



Caring for Survivors: A Principled Approach to Safeguarding

24th November 2022



misean cara
Mission Support from Ireland

Objectives



Exploring key concepts of the survivor-centred approach, strengthening organisational culture and reporting and incorporating a survivor-centred approach to case management.



Definition



What does the term 'Survivor-Centred Approach' mean to you?

Survivor-Centred Approach



- A survivor-centered approach seeks to **empower** survivors by prioritising their rights, safety, well-being, needs and wishes.
- A survivor-centred approach aims to put the **rights** of each survivor at the forefront of all actions and ensure that each survivor is treated with **dignity and respect**. Organisations must ensure that survivors have **access** to appropriate, and good quality services.
- By putting the survivor at the **centre of the process**, such an approach promotes their **recovery**, reduces the risk of further harm and reinforces their **agency** and **self-determination**.
- Practicing a survivor-centred approach means establishing a relationship with the survivor that promotes their emotional and physical safety, builds **trust** and helps them to restore some control over their life.

Promoting Empowerment



Each person:

- Has equal rights to care, support and protection;
- Is different and unique;
- Will react differently;
- Has different strengths, capacities, resources and needs;
- Has rights, appropriate to their age and the circumstances, to decide who should; know about what has happened to them and what should happen next.

Values, Attitudes, Beliefs



- *"She provoked the sexual assault because of her sexy dress, she was asking for it."*
- **Reality: Abuse is never the fault of the survivor.**
- *"A man can protect himself."*
- **Reality: Anyone can be subjected to abuse, exploitation, harassment.**
- *"You are more likely to be attacked by a stranger than by someone you know".*
- **Reality: In most cases of abuse this is perpetrated by someone the survivor knows.**
- *"People often lie about abuse, exploitation, harassment, to get attention, or seek revenge".*
- **Reality: False allegations about abuse are rare.**
- *"A sex worker can't be sexually assaulted. It's their job".*
- **Reality: Consent applies to everyone, in every situation.**
- *Myth: "Women don't commit sexual abuse, exploitation, harassment"*
- **Reality: Anyone with power can sexually harm another person. The large majority of perpetrators are men but some women also perpetrators of sexual violence, particularly against children and adolescents.**



Values, Attitudes, Beliefs



- We must acknowledge the possibility that information can be withheld or distorted by interpretation because of our attitudes and beliefs.
- We must be aware of our own biases, as an important way to be professional.
- We have a duty to remain neutral and to help survivors, regardless of our personal views.
- Self-awareness is a lifelong journey – Critical self-reflection.
- It is important to have an awareness of our values as they inform our beliefs and attitudes in relation to everything.
- We need to understand that values underpin beliefs and beliefs underpin behaviour. How we and others behave is a reflection of our beliefs and values.
- If one or more characteristics of the survivor makes it difficult for us to maintain an impartial position, we should consider standing aside.
- Making our values and beliefs explicit is one of the first steps in culture change because talking about them, helps us to begin to make them a reality in our workplace.

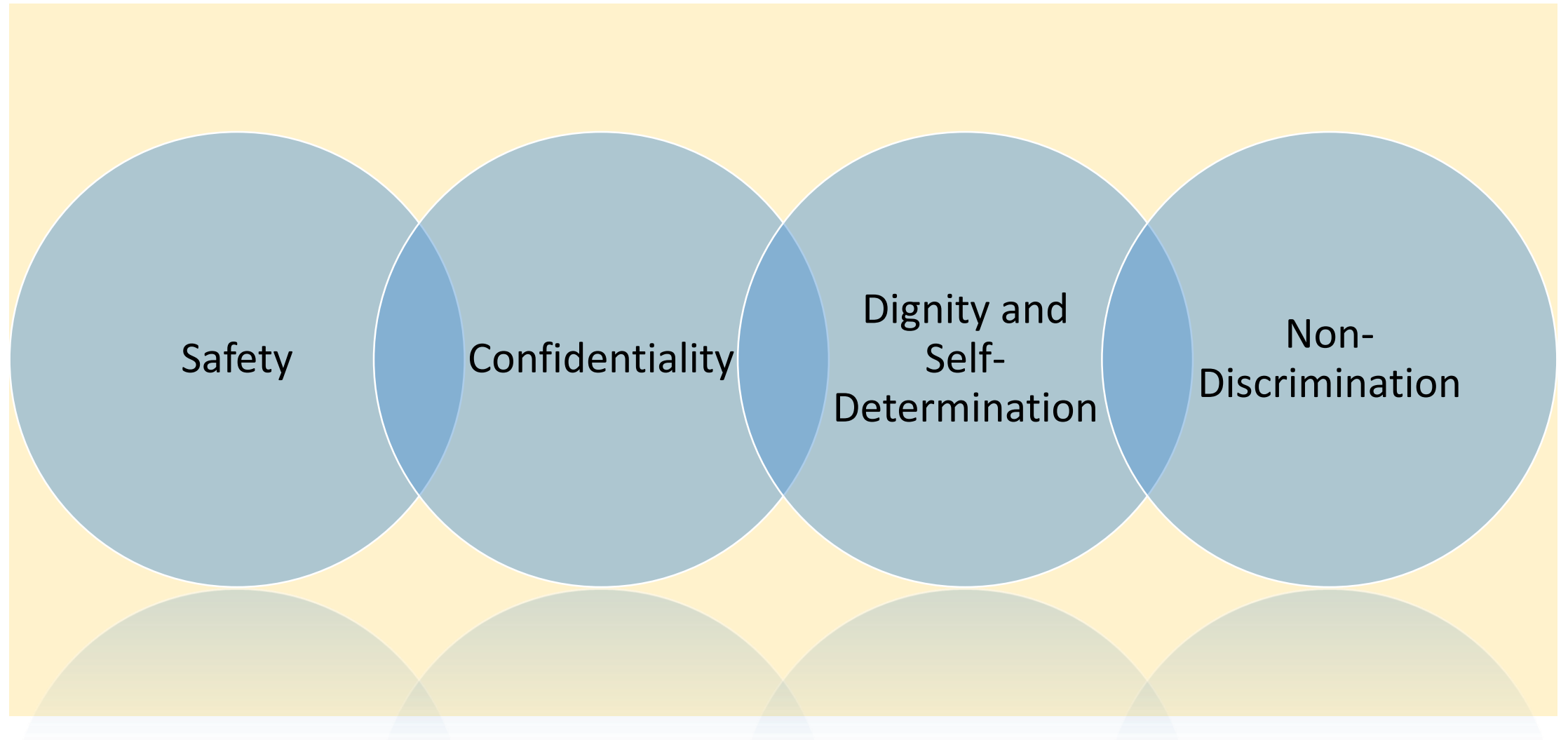


Influences



Context	Influence
Legal	What the law says (for example, about the age of consent, marriage, etc.)
Societal	What the commonly held view is in the social situation that we live in, including social norms.
Cultural	How our culture views things
Religious	What our religion says
Personal	How our past experiences have taught us to see the world and shaped our view
Professional	What our profession tells us
Environmental & Economical	What people have to do to survive (for example, how do they feed their family if the crop fails)
Institutional	What the culture of the organisation or institution is.

Guiding Principles





Why is it important?

Survivors may be at high risk of further violence – sexual and otherwise – from:

- Perpetrators
- People protecting perpetrators
- Members of their own family

What does it mean?

Every person has the right to be protected from abuse, exploitation and harassment.

Every child has the right to be protected from harm, and as adults, we have responsibilities to uphold that right.

Safety



The concept of safety includes physical safety and security as well as psychological and emotional safety.

Consider the safety needs of:

- Survivors
- Family members and supporters
- Those providing care and support

Confidentiality



Why is it important?

- Confidentiality promotes safety, trust, dignity and empowerment.
- People have the right to choose to whom they will, or will not, tell their story.
- Breaching confidentiality inappropriately can put the survivor and others at risk of further harm.
- If service providers do not respect confidentiality, others will be discouraged from coming forward for help.

What does it mean?

- Confidentiality means not disclosing any information at any time to any party without the informed consent of the person concerned.

Confidential collection of information during interviews

- Sharing information only on a need-to-know basis or in line with laws and policies.
- Storing any information about the survivor securely.
- Obtaining informed consent from the survivor before sharing any information, including in the context of a referral.

Exceptions to Confidentiality



There can be exceptions to confidentiality, and it is very important that the survivor (especially children/young people and their caregivers) knows what the limits are.

Limits include:

- Situations in which there is the threat of ongoing harm to a child; and where the need to protect them overrides confidentiality.
- Situations in which laws or policies require mandatory reporting of certain types of violence against children.
- Situations in which the survivor is at risk of harming themselves or others, including threats of suicide.
- Situations involving sexual exploitation or abuse by humanitarian or peacekeeping personnel.

Dignity & Self Determination



Why is it important?

- Every survivor has the right to be treated with respect and dignity and to make choices about what happens.
- The response of the service provider can either promote dignity and empowerment or cause further distress and harm.

What does it mean?

- Self-determination means respecting the dignity, wishes and choices of survivors, and allowing them to be in control of the helping process by deciding who to tell and what action to take.
- Failing to respect dignity and self-determination can increase feelings of helplessness and shame, reduce the effectiveness of interventions, cause re-victimization and further harm, and perpetuate harmful norms.

- Having a validating, non-blaming and non-judgmental approach.
- Valuing the survivor and caring about their experience, history and future.
- The survivor makes decisions about their care, and this is valued and upheld.

Non- Discrimination



What does this mean?

All people have an equal right to the best possible assistance without unfair discrimination on the basis of:

- Gender
- Disability
- Race, ethnicity or tribe
- Colour
- Language
- Religious or political beliefs
- Status or social class, etc.



The voluntary agreement of an individual who has the legal capacity to give consent.

To provide informed consent, the individual must have the capacity and maturity to know about and understand the process and the services being offered and be legally able to give their consent.

Informed Consent



To ensure consent is 'informed,' organisations must provide the following information to the survivor:

- All the possible information and options available to the person so she/he can make choices.
- Inform the person that she/he may need to share his/her information with others who can provide additional services.
- Explain to the person what will happen through the process, as you work with her/him.
- Explain the benefits and risks of services to the person.
- Explain to the person that she/he has the right to decline, refuse or withdraw at any time.
- Explain limits to confidentiality.

Mandatory Reporting



- Mandatory reporting refers to state laws and policies that mandate certain agencies and/or people in helping professions (teachers, social workers, health staff, etc.) to report actual or suspected child abuse (e.g., physical, sexual, neglect, emotional and psychological abuse, unlawful sexual intercourse).
- Mandatory reporting can also be mandated for cases of certain types of abuse against others (e.g., intimate partner/domestic violence, rape, abuse of vulnerable adults).
- To comply with mandatory reporting laws, organisations must have a thorough understanding of the laws in their setting.

Barriers to Reporting



- Power imbalances between beneficiaries and the organisation.
- Power relations active within communities – low power and standing of individuals.
- Lack of awareness and knowledge that abuse, exploitation, harassment is wrong.
- Lack of awareness of rights – ‘It’s just the way it is’.
- Lack of awareness and knowledge of reporting mechanisms.
- Fear of not being believed or being blamed, retaliation.
- Impunity for abusers – ‘Nothing will happen anyway’!
- Fear of social consequences e.g., being ostracised or rejected.
- Fear of losing benefits – job, income, status, withdrawal of aid.
- Personal safety – fear of retribution, stigmatization or discrimination.
- Weak organisational culture.

Overcoming Barriers to Reporting



- Safe, Accessible and Appropriate reporting – Safe and Accessible People (Sufficient expertise, autonomy, decision making) & Places (in-person reporting, phone/email, online).
- Quality support and assistance – In house supports/referral pathways to external services and supports.
- Enhanced accountability, including through safe recruitment practices, training, roles and responsibilities, trauma-informed investigations.
- Resources, Resources, Resources!

Case Management



1. Introduction and Engagement Skills

2. Assessment and Planning

3. Follow-up and Case Closure



Case Management



Case management has two main objectives:

1. Achieve good outcomes through service delivery tailored around individual needs and circumstances.
2. Empower survivors through supporting their participation in decision-making according to their age and developmental level.

In case management, the survivor is at the **centre** of the helping process and should **actively participate** in age-appropriate ways in all aspects of the planning and service delivery, and the action plan always reflects his/her best interests.

1. Introduction and Engagement Skills



Introduction:

Involves making the person feel safe and calm and giving him or her information about who you are and what help you can offer. It also involves making sure the person gives consent if you are going to proceed with making referrals or sharing information.

- Greet and comfort the survivor and obtain permission to proceed.

Engagement Skills:

1. **Voice:** How we talk, the volume, tone and speed;
2. **Verbal:** What we say, age/context appropriate language.
3. **Physical:** The messages we send with our face and other parts of our body, sometimes called 'body language'.
4. **Behavioural messages:** What we do/or don't do.

2. Assessment and Planning



Assessment (Gathering Information):

This step involves listening to the survivor (and their caregiver in the case of a child) to find out what has happened and identifying their needs, problems and resources.

Immediate needs might include the following:

- The need for safety and protection, particularly if the perpetrator is in the household or nearby.
- Health – does the survivor need medical examination, treatment or a forensic examination?
- Emotional and practical needs – how is the survivor feeling and coping? If it was a recent incident, they may be distressed or frightened.

Case Planning:

This step involves giving age-appropriate information to the survivor (and to their caregiver in the case of a child) and together planning how to meet needs, solve problems and make decisions about what will happen next. Information includes the following:

- What is going to happen next in cases where there is mandatory reporting
- Possible consequences of the violence, for example, how she might feel and strategies to help the survivor cope
- Information about services and support available
- The implications of sharing information with other actors
- The associated costs (if any) of receiving a service
- The name of the service provider and the estimated time it takes to receive the service
- An overview of the legal process if relevant.

After providing information about available services, caseworkers must help the survivor understand her options and choices to make informed decisions about what to do.

3. Follow-up and Case Closure



- **Follow up** – Monitoring the case, making sure the survivor is safe and getting the help they need, and identifying and addressing barriers or problems.
- **Case Closure** – How long outside help is needed depends on each case. In cases that proceed to court for prosecution, the survivor may need ongoing support for months or years. In other cases, case closure may take place after a much shorter time.

Discussion





www.miseancara.ie



[/MiseanCaraIreland](https://www.facebook.com/MiseanCaraIreland)



[@MiseanCara](https://twitter.com/MiseanCara)



[Misean Cara](https://www.linkedin.com/company/Misean-Cara)



Valerie Philpott

Safeguarding Advisor

vphilpott@miseancara.ie

(01) 4999129



misean cara

Mission Support from Ireland

