

7 Minute Briefing

The Voice of the Child



1. The voice of the child

If a child makes a disclosure, that raises a possible safeguarding concern, what should you do? Should you ask questions? How can you promote children being able to share their worries?

Listening to the voice of the child supports decision making for families to [access the right support at the right time](#). When a parent gives information, the child's voice should not be missed and they should be spoken to.

2. Create the environment

Encourage a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, among all staff, in any measures the school or college may put in place to protect them ([KCSIE](#))

Teach children about their right to feel safe and secure and what to do if they have worries ([HYPERLINK "https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2" Unicef rights of the child](#))

Consider different ways that children can disclose their concerns (i.e., worry boxes, buddy benches)

Ensure children know who they can speak to if they have a worry, both in and outside of school.

Create regular opportunities for children to talk and share daily experiences. **Be** professionally curious! If you become aware of a significant change in a child's life (new partner in home, death of care giver including those with SGO) take the opportunity to speak to the child to understand the impact on their lives.

3. Ask questions

If the context of a child's disclosure is unclear, **before** speaking to parent/carer, children **should** be asked questions, to determine the right action. It should be explained to children that information cannot be kept confidential, and **ensure** children have support following any disclosure.

If a clear disclosure of [significant harm](#) has been made, **no** further questions should be asked, and your safeguarding procedures should be followed.

Leading questions, where possible, should be **avoided**. Tell explain and describe (**TED**) questions are an effective way of ascertaining more information i.e. tell me what happened? Who? What? Where? When? How? Ask children about their daily routines and experiences.

Don't be afraid of silences, consider the best place to speak to the child, and consider speaking side by side, rather than face to face with children.

4. Children with communication difficulties

Children with SEND/EAL needs, face extra barriers when it comes to sharing their worries. Efforts **should** be made to facilitate communication by other means i.e. drawing, PECS.

Consider the child's behaviour, demeanor, attendance and presentation. Has there been a change, or is there an ongoing concern?

Link up with other professionals and siblings to get a greater understanding of the child's daily life (good practice for all children)

[d/Deaf and disabled children: learning from case reviews \(NSPCC\)](#)

5. Record keeping

Record **factually** (not opinion), what the child has told you or what you have observed as soon as possible. Ensure records include the date, time, behaviour and words used by the child.

Records **need** to be clear to what has happened, the actions you have taken, and the decision determined. Other agencies may ask for your records and it is crucial that they can understand what happened and why.

We advise **against** settings asking children to write a statement of what has happened.

6. Train all staff

Children will often disclose to lunchtime supervisors and support staff. If staff do not know how to respond, an opportunity may be lost for a concern to be explored. **ALL** staff need to know how to respond to a disclosure and next steps. Staff should be supported to be confident to ask open questions and be professionally curious.

[Helping adults respond to children disclosing abuse NSPCC guidance](#)

7. Further information and training

- [With or Without Words' - Keeping the Child Voice Front and Centre - Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board \(staffsscb.org.uk\)](#)
- [Speak out Stay safe programme | NSPCC Learning](#)
- **ESAS** 01785 895836 / esas@staffordshire.gov.uk