



Child Protection – Reporting process

If you are concerned about a child's welfare

There will be occasions when staff may suspect that a child may be at risk, but have no 'real' evidence. The child's behaviour may have changed, their artwork or writing could be bizarre or physical but inconclusive signs may have been noticed. In these circumstances, staff will try to give the child the opportunity to talk. The signs they have noticed may be due to a variety of factors, for example, a parent has moved out, a pet has died, a grandparent is very ill or an accident has occurred. It is fine for staff to ask the child if they are OK or if they can help in any way.

Staff should use the **Record of Concerns or Record of Conversation** to record these early concerns. If the child does begin to reveal that they are being harmed, staff should follow the advice below. Following an initial conversation with the child, if the member of staff remains concerned, they should discuss their concerns with the DLO.

Concerns which do not meet the threshold for child protection intervention could be managed through the Early Help/DAF process

If a child discloses to you

It takes a lot of courage for a child to disclose that they are being abused. They may feel ashamed, particularly if the abuse is sexual; their abuser may have threatened what will happen if they tell; they may have lost all trust in adults; or they may believe, or have been told, that the abuse is their own fault. Sometimes they may not be aware that what is happening is abusive.

If a child talks to a member of staff about any risks to their safety or wellbeing, for younger children this could be through their play or conversations with their peers, key worker etc. **the staff member will need to let the child know that they must pass the information on** - staff are not allowed to keep secrets. The point at which they tell the child this is a matter for professional judgement. If they jump in immediately the child may think that they do not want to listen, if left until the very end of the conversation, the child may feel that they have been misled into revealing more than they would have otherwise.

During their conversations with the child staff will:

- allow them to speak freely
- remain calm and not overreact – the child may stop talking if they feel they are upsetting their listener
- give reassuring nods or words of comfort – 'I'm so sorry this has happened', 'I want to help', 'This isn't your fault', 'You are doing the right thing in talking to me'
- not be afraid of silences – staff must remember how hard this must be for the child
- **under no circumstances** ask investigative questions – such as how many times this has happened, whether it happens to siblings too, or what the child's mother thinks about all this. Do remember your TED questions: Tell me.... Explain..... Describe.....
- at an appropriate time tell the child that in order to help them, the member of staff must pass the information on

- not automatically offer any physical touch as comfort. It may be anything but comforting to a child who has been abused
- Avoid admonishing the child for not disclosing earlier. Saying things such as 'I do wish you had told me about this when it started' or 'I can't believe what I'm hearing' may be the staff member's way of being supportive but may be interpreted by the child to mean that they have done something wrong
- Tell the child what will happen next.
- report verbally to the DLO
- write up their conversation as soon as possible on the **record of concern form** and hand it to the designated person
- seek support if they feel distressed

Notifying parents

The Setting will normally seek to discuss any concerns about a child with their parents. This must be handled sensitively and the DLO will make contact with the parent in the event of a concern, suspicion or disclosure. However, if the DLO believes that notifying parents could increase the risk to the child or exacerbate the problem, advice will first be sought from Local Safeguarding Board Consultation Line.

Confidentiality and sharing information

All staff will understand that child protection issues warrant a high level of confidentiality, not only out of respect for the child and staff involved but also to ensure that information being released into the public domain does not compromise evidence.

Staff should only discuss concerns with depending on who is the subject of the concern. That person will then decide who else needs to have the information and they will disseminate it on a 'need-to-know' basis.

However, following a number of cases where the Designated Lead Officer/Manager or chair of committee have failed to act upon concerns raised by staff, *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2015)* and the SSCB escalation policy emphasises that **any** member of staff can contact the Local Safeguarding Board if they are concerned about a child.

Child protection information will be stored and handled in line with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Information sharing is guided by the following principles. The information is:

- necessary and proportionate
- relevant
- adequate
- accurate
- timely
- secure

Information sharing decisions will be recorded, whether or not the decision is taken to share and kept on file.

Record of concern forms and other written information will be stored in the office any electronic information will be password protected and only made available to relevant individuals.

Every effort will be made to prevent unauthorised access, and sensitive information is not stored on laptop computers or other hand held devices, which, by the nature of their portability, could be lost or stolen. Child protection information will be stored separately from the child's development file and the development file can be 'tagged' to indicate that separate information is held.

The DLO will normally obtain consent from the parents to share sensitive information within the setting or with outside agencies. Where there is good reason to do so, the DLO may share information *without* consent, and will record the reason for not obtaining consent.

Child protection records are normally exempt from the disclosure provisions of the Data Protection Act, which means that children and parents do not have an automatic right to see them. If any member of staff receives a request from a child or parent to see child protection records, they will refer the request to the Manager/ DLO

The Data Protection Act does not prevent providers staff from sharing information with relevant agencies, where that information may help to protect a child.

The provider's confidentiality and information-sharing policy is available to parents and children on request.

Reporting directly to child protection agencies

Staff should follow the reporting procedures outlined in this policy. However, they may also share information directly with children's social care, police or the NSPCC if:

- the situation is an emergency and the Designated Safeguarding Officer, their deputy, the Manager/Playleader and the chair of committee/ proprietor are all unavailable
- they are convinced that a direct report is the only way to ensure the child's safety
- for any other reason they make a judgement that direct referral is in the best interests of the child.