

Responding to potential or actual abuse of children

Responding to disclosure:

- ensure the safety of the individual – call for help if necessary
- listen and believe
- remain calm and do not show shock or disbelief
- respond in a caring, respectful and reassuring way
- never promise not to tell anyone else
- follow the individual's wishes unless this would put them or others at risk
- reassure them that you will support them
- let them know they will be kept informed of what is happening
- do not be judgmental
- do not ask leading questions which could compromise evidence
- report to the relevant person as soon as you can.

Factors that could compromise evidence:

- contacting the alleged perpetrator
- asking leading questions
- touching or moving anything
- incomplete, inaccurate or altered records.

Who you report to:

- internal reporting – line manager, supervisor or senior staff member (unless they are the suspected perpetrator).

How to make a report:

- ensure the report is legible
- in cases of disclosure, record or report what was said to you in the person's own words
- record or report if anyone else was there at the time
- record or report the date, time and setting in which the allegation was made or the event witnessed
- ensure that facts only are recorded, not opinions or other personal comment
- diagrams, drawings or photographs (of location of injuries or the scene) may be used to support the report
- maintain confidentiality and do not discuss details with individuals not directly involved
- date and sign the report and keep a copy.

What happens next:

- 1 Discuss the situation with your manager and/or other senior as appropriate. This would include the designated child protection officer in the setting. There may be two outcomes from this:
 - a. There are no longer any concerns – no further action, although the setting may need to refer to other services to ensure that appropriate services are provided.
 - b. There are still concerns.

- 2 Practitioner refers the case to social services. This is followed up within 48 hours with a written report. The report is acknowledged as a referral and a decision will be made within one working day of next course of action. Feedback is given to practitioner on course of action taken. There may be two outcomes from this:
 - a. No further social services involvement at this stage. Other action, such as onward referral for additional services, may be necessary.
 - b. Initial assessment is required.

- 3 Initial assessment is completed within seven working days from referral to social services. Feedback is given to practitioner on course of action taken. There may be two outcomes from this:
 - a. No further social services involvement at this stage. Other action, such as onward referral for additional services, may be necessary.
 - b. The child is in need. This then works its way through a number of actions.

- 4 If there are concerns regarding the child's immediate safety, a decision will be made by social services. This may include emergency action to safeguard the child.