

Safeguarding guidelines

-
- If your assessment of risk suggests that you need to take urgent action and you are not able to contact your supervisor in time, you could call the local authority designated safeguarding lead professional or local authority duty care officer who will have experience of dealing with many cases and ask for advice on the case. Note that once the name of the client is given, the person you have contacted would be required to take the case forward. In extreme circumstances where you perceive that someone is in imminent danger and that you are legally obligated to act, you would need to call the police.
- It is useful to have a pre-planned arrangement as to whom to call if your supervisor is unavailable.
- In ALL cases full notes should be taken of your decision, actions and reasons for them.

Step four: act

Following the above steps your actions may be:

- in the first instance, to make a formal report to the designated safeguarding lead in your setting
- to make a formal report of the case to an employer/other service
- to discuss further with your client
- to formally contact children's or adult services
- to formally contact the police
- to do nothing – (the rationale for your decision should be recorded and where appropriate agreed with your supervisor)
- should you continue to have a well-reasoned concern which has not been taken up by the setting in which you are working, you should take the responsibility for reporting your concern to the relevant authority.

But also consider:

- how to respect the confidentiality of clients and treat information that does not need to be disclosed about them as confidential
- how you ensure that clients are informed about how and why information about them is collected, stored and shared with others in relation to matters of safeguarding
- how and when you inform clients that a disclosure could trigger further action by a relevant body that there would be the possibility of heightened risk to them by continuing to make such a disclosure.

Your response may be:

- to listen and be empathic when a client is telling you something serious. If it proceeds to be a full or clear allegation clarifying questions should not be asked.
- to show empathy without collusion and listen actively to what is being said without asking leading questions.
- where partial or unclear comments are made, to seek to clarify, but be aware that the client may be indicating that they are not ready to share more detail at this stage of the therapeutic work and should not be pressured to do so. By clarifying you may contribute to a need to take action after the session. Any response should be in the considered best interest of the child, adolescent or adult at risk.
- to show an expression of concern: reassure but do not promise inappropriate confidentiality.
- good practice is to make clear in an initial contract that where their safety or the safety of others is a concern, the therapist may need to talk with relevant people in order to ensure their safety. You may want to remind a client of this agreement.
- to make the client aware of any statutory responsibilities that would be invoked by specific disclosures.
- to provide support for the client to report (or similar).

(The categories were also enshrined in the Children's Act 2002 enacted 2005 and the inter-agency guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015)

There are helpful definitions of abuse relating to children and adults to be found in Appendix 2 of the NHS Safeguarding Policy (June 2015).

In the case of adults, the threshold of significant harm has been replaced by the phrase 'adult at risk' from: self-neglect, modern slavery, domestic abuse and exploitation (Adult and Care Act 2014).

Step three: think!

- If working in an organisation such as the NHS, a school, college or university or within an organisation in the private or voluntary sector, you have a responsibility to formally inform and consult the designated safeguarding person in that setting at the earliest opportunity.
- If in private practice, unless you are certain that no action needs to be taken, it is good practice to consult your supervisor to discuss your concerns.
- By giving yourself time to discuss in supervision, you can separate yourself from the emotion of the moment so that you can see things clearly, which allows for consideration of the many things that may need to be taken into account.

- If your assessment of risk suggests that you need to take urgent action and you are not able to contact your supervisor in time, you could call the local authority designated safeguarding lead professional or local authority duty care officer who will have experience of dealing with many cases and ask for advice on the case. Note that once the name of the client is given, the person you have contacted would be required to take the case forward. In extreme circumstances where you perceive that someone is in imminent danger and that you are legally obligated to act, you would need to call the police.
- It is useful to have a pre-planned arrangement as to whom to call if your supervisor is unavailable.
- In ALL cases full notes should be taken of your decision, actions and reasons for them.

Step four: act

Following the above steps your actions may be:

- in the first instance, to make a formal report to the designated safeguarding lead in your setting
- to make a formal report of the case to an employer/other service
- to discuss further with your client
- to formally contact children's or adult services
- to formally contact the police
- to do nothing – (the rationale for your decision should be recorded and where appropriate agreed with your supervisor)
- should you continue to have a well-reasoned concern which has not been taken up by the setting in which you are working, you should take the responsibility for reporting your concern to the relevant authority.

But also consider:

- how to respect the confidentiality of clients and treat information that does not need to be disclosed about them as confidential
- how you ensure that clients are informed about how and why information about them is collected, stored and shared with others in relation to matters of safeguarding
- how and when you inform clients that a disclosure could trigger further action by a relevant body that there would be the possibility of heightened risk to them by continuing to make such a disclosure.

You can:

- Share confidential information without consent if it is required by law, or directed by the court, or if the benefit to the child or adult that will arise from sharing that information outweigh both the public and the individual's interest in keeping the information confidential.
- Weigh the harm that is likely to arise from not sharing the information against the possible harm, both to the person and to the overall trust between yourself and your client, whether a child or an adult, from releasing the information.
- Discuss the case with the local authority safeguarding team if you are uncertain that the child or adult is at risk. They are the body that takes responsibility (ultimately passed to the courts) for any further action. In the first instance you may want to withhold personal details of the person at risk. In sharing concerns about neglect and abuse you are not making the final decision on how best to protect the individual.

Step five: Reflect

You may wish to review how you have dealt with a disclosure and the impact that it had on you as a practitioner by:

- use of supervision
- reviewing your recording process
- reviewing your own support strategies and processes

noting your learning from the case

Supporting Information

Further information can be found on the following websites;

- **NSPCC** www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/safeguarding provides guidance and legislation information for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales
- Children's Acts and all relevant legislation at www.legislation.gov.uk
- Government publications on safeguarding can be found at gov.uk/publications
- Your local authority will have a .gov.uk website address, for example: www.gov.uk.