

**Child Protection: Handling a disclosure, reporting and monitoring procedures**

Child Protection

The Tyro Lawyer meets its child protection responsibilities by ensuring all volunteers and mentors can:

* identify and recognise children and young people suffering from or at risk of abuse or neglect
* meet the communication needs of under 18s
* respect the boundaries and limits of confidentiality and know how and when to share information

Date:

Designated safeguarding lead

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Date:

Safeguarding officer

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Allegations of Abuse or Inappropriate Behaviour Involving Staff

Allegations involving any mentor or volunteer should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Safeguarding officer. All information will be collected, and the relevant procedures will be followed.

The Designated Safeguarding lead will contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for West Midlands and follow the advice and suggested actions they provide.

Whilst a complaint is being investigated the volunteer or mentor will be suspended, and if the complaint is upheld the volunteer or mentor will be dismissed and any relevant authorities informed immediately.

**Definition of abuse**

Abuse is the physical, sexual or emotional mistreatment, or neglect of a young person or a vulnerable adult, which either deliberately or unknowingly causes harm, threatens the life or violates the rights of a person.

There are four main types of abuse that everybody should be aware of:

1. Physical abuse
2. Sexual abuse
3. Emotional abuse
4. Neglect

Sometimes there can be a mixture of two or more forms of abuse at any time. It is important that each person familiarises themselves with signs of abuse to help combat it. Abuse can take place in any setting either through face-to-face verbal or physical contact, or via the telephone or Internet.

If you suspect abuse you should firstly discuss this with Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Safeguarding officer and take appropriate steps.

**Guidance on handling a disclosure from a child**

What should you do if a child comes to you and tells you that they are being abused, or an under 18 expresses concern about another? It’s normal to feel overwhelmed and confused in this situation. Child abuse is a difficult subject that can be hard to accept and even harder to talk about. Children who are abused are often threatened by the perpetrators to keep the abuse a secret. Thus, telling an adult takes a great amount of courage. Children have to grapple with a lot of issues, including the fear that no one will believe them. So, care must be taken to remain calm and to show support to the child throughout the disclosure phase.

The following guidelines will help lessen the risk of causing more trauma to the child and/or compromising a criminal investigation during the disclosure phase.

**Receive:**

*Listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief. A common reaction to news as unpleasant and shocking as child abuse is denial. However, if you display denial to a child, or show shock or disgust at what they are saying, the child may be afraid to continue and will shut down.  
Accept what is being said without judgement.  
Take it seriously.*

**Reassure:**

*Reassure the child, but only so far as is honest and reliable. Don’t make promises that you can't be sure to keep, e.g. "everything will be all right now". Reassure the child that they did nothing wrong and that you take what is said seriously.  
Don’t promise confidentiality – never agree to keep secrets. You have a duty to report your concerns.  
Tell the child that you will need to tell some people, but only those whose job it is to protect children.  
Acknowledge how difficult it must have been to talk. It takes a lot for a child to come forward about abuse.*

**React:**

*Listen quietly, carefully and patiently. Do not assume anything – don’t speculate or jump to conclusions.  
Do not investigate, interrogate or decide if the child is telling the truth. Remember that an allegation of child abuse may lead to a criminal investigation, so don't do anything that may jeopardise a police investigation. Let the child explain to you in his or her own words what happened, but don’t ask leading questions.  
Do ask open questions like "Is there anything else that you want to tell me?"  
Communicate with the child in a way that is appropriate to their age, understanding and preference. This is especially important for children with disabilities and for children whose preferred language is not English.  
Do not ask the child to repeat what they have told you to another member of staff. Explain what you have to do next and whom you have to talk to. Refer directly to the named child protection officer or designated person in your organisation (as set out in the organisation's child protection policy).  
Do not discuss the case with anyone outside the child protection team.*

**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 Court.  
Record the date, time, place, words used by the child and how the child appeared to you – be specific. Record the actual words used; including any swear words or slang.  
Record statements and observable things, not your interpretations or assumptions – keep it factual.*

**To summarize:**

* Treat all under-18s with the same respect as all other Mentees.
* Challenge all unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations or suspicions to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Safeguarding officer immediately.
* If you are offered information listen carefully and without judgement, but please exercise caution when discussing sensitive issues.
* If you need to share the information please explain to the student that is what you intend to do.
* Do not promise to keep any of the information a secret.
* Do not promise that you can solve the problem - if the problem persists, you will be seen to have broken the child's trust.
* Reassure the child or vulnerable adult that they have done the right thing in disclosing the information and tell them you believe them.
* Make time for the student to talk to you, do not rush them and do not ask them leading questions, it is not our place to investigate.

**Reporting and Monitoring Procedures**

All volunteers and mentors should be aware that they have a responsibility to safeguard. If a concern is raised by either an adult, a mentee themselves or a concerned mentee, they should not keep the information to themselves. They should inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Safeguarding officer immediately to ensure as much information is recorded as possible. Vital information could be missed if this is not done.

* Safeguarding issues will take priority over any other work a person has.
* All concerns will be recorded by the Safeguarding Officer and kept in accordance to the Data Protection Act.
* The Designated Safeguarding Officer will consult the relevant authorities if they need any advice or support.
* Mentees can contact the Safeguarding Officer by phone or email. Mentees are informed about this during their interview process.

In the event that the Safeguarding Officer is not available any concerns should be raised with the Designated safeguarding lead.

Keeping records

If a disclosure is reported by or from a young person or adult (e.g. concern about a physical injury or neglect at home) or there are concerns about the behaviour of an employee or volunteer (e.g. if they hurt a child, breach the code of conduct or do something considered to be poor practice) it is vitally important to record all relevant details, regardless of whether or not the concerns are shared with either the police or another authority. An accurate record should be kept of:

* date and time of incident/disclosure
* parties who were involved, including any witnesses to an event
* what was said or done and by whom
* any action taken by the organisation to look into the matter
* any further action taken
* where relevant, the reasons why a decision was taken not to refer those concerns to a statutory agency
* any interpretation/inference drawn from what was observed, said or alleged should be clearly recorded as such
* name of person reporting on the concern, name and designation of the person to whom the concern was reported, date and time and their contact details.
* Records will be kept in a password protected drop box accessible by the Safeguarding Officer and Safeguarding Lead only.

Records of this nature will not be held for longer than 6 years after the subject’s last contact with the school. Exceptions to the 6 year period will occur when records:

* Need to be retained because the information in them is relevant to legal action that has been started.
* Are required to be kept longer by law.
* Are archived for historical purposes (e.g. where the organisation was party to legal proceedings or involved in proceedings brought by a local authority). Where there are legal proceedings it is best to seek legal advice about the retention period of your records.
* Consist of a sample of records maintained for the purposes of research.
* Relate to individuals and providers of services who have, or whose staff, have been judged unsatisfactory.
* Are held in order to provide, for the subject, aspects of his/her personal history (e.g. where the child might seek access to the file at a later date and the information would not be available elsewhere).

When records are being kept for more than the 6-year period, files will be clearly marked and the reasons for the extension period clearly identified.