

Chapter 5: Responding to, Recording and Reporting Concerns about Abuse

Aim of the chapter

- i. To describe arrangements for responding to concerns of abuse or risk of harm to adults

How staff and volunteers respond to, record and report adult safeguarding Concerns

Adults have the right to take risks and Joymount Presbyterian Church recognises the need to provide support to enable them to identify and manage potential and actual risks to themselves.

Where there are concerns raised about an adult at risk, however, or where a disclosure or allegation is made, people often feel anxious about passing on the information. Often there can be delay in passing on vital information.

Leaders who have concerns do not need any evidence of wrongdoing, nor are they responsible for conducting an investigation; they simply need to pass on their concerns through the Joymount Presbyterian Church's reporting procedures, as soon as possible.

It is important to remember that it is not the responsibility of one person in our denomination to evaluate information regarding an adult at risk and any safeguarding concerns.

Timely sharing of information is one of the most important ways to prevent and detect adult abuse.

Recognise

There are a number of ways in which you may become aware that an adult is at risk:

- They may tell you
- Someone else may tell you
- You may witness something that gives you cause for concern
- You may see signs of physical injury that have no credible explanation
- An individual's behaviour or demeanour may change or give you cause for concern
- The behaviour of another individual around an adult may be inappropriate

Be aware at all times that there may be a link between adult safeguarding and child protection, i.e., victims and those who harm are part of wider networks and communities including families.

This link should be part of any considerations and where there is a connection the child protection procedures and mandated reporting must also be followed.

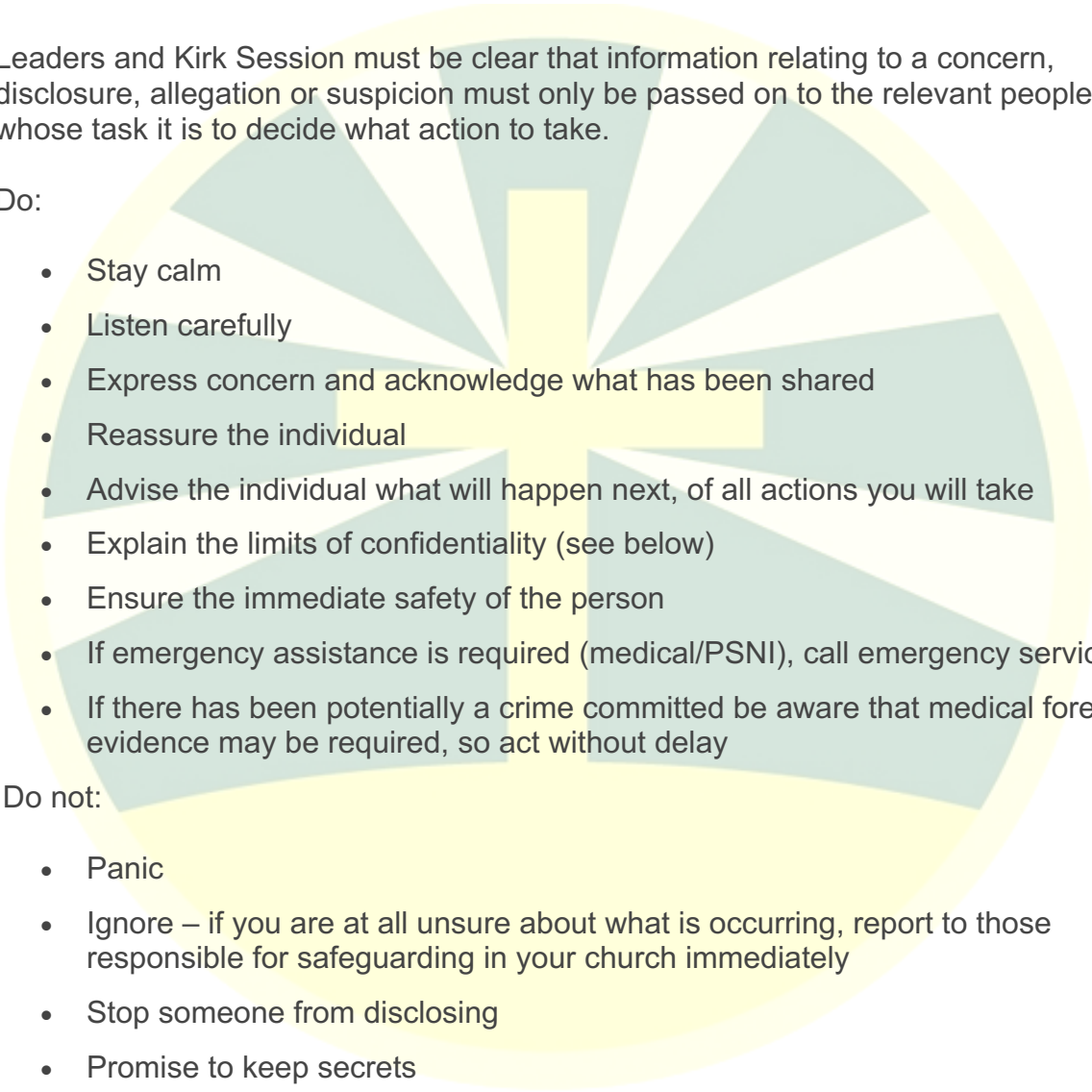
Respond

Confidentiality

When a leader has a concern about an adult, that concern needs to be recorded and reported only to statutory authorities and the Adult Safeguarding Champion in the church.

Leaders and Kirk Session must be clear that information relating to a concern, disclosure, allegation or suspicion must only be passed on to the relevant people whose task it is to decide what action to take.

Do:

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- Stay calm
 - Listen carefully
 - Express concern and acknowledge what has been shared
 - Reassure the individual
 - Advise the individual what will happen next, of all actions you will take
 - Explain the limits of confidentiality (see below)
 - Ensure the immediate safety of the person
 - If emergency assistance is required (medical/PSNI), call emergency services
 - If there has been potentially a crime committed be aware that medical forensic evidence may be required, so act without delay

Do not:

- Panic
- Ignore – if you are at all unsure about what is occurring, report to those responsible for safeguarding in your church immediately
- Stop someone from disclosing
- Promise to keep secrets
- Press for more details or ask investigatory questions – allow for free recall
- Gossip or discuss with anyone who does not have a legitimate need to know, which includes for the purposes of prayer
- Contact the alleged perpetrator
- Leave details with anyone on voicemail or email
- Delay

Recording

Please see the sample recording form:

- Record in writing a report of what you have heard or witnessed
- Note any action taken
- If a disclosure was made, at all times use the individuals' own words, do not paraphrase
- Sign and date your record
- Give your record to the Adult Safeguarding Champion (or designated person if they oversee all safeguarding) / Mandated Person (Minister in ROI) in your congregation
- Do all of this within 24 hours of the concern

Report

Joymount Presbyterian Church has a responsibility, without delay, to involve statutory services, even if it does not involve church personnel directly, when we are concerned about the safety of an adult at risk.

Ensure at all times that you are keeping the adult raising the concern informed. Be clear about who will be made aware of the information.

You must not delay; therefore, it is not always appropriate to wait to speak with someone from the central PCI Safeguarding Team, which is only operational Monday to Friday. The team is there to support the denomination with all safeguarding situations; however, **you must not delay in involving statutory services if there is an immediate risk.**

Reporting adult safeguarding concerns to the appropriate authorities

As per the recording procedures, there must be no delay in reporting to statutory authorities any concerns about an adult in need of protection.

When a concern is raised about an adult at risk or in need of protection the ASC (designated safeguarding person) must:

