

# Dealing with a disclosure from a young person who has been a victim of crime

Supporting a young person who is disclosing that they have been a victim of a crime requires a sensitive and empathetic approach. Here are step-by-step details on how to provide that support:

- **Stay Calm and create a safe environment:**

When the young person discloses the crime, stay calm and composed. Ensure that you are both in a safe and confidential environment, where possible quickly finding a more suitable or comfortable space. Ask the YP if they are comfortable here or would like to go elsewhere – depending upon where you are.

- **Listen Actively:**

Maintain eye contact and offer your full attention to show you are listening. However, be flexible as sometimes diverting your gaze can give young people space without pressure.

- **Embrace the power of silence:**

During active listening, don't be afraid of silence. Allow the young person to take their time to gather their thoughts and share at their own pace. Silence can also signal that you are fully engaged and ready to hear whatever they want to share.

- **Confirm, Validate and thank:**

Use summarising techniques to confirm that you have understood what they are communicating with you. Start by expressing your belief in their words and your concern for their well-being. Let them know that their feelings and experiences are valid and important. Thank them for sharing this with you.

- **Assure Confidentiality:**

Keep the conversation confidential unless there's a risk to their safety or the safety of others. Make them aware of any legal or ethical limits to confidentiality.

- **Empower Choice:**

Encourage them to share as much or as little as they are comfortable with. Let them control the pace of the conversation. If they are struggling to find the words, give them some paper/pen so they can write things down or draw things. Ask them what they need from you.

- **Avoid Blame or Judgment:**

Focus on the perpetrator's actions rather than questioning the victim's choices. Notice any of your own judgments and focus on making the young person feel comfortable as part of the conversation.

- **Ask Open-Ended Questions**

Use open-ended questions to encourage them to share their feelings and thoughts whilst being mindful of the potential legal implications. For instance, you might ask, 'Could you provide additional details about the situation?' or 'What emotions are you experiencing in this situation?'

- **Offer Emotional Support:**

Be empathetic and validate their emotions. You can say, "This sounds like such a difficult experience, I'm here to help support you. Is there anything you need right now?"

- **Provide Resources:**

Offer information on available resources such as local counselling services, support groups, or helplines for crime victims. Ensure they are aware of their rights as a victim.

- **Respect Their Decisions:**

Respect their choices, including whether they want to involve law enforcement or take legal action, while ensuring their safety and protection are the utmost priorities. Support them in whatever decisions they make, always with their safety in mind.

- **Stay with Them:**

If they are willing, stay with them or help them find someone they trust to be with them. Safety and emotional support are crucial.

- **Encourage self-nurturing:**

Suggest self-care strategies, like deep breathing exercises or mindfulness, to help them manage their immediate distress and positive self-talk.

- **Follow Up:**

Check-in with them regularly to see how they are doing and whether they need further assistance or support. Let them know you're there for the long term. Plan with them when you are going to check back in with them, make a note of it, and take any contact details necessary e.g. mobile/email so you can follow-up with ease.

- **Report if Necessary:**

If the young person is a minor or in immediate danger, you may need to report the crime to the appropriate authorities or child protective services, depending on the situation.

- **Professional Help:**

If the situation is severe, encourage them to seek professional help from a therapist, counsellor, or support organisation specializing in crime victims.

- **Documentation:**

If the young person decides to involve law enforcement, help them gather any relevant information, such as dates, locations, descriptions of the perpetrator, and any evidence they may have.

Remember, every individual's experience is unique, and the young person's needs and preferences should guide your approach. Your role is to provide support, empathy, and information to empower them to make the choices that are right for them.