



## **The Boys' Brigade**

### **Policy on Responding to Allegations of Historic Abuse in the Brigade**

#### **1. Policy Statement**

The Boys' Brigade recognises that there may be people who, in the past, have suffered abuse during their time as child members of the Brigade. This policy aims to clarify how the Brigade responds to the disclosure of any such abuse.

NB: although we use the term "historic" abuse, the effects on the victim are current, and may involve BB leaders who are still registered. For the purposes of this policy, historic abuse would be defined as the disclosure of abuse that happened a significant time ago, by an adult who was abused while under 18 years old and as a result of their involvement with BB as a child.

Reported criminal acts from the past need investigating and in some cases necessitate reporting to the relevant statutory agencies.

This policy is underpinned by the Brigade "Safeguarding Policies and Practice" document and the "Code of Good Practice".

The Boys' Brigade will seek to:

- Respond quickly, sensitively and effectively to any disclosures of historic abuse
- Ensure confidentiality at levels requested by the discloser of abuse (NB: where there is a current risk of harm to children, the discloser will be informed that we have a duty to share the information with the relevant agencies)
- Assess any current risk of harm
- Assess need and or duty to pass on information to the relevant agencies/public authorities
- Offer the discloser of abuse an opportunity to be listened to, and offer signposting to other sources of support or information

#### **2. Procedure**

##### Disclosure

Any disclosure of historic abuse, whether received by a volunteer leader or staff member should be handled initially in the same way as reported current or recent abuse. See Code of Good Practice card for "Dos and Don'ts and "What Happens If...". The person disclosing the abuse should be given the opportunity to speak directly with the BB Safeguarding Lead (the Director of Youth and

Children's Work) and advised that it is the duty of the person being told of the abuse to pass this information on.

### Safeguarding Procedure

The Director of Youth and Children's Work will assess the information about what happened, where it took place, when it took place and who was involved. The assessment will include the following factors:

- Does the information need to be shared with the police or other agencies? If so, the person disclosing the information will be encouraged to do this themselves unless a current risk of harm to children is identified
- Are children currently at risk of harm?
- Is the alleged perpetrator still alive? Are they still registered as a leader? If so, normal safeguarding procedures will apply.
- What level of support does the victim need at this moment? (This may involve signposting to a local support or counselling service, their GP, police or legal representative.)

### **3. Advice for BB staff or volunteers receiving disclosures of historic abuse**

It has been our experience that a victim of historic abuse has a primary need to be heard and acknowledged and it may be the first time this information has been shared since childhood. The process, for them, may stop here or they may be looking for further help and support.

Staff or volunteers receiving a disclosure may initially feel anxious about what they should or should not say. It is appropriate to listen carefully and show signs of concern and support. Saying something like "I'm sorry this has happened to you" is NOT an admission of liability and it is important that the person knows they are being taken seriously.

We cannot give legal advice or help a victim who wishes to seek legal redress but can advise that they speak to the Director of Youth and Children's Work who will be able to listen and signpost to other agencies or voluntary support services for survivors of abuse.

If the person disclosing does not wish to speak to anyone else, the person receiving the disclosure must share the information, preferably with the permission of the discloser, as soon as possible in the normal way. Explain that anonymity can be preserved, but that it is important that we pass on any information about the alleged perpetrator in order to safeguard children, particularly if there is a current risk of harm to others.

Explain to the discloser that we have a "Whistleblowing" policy which means that they can talk to the Director of Youth and Children's Work about the abuse with no pressure or expectation that they identify themselves.

