

## Pleased to be told

You should tell the child that you are pleased that you have been told and that they did the right thing in coming to you. The child should be reassured that they have done nothing wrong and that the abuse is not their fault.

You should also reassure the child that you will do your best to protect and support them.

## Recording

When recording, you should make a clear distinction between fact, opinion and hearsay.

Listen very carefully to the child and write down immediately exactly what they say (or within 24 hours of the disclosure) - even if the child uses slang or foul language. Don't write what you think the child meant and don't speculate or summarise.

## Collate notes

You should record accurate and comprehensive notes: including dates, times, names, reasons for decisions and descriptions of injuries or bruising etc.

## Explain what happens next

Tell the child who will be told and what will happen next.

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## Discuss with designated person

You must, as soon as possible, discuss the details of the disclosure or allegation with the designated senior person (or their deputy if they are not available).

Do not discuss the disclosure or allegation with the child's parents or carers or with any of your colleagues.

## The role of the designated person

Upon listening to the disclosure or allegation, the designated person will decide upon the next action to take.

The actions they take will depend on what you have told them and on what other information they already have.

For example, they could choose to refer to the case to Children's Social Care or chose to discuss the matter with other involved agencies.

## Summary: actions to avoid

In summary, if a child makes a disclosure to you, you must not:

- Panic
- Allow your personal feelings to show
- Approach the alleged perpetrator
- Make promises or keep secrets
- Ask leading questions
- Make assumptions

## Summary: actions to undertake

If a child makes a disclosure to you, you must:

- React calmly
- Reassure the child
- Keep questions to a minimum
- Listen carefully
- Take the child seriously
- Keep an accurate record
- Inform your designated Safeguarding person



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# Responding to a Disclosure What you should do Refresher Guide



## Introduction

When working with children you need to know how to respond to a disclosure or allegation.

This is because, how you respond will impact on the child's or adult's decisions about what and who to tell in the future. Also, importantly, how you respond may affect evidence that may be used in any potential future legal proceedings.

## What children fear

There are a number of important factors which prevent children from talking about abuse to an adult.

These include:

- A fear of not being listened to or believed
- The feeling of being embarrassed
- The fear of consequences
- Adults not being empathetic or trustworthy
- Not knowing what happens next



## What children want

The NSPCC asked children what would encourage them to talk to adults about getting help.

Some of the answers suggested that children did not feel confident that adult intervention would be effective:

"Someone who looks at me when they are talking to me and speaks clearly and slowly."

"Someone who isn't patronising and treats me like a grown-up."

"Someone who is an expert and knows what they are talking about - understands the disability or difficulty I have."

"Someone I have known for some time, who knows how to sort things out."

"Someone who won't tell me off."

## Types of disclosure

Disclosures may be received from children, parents or other members of the public. They can be direct or indirect. More often than not, a disclosure will be indirect.

For example, a child might tell you that the abuse is happening to someone else. Or they will disclose information to you in a round-about way and provide you with hints.

This means that in order for a child to share information with you about abuse, you may need to prompt them.

## Support the child

Children who make a disclosure want the abuse to stop.

You must always keep in mind that it is hard for a child to talk about abuse to another person.

You should also be mindful that they have chosen carefully about whom to talk to – and that they have chosen to talk to you.



## Be reassuring

If a child tells you about abuse, you must not panic.

Keep in mind that the child may have been threatened not to tell anyone.

You need to remain calm and reassuring, and not allow your personal feelings to show.

If you look horrified or shocked, the child may interpret your reaction as your being horrified and shocked by them and they could possibly shut down.

Children rarely lie about abuse – so you must take what the child is saying seriously.

## Safety first

First and foremost, you must ensure the child is safe and not in immediate danger.

Where appropriate, you should seek medical help or contact the Police.

If the alleged perpetrator is around, do not approach them.

If possible, find a quiet place to talk with the child so as to ascertain their wishes and feelings as a part of considering what actions to take.

## Avoid promises

You must not promise confidentiality or keep secrets.

Where you can, find the appropriate opportunity to explain that the information they pass onto you will need to be shared with others.

However, the information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.

## Listen carefully

Listen carefully to the child's account and keep questions to a minimum.

Use reflective listening – that is to say listen more than talk and respond with

statements to confirm that they are being heard.

Allow the child to talk at his or her own pace and don't interrupt if they are talking freely.

## Do not interrogate

You are not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred and should not conduct an investigation to establish whether the child is telling the truth or not.

Ask questions for clarification only and don't ask for details.

Bear in mind that the disclosure or allegation may lead to a criminal investigation.

As such, avoid asking any leading or probing questions that may jeopardise an investigation.

## Communicate appropriately

When speaking with the child you should ask them for their account of the story, and ask them what other adults they have told. In doing so, you should communicate in a way that is appropriate to their age and understanding.

Ask for times, locations and whether there are any witnesses.

Do not ask the child to write a 'statement' of their account.

## Observe

When listening to the child, you should observe and note their emotions and behaviour.

