

If a child or young person trusts you enough to tell you about an abusive situation, it means that they really trust and respect you – so well done! Once you have made sure that they understand that you may not be able to keep what they say a secret, and if the child or young person still wants to tell you, you must make a record of what is said, as soon as possible, but not while the child or young person is talking to you. Make a note of the time, date, and place of disclosure, and if anyone else was in the room. Record what the child actually says as far as possible.

Pass a copy of the notes you make on to the person responsible for child protection as soon as you can. You are not expected to contact social services yourself if you are in a school. Once you have passed the information on, you have done all that is expected of you. You will not be involved in the decision to pass the information on to social services, since the school has a duty to protect its pupils from harm and, as they will know the families of their pupils, they will make use of all available information to make a decision.

After a child or young person has told you this kind of information, you are likely to feel very confused. You may want help in coping with powerful and conflicting emotions about the abuse. These could include shock, anger, disbelief, self-blame and fear. You may need to talk to someone about what they have told you; you may have someone within college you can talk to, or you may want to contact the STIMULUS coordinator. Remember to keep the child's name confidential; the school will deal with what needs to be done in terms of reporting matters further.

Things to remember

- Explain that you can't keep what they tell you a secret, and that you need to tell someone if what they tell you is hurting them or someone else.
- Listen to the child or young person. Show that you believe what they say and are taking it seriously. It is very rare for a child or young person to report abuse if it has not taken place.
- Try not to appear shocked.
- Don't ask any questions that will force the child or young person to reveal any information that they don't want to at that time.
- Thank the child or young person for telling you, let them know that it was the right thing to do and reassure them that they are not to blame.
- Don't make any promises that you may not be able to keep.
- Try to write down what was said, the place, time, and who else was present as accurately as possible.
- Don't confront the alleged abuser yourself.



STIMULUS

Safeguarding and Child Protection

Advice for students

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Protecting Yourself

False accusations against adults are very rare. However there are a few things you must do to comply with the University's guidelines on working with children and to minimise the risk of any unfortunate misunderstandings.

- Treat everyone with respect, and avoid favouritism.
- Remember that someone else may misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned.
- Avoid physical contact with pupils.
- Discourage overfamiliarity. If a pupil develops a crush on you, it's a good idea to make sure the teacher knows, and perhaps avoid that particular pupil.
- Behave in a friendly but professional way – don't join in childish conversations, or use inappropriate language.
- Avoid being alone with individual pupils. If a teacher asks you to work with an individual pupil outside the classroom, ask whether there is a public space you can use, such as a library or resource base. Sit on the opposite side of the table to the pupil.
- Do not exchange e-mail addresses with pupils, 'friend' them on Facebook or interact on other forms of social media, or arrange to meet them out of school. (However it is acceptable, for instance, to tell them that you're helping with an event at the Science Festival, and encourage them to attend.)

Protecting Children

It is unlikely that this is something you will have to deal with during your placement. However, children may regard anyone working in a school as somebody "safe" to talk to, and may choose you particularly since you are nearer their age. This information sheet is not a comprehensive guide, but you should read it so that, in the unlikely event of you becoming aware of a child who may be being abused, you know what you should and shouldn't do. The school will have a policy (which they should share with you), and a member of staff in charge of child protection issues; you will need to pass on any information to the class teacher or the Designated Person for Child Protection to deal with.

It is important to remember that few abused children will fit neatly into one or other category – most of them will be suffering from more than one form of abuse. For example a neglected child will also be suffering from emotional abuse. The categories of abuse are listed overleaf.

What is abuse?

Abuse is the intentional harming of a child or other vulnerable person by someone in a position of trust; this could be by a relative, carer, neighbour, or anyone else who has contact with children or other vulnerable people.

There are 4 different categories of child abuse that are generally recognised:

1. **NEGLECT** – persistent or severe neglect of a child, sufficient to seriously endanger health or development. For example failure to provide adequate food, shelter or supervision.
2. **PHYSICAL ABUSE** – deliberately inflicting physical injury to a child. For example poisoning, shaking or hitting.
3. **SEXUAL ABUSE** – involving a child or young person in sexual activities whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. This may involve non-contact activities.
4. **EMOTIONAL ABUSE** – persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection of a child by having no feeling of warmth, care or concern for the child. All child abuse involves some emotional ill treatment. For example age or developmentally inappropriate expectations, ridiculing or bullying.

What should I do if I am worried that a child is at risk of harm?

Share your concerns with the class teacher, link teacher or person in charge of child protection (the Designated Person) within the school. They may ask you to write down your concerns; make sure that what you write down is clear, factual and without speculation. You may be concerned because of a change in behaviour or because of something that you have been told or you may have a general feeling of unease. Even if you think that this may be insignificant, it may link in with something that someone else has noticed, so it is still important to tell someone of your concern. The person in charge of child protection will log concerns, and monitor whether action needs to be taken.

What should I do if a child wants to tell me about an abusive situation?

It is very important that you do not promise not to tell anyone else. If abuse is disclosed, it must be reported. You need to make it clear that if they tell you about something that is putting them or others at risk, you will have to pass that information on. If a child asks if they can tell you a secret, be very wary (although it may turn out to be that they fancy a child on the other side of the room!).