

# Resources for Supporters

## Disclosure: How you can help



We know there are many reasons why boys and men, women and girls take many years to speak about what happened to them as a child.

### What are the barriers to disclosure or telling?

- Concern for their own safety;
- Fear that they will get into trouble;
- Protecting parents, family;
- Sense of guilt, shame and embarrassment;
- Mistrust of others.



### Men also struggle with additional barriers

- Thoughts he should have been able to stop the abuse from happening;
- Being a man, he should not show any weakness;
- Speaking about the abuse can open a can of worms and he will become overwhelmed by his emotions;
- The suggestion he might become a perpetrator;
- Their sexual identity being brought into question;
- If he was abused by a woman, a fear that he won't be taken seriously.

### What can prompt a disclosure?

Certain events can lead men to speak about what happened to them.

- Public discussion about redress schemes, criminal trials of perpetrators;
- Disclosures of a friend;
- Becoming a parent;
- When a relationship breaks down;
- Seeking justice through redress or civil litigation.

## How can you help?

You do not have to be an expert or know all the right things to say when a man discloses or tells you what happened to him as a child. A man who has decided to talk to a supportive friend, partner or family member wants you to know what happened to him. You will be playing an important role in helping him as he tries to understand what happened and how it is affecting him.

### Listen

- Give him your full attention, he may struggle with words – silence is ok.
- Try not to interrupt him or ask lots of questions.
- You don't need to know all the details.

### Believe

- He may think you will not believe him. Tell him you believe him.
- Listen and let him know you believe him and ask him how you can help him now and into the future.

### Be fully present

- By physically and emotionally present. Put your phone away.
- Focus on being a calm and supportive friend.
- Keep calm. You might have a range of emotions yourself for example anger or horror.

- If you become overwhelmed by your own emotions he may feel he needs to stop talking, to support you; he may feel responsible for upsetting you.
- Let him know you are ok, that your concern right now is him.

### Offer reassurance

- Let him know you are pleased he has told you, that he trusts you.
- Remember that telling you a trusted friend, may well be the first step in getting professional help.

### Respect confidentiality and prioritise safety

- Treat what he tells you with respect and keep it confidential.
- Talk to him about who else should know. He will probably say that he does not want anyone else to know without him being asked if it is ok to tell them. Respect that.
- But be open with him, if you have any worries about his safety or that of anyone else, tell him you might have to share the information.

### Prioritise wellbeing and support

- Remember to prioritise your personal and emotional wellbeing.
- Set aside time to relax.
- It is ok for you to get support for yourself.