

Module 2: Responding to Disclosure of Sexual Violence

Step 2: Please read the following case study

Anna's Story

Anna has cerebral palsy and a mild learning disability. She shares a house with Natalie who also has an intellectual disability. The women have support workers who come in daily to assist with personal care (Anna) and household tasks (both women).

Anna is unable to drive so she relies on taxis to transport her to her destination. One day, Anna called a taxi to take her to the local shopping centre. After the taxi driver locked her wheelchair he put his hands down the front of her shirt. Anna told him to stop. After doing her shopping Anna called another taxi to take her home. The same taxi driver arrived to pick her up and this time after locking her wheelchair into place, touched her on the breasts and in the vaginal area. Anna was terrified and didn't know what to do. She told him to stop but because her speech is sometimes difficult to understand, he paid no attention. After the taxi driver took her home and unloaded her wheelchair from the taxi he leant over Anna and pinched her very hard on the breast. He told she better not tell anyone their secret because he knows where she lives.

When Anna got into her house she became very distressed and told Natalie what had happened. Natalie called one of their support workers who then contacted the police. Anna then became very angry and agitated at Natalie for calling the support worker. When the police arrived, Anna at first refused to tell them what had occurred. After reassurance from a female officer who sat with Anna for some time, Anna was able to describe the offender and give particulars of what had happened. She told the police officer she was scared that the taxi driver knew where she lived, and worried that people would not believe the same driver picked her up a second time. The police officer recorded Anna's statement and injuries and noted that her limited mobility made it very difficult for her to defend herself against any assault.

The taxi driver was later apprehended and charged with sexual assault. Anna was not required to give evidence at the Committal Hearing, but a trial date has been set.

Three weeks after the assault occurred, one of Anna's support workers, Marian, noticed that Anna seemed withdrawn and tired, with dark shadows under her eyes. Anna also appears to have lost weight. When Marian asked Anna how she was feeling, Anna wouldn't say much but said she had been having trouble sleeping at night. Later, Marian asked Natalie how she thought Anna was going. Natalie told Marian that Anna had been staying awake with her light on at night, then sleeping late in the morning, and wasn't eating much. Natalie said Anna had been asking her to stay home from work because she was scared of being alone during the day. Natalie said when she tells Anna she has to go to work or she'll lose her job, Anna gets angry and yells at her. When Natalie is out, Anna locks all the doors and windows and she won't answer the door to male support workers.