

Responding to disclosures and recording concerns

The 4 'Rs' – Receive, Reassure, React, Record

Receive

- Listen to what is being said calmly without displaying shock or disbelief
- Allow the individual to speak in their own words
- Accept how the individual feels – this is different to agreeing how they should feel or being sympathetic
- Resist interrupting an individual who is freely recalling events
- Accept what is being said without judgement
- Take it seriously
- Help them by simply being there
- Think about your body language – show you are actively listening; it might be better to sit at right angles to the individual so that they don't have to make eye contact
- Be aware that a person's age, culture, nationality or any disability will affect their ability to tell their concern or allegation

Reassure

- Reassure them, but only so far as is honest and reliable. Don't make promises that you can't be sure to keep, e.g. "I'll stay with you" or "everything will be all right now"
- Reassure them they are not to blame and have not broken a 'rule' – be aware that they may have been threatened or bribed not to tell
- Don't promise confidentiality – you have a duty to report your concerns. Tell them that you will need to tell someone to keep them and others safe, and say who
- Acknowledge how difficult it must have been to talk
- Never agree to keep secrets – be honest
- Do reassure them that he or she is right to tell
- Don't try to counsel the individual

React

- Listen quietly, carefully and patiently, allowing the person to continue at their own pace
- Do not investigate, interrogate, probe for further information or decide if they are telling the truth
- Don't ask leading questions, e.g. "What did he do next?" (This assumes he did), or use language they have not used
- Do ask open or clarifying questions like "Is there anything else that you want to tell me?", "Are you able to say a bit more about that?"
- Do not criticize or make comments about the alleged abuser
- Do not ask them to repeat what they have told you to another person. Explain what you have to do next, whom you have to talk to and why – to keep other adults/children safe
- Tell your Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator (or the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser)
- Do not speak to or alert the person about whom the allegations have been made

Record

- Make some very brief notes at the time and write them up in detail as soon as possible
- Do not destroy your original notes in case they are required by the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser or the statutory authorities
- Record the date, time, place, words used and how they appeared to you. Record the actual words used, including any swear words or slang
- Draw a diagram to indicate the position of any marks or to explain complex situations (such as family relationships) if this would be helpful
- Record statements and observable things, not your interpretations or assumptions – keep it factual
- Do not assume anything – don't speculate or jump to conclusions
- Record all subsequent events and actions up to the point where the individual is no longer in your care or you have passed the record on (to Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator or Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser)