

# *Guidance to compliment the Child Protection Policy*

## Dealing with a disclosure made by a child

### **Listen**

- Listen carefully to what is being said, without displaying shock or disbelief.
- Accept what is said. The child making the disclosure may be known to you as someone who does not always tell the truth. However, do not let your past knowledge of this person allow you to pre-judge or invalidate their allegation.
- Do not attempt to investigate the allegation. Your duty will be to listen to what is being said and to pass that information on.

### **Reassure**

- Provide the child with plenty of re-assurance. Always be honest and do not make promises you cannot keep, for example: "I'll stay with you", or, "Everything will be all right now".
- Alleviate guilt, if the pupil refers to it. For example, you could say: "You're not to blame. This is not your fault".
- Do not promise confidentiality. You will be under a duty to pass the information on and the child needs to know this.

### **React**

- You can ask questions and may need to in certain instances. However, this is not an opportunity to interrogate the child and go into the territory of in depth and prolonged questioning. You only need to know the salient points of the allegation that the child is making. Any questions must be open and not leading eg TED
- T- Tell me, E-explain, D-describe.
- Do not criticize the alleged perpetrator as the pupil may still have a positive emotional attachment to this person.
- Do not ask the pupil to repeat their allegation to another member of staff. If they are asked to repeat it, they may feel that they are not being believed and / or their recollection of what happened may change.

### **Record**

- Take notes as soon as it is practical to do so. Record the actual words spoken by the child – do not re-translate them into the way that adults speak or try to make sense of the structure of what was said). Do not be offended by any offensive language or words used to describe the abuse).
- Time and date your notes and do not destroy them in case they are required by a court.
- Where possible, indicate the position of any bruising or injury but do not ask the child to remove any clothing for this purpose.

- Record statements and observable things, rather than your interpretations' or assumptions.

### Final Steps

- Once you have followed the above guidelines, pass the information on **immediately** to the Designated Senior Person or the person with responsibility for Child Protection. They will then have several options open to them, including contacting Children's Services to seek their advice as to what should happen next.

## Confidentiality

With regards to child protection, the duty of confidentiality is not absolute and may be breached where this is in the best interests of the child and in the wider public interest. If professionals judge that disclosure is necessary to protect the child or other children from a risk of serious harm, confidentiality may be breached. Staff should refer to the Local Authority guidance "Guidance for Schools: Consent for referrals to Children's Services / Team Around the Family".

Where those in education settings judge that there is a need to share confidential information with children's social services or the police:

- they should attempt to support the child
- they may initially discuss the case anonymously with other relevant colleagues, such as the DSP or another colleague with suitable competence in safeguarding or with children's social services.
- the child should be informed of the professional's need to share confidential information, unless to do so might put them at further risk
- any decision to share information or not should be properly documented.

Decisions in this area need to be made by, or with the advice of, people with suitable safeguarding competence, such as the named designated professionals.

## Managing allegations against adults who work with children

In the event of a child protection allegation being made against a member of staff, the person in receipt of that allegation must immediately pass details of the concern to the Headteacher or in their absence a member of staff with Headteacher responsibilities. The Headteacher will then contact the Chair of Governors and Central Referral Team to discuss the next steps in accordance with local arrangements. Staff should not confront the person the allegation is against or share information with anyone else.

If a potential child protection allegation is made against the Headteacher, the member of staff in receipt of that allegation must contact the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will then contact The Central Referral Team to discuss the next steps in accordance with local arrangements. If the Chair of Governors is unavailable, the member of staff can seek advice from The Central referral Team.

### Abuse of position of trust

Welsh Government guidance ("Keeping Learners Safe" 2020) indicates that all Education staff need to know that inappropriate behaviour with, or towards, children is unacceptable. Under the Sexual Offences Act, 2003, it is an offence for a person over 18 (for example teacher, youth worker) to have

a sexual relationship with a child under 18 where that person is in a position of trust in respect of that child, even if the relationship is consensual. This applies where the child is in full-time education and the person works in the same establishment as the child, even if he/she does not teach the child.

## Supporting the pupil at risk

Child abuse is devastating for the child and can also result in distress and anxiety for staff who become involved. We recognise that children who are at risk, suffer abuse or witness violence may be deeply affected by this. This school may be the only stable, secure, predictable element in the lives of children at risk. Nevertheless, when at school their behaviour may be challenging and defiant or they may be withdrawn. The school will endeavour to support the pupil through:

- The content of the curriculum to encourage self-esteem and self-motivation
- The school ethos which:
  - promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment
  - gives learners a sense of being valued (see section 2 on Prevention in the Child Protection Policy)
- The school's setting's behaviour policy, which is aimed at supporting vulnerable pupils in the school. All staff will agree on a consistent approach that focuses on the behavioural outcome of the child but does not damage the individual's sense of self-worth. The school will endeavour to ensure that the learner knows that some behaviour is unacceptable but that they are valued and not to be blamed for any abuse which has occurred.
- Liaising with other agencies who support the learner such as local authority officers – for example the educational psychology service, behaviour support services or the School Safeguarding and Attendance Team – child and adolescent mental health services, and advocacy services keeping records and notifying the local authority as soon as there is a recurrence of a concern.
- Taking all suspicions and disclosures seriously
- Nominating a link person who will keep all parties informed and be the central point of contact. Where a member of staff is the subject of an allegation made by a pupil, separate link people will be nominated to avoid any conflict of interest.
- Responding sympathetically to any request from pupils or staff for time out to deal with distress or anxiety.
- Maintaining confidentiality and sharing information on a need-to-know basis only with relevant individuals and agencies.
- Storing records securely.
- Offering details of helplines, counselling or other avenues of external support cooperating fully with relevant statutory agencies, including working with Police and children's services in line with the Operation Encompass and Operation Endeavour protocol (see below).

### OPERATION ENCOMPASS

The school participates in **Operation Encompass and Operation Endeavour**.

Operation Encompass was created to support children experience domestic abuse through timely information-sharing between police and schools. The purpose of Operation Encompass is to enable support to be given to child victims of domestic abuse. Through Operation Encompass schools can help children understand what is happening at home and how to best protect themselves both

physically and emotionally. The information a school receives also enables them to prepare for the child at school and ensure they have the support they need.

The purpose of Operation Endeavour is to safeguard and support those children and young people who have been reported missing from home. It is thought that approximately 25% of children and young people that go missing are at risk of serious harm. There are particular concerns about the links between children running away and the risks of sexual exploitation. Operation Endeavour aims to ensure that a Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) has been identified within the schools and are appropriately trained. They are to be made aware of the incidents at the earliest opportunity in order to provide timely and tailored support to children and young people at the start of, and during the school day

## Review

The Child Protection Policy will be reviewed and ratified annually at a full governing body meeting and recorded in the minutes. In preparation for this review, the Designated Senior Person for Child Protection may wish to provide the Governing Body with information on the following: -

- changes to Child Protection procedures;
- training undertaken by all staff and governors in the preceding 12 months;
- the number of incidents of a Child Protection nature which arose in the school within the preceding 12 months (without details or names);
- where and how Child Protection and Safeguarding appear in the curriculum;
- lessons learned from cases.