



Building Circles

Building Circles – Safeguarding Policy and Procedure

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, participants and trustees and to any visitors.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility:

Safeguarding vulnerable adults is a part of the wider role of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity which is undertaken to protect specific vulnerable adults who are suffering or are at risk of suffering significant harm. As adults and/or professionals or volunteers, everyone has a responsibility to safeguard vulnerable adults and promote their welfare.

Building Circles recognises that the individuals that we are helping to support can be vulnerable adults and that everyone involved in the charity has a responsibility to help keep people safe from abuse. Our employees and volunteers can be particularly well placed to spot signs of abuse or neglect and so are key to prevention and early detection. It is vital that all staff and volunteers are vigilant at all times and that any concerns or suspicions are raised at the earliest opportunity.

To this end, the charity will seek to ensure that:

- all staff and volunteers are safe and suitable to work with people we support
- staff and volunteers are given support and training to recognise possible signs of abuse
- staff and volunteers ensure that all participants receive the support that they need to identify, and report abuse as far as is possible
- there is a system for dealing with concerns about possible abuse, that is clear to all
- good links are maintained with the statutory care authorities to enhance effective reporting

Building Circles will respond to all allegations of abuse, including those made against the staff, volunteers or others supported by the charity.

Definitions

Vulnerable Adult

The Care Act 2014 defines a person who should be subject of a Safeguarding Enquiry as an adult who:

- has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and;
- is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; and;
- as a result of those care and support needs, is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect.

An adult at risk may be a person who is more vulnerable due to ill health, physical or sensory disability, learning disability, mental health needs including dementia, substance abuse, age, cognitive impairment, issues affecting mental capacity, or a combination of these factors (this list is not exhaustive) that may lessen the ability of the person to protect themselves from the risk or experience of abuse.



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Abuse

Abuse is defined as any action that violates a person's human or civil rights. It can take many forms and involve several factors. It can occur anywhere, and the abuser could be a stranger, a carer, a family member, or someone else in a position of trust.

There are currently 10 identified categories of abuse:

- Physical abuse, including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, being locked in a room, inappropriate sanctions or force-feeding, inappropriate methods of restraint, and unlawfully depriving a person of their liberty.
- Domestic abuse – An incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse by someone who is or has been an intimate partner or family member regardless of gender or sexuality. Includes psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse; so-called “honour-based” violence; Female Genital Mutilation; Forced Marriage.
- Sexual abuse, including rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts, indecent exposure and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting.
- Psychological abuse, including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, indifference, harassment, verbal abuse (including shouting or swearing), cyber bullying, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.
- Financial or material abuse, including theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult's financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with Wills, Property Inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions, or benefits.
- Modern Slavery – Modern Slavery encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced and compulsory labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and Slave Masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive, and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude, and inhumane treatment.
- Organisational Abuse – Including neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a care home or hospital, or where care is provided within their own home. This may range from one off incidents to on-going ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within the organisation.
- Self-Neglect – Self neglect entails neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.
- Neglect and acts of omission – these include ignoring medical, emotional, or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social or educational services, and the withholding of the necessities of life - such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.



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- Discriminatory abuse, this includes discrimination on grounds of race, faith, or religion, age disability, gender, sexual-orientation, and political views along with racist, sexist, homophobic or ageist jokes based on a person's disability or any form of harassment, slurs, or similar treatment.

Current Legislation and Information

The provisions in law for the protection of vulnerable adults come within the *Care Standards Act 2000*, supported by Department of Health Practical Guidance. The *Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Bill* provides the legislative framework for the introduction of a new vetting and barring scheme for those working with children and/or vulnerable adults. Further information for this document has been gained from *No Secrets: Guidance on policies and procedures to protect vulnerable people*. The definitions above are from that document.

The definition of 'care worker' includes voluntary workers within registered care premises. However, it is good practice to ensure that all volunteers and employees, of organisations not currently covered by the legislation, are rigorously screened prior to commencing volunteering or employment, as well as being made aware of the issues involved in the *Protection of Vulnerable Adults* through training, supervision, and support in their practice.

Safeguarding Reporting Details

If you think an adult is being abused or neglected, you can report your concerns to the Adult Social Care Service: Gloucestershire Adult Helpdesk – 01452 426 868

The Adult Helpdesk is open Monday to Friday 8am – 5pm – excluding bank holidays.

If you have a social care emergency outside of the above hours, you can contact Gloucestershire County Councils Emergency Duty Team on 01452 614 194

If it is not an emergency, please report to our Head of Safeguarding Helen Kay, within 24hrs of you becoming aware of the abuse/suspected abuse/a concern being raised.

Email – helen@buildingcircles.org.uk

Mobile: 07450 840 909

In an emergency, and if a person is in immediate danger, please call 999 while keeping them safe.

Making Safeguarding Personal

Building Circles aims to keep the people we support at the heart of the safeguarding process by involving people at every stage of the process wherever safe and possible to do so. We will log every safeguarding concern and include how we have attempted to involve the person we support and who else has been involved.



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Accessible information

It is important that the people we support understand the service and information that they are being offered and given, that this is in a format that is accessible to them, and that they are enabled to communicate the support that they are requesting. Communication barriers add to vulnerability and where they exist it is important that everything possible is done to overcome these so that understanding is possible. It is recognised that in some instances, this may take time, and it may be necessary to involve other people and /or equipment and training to achieve this and ensure that staff and volunteers are fully alert to pointers that abuse, or neglect may be happening.



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Positive Risk Taking: Balance of risk to achievement

Building Circles recognises that there are risks inherent in the development of new friendships and relationships that support improved quality of life. Paul Marriot [2005] considers the balancing of risk to achievement, within the relationship of volunteers and vulnerable adults and the social activities that may be contemplated. He suggests that most things in life that are enjoying and fulfilling involve some kind of risk, as enjoyment often comes from overcoming new challenges, where the risk of failure is always present. Within new relationships, the risk of rejection is also always present. Furthermore, he states that fulfilment 'comes from the realisation of a dream or ambition, where there is always risk that the aspiration proves unrealistic'. As others have also noted, the relationship between a volunteer and the person that they are befriending is qualitatively different from that of the befriended person and someone who has a duty of care towards them. Also, within an innovative new way of offering support and help, there will be risk.

Hence, there is need for the realisation by all concerned that there is risk and steps must be taken to have contingency plans for times when things may go wrong. Risk assessment provision is found in Building Circles **Health and Safety Policy**.

Safeguarding in Building Circles

Staff and Volunteer Selection

Building Circles ensures that the recruitment and selection of staff, volunteers and trustees follows best practice guidance and always obtains enhanced Disclosure and Barring (DBS) checks for anyone working directly or coming into unsupervised contact with people we support. Participants may also be required to apply for a DBS check. DBS checks are renewed every 3 years for all volunteers and staff.

All staff and volunteers are interviewed, and two references will be taken up and checked and cross-referenced for accuracy. Everyone will be required to obtain the relevant level of DBS check. No person will be allowed to work alone with a vulnerable adult until all the checks are satisfactorily in place.

Training

Training and assessment throughout employment including thorough induction, supervision and initial visits will help support and enhance awareness. Safeguarding training will be completed by all staff and volunteers, and this needs to be refreshed every 3 years.

Training will be organised at two levels:

- general session, for subjects that are common to all volunteers and employees and
- specific training, needed by individual volunteers and employees, due to their own needs or the needs to enhance their friendship with the person that they support. This may be specific communication support or background information, applicable to the person they support.

All volunteers and employees are made aware of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006), and their responsibilities stemming from it. Each volunteer and employee has access to our Volunteer and



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Staff Handbook from their Induction onwards. This must be read and includes our safeguarding policy. Staff and volunteers must sign an agreement to say they have read and understood their responsibilities.

Monitoring of competence and safety to work will be assessed and actions taken swiftly, to ensure the people we support are kept safe at all times.

Ongoing Support

Ongoing support includes:

- regular supervision and support meetings to include review of role duties and responsibilities
- relevant training and updating
- team meetings
- where possible and appropriate feedback from contact with the person we support and others who are in contact with them to aid development and practice
- Feedback on learning from events

The Volunteer Co-ordinator/s organise regular meetings with individual volunteers to discuss progress within their relationship with the person that they support. The CEO conducts supervision and support meetings with the Volunteer Co-ordinator and any other employees. Any areas of concern raised by either the volunteer/employee or the CEO/Volunteer Co-ordinator should be noted during the session and action taken as appropriate; follow-up/reporting back regarding the situation and the resolution or otherwise of the concern should also be recorded.

Meetings of groups of volunteers and Co-ordinators together will enable an exchange of information and highlight any concerns.

Good boundaries are vital to safe practice, and it is made clear to staff and volunteers that it is important to discuss with the people that we support that these boundaries exist, and a formal arrangement for contact should be made (days and times that are convenient to all) that both parties are happy with. Our mission is to promote genuine, lasting friendships, but these must still be within boundaries that keep everyone safe.

Involving People We Support and their Family/Carers

Building Circles is committed to involving people we support in the safeguarding process throughout their involvement with Building Circles. During the initial assessment visit/s, and before a volunteer has been identified, the Volunteer Coordinator will inform the people we support and his/her immediate family members and carer/s about the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adult Policy and Procedures, and their right to report any concerns to Building Circles at any time.

The Volunteer Co-ordinator will continue to maintain regular contact with each person we support, without the volunteer, to find out about the person's experience of our support.



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Participants, and their carers, will be given telephone contact details, as well as an address and a named contact, so that they can raise any concerns they have.

Our Safeguarding Lead is Helen Kay, CEO.

Our Trustee responsible for Safeguarding is Jon Minall.

Confidentiality and Raising Concerns

It is important that any concerns are kept confidential; those between the volunteer and the Volunteer Co-ordinator are essential and must be open and frank but the matter should not be discussed with other volunteers or any outsider. Information that the volunteer discloses may be evidence that they may be required to give in any legal proceedings. Inferences and opinions are not evidence and should not be disclosed. The documents on confidentiality are given to every volunteer and employee during their induction programme and will be revisited at regular intervals.

Building Circles Safeguarding Procedure

Although disclosure can happen at any time, Procedure flowcharts and forms are available for use when a disclosure is made, or at the earliest opportunity afterwards. They are attached in the appendices of this policy.

Supporting and Listening to someone that discloses a concern

If a person we support makes a disclosure about abuse or neglect, the staff member or volunteer should not promise to keep this a secret and should make it clear to the person that they will need to pass this on. The reason for that should be clearly explained to the person and they should be advised that the information will be shared on a strict 'need to know' basis. The only exception would be where doing so could lead to further risks. The disclosure should be written up immediately after the disclosure (when no longer with the person) on a Building Circles Disclosure Form or on the online form at <https://forms.office.com/r/h8rBKHH8LG>. This should be written up using the person's own words as much as possible and should be completed AFTER the disclosure has been taken. Notes should be taken in the person's own words. Building Circles provides question prompt sheets that may be helpful to use. These can be found in the Appendices, and in the Staff Handbook.

Do

- Give the person your whole concentration and understand what is being said.
- Listen carefully to what is said
- Be sympathetic and reassure the person by telling them:
- Assure them they did the right thing in telling you and that you will treat the information seriously
- you will not tell anyone except those who need to know
- Tell them who you are going to report to and that you will let them know what is going to happen next.



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- Write down what has been said or seen and report the incident as soon as possible to the most appropriate member of staff, for example the Social Buddy Coordinator, the Gig Buddy Coordinator, the Training Manager or Safeguarding Leads (if a member of staff). These people will report the incident to Safeguarding Leads as soon as possible.
- In an emergency contact the Ambulance/Police service and then report the incident to the most appropriate member of staff, for example the Social Buddy Coordinator, the Gig Buddy Coordinator, the Training Manager or Safeguarding Leads (if a member of staff). These people will report the incident to Safeguarding Leads as soon as possible.

Don't

- Stop anyone who is telling you freely about significant events.
- Make any contact with the person who is alleged to have carried out the abuse.
- Question anyone further regarding what happened to them.
- Be judgemental, e.g., do not ask why they did not run away.
- Pass the information to anyone except those who need to know.
- Promise not to tell anyone else about the problem or make any other promise that you cannot keep.

Ensuring the person is safe

If the person is in immediate danger the staff member / volunteer should call 999. If the person could be at risk imminently the staff member / volunteer should call 111. In all cases the staff member / volunteer should speak to the Social Buddy Coordinator, the Gig Buddy Coordinator or Safeguarding Leads (if a member of staff) as soon as possible. If the person is supported by a registered care provider the staff member/ volunteer should report the disclosure to the Designated Safeguarding Lead – UNLESS THEY ARE THE ABUSER. If the person is being trained in a college or school environment, the staff member / volunteer should report the disclosure to the Designated Safeguarding Lead – UNLESS THEY ARE THE ABUSER.

Raising a concern

All staff and volunteers have a duty of confidentiality and must not discuss the disclosure with anyone other than the Volunteer Co-ordinator (if a volunteer) or Safeguarding Leads (if a member of staff) unless directed to do so by the Safeguarding Leads. Where staff have concerns about the possibility of abuse or neglect, they should raise these with the Volunteer Co-ordinator (if a volunteer) or Safeguarding Leads (if a member of staff) immediately.

The following is the reporting line to be used:



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- Volunteers should report to the Volunteer Co-ordinator, who will report the disclosure to one of the safeguarding leads
- Employees should report the disclosure to the safeguarding lead Helen Kay. If the CEO is not immediately available, contact should be made with Jon Minall. If none of the above are available report the abuse to the Gloucestershire Adult Helpdesk 01452 614194

Maintaining records

The safeguarding leads are responsible for dealing with any concerns regarding vulnerable adults and their welfare, for reporting concerns to outside agencies or ensuring that they are properly handled within Building Circles and for keeping the relevant records in line with the UK Data Protection Act 2018 and the EU General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018.

All complaints, suspicions or allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and investigated as soon as possible.

All complaints, suspicions, or allegations of abuse (along with disclosure forms) are stored in a folder kept securely on the charity's OneDrive. This folder has a limited access policy applied to it in line with this policy.

Attachments:

Appendix 1 If someone makes a disclosure – flowchart

Appendix 2 What to do when someone makes a disclosure – flowchart

Appendix 3 What do we do after someone makes a disclosure – flowchart

Appendix 4 Abuse Disclosure Prompt Sheet

Appendix 5 Abuse Disclosure Record Sheet

Bibliography and Related Legislation.

- Care Act 2014, available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents/enacted>
- Care Standards Act 2000, available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/14/contents>
- Department of Health (2001) No Secrets: Guidance on policies and procedures to protect vulnerable people, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/no-secrets-guidance-on-protecting-vulnerable-adults-in-care>
- Paul Marriot (2005), Better Care – a resource pack for voluntary organisations and community groups: working with vulnerable adults, Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire



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- Safe and Alert Good practice advice on working in vulnerable situations, 2nd edition, National Centre for Volunteering, London
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006), available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/47/contents>



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POLICY APPROVAL		
Approved by CEO	Date 7 th April 2026	Sign and Print Name Helen Kay
Approved on behalf of Trustees	Date 7 th April 2026	Sign and Print Name Jon Minall

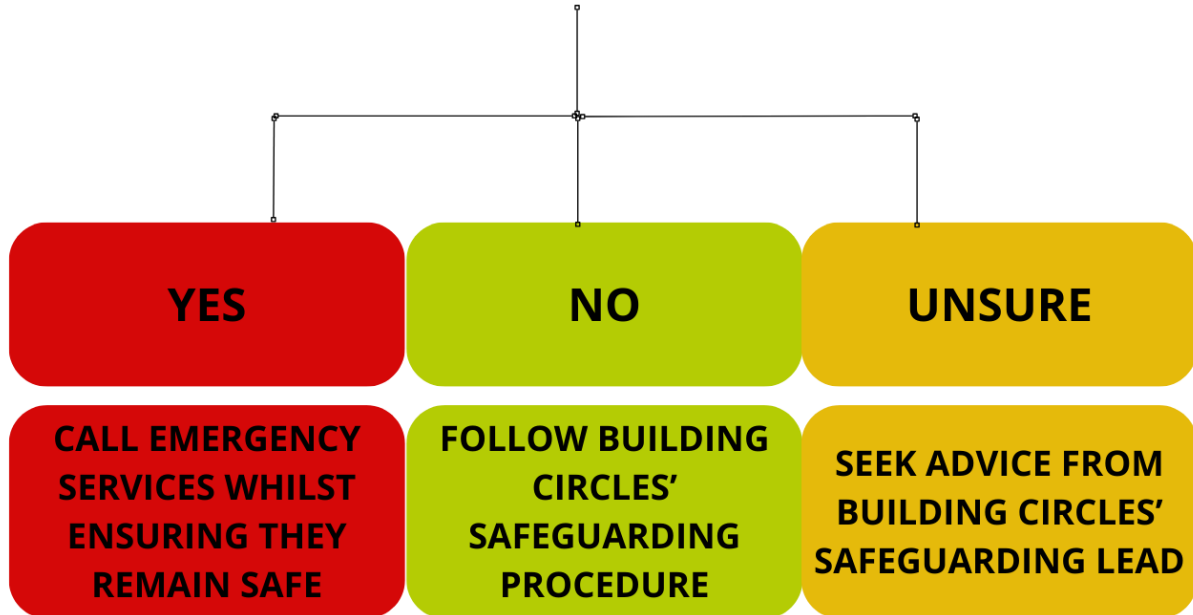
CHANGE RECORD		
February 2026	H Kay	Updated pending approval at the next trustee meeting in April
February 2025	H Kay	Updated – pending approval at next trustee meeting in April
Dec 2024	J Minall	Updated
October 2023	J Minall	Policy Approved by the Trustess
May 2022	J.Sutherst	Policy approved by the Trustees
March 2021	K.Buck	Policy approved by the Trustees
February 2021	K.Buck	Policy approved by the Trustees
July 2019	K.Buck	Policy approved by the Trustees



