

Allegations and suspicions - do's and don'ts

Do's

- Stay calm /do not show shock.
- Listen carefully, gently and patiently rather than asking questions.
- If you do ask for more information use TED: 'tell me...' 'explain to me...' 'describe...' this should mean you do not ask leading questions.
- Encourage them to talk and listen to them.
- Be non-judgmental.
- Start with an open mind and tell the individual that you treat this seriously.
- Allow the individual to recall events and describe what has happened in their own time.
- Reassure the individual they are doing the right thing by telling you and that they are not to blame.
- Be clear about your own position and what action you must take such as telling the individual that you need to pass the information on.
- Write down what you have been told, using the exact words if possible including the date, time, place and people present which you sign and date.
- Keep any drawings, etc, that they may do.
- Make sure you preserve any 'evidence', keeping it safe (e.g. no washing of clothes or showering) and uncontaminated.
- Ask for their consent for their information to be shared with other agencies on a 'need-to-know' basis (you cannot, though, guarantee confidentiality).
- Report the allegation as soon as possible – inform your line or senior manager, unless you suspect they are implicated.
- Give the individual contact details so they can ask questions or discuss issues (they need to know who they can get information from).

Don'ts

- Show shock, disgust or disbelief.
- Judge.
- Prompt them or ask detailed or leading questions.
- Make assumptions or put words into their mouth.
- Promise it will not happen again.
- Interrupt or stop them from freely recalling events.
- Make them repeat their account unnecessarily.
- Pressurise the individual for more details
- Ignore what you have been told.
- Promise to keep secrets - or make promises you can not keep.
- Do not contact or confront the alleged abuser.
- Don't contaminate or remove any evidence.
- Expose the individual to an examination to verify injuries.
- Dismiss your concerns or worry that you may be mistaken.
- Discuss individual cases or give information about the allegation to anyone who doesn't need to know.