

PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO A CHILD PROTECTION CONCERN

This document sets out the processes to be followed when responding to a child protection concern and should be read alongside the safeguarding policies of both One Million Mentors (1MM) and the relevant partner organisation.

WAYS A CHILD PROTECTION ISSUE MAY COME TO NOTICE

Staff and mentors are not expected to be experts in identifying child abuse but a child protection issue may come to notice in several different ways:

1. A mentee may make a direct disclosure of an allegation; or
2. A mentee may make a comment that seems to suggest abuse; or
3. A mentee may have bruises or marks; or
4. A mentee's behaviour may suggest the possibility of abuse; or
5. Something about an adult's behaviour may suggest that they are not a suitable person to work with a child, young person or vulnerable adult.

GOOD PRACTICE WHEN DEALING WITH A DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE

In this situation staff and mentors **should**:

- Keep the focus of any action on the welfare of the mentee as a possible victim of abuse.
- Speak to the mentee in a quiet area, visible to other staff whenever possible.
- Remain calm and allow the mentee to speak for as long as s/he wants and at their own pace.
- Ask questions only if they are necessary to clarify whether or not the mentee is disclosing abuse or to decide what to do next. Then use open questions such as, When? Where? Who? What? How?
- Actively listen, using open body language to create empathy and a non-judgemental environment.

- Be supportive and reassuring while maintaining professional boundaries.
- Reassure the mentee that they will not get into trouble and that they are right to make the disclosure.
- Remind the mentee of the need to share concerns about their safety and wellbeing and let them know what will happen next.
- Ask the mentee if they have discussed the situation with anyone else.
- Immediately inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for the relevant partner organisation or, in their absence, the Mentor Co-ordinator.
- As soon as possible, write down exactly what the mentee has said. The written record should include the date and time of the disclosure and only the facts as provided by the mentee, with no personal opinions. It should also identify any other witnesses, either to what the mentee said or to any significant marks or behaviour.
- Handle information correctly, sharing on a strictly 'need to know' basis.
- Acknowledge their own feelings, speaking to their DSL or Mentor Co-ordinator as required.
- **Where there is a risk to the life of a child or a likelihood of serious immediate harm – DO NOT DELAY TAKING ACTION.**

They should not

- Make light of the disclosure by underestimating or 'playing down' the situation.
- Jump to conclusions or make assumptions.
- Ask about explicit details or in any way prompt answers from the mentee.
- Change the subject for fear of dealing with the issue.
- Promise anything which they may not be able to deliver.
- Criticise or try to speak to the alleged perpetrator.
- Promise to keep the allegations secret.

- Try to investigate whether or not the mentee has been abused. That responsibility lies with children's social care and the police.