

Dealing with disclosure of information and handling sensitive issues – Continuing professional development (CPD) activity

Guidance for facilitators

Introduction

This resource uses a range of activities and tools for teachers* to discuss the handling of sensitive issues including disclosure with colleagues. The activities undertaken mirror approaches that could be adopted for use with learners in delivery of this particular topic, and which could be transferred to other topics and scenarios.

The guidance notes can be used as facilitator notes for group exercises. You could also use the activities during one to one sessions with Subject Learning Coaches (SLCs) or as independent activities for continuing professional development (CPD).

The session is divided into two parts. The first of these focuses on defining disclosure and exploring reasons why disclosure is not reported, and considers strategies to support learners who have disclosed information. Excerpts from the Barbara's story case study have also been included in this resource. Facilitators for this activity may like to also explore the Barbara's story resource.

The second part of the session focuses on exploring and dealing with sensitive issues and strategies to deal with learners in distress.

The activities included in these sessions:

- promote logical thinking
- aid exploration of a topic
- support discussion of sensitive issues and disclosure with colleagues
- provide opportunities for experiential learning
- relate theory and practice
- provide opportunities for differentiation
- encourage co-operative learning.

* We use the word 'teacher' as a generic term to include teachers, tutors, trainers, lecturers and instructors and instructors in the further education (FE) system.

Learning objectives

Through participation in the activities, teachers should be able to:

- work with colleagues co-operatively
- extend their repertoire of active teaching methods
- develop strategies to use with learners when teaching the topic of disclosure
- feel more confident in the use of active learning approaches.

It is important to note that:

- the activities in these CPD sessions may result in some participants discussing personal and confidential information either about themselves or their learners
- you may also have to deal with disclosure of poor practice in the workplace
- you will need to be aware of your own organisation's policies on disclosure and how to implement them. Be sure you know who to contact for support should the need arise.

Resources required

- Facilitator guidance notes.
- Your organisation's policy and procedures on dealing with disclosure.
- **Stage 1 sheets**
 - 1.1: Direct and indirect disclosure** (you may wish to cut the statements into strips)
 - 1.2: Excerpt from Barbara's story**
 - 1.3: How to respond to disclosure**
 - 1.4: Triad activity**
 - 1.5: Why teachers do not respond issues surrounding disclosure**
- **Stage 2 sheets**
 - 2.1: What is a sensitive issue?**
 - 2.2: Examples of sensitive issues** (you may want to cut the statements into individual cards)
 - 2.3: Learner responses to sensitive issues**
 - 2.4: Strategies for preventing problems and resolving issues**
- **Stage 3 sheets**
 - 3.1: Record and reflect.**
 - 3.2: The supported experiment.**
- Flip chart with paper and marker pens
- Sticky notes

Optional resources include:

- audio resource from Barbara's story
- quick start pedagogy guides
- Safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults from previous Society, health and development (SHD) resources.

Overall indicative time: 5 hours

Starting points

This is a group activity which is well suited to SHD but can also be used across a range of curriculum areas. It is important to link the learning points with your own organisation's policies and procedures for disclosure and handling sensitive situations.

You may wish the participants to undertake some research prior to the facilitated session. For example, participants can review the organisation's policies and procedures and identify the key contacts in the organisation.

You may wish to establish ground rules at the start of the session. Examples of activities to set ground rules can be found in the case study toolkit.

Coaching activities within the sessions may include action learning sets, and to develop the session further you may wish to ask your colleagues to co-construct additional activities.

The activities can be introduced at any point in the curriculum but would be particularly useful to use with new and inexperienced staff at the start of the academic year. The activities would also be useful for other subject areas and for teacher training sessions.

The activities can be introduced as an overview with teachers being invited to share what they already know and how this can be developed in practice.

Approaches used in this resource can be adapted to a wide range of learning programmes. The experiential learning activities will encourage learners to work co-operatively to share ideas and knowledge.

Supporting resources can be differentiated to cater for different reading abilities. The scenario provided on **Sheet 1.2: Excerpt from Barbara's Story** requires reading skills at Level 1. Discussion and feedback activities can be accessed by all levels of learners, and provide opportunities for developing these skills to a higher level.

Exploring pedagogic approaches

Co-operative learning

All activities throughout the session include co-operative learning, which is a structured form of group learning. It ensures that individual participants understand that their contribution to the team is vital. Setting ground rules prior to sessions incorporating co-operative learning helps learners to use this approach more productively.

Experiential learning

Within the activities, participants should be prepared to share their experiences. For some participants this may be uncomfortable. This will provide them with empathy for learners dealing with sensitive issues or making a disclosure. It also allows them to experience first hand the issues surrounding disclosure and allows them to make discoveries, develop understanding and experiment.

Experiential learning through practical activities, such as the card-sorting exercise, promotes discussion and co-operative learning. This type of learning promotes deep rather than surface learning.

Relating theory and practice

Participants are able to relate the theory behind disclosure and dealing with sensitive issues, and translate them into classroom practice. They will link the activities to strategies used in the classroom. The activities also link very closely to the Every Child Matters agenda.

Differentiation

There are opportunities throughout the sessions to work in small and large groups and also with different members of the group. The different levels of activity also lend themselves to differentiated learning.

Differentiating supporting handouts can support different levels of reading ability (see section on Embedding literacy, language and numeracy below).

Multi sensory approaches

Activities in the resource could be developed into case studies that are provided on video or audio. This would provide additional support to the visual, auditory and kinaesthetic approaches covered through the discussion and role play activities.

Assessment for learning

Opportunities to check learning and provide constructive feedback could be developed within the resource. Careful use of questioning will enable learners, whether teachers or not, to reflect on and evaluate their learning and to identify opportunities for further development. Feedback on the activities and supporting materials aids teachers in reviewing and amending approaches.

Alternative approaches

Encourage teachers to use their own experiences to develop their own case studies for use with learners.

Suggested approach

Stage 1 covers what happens when learners disclose information and explains how that information may be used. It differentiates between direct and indirect disclosure and the strategies used to deal with disclosure.

Stage 2 is more generic, exploring how sensitive issues can trigger reactions in learners and how to deal with these reactions.

Stages 3 and 4 encourage teachers to reflect on the learning approaches and give guidance to participants. Explains how this CPD activity could be used to support the development of their skills within the framework of the new overarching professional standards.

Teachers may have dealt with a number of situations surrounding disclosure and sensitive issues, and it would be helpful for the group if they share these (while maintaining confidentiality) with the rest of the group.

Stage 1

Activity 1: Defining disclosure

Invite participants to work in small groups of up to four to define the meaning of disclosure. Ask them to exchange their written definitions with the other groups and to make changes to the definitions until consensus is reached.

Oxford English Dictionary definition: Disclosure

- Noun. 1. The action of disclosing information.
2. A fact, especially a secret, that is disclosed.

www.askoxford.com

Activity 2: Direct and indirect disclosure

As a large group discuss what is meant by direct and indirect disclosure.

Direct disclosure

When a learner tells you outright that something is happening to them, for example, "My mother beats me every time I do something wrong."

Indirect disclosure

Disguised disclosure: when a learner hides or disguises the fact that they are referring to their own situation, for example, "What would happen if a learner was being abused and he told you about it?"

Suggested disclosure

When a learner hints that something may be happening, for example, "My brother's friend keeps bothering me."

Conditional disclosure

When a learner wants to tell you something but there are conditions attached, for example, "Something awful has happened but if I tell you about it, you must promise not to tell anyone."

Divide participants into small groups with up to four in each group. Print out the statements on **Sheet 1.1: Direct and indirect disclosure** and cut them into strips. Ask the groups to classify the statements into direct and indirect disclosure and discuss the possible range of strategies to deal with the issues surrounding disclosure.

Discussion points may include:

- What happens next?
- What would I do?
- Who would I refer this matter to?
- Who is the designated protection officer or named person?

Apply these questions to each of the statements for direct and indirect disclosure.

Invite each group to share the key points from their discussion with the whole group.

Invite the group to link the main points of the discussion with your organisation's policies and procedures on disclosure and handling sensitive issues.

Activity 3: Excerpt from Barbara's story

Participants use an excerpt from Barbara's story in this activity, for example, **Sheet 1.2: Excerpt from Barbara's story**. The full transcript can be found in the Life stories section. You may wish to read through this and select your own excerpt. Alternatively you may wish to use the audio resource from the multimedia resource library.

The excerpt may be used in a number of ways:

- as a discussion tool with the whole group
- small group discussion about Barbara's experience
- small group discussion on different aspects of the excerpt; for example, one group could focus on Barbara's experience while a second group may discuss the event from the point of view of Barbara's siblings
- as the foundation for drawing a timeline of legislation around safeguarding. You may wish to look through the QIA resource Safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults for further information.

Activity 4: Immediate responses and follow-up actions following disclosure

Participants need to be confident about taking the appropriate actions when a learner has made a disclosure. This activity focuses on sharing experiences and expertise among the group.

Using a brainstorming technique, gather information from participants about what their immediate response would be to a disclosure and what would need to be considered in following it up.

Sheet 1.3: How to respond to disclosure can be used as a discussion tool, with participants adding their own recommendations. You may wish to explore with your participants when it may be necessary to involve a second person, for example, if disclosure alluded to race or gender issues.

Activity 5: Triad activity using scenarios

Teachers are expected to deal with a range of issues disclosed by learners. These may include disclosure of a personal or financial nature, or may be a disclosure of poor practice within the workplace.

Invite participants to work in groups of three for this role play activity. Ask two members of the group to role play a scenario while the third participant observes and takes notes of the interaction. When the interaction is complete, invite the observer to provide feedback.

This activity highlights the need for risk management, risk reduction and the impact on learners, the teacher and the organisation as a whole.

Risk assessment

This is an important part of the discussion with teachers. Highlight the importance of:

- making a risk analysis of actions
- ensuring that one teacher does not handle a case alone without support
- following the correct procedures as laid down in the organisation's policy
- knowing who to go to when a learner has made any kind of disclosure
- understanding when to let go and pass the responsibility on to someone else for further action.

A range of scenarios is included in **Sheet 1.4: Triad activity**.

Activity 6: Why teachers do not report issues around disclosure

For many reasons, teachers do not report issues around disclosure. This may be because:

- they have not realised that the learner has made a disclosure
- they do not know who to report it to
- they do not have confidence in the person who they are meant to inform
- the teacher may not want to be caught up in the investigation and all the extra work this may involve.

Occasionally, the allegation may be against a colleague and the teacher employs the 'rule of optimism'. This is when it is believed that a person could not do such a thing as it is out of character. There are also other occasions when the teacher does not believe what the learner has told them, so does not take it any further.

This activity encourages participants to think about and discuss the reasons why colleagues do not report issues of disclosure.

Divide members into small groups with three to five participants in each group. Using sticky notes, ask participants to identify reasons why colleagues do not report disclosure and to categorise these reasons into groups. Bring participants back into one group to share the main points from their discussions. Use **Sheet 1.3: How to respond to disclosure** to support the discussion.

Further discussion can also include:

- the consequences of not reporting disclosure
- the consequences of not completing documentation appropriately
- which support may be required for a learner that has disclosed.

This session can be used in isolation but will be a more effective tool if used in conjunction with Stage 2.

Debrief

Invite participants to reflect on and share their thoughts on the series of activities. Ask them to indicate how confident they feel about dealing with disclosure. Take time to address any remaining issues or concerns that participants may have.

Note: It is essential that you allow sufficient time for one to one debriefings with the participants so that they are not left to deal with any emotional issues on their own. Make sure that participants are provided with details of key contacts that can assist them.

Stage 2

Activity 1: What is a sensitive subject?

SHD programmes contain many subjects that are of a sensitive nature. It is important to discuss with participants the subjects that may provoke a reaction or cause distress to some learners.

Using a brainstorming technique ask participants to identify the sensitive topics, issues or subjects within the programmes of study they are delivering.

Support the activity with **Sheet 2.1: What is a sensitive subject?**

Alternative approach

Cut out the examples of sensitive issues illustrated in **Sheet 2.2: Examples of sensitive issues** and ask participants to reflect on those they have encountered in the past; how did they feel and respond to the disclosure?

Activity 2: Learner reactions to sensitive issues

Learners respond to sensitive issues in different ways and it is important to be able to recognise the distress that learners experience when certain issues are discussed. Each learner will respond differently and while some may not find a certain topic sensitive, others may find it distressing - for example, different types of cancer and its treatment, particularly if they have a family member who is suffering with or who has died from cancer.

Divide participants into small groups of up to four participants. Ask each group to discuss and record on flip chart paper how learners may respond to sensitive issues that will inevitably be discussed as part of their programme of study.

Monitor the progress of the groups and when you feel that all issues have been discussed, ask the groups to display their flip chart sheet on the wall. Discuss the similarities and differences between groups.

You may wish to extend the activity by asking:

- What would be an immediate response to dealing with the behaviours that have been elicited from discussing the sensitive issues?
- What would the follow-up actions be?

Support the activity with **Sheet 2.3: Learner responses to sensitive issues**.

Activity 3: Responses to sensitive issues

Intervention strategies are essential when discussing sensitive issues and there may be occasions when learners become extremely distressed. In these cases, participants will need to know which methods to adopt to support learners.

Working first in pairs and then with participants in a larger group, use the brainstorming or goldfish bowl techniques to capture each individual and group's immediate response to a learner becoming distressed while exploring sensitive issues.

Goldfish bowl technique

This is a strategy for structuring group work and co-operative learning. The seating is arranged so that two learners are seated opposite each other with a vacant seat next to them. The others are seated around them in a circle. The two in the middle each take a turn to express their views while others listen. When someone else wants to make a comment, they have to take the vacant seat and everyone has to listen. When they have finished commenting, they return to their own seat.

Additional points for discussion could include:

- asking the group what the follow-up actions would be
- discussing what information if any would need to be shared with colleagues or the named person (child protection officer)
- highlighting similarities and differences between disclosure and the handling of sensitive issues.

Risk assessment

This is an important part of the discussion with participants. Highlight the importance of:

- making a risk analysis of actions
- ensuring that one teacher does not handle a case alone without support
- following the correct procedures as laid down in the organisation's policy
- knowing who to go to when a learner has made any kind of disclosure
- recognising when it's time to let go and pass the responsibility on to someone else for further action.

Activity 4: Guidelines for planning and ground rules for delivery

It is essential to plan sessions carefully when sensitive issues may be exposed. Preparing learners for the topic will help you to pre-empt any problems that could arise and assist you in resolving them.

Divide the participants into four groups: A, B, C and D.

Ask the participants to think about the preparing for instances when sensitive information may be discussed –

Groups A and B – points to consider when setting ground rules

Groups B and D – guidelines for planning sessions

Encourage each group to record the key points on flip chart paper.

Ask each group to nominate a spokesperson to share the outcomes of their discussion. The spokesperson from group A then shares the key points with group B and facilitates further discussion. Similarly, the spokesperson from group B presents to group A, the spokesperson from group C presents to group D and vice versa.

Bring all the groups together for a final discussion of the key points. Recap and consolidate by linking to the outcomes of Stage 1.

Debrief

Invite participants to reflect on and share their thoughts about the series of activities. Ask them to indicate how confident they feel about handling sensitive issues. Take time to address any remaining issues or concerns that participants may have.

Note: It is essential that you allow sufficient time for one to one debriefings with the participants so that they are not left to deal with any emotional issues that arise on their own. Make sure that participants are provided with details of key contacts who can assist them.

Stage 3

Reflection

You may need to give guidance to participants on how this CPD activity could be used to support development of their skills within the framework of the new overarching professional standards.

The new professional standards can be downloaded from the Lifelong Learning UK website:

www.lifelonglearninguk.org/documents/professional_standards_for_itts_020107.pdf

The Institute for Learning website www.ifl.ac.uk can provide:

- a description of the CPD process
- a place for teachers to keep a record of their CPD activities and achievements.

The joint Training and Development Agency for Schools and Lifelong Learning UK website, which supports the workforce in delivering Diplomas, can provide an online, interactive training needs analysis for teachers of Diplomas: www.teach14-19.org

This stage allows teachers to plan new approaches or strategies in their teaching. This process is invaluable in helping us to grow and improve as teachers. The process is enhanced by spending time reflecting on the whole process and documenting our thoughts and reflections. This not only helps us to clarify thoughts, but it can also contribute to each teacher's own personal reflective diary and form part of their continuing professional development. It is even more powerful if they work collaboratively with others in working through this process. See **Sheet: 2.4: Strategies for preventing problems and resolving issues.**

Participation in this CPD activity, followed by implementation and evaluation of new ideas, and reflection on the impact of the change in teachers' practice could contribute in demonstrating **BS2 Applying and developing own professional skills to enable learners to achieve their goals.**

This activity:

- shares understanding of the term disclosure and gets the participants to agree on a common definition
- extends understanding of disclosure by participating in a card sort activity to classify direct and indirect disclosure
- allows teachers to work co-operatively with their peers to establish strategies for supporting learners that disclose information of a sensitive nature
- reflects on teachers' individual and organisational practice
- ensures that teachers read and review their own organisation's policy on disclosure.

Personal and group action points: reflection, making sense and planning

Give time for participants to reflect on:

- the content of the session (what they have learned)
- the learning approach experienced through the CPD activity (how they have learned it)
- where they might use this approach again.

Your organisation may have its own process for recognising and recording CPD. If it does not, participants can use **Sheet 3.1: Record and reflect** after completing the CPD activity. It can be kept in their professional development portfolios. Participants may wish to extend and develop their approaches further. Provide participants with **Sheet 3.2: The supported experiment** form which they can use as a personal reflective diary to support CPD

Reflection: what is modelled in this session?

Invite participants to reflect on the approaches you have used to facilitate this session. You might want to ask:

- Which pedagogical approaches have been modelled in this session?
- What are some of the challenges of using these approaches?
- What have they learned from their experience?
- Which other techniques might they use with their learners to demonstrate the approaches?