ask the question 'Why?', but you should ask questions such as (Who? What? Where? When?). You should only ask these kinds of questions to clarify what is being said, and whether you think someone has been harmed, or is at risk of being harmed.

NOW, A WORD ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY.

You have an obligation to maintain the highest level of confidentiality in your role: when personal information is shared, it has to be kept confidential. Immense damage has come from a failure to do this.

But confidentiality does not apply where harm is suspected. If you suspect or are sure that someone is about to disclose, or has begun to disclose harm, you need to communicate to them that they can continue to share, but that if what they share involves harm either to themselves OR to another, then you are obliged to disclose that information with the relevant bodies.

That can be difficult, but we can't promise confidentiality in these cases.

We have some guidelines for what to do if you sense someone might be harmed, or is at risk of harm:

1. **If the risk of harm or abuse is an emergency:**
 - Refer the situation to the police or social services immediately.
 - Inform a Provincial Safeguarding Officer at the earliest opportunity.
 - Write careful notes of what you witnessed, heard or were told. Sign, date and give these to the Provincial Safeguarding Team.

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2. If it's not an emergency:

- Write careful notes of what you witnessed, heard or were told immediately and, in any event, within 24 hours. Make sure you note the time, day, date, location of the conversation, and anyone else who was present. Sign your notes.
- Contact the Safeguarding Team straight away. They will advise you as to what to do next.
- You may be asked to send your notes to the Provincial Safeguarding Team. Fill out a Safeguarding Referral Form which is straightforward and can be found in the Safeguarding Guidance on the Church in Wales webpages.

Remember:

- It is **your responsibility** to take concerns about children, and adults at risk, indeed everyone, seriously.
- **You are not expected** to deal with concerns on your own.
- **Always** report any concerns you have to the Safeguarding Team.

Some more simple guidelines for protecting yourself:

- Avoid physical contact with children.
- Avoid being alone with children. Think about meeting in public places instead.
- Ensure that your use of texting and social media is in accordance with Church in Wales policy.
- Think carefully about how you share your personal contact details.
- Don't invite children to your home except as part of a wider family group or part of an organised church group activity.

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Who is supporting you?

- Ministry Area Safeguarding Officers
- Provincial Safeguarding Team
- Social Services
- Police