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.