



# Responding, Reporting and Recording.

## RESPONDING

A concern about a child may refer to an incident when a child has shown signs of abuse or there has been a disclosure of abuse by the child or another person. A concern may also refer to inappropriate or difficult behaviour that an adult has shown towards a child.

Responding to concerns must be based upon a clearly defined reporting process. (see below) Knowing what to do, who to contact and who needs to know will ensure that the incident is dealt with appropriately. The leaders primary responsibility is to report any concern as soon as possible and ensure that the concern is taken seriously.

In the event of a concern that involves alleged or suspected child abuse a Report of Concern form must be completed and passed to the Safeguarding Officer immediately. ( located in the file in the front office )

What to do and what not to do if a child discloses to you:

### DO

- ✓ Listen
- ✓ Stay calm
- ✓ Accept without question what you are being told
- ✓ Give time for the child to say what they want
- ✓ Write down what was said to you or what you observed as soon as possible
- ✓ Write down the exact words that the child used
- ✓ In the event of a serious concern do not hesitate to contact the Safeguarding Officer and appropriate advice will be given
- ✓ Reassure the child that they've done the right thing and that you will do something about what they've told you
- ✓ take notes

- ✓ Report and record to whom you reported the incident to.

## **DON'T**

- ✓ Panic
- ✓ Ask direct or leading questions
- ✓ Make a child repeat the story unnecessarily
- ✓ Promise to keep secrets
- ✓ Assume
- ✓ Delay
- ✓ investigate - including taking photographs or trying to get more details
- ✓ Under no circumstances should you attempt to deal with the problem alone

## **REPORTING**

In order to protect the dignity of the child, young person or vulnerable adult at the centre of the allegation, it is vital that information is passed to others **ONLY** on a 'NEED TO KNOW' basis. That is to say, the leader who has the concern should discuss his/her concern only with the persons in the reporting chain.

The information below sets out the general guidelines for reporting, every situation is unique and not every person in the chain may be available exactly when you need them. The key in this situation is to ensure the C/YP/VA is safe, therefore, do not wait for the first person to respond or for a meeting or to seek advice from any outside party. Work through the list of relevant people, preferably in the order they are given, until you are satisfied you have passed on information to a relevant person.

- 1 The worker concerned should -
  - i. Immediately notify the leader-in-charge. ( if it is deemed preferable the worker can contact the safeguarding officer directly )
  - ii. Record and date all available information relating to the cause for concern and any subsequent action.
- 2 The leader-in-charge should -

- i. Immediately notify in person the Safeguarding Officer, who will keep the Lead Pastor informed as appropriate. This notification is to be followed by written confirmation of the incident and details of all action taken
- ii. If a child is in danger or a criminal offence has taken place, then PSNI and/or Social Services must be informed immediately.
- iii. Offer support to the leader or other person who made the initial report. Additional support is also available through church if needed eg. The Pastoral Care Team.
- iv. Reassure them that they've done the right thing



## **RECORDING**

### Child's words

It is very important that any words a C/YP/VA says are recorded accurately. If something of concern is said to a leader, this should be recorded immediately on any piece of paper at hand and then the Incident form written up at a later stage. A copy of the Incident form is available in the church office..

The complexity of child protection issues means that there can never be a set of prescriptive questions. Don't try to get too much information, rather, let the child give you as much as they feel prepared to give. The adult listening should try to act as natural as possible throughout. Makes notes during the interview, but only those necessary. As soon as the interaction is completed then the leader should immediately record as much detail of the discussion as possible.

### COMMON QUESTIONS that could be used in some situations.

#### THE DOs - open questions/statements

- Would you like to tell me what happened?
- Can you tell me where/when this happened?
- Would you like to tell me who was involved?
- Can you tell me what happened next?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me?
- Has it happened before? How often?
- Thank you for telling me this but you do realise I will have