



Dealing with disclosures and concerns about a child or young person procedure

Children experiencing distress or abuse may seek to tell a member of staff or volunteer of Pawsitive Squad CIC. Children may choose to make disclosures to volunteers as they may view volunteers as having less authority or being less intimidating. It is important to make sure therefore that ALL staff and volunteers know how to respond to a disclosure from a child.

If a child disclose harm to any staff member or volunteer it must be remembered that Pawsitive Squad CIC's role is to recognise and refer abuse, not to investigate. This is to avoid contamination of evidence gained in any subsequent investigations by the Police and/or social services and to ensure that the child is not placed under additional stress of having to repeat their story more than necessary.

While Pawsitive Squad CIC staff and volunteers must not investigate that does not mean that we can not ask questions however it is important that questions are only asked to clarify that they are being harmed or at risk of being harmed or that the member of staff or volunteer are reassured that the child is safe. Any questions asked must not be leading. If a child presents with an injury accompanied by a disclosure that they have been harmed or make a clear sexual disclosure it should not be necessary to question the child except to clarify who was involved and when the incident took place.

In situations where the child appears to be making a possible disclosure or presents with a suspicious injury it is reasonable to ask open, non-leading questions to establish the child's story. Examples of acceptable questions are "that's a nasty bruise, how did that happen?" "you seem upset, is anything troubling you?" Try to ask open question such as what? When? Who? How? Where? But remember that you should only ask questions to clarify is the child is at risk of harm Once clarification is achieved, no further questions should be asked.

Disclosures may sometimes come through third parties such as a friend or disclosing indirectly by asking "what if my friend..." If such concerns arise they should be taken as seriously as direct disclosures. Children may also seek to disclose their experiences through drawing, writing, stories or play. If concerns arise, it is appropriate to talk further with the child to allow discussion and clarification.

In any circumstance where a child or young person discloses abuse, or any volunteer or member of staff suspects abuse this information requires immediate sharing with Pawsitive Squads safe guarding officer (Heather Pyne) or the Deputy Safeguarding Officer (Amanda Burrows). This includes disclosures of allegations against other members of staff or other volunteers at Pawsitive Squad CIC.

Do's and Don'ts of dealing with disclosures

- 1) DO remember the child's welfare and interest must be the paramount consideration at all times.
- 2) DO listen carefully and actively to the child. Let the child guide the pace.
- 3) DO NOT act shocked at what you are hearing as this can discourage the child from disclosing.
- 4) DO not investigate
- 5) DO Stay calm and reassure the child
- 6) DO NOT promise to keep a secret or confidentiality – if a child asks you to then tell the child you are worried about them and that you have a responsibility to keep them safe, so you must tell someone who will know how to help you keep them safe.
- 7) DO record factually what the child has told you or what you have observed. Ensure you recover the date, time, place of disclosure, behaviour and words used by the child.
- 8) Do use a body map to record any details of injury or bruising.
- 9) DO not gossip with other staff or volunteer about what you have been told. This information remains confidential to those who 'need to know'
- 10) DO NOT break contact with the child after disclosure unless this would have happened anyway. We do not want the child to feel rejected for disclosing.
- 11) DO ensure that YOU are receiving any support necessary to cope with the information you have received.



Pawsitive Squad CIC
Guidelines for dealing with disclosures

If a child discloses abuse to you:

- 1) Remain calm and listen. It is important that an abused or neglected child knows you are there to listen to and help them.
- 2) Go slowly. Don't pressure the child to say anymore than they are willing. Asking gentle open-ended questions such as "can you tell me more about what happened" is helpful.
- 3) Be reassuring and supportive. Reassure the child they have not done anything wrong. Don't ask "why" questions as this can make a child believe they are in trouble or to blame. Make sure they know they did the right thing telling you.
- 4) Gather the essential fact only. Limit the discussion to clarifying that a child was or is at risk of harm. Once facts are gathered gently redirect the conversation to be supportive.
- 5) Tell the child what will happen next. Tell them you are going to have to tell the safeguarding team who may need to tell other people but that you are telling these people to help keep them safe.
- 6) Report to the designated child protection officer (Heather Pyne) or the deputy child protection officer (Amanda Burrows) immediately for follow up and referral.
- 7) Make notes of all comments using the child or young persons exact words where possible. Save anything the child gave to you as it may need to be saved with children's social services and/or the police.

Note: If after initial concerns you believe that, following gentle questioning, the child is not at risk and you have clarified that the child has not disclosed any abuse or risk of harm this must still be reported to the designated safeguarding officer. The concern will still need to be filed with justification of why Pawsitive Squad CIC decided to take no further action.

Remember: You are not alone and do not need to make any decisions. Always refer to the designated safeguarding officer. Please make sure disclosures are reported immediately and ensure the child is suitably supervised and protected until you've received further advice or instruction.

Action by the designated safeguarding officer/ deputy upon receiving disclosure about a member of staff or volunteer:

- If the allegation is not about a current member of staff or volunteer, the disclosure will be reported to the police.
- If the person the allegation was made against has behaved in a way which has or may have harmed a child OR has possibly committed a criminal offence the local authorities designated officer (LADO) will be contacted immediately who will direct further action and investigation as required.
- If the person the allegation was made against behaved in a way towards a child or children in a way which indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children, contact the local authorities designated officer (LADO) immediately who will direct further action and investigation as required.
- If there is no further action from outside Pawsitive Squad CIC (such as from police or local authority), the designated officer will keep a record of the outcome and reasoning.

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