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Appendix 1

IS THE PERSON IN IMMEDIATE DANGER

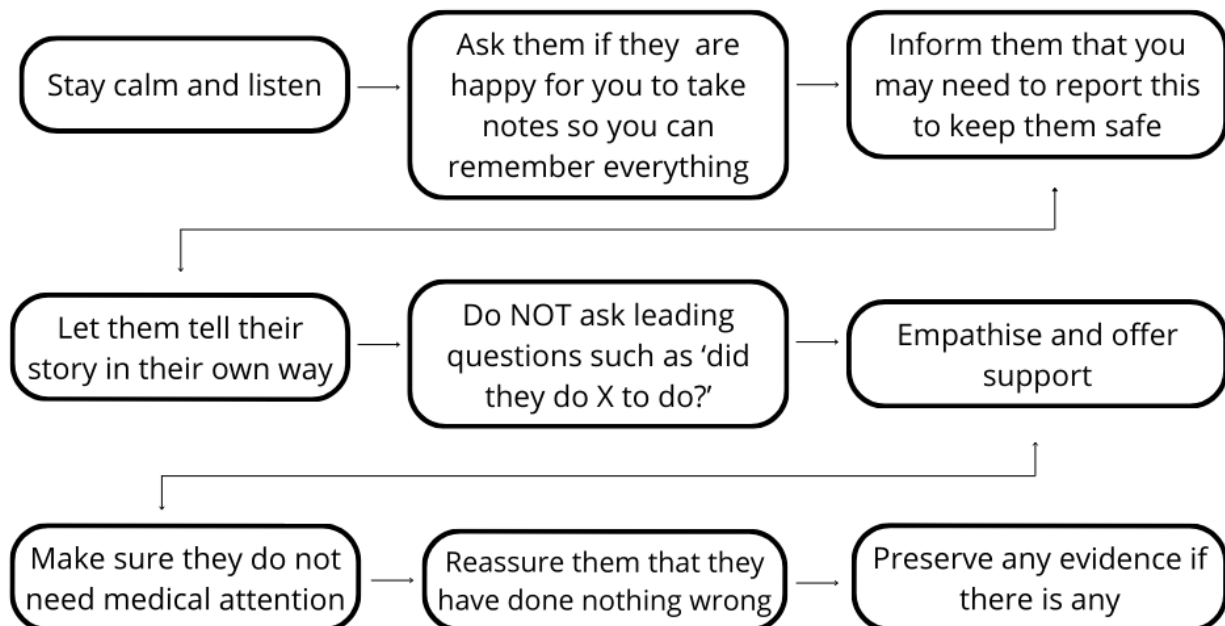




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Appendix 2

What to do when someone makes a disclosure





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Appendix 3 : Abuse Disclosure Prompt Sheet

Name of Abused:

Date and Time:

Care Home/Residence:

**Take notes in the person’s own words and do not promise to keep secrets
If you can ask the following questions, it would be helpful but they may need to be written down later if the person you are with is upset. Give this person your whole concentration and understand what is being said.**

A new disclosure.
Is this a new disclosure? If so, who is abusing you?
What do they do to you?
When does this happen?
Is there someone here you can trust that we can tell? What is their name?
We must report what you have said.

A current disclosure - it is being dealt with now
What happened and who was the abuser?
Have you told someone already and is something being done about it?
Have the police or safeguarding been involved?
Do you feel safe now?
Are people helping you get over this?
We will have to mention this to Safeguarding.

An historical disclosure - something that happened a long time ago
What happened and who was the abuser?
Who did you tell and were the police or safeguarding involved?
Are you safe from harm now?
After we are gone do you have someone to talk to if you need it?
We will have to tell Safeguarding.

BC staff name:

Time:

Place:



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Passed to Safeguarding – who:

Passed to Safeguarding – date:

Appendix 4 Abuse Disclosure Record Sheet



Abuse Disclosure Record Sheet

Name of Abused:

Date and Time:

Care Home/Residence:

Take notes in the person's own words and do not promise to keep secrets. If you can ask the following questions, it would be helpful, but they may need to be written down later if the person you are with is upset. Give this person your whole concentration and understand what is being said.

A new disclosure.
Is this a new disclosure? If so, who is abusing you?
What do/did they do to you?
When did/does this happen?
Is there someone here you can trust that we can tell? What is their name?



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We must report what you have said.
A current disclosure - it is being dealt with now
What happened and who was the abuser?
Have you told someone already and is something being done about it?
Have the police or safeguarding been involved?
Do you feel safe now?



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Are people helping you get over this?

We will have to mention this to Safeguarding.

An historical disclosure - something that happened a long time ago

What happened and who was the abuser?

Who did you tell and were the police or safeguarding involved?

Are you safe from harm now?

After we are gone do you have someone to talk to if you need it?



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We will have to tell Safeguarding.

BC staff name:

Time:

Place:

Passed to Safeguarding – who:

Passed to Safeguarding – date: