

K. FOLLOW UP AND RECORD KEEPING

Appendix 10 covers issues of confidentiality and data protection. Summary guidance is as follows:

- a) Do check if it is safe to contact the abuse survivor at home before doing so. Ask them what their preferred means of contact is and confirm that this is safe.
- b) Do keep information confidential and as a general rule only share with informed consent where appropriate and if possible, respect the wishes of those who do not give consent to share confidential information. You should note that it may still be possible to share confidential information without consent if, in your judgement, it is necessary and proportionate to do so, such as where the safety of the victim or any other person may be at risk. Always keep a record of your decision and the reasons why you decided to share (or not). If in doubt, seek advice.
- c) Do make a brief objective note of date, facts and context of what you have been told but keep your opinions separate. This should be kept in strict confidence but could be useful in any future proceedings.
- d) Do review the safety and risk issues in relation to the victim and the perpetrator if they are in the same Church. There may need to be a risk assessment and 'safeguarding agreement' put in place to protect the vulnerable.
- e) Survivor safety planning should be conducted by a professional, ideally from a domestic abuse service or a statutory agency. There may be an occasion when a survivor wishes to discuss their safety with you. It is essential that you seek advice before entering into detailed safety planning discussions. This planning would normally be guided by a safety planning format (see Appendix 8) and careful consideration should be given to where and how such information is provided and kept by the victim, to avoid being accessed by the perpetrator. Preferably, safety planning should be carried out with someone with experience and training in this area.
- f) **Do not give information about the victim's whereabouts to the perpetrator or to others who might pass information on to the perpetrator.** Do not discuss with other members of a congregation who might inadvertently pass information on to the perpetrator.
- g) When victims are leaving a controlling abuser, they often have to leave with nothing and have access to very limited financial support. Consider how your church can provide practical support to survivors.