

# Safeguarding 7-minute briefing: Managing a disclosure

## Check you know...

Our school safeguarding procedure.  
Who to pass it on to – who is the DSL or DDSL in school?  
Who is our back up DSL at another MAT school?  
Safeguarding is EVERYONES responsibility.

## Why disclose in school?

Children experiencing distress or abuse may seek to 'tell' in school, often because this is the place where they feel most safe, secure and listened to. It is not unusual for them to choose members of staff seen to be on the periphery of the staff team such as midday supervisors, caretakers or classroom support staff because they may be perceived as having less authority, more time and be less intimidating.

## What to avoid

Do not investigate  
Do not look shocked or distasteful  
Do not probe or speculate  
Do not promise to keep a secret  
Do not pass an opinion on the alleged perpetrator  
Do not delay in getting help

## What I do if a child discloses to me

Do not promise confidentiality.  
Reassure them that they are being taken seriously.  
Listen to the child. Stay in the moment with them.  
Write down the initial details in the words used by the child as soon as possible after the disclosure.  
Do not say words for them, however embarrassed they are to say them.  
Act immediately and pass on to the DSL.



## Refer not investigate.

Children may find it hard to tell staff about abuse verbally. Children can act in ways that they hope adults will notice and react to. The child may not make a direct report. If a child discloses harm, remember the school role is to recognise and refer not to investigate. 'Not investigating' does not mean that questions cannot be asked. Careful thought needs to be given on how and what questions are asked, avoiding anything as 'leading' the child.

## Questions and other situations

Where the child is making a possible disclosure or has a suspicious injury, it is reasonable to ask open, non-leading questions. "That's a nasty bruise, how did it happen?"; "You seem a bit upset and I'm worried, is anything troubling you?"; Remember 'TED' 'Tell', 'Explain' and 'Describe'. If further clarification is needed, keep questions open - What? When? Who? How? Where? Questions should only help clarify if the child is at risk of harm. Once clarification is achieved, no further questions should be asked.

## Injuries or Sexual Disclosure

If a child presents with an injury accompanied by a clear disclosure or makes a sexual disclosure it is not necessary to question the child other than to clarify who and where. Listen to the child and carefully record the disclosure. Ensure immediate information sharing with the Designated Safeguarding Lead. It is likely that such a scenario will require immediate consultation about action to be taken and an urgent referral to Specialist Children's Services may be necessary.

[Click here to take quiz](#)

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