

Disclosure of Abuse Policy

GO Kids recommends the following guidelines, if a child tells a member of staff that they are being abused. Dealing with disclosure of abuse has many implications for both the child and their family and staff must deal with it in a professional manner.

- Stay calm. Try not to transmit your own feelings which could be shock, anger, or embarrassment. Remaining calm will lessen the effect of the trauma and help the child know that you are in control and can help them.
- Believe the child. Children rarely lie about abuse, especially sexual abuse.
- Reassure the child. They may be feeling very guilty or responsible for the abuse and need to know that it is not their fault. Tell the child you are glad they told you.
- **DO NOT PROMISE TO KEEP IT A SECRET.** You cannot do so, and it would be wrong to deceive the child. Explain, as simply as you can, what you will have to do and who you will have to tell.
- Allow the child to talk but do not pressurize them or ask any sort of leading question. This may jeopardise any further action taken. It is better if the child does not have to repeat the story over and over again.
- Report the incident to the most senior member of staff on duty and write down what the child has told you as soon as possible. Sign and date the statement. The senior member of staff is responsible for deciding whether to contact social services/police and the parent/guardian.
- If possible, remain with the child to support them through the formal interview.
- Do not tell anyone other than the senior member of staff and social work/police representative what you have been told by the child. Confidentiality is crucial in a case like this and a huge amount of damage can be done if rumours are spread.
- Ensure that you have someone to talk to after the investigation. You will need to come to terms with the emotions you have been experiencing. No one can handle this type of situation alone.