

Dealing with disclosures from children

All organisations who work with or meet children should have safeguarding policies and procedures in place that are available to all staff. This is to ensure that every child, regardless of their age, gender, religion or ethnicity, can be protected from harm.

Children might have made the decision to disclose to you, or might have accidentally said or done something that has led you to the point of being concerned. If a child that you meet in a professional capacity discloses abuse to you, you should:

- Follow your organisation's safeguarding policies and procedures as soon as possible.
- If a child is in immediate danger, then call 999 and contact the police.
- Ask open, non-leading questions such as "I'm worried about you, what can I do to help?"

1. Receive

- Listen quietly, carefully and patiently. Do not assume anything – do not speculate or jump to conclusions. A reaction of shock or disbelief could cause the child to retract or stop talking.
- Communicate with the child in a way that is appropriate to their age and understanding. This is especially important for children with disabilities or for children whose preferred language is not English.

T.E.D- Tell, Explain, Describe

You might wish to use the acronym 'TED' as a reminder that the child can be encouraged to 'Tell', 'Explain' and 'Describe' the concern. If it is necessary to seek further clarification, staff should keep to asking open questions such as What? When? Who? How? Where? It is important to remember that questions should only be asked to help clarify whether the child is at risk of harm. Once clarification is achieved, no further questions should be asked. You should not investigate.

2. Reassure

- Let the child know that they have done the right thing in letting someone know. Reassurance can make a big impact to the child who might have been keeping the abuse secret.
- Tell them it is not their fault. Abuse is never the child's fault and they need to know this.
- Say you will take them seriously. A child might have kept abuse secret in the fear they will not be believed. They have told you because they want help and trust you will be the person who will listen to and support them.
- Do not promise confidentiality – never agree to keep secrets. You have a duty to report your concerns.
- Explain what you will do next, when this will happen and how they will be kept informed and supported. If age appropriate, explain to the child you will need to report the abuse to someone who will be able to help.
- Acknowledge how difficult it must have been to talk. It takes a lot of courage for a child to disclose what has happened to them.

3. React

- Do not talk to the alleged perpetrator of the abuse. Doing so could leave the child at further risk and might possibly inhibit or damage further investigations.
- Do not investigate, and ensure you ask open, non-directive questions.

4. Record

- Make some very brief notes as soon as possible after speaking to the child and write them up in detail as soon as possible. Do not destroy your original notes in case they are required by Court.
- Record the date, time, place, words used by the child and how the child appeared to you – be specific. Record the actual words used; including any swear words or slang.
- Record statements and observable things, not your interpretations or assumptions – keep it factual.
- Do not delay in reporting the concern – a swift response to safeguarding concerns is of paramount importance to protect the child and prevent further harm.

If your organisation does not have a clear safeguarding procedure or you're not comfortable with how your organisation has responded to your report, contact the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line to discuss your concerns on: 0800 028 0285 or Email help@nspcc.org.uk

NOTE: Disclosures relating to allegations against colleagues and members of staff should be treated in the same way. This information must be passed immediately to the Head Teacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who will contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and ensure the appropriate procedures are followed. Alternatively, you can contact the Wigan LADO on 01942 486042 or LADO@wigan.gov.uk