

Responding to Disclosures

If a young person informs you that s/he is concerned about someone's behaviour to them or makes a direct allegation you should:

- React calmly.
- Show acceptance of what the child says.
- Reassure the child that they did the right thing in telling you.
- Look at the child directly.
- Tell the child you will need to let someone else know – never promise confidentiality – be honest.
- Take what the child says seriously, even if it involves someone you feel sure would not harm them.
- Be aware that the child may have been threatened or bribed not to tell anyone.
- Do not judge the child.
- Do not lay blame – even if the child has broken a rule, they are not to blame for the abuse.
- Listen to what you are told, even if it is difficult to believe.
- Never push for information – avoid leading questions. If the child decides not to tell you after all, then accept that and let them know that you are always ready to listen.
- Ask just enough to clarify your understanding of what is being said, so that you can pass the information on.
- Ensure that the child or young person is safe.
- If they need urgent medical attention, make sure that the doctors, or medical staff, know that it is a child protection issue.
- Make a written record of the conversation as soon as possible.
- Do not contact parents or other carers until advice and guidance has been sought from the Child Protection Officer in your organisation.

What to do after a child has talked about abuse

When a young person has spoken about an allegation of abuse, or their concerns about someone's behaviour towards them, you should:

- Make written notes as soon as possible (preferably within an hour of being told).
- Complete your organisation's 'Reporting Child Abuse' form.
- Keep all handwritten notes, even if they are typed subsequently.
- Report the discussion to the Child Protection Officer in your organisation.
- Not discuss the suspicions or allegations with anyone other than those nominated above.
- Consider whether or not it is safe for a child to return home to a potentially abusive situation.
- On rare occasions, and only in consultation with the Child Protection Officer, take immediate action to contact Social Services and/or the police to discuss putting safety measures into effect for the child so that they do not return home