

Appendix 4

WHAT TO DO IF A CHILD DISCLOSES ABUSE

Always follow the 4 R's

1. RECEIVE

- **LISTEN** to the child/young person. If you are shocked at what the child/young person says to you try not to show it. Take what the child/young person says to you seriously, children and young people rarely lie about abuse and if they are not believed it adds to the traumatic nature of disclosing. If they meet with revulsion or disbelief, children and young people may retract what they have said.
- **ACCEPT** what the child/young person says. Be careful not to burden the child/young person with guilt by asking, "Why didn't you tell me before?"

2. REASSURE

- **STAY CALM** Reassure the child/young person that they have done the right thing in talking to you. Be honest with the child/young person. Do not make any promises that you are unable to keep, like "I'll stay with you", or "Everything will be all right now".
- **DO NOT** promise confidentiality.
- **TRY** to alleviate any feelings of guilt that the child/young person displays, e.g. "You are not alone, you are not the only one this sort of thing has happened to".
- **ACKNOWLEDGE** how hard it must have been for the child/young person to tell you what has happened.
- **EMPATHISE** with the child/young person. Don't tell them what they should be feeling

3. REACT

- **REACT** to the child/young person only as far as is necessary for you to establish whether or not you need to refer to matter.
- **DO NOT** interrogate the child or make investigations with third parties to establish any of the facts.
- **AVOID** asking leading questions, for example "Did he touch your penis?"
- **BE** careful about what you ask the child; you may taint any evidence being put before a court.
- **USE** open questions, such as, "Is there anything else you would like to tell me?" or "When did it happen?"
- **DO NOT** criticise the perpetrator. The child/young person may love him/her and reconciliation may be possible.
- **DO NOT** ask the child to repeat what has been said to another member of staff.
- **EXPLAIN** what you have to do next and to whom you have to talk to.
- **INFORM** the appropriate person according to your procedure/protocol.

Our designated officers are: Jackie Band, Eilish Gallagher

4. RECORD

- **AS SOON** as is reasonably practicable make notes on what has happened.
- **DO NOT** destroy these notes, they should be retained in a safe place. The court in any legal process may require them.
- **RECORD** (using appendix 1d) Place, date, time and details of the child/young person involved. Record any noticeable non-verbal behaviour of the child/young person. If the child/young person uses their own words to describe sexual organs/acts, record the words spoken. Do not translate them into proper words.
- **RECORD on** the diagram (using 'record of marks observed on a child') to indicate positioning, size and location of any injuries you have identified
- **BE OBJECTIVE** in your recording. Include statements made and what you have seen, rather than assumptions or interpretations. Rely on FACT. A fact is any event that can be perceived by one of the five senses.

SUPPORT

Identify the support network available to yourself, as certain disclosures can be emotive. This may include Staff Counselling Services.

Be aware that after the event, the child/young person may need support. Be prepared for this. (see Safeguarding Policy)

Be aware of the sources of advice available for discussion or advice.

Children's Social Care

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