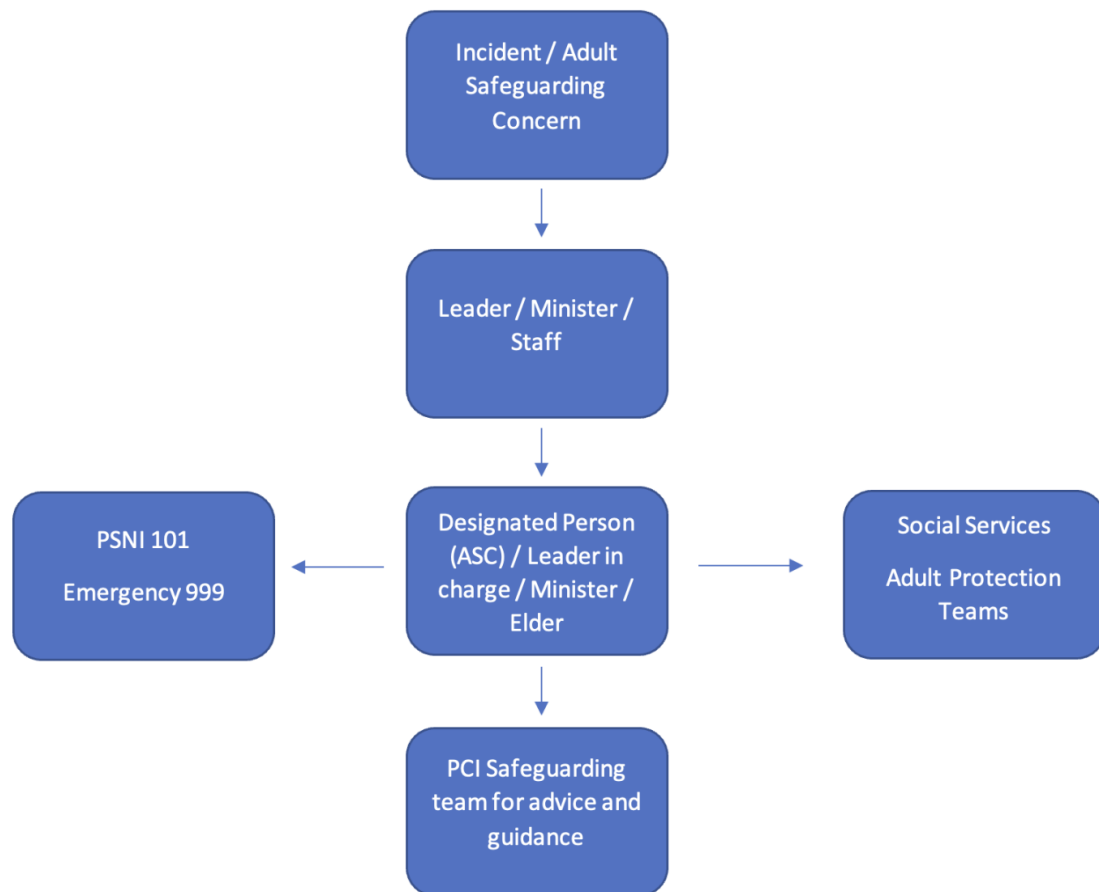
- Where immediate danger exists or the situation warrants immediate action, ensure any medical assistance has been sought and refer to the HSC Trust Adult Protection Gateway Service or PSNI
- Ensure that any actions take account of the adult's wishes
- When practicable, contact the Safeguarding Lead at PCI or the Safeguarding Department for advice and support (do not let this be a source of delay – the Safeguarding Office operates Mon–Fri 9.30am to 4.30pm only and is not an emergency response service)

- Where it has been deemed that it is **not a safeguarding issue**, other alternative responses must be considered such as monitoring, support or advice to leaders or Kirk Session, signposting to external agencies for specific support.
- A record must be made of the concern and the details kept on file, including any action taken or the reasons for not referring
- If it is decided that **it is a safeguarding issue**, a referral will be made to the HSC Trust Adult Protection Gateway Service. The HSC Trust will then conduct a risk assessment and decide what response is appropriate.
- If a crime is suspected or alleged, contact the PSNI and HSC Trust Adult Protection Gateway Service directly
- Act as the liaison point for any investigative activity that is required and will ensure easy access to relevant case records or leaders/Kirk Session
- Ensure that accurate and timely records and any adult safeguarding forms required have been completed

Where there is any doubt or uncertainty about whether there is a safeguarding issue this must be discussed with the HSC Key Worker (if known) or HSC Trust Adult Protection Gateway Service.

Joymount Presbyterian Church ASC must hold the relevant Adult Protection Gateway contact details.

Flow chart for reporting



* If there is an emergency the PSNI or social services should be contacted without delay

CHAPTER END