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## **CHILD ABUSE**

### **GUIDELINES ON HANDLING A DISCLOSURE**

If a child discloses to you:

- 1 **STAY CALM:** Try not to transmit your anger, shock or embarrassment to the child. Remaining calm will help lessen the effect of the trauma. It will also help the child to know you are in control.

If you have had similar experience in childhood this may be difficult for you to do. You may need to pass the child on to someone else who is more able to cope. This also applies to anyone who does not wish to become involved.

However, if a child chooses to speak to you, it means they have placed a great deal of trust in you. It takes a lot of courage to speak to someone about what has happened to them.

- 2 **LISTEN TO THE CHILD WITH AN OPEN MIND.** Children rarely lie about abuse.
- 3 **REASSURE THE CHILD.** Children often feel responsible for or guilty about the incident. Emphasise it is not the child's fault. Tell the child you are glad they told you.
- 4 **DO NOT PROMISE TO KEEP IT A SECRET.** You cannot and it would be wrong to deceive the child. Explain as simply as you can what and how you will have to tell. A child may beg you not to say anything because they are frightened but remember they would not have said anything unless they wanted the abuse to stop.
- 5 **ALLOW THE CHILD TO TALK BUT DO NOT PRESSURISE.** Remember it is better if the child does not have to repeat the story over and over again. Do not question the child about what he/she is saying. Make a full written record as soon as possible after the child has spoken to you.
- 6 **REPORT THE INCIDENT AND, IF YOU FEEL ABLE, REMAIN WITH THE CHILD TO SUPPORT DURING THE FORMAL INTERVIEW.**

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- 7 **AFTER THE INVESTIGATION, ENSURE THAT YOU HAVE SOMEONE TO TALK TO.** You will need to unburden yourself and come to terms with the emotions and feelings you have been experiencing.

**DON'T PANIC. YOU ARE NOT ALONE. THERE SHOULD ALWAYS BE A SUPPORT NETWORK TO SHARE YOUR ANXIETIES AND FEELINGS WITH YOU. NO ONE CAN HANDLE THIS TYPE OF ABUSE ALONE - EFFECTIVELY.**

## **HOW TO REACT WHEN A CHILD WANTS TO TALK ABOUT ABUSE**

### General Points

- ◆ Accept what the child says
- ◆ Keep calm
- ◆ Look at the child directly
- ◆ Be honest
- ◆ Let them know you will need to tell someone else - don't promise confidentiality
- ◆ Even when a child has broken a rule they are not to blame for the abuse
- ◆ Be aware the child may have been threatened
- ◆ Never push for information

### Helpful thing to say

- ◆ I believe you
- ◆ I am glad you have told me
- ◆ It is not your fault
- ◆ I will help you

### Avoid saying

- ◆ Why didn't you tell anyone before?
- ◆ I can't believe it
- ◆ Are you sure this is true?
- ◆ Why? How? When? Who? Where?
- ◆ Never make false promises
- ◆ Never make statements such as "I am shocked, don't tell anyone else"

### Concluding

Again, reassure the child they were right to tell you and you believe them. Let the child know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens.

Immediately refer to a senior worker/appointed person/someone appropriately qualified.

**Make notes as soon as possible, writing down exactly what the child said and when he/she said it. Record dates and times of these events and when you made the record. Keep all hand-written notes, even if subsequently typed up.**

This Policy was adopted by St Thomas' Playgroup Dec 2017 and will be reviewed Dec 2018