

Disclosure of Childhood Abuse by a Person who is now an Adult: Guidance for Practitioners

(Formerly known as Non-recent Allegations of Abuse)

Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Boards	Date: 21 March 2022	Status: Endorsed April 2022
Author: PPG		Review Date: 21 March 2025

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 All statutory partner organisations of the Safeguarding Boards have a duty to report safeguarding concerns relating to children and adults at risk (Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, Part 7). This includes any beliefs or suspicions that a child may be suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.
- 1.2 Guidance in relation to children at risk of harm and the powers and duties under the Children Act 1989, in particular the duty under section 47 of that Act, **must** be considered. [Wales Safeguarding Procedures 2019 Children & Young People at Risk of Harm](#)
- 1.3 The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 imposes a new duty on relevant partners to report to a local authority if it is suspected that an adult is an adult at risk. The Act also imposes a duty on a local authority to report to another local authority if an adult suspected of being an adult at risk is living in or moving to another area. [Wales Safeguarding Procedures Adults at Risk](#)
- 1.4 All practitioners must ensure that they respond appropriately when adults disclose abuse that they experienced as a child because:
- there is a significant likelihood that a person who abused a child/ren in the past will have continued to do so, and may still be abusing children
 - a criminal prosecution may be possible if sufficient evidence can be obtained

2.0 CONTEXT

- 2.1 Many child abuse allegations are not reported until years after the offences were committed. There are many valid reasons why late reporting is common:
- Fear of not being believed
 - Ongoing contact with the perpetrator
 - Threats made by the perpetrator
 - Lack of understanding at the time that their experiences constituted child abuse.
 - Inability to adequately communicate the abuse due to their cognitive capacity.
 - Cultural or language barriers
 - Never having been asked about the possibility of child abuse.
- 2.2 Before any work is undertaken with adults, practitioners have a responsibility to advise the person of the limits of confidentiality and that, for example, any disclosures of child abuse must be reported. This is part of the duty to safeguard children and adults at risk. [Wales Safeguarding Procedures 2019 Children & Young People at Risk of Harm](#)
- 2.3 It should be noted that for children disclosing abuse as a child, this should be dealt with as described in the [Wales Safeguarding Procedures/Children &](#)

[young people at risk of harm](#). Similarly, adults disclosing abuse as an adult should be dealt with as described in the [Wales Safeguarding Procedures/Adults at risk](#).

3.0 INITIAL PRACTITIONER RESPONSE TO DISCLOSURE

- 3.1 Whenever an adult makes a disclosure of childhood abuse, the practitioner must record what is said by the person and their responses and be clear about the actions that will be taken by the practitioner being given the information. The overriding duty is to safeguard any children or adults who may currently be at risk.
- 3.2 All written records must be dated and signed. Electronic records must be kept in line with their agencies record keeping policy. Any information recorded in the case records may be used as evidence by the police or in court.
- 3.3 Every effort should be made to empower and support the person in making the disclosure but it is not appropriate for the practitioner to 'investigate' the allegations prior to the involvement of Children Services/Police. Questions may be asked for clarification purposes only but care needs to be taken not to use leading questions.
- 3.4 It is important to establish whether the adult is aware of the alleged perpetrator's recent or current whereabouts and if they have any contact with children or adults who may be at risk. If possible, this will include gathering information such as the alleged perpetrator's full name, date of birth, place of work, responsibility for children and whether the abuse had previously been investigated, and if so by whom.
- 3.5 Full consideration should be given to Section 5 of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures which sets out arrangements for responding to safeguarding concerns about those whose paid, voluntary work or caring responsibilities brings them into contact with children or adults at risk. The allegation being made may mean that the person who is subject to the allegation is unsuitable to continue to work with children or adults at risk in their present position or in any capacity. Appropriate advice should be sought from the Designated Officer for Safeguarding. There may be a duty to report these concerns. For full details refer to [Section 5 of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures 2019](#).
- 3.6 If there is any current risk to any child or adult who may be at risk, the practitioner must report to children's services even without the person's consent.
- 3.7 The adult must be asked whether s/he wants to make a complaint directly to the police that may lead to a police investigation and to a criminal prosecution. This will include all adults regardless of mental health issues or learning disabilities. The decision of a person with capacity not to report their own abuse must be respected.

3.7 Consideration must be given to the therapeutic needs of the adult who should be reassured that all reasonable efforts will be made to investigate what they have reported. Adults must also be made aware that insufficient disclosure of information could result in no action being taken against the perpetrator but could leave children or vulnerable adults at risk of harm.

4.0 NEXT STEPS

4.1 When information is obtained that gives rise to a reasonable cause to suspect that child(ren) is/are currently at risk of abuse and neglect, **practitioners have a duty to report** by referring the case to Children's Services by telephoning the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and following up in writing by submitting a C1 (Report Form) within 2 working days. The same is true for any adults at risk. This should be done by telephoning the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and following this up in writing by completing the Adult at Risk Report Form (A1). Telephone numbers to report concerns are;
Rhondda Cynon Taf & Merthyr - 01443 743730
Bridgend (Adults) - 01656 642477
Bridgend (Children) - 01656 642320

4.2 When it is unclear as to whether any children are currently at risk or the identity of the alleged abuser(s) is unclear, the case should be discussed with the Designated Officer for Safeguarding within the practitioner's organisation within two working days. It may be possible to work with the service user over a more extended period of time to empower them to reveal/remember more details and/or proceed with a formal disclosure/complaint.

4.3 Practitioners should be aware that disclosure of abuse allegations to the Police or Social Services and the subsequent actions taken may have a direct impact on the adult making the disclosure and their engagement with the services they are accessing. When there is any doubt as to how to proceed, the Designated Officer for Safeguarding within the practitioner's organisation should be consulted. The outcomes of any discussions must be recorded in the case record, together with any resulting action plans.

4.4 Measures to protect the adult, who has made the disclosure should be addressed as part of the multi-agency planning of the investigation.

5.0 SUPPORTING THE ADULT TO MAKE A COMPLAINT TO THE POLICE

5.1 Practitioners may wish to support the adult to facilitate this process by being present in an initial telephone call with the Police. If the professional witnessed the initial disclosure though caution should be used. Advice from the Police may be needed to avoid evidential problems.

- 5.2 Practitioners can contact the Police themselves to ask for advice on what action to take by dialling 101. The Police will provide guidance on what information is required in order for the complaint to be investigated.
- 5.3 Any police involvement in an investigation will depend on a number of factors, which will include the adult's wishes and the protection of the public.
- 5.4 The Police will share the information with Children's Social Services in order to determine the next steps and to also establish if there is any information available regarding the alleged perpetrator, and the likely risk to children currently having contact with them

6.0 SUPPORT FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

6.1 A Referral to New Pathways can be made with the consent of the individual. New Pathways is a registered charitable company that provides a range of specialist counselling and advocacy services for women, men, children and young people who have been affected by rape or sexual abuse whether current or historical. They have many years of experience and are widely regarded throughout the UK as a leading organisation in this field. New Pathways also provide support for victims who do not wish to report to police.

6.2 The contact details are as follows:

New Pathways, 11 Church St, Merthyr Tydfil CF47 0BW
Telephone: 01685 379 310
Email: enquiries@newpathways.org.uk

7.0 REPEATED DISCLOSURES

- 7.1 Practitioners should not assume that abuse that has previously been disclosed and/or investigated automatically discounts the possibility of a child being currently at risk.
- 7.2 The possibility that any children or adults are currently at risk should continue to be considered with any repeated disclosure. The results of these discussions must be documented in line with agencies policies.
- 7.3 In circumstances where allegations have already been disclosed / investigated and there is no evidence of any current risk to children or adults at risk, the need for further action should be discussed with the police (101) and Children's Services via MASH if there is any doubt surrounding current safeguarding concerns.
- 7.4 When the alleged perpetrator is deceased, professionals should still consider whether any others involved in the alleged abuse may still present a safeguarding risk. The results of these considerations must be documented in line with agencies record keeping policy.

7.5 The provision of pre-trial therapy should be carried out in compliance with the CPS guidance which can be found at www.cps.gov.uk