

How To Respond to a Disclosure Safeguarding Guide – to accompany Safeguarding Concerns and Disclosures Procedure

4.0 How To Respond to a Disclosure

4.1 Note that Advice and Response offer more in-depth First Disclosure training to groups – please enquire with adviceandresponse@manchester.ac.uk for details. Remember that you may observe or suspect safeguarding concerns.

4.2 Remember that if someone tells you something that suggests they or someone else are in danger you usually will need to pass that information to someone else and you should be clear about this with any reporter. If a reporter does not consent for you to pass on details to Advice and Response, you will need to pass on an anonymised report to Advice and Response so that Advice and Response can decide whether any further disclosure is needed due to risks to the reporter and/or others.

4.3 When you receive a disclosure of a concern (i.e., the person reporting or a third party tells you), first and foremost, it is important to be aware that you are not expected to give detailed or expert advice and support. Rather, your job as a first responder is to:

1. Offer a safe and non-judgemental approach
2. Provide accurate information on signposting to and/or making a referral to specialist advice and support [with Advice and Response](#)

Offering a safe and non-judgmental approach

With all types of disclosure, what people need most of all is an empathetic and non-judgmental response.. We understand that receiving disclosures can be distressing and challenging but it's important to bear in mind that the person has made an active choice to disclose to you and you should feel reassured by the fact that they have chosen to speak to you about this.

You are not expected to give detailed or expert advice but to actively listen in a non-judgmental and empathetic way. You can offer this by doing the following;

- Acknowledge the student's feelings and reassure them they have done the right the thing by telling you
- Inform the person that you may need to pass on information that they tell you to someone else in order to safeguard them and/or others

- Ensure you are in an appropriate space i.e. somewhere quiet and away from a shared office space or reception. If you are alone with a student who is distressed and possibly feeling vulnerable, it is best to inform a colleague what you are doing.
- If the student is accompanied, check that this person's presence is welcomed and if not, tactfully explain that you think it best that they leave to allow the student time to regain some privacy.
- If the student is not accompanied, check whether they would like to contact someone to accompany them and provide support (note that someone disclosing may not feel comfortable disclosing if they are alone with you so do gently confirm they are OK to continue if they are alone with you)
- Be patient and reassure the student that they can take their time
- Focus on what is being said and being present in the conversation rather than thinking about what you need to say or do
- Be mindful of your body language and facial expressions
- Do not lead the conversation by questioning their account; you are not investigating or gathering evidence
- Avoid interrupting the student mid-sentence
- Ask factual questions only where appropriate (see below for guidance on this)
- Do not make assumptions about what the student wants or feels
- Check your understanding of what they have told you by summarising back to them

Helpful Phrases

"I'm so sorry to hear that this has happened"

"Thank you for sharing this with me, I understand how difficult it must be but you've absolutely done the right thing."

"I'd like to refer you to Advice and Response so that you have access to specialist support, if that would be okay?"

"What will happen when I pass it on is that someone from that team will be in touch with you within two working days (or sooner if it's urgent) "

Relevant Questions

When receiving a disclosure, as a matter of course, you should not need to ask any detailed questions of the student beyond clarifying basic facts to ensure you can appropriately refer or signpost. You should reflect carefully on how you frame any questions you ask to ensure that they are sensitive and appropriate. For example, starting questions with, "Can I ask,?" is a helpful technique in framing questions sensitively and demonstrating that you respect the reporter's boundaries. It's also best to

try and avoid “why” questions as, even if well-intentioned, these type of questions can imply judgement, especially to someone in a vulnerable state.

Examples of relevant questions

- ☐ “Can I just ask a couple of questions to ensure I understand correctly?”
- ☐ “Can I ask when this happened?”
- ☐ “Do you know if the person who did this is also a student here?”
- ☐ “Have you reported anything to the police?”
- ☐ “Have you got support from anyone else?”
- ☐ “What would you like to happen? ”

Recording Disclosures

4.4 Any notes taken by a ‘first responder’ are known as a ‘first report’ and can be used by the police or in court should the reporting party decide to report to the police. This means that if you write anything down, it must be brief and factual without recording opinions. The disclosure referral guide for notes below* can be used to guide your record of the disclosure ([or you can go straight to the Report and Support reporting portal](#)). As per the information earlier in this guide about practical routes for supporting, all reports will be entered via www.reportandsupport.manchester.ac.uk even if you contact Advice and Response for advice first.

4.5 Disclosure Referral Guide for Notes

- Your Name
- Your Role
- Date of disclosure
- Reporting Student Details
- Name
- Student ID
- Contact Number
- Disclosure Details:
 1. When did this happen?
 2. What happened?
 3. Is the person who has abused/endangered the reporter/other adult or child also a member of the University of Manchester i.e. staff or student?
 4. Has this previously been reported to the police or any other services (e.g. Social Services, previous School, etc)?
 5. Is there any support in place from other services?
 6. Does the reporter consent for you to pass on details to Advice and Response? If not, do they understand that you will need to pass on an anonymised report to Advice and

Response and that Advice and Response will decide whether any further disclosure is needed due to risks to the reporter and/or others

You can then pass on this information to Advice and Response by making a report via [Report and Support](#). If you want to speak to someone for advice, contact adviceandresponse@manchester.ac.uk or call Advice and Response Duty on 0161 306 0060. If you are a staff member making a referral you will usually inform your line manager of the referral as soon as practicable, which may be after the referral has been made.