



West Monkton Church of England School

**Handling a Disclosure from a
Vulnerable Child Policy**

March 2022

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Introduction

It can be very hard for children and young people to speak out about abuse in any shape or form including: physical, sexual or emotional. Often they fear there may be negative consequences if they tell anyone about what has happened or what is happening to them. Some may delay telling someone about abuse for a long time, while others never tell anyone, even if they want to. Some may communicate through indirect ways, role play and other behaviours. Regardless of the form it takes, it is vital that children and young people at West Monkton School are able to communicate and feel safe to do so; knowing that whoever they tell takes them seriously and acts on what they have been told.

Disclosure

Disclosure is the process by which children and young people start to share their experiences of abuse with others. This can take place over a long period of time – it is a journey, not one act or action. At West Monkton School, we believe a disclosure can be anything that may cause be a cause for concern for a child's wellbeing.

Children may disclose directly or indirectly and sometimes they may start sharing details of abuse before they are ready to put their thoughts and feelings in order, sometimes disclosures may be random and shared through role play or behaviours.

Responding to a Disclosure

Once a child has indicated they are ready to disclose information to a trusted adult. The trusted adult should inform a member of the school's safeguarding team at the earliest opportunity. It will be our best intention that a member of the safeguarding team (DSL or a Deputy DSL) will be present alongside the trusted adult (if the DSL/DDSLs are not known to the child i.e. one their 'trusted adults') to hear the disclosure from the vulnerable child. This will ensure that the school's safeguarding protocols are followed, whilst making the child feel that they are being listened to, supported and that their disclosure is being taken seriously. In addition, any further discussions deemed necessary with the child around the disclosure ensure a trusted adult is present.

In responding to a disclosure, there are three key interpersonal skills that help a child feel they are being listened to and taken seriously:

- **show you care, help them open up:** Give your full attention to the child or young person and keep your body language open and encouraging. Be compassionate, understanding and reassure them their feelings are important. Phrases such as 'you've shown such courage today' help.
- **take your time, slow down:** Respect pauses and don't interrupt the child – let them go at their own pace. Recognise and respond to their body language. And remember that it may take several conversations for them to share what's happened to them.
- **show you understand, reflect back:** Make it clear you're interested in what the child is telling you. Reflect back what they've said to check your understanding –and use their language to show it's their experience.

Supporting the child following a disclosure

A child disclosing is a significant event that can have an impact on their emotional state. Following a disclosure, ensure the child is supported:

- alert the adults who support the child: Make them aware that the child may need further support (recognise some details may not be shared).
- ask the child how they feel: What/Who could help them?
- be aware: Understand that for the child the impact could be long lasting. Monitor their behaviours and continue to check in with them until you are confident 'they are ok'. Be sensitive to their needs.

Supporting documents:

- Behaviour Policy
- PACE: A trauma-informed approach to supporting children and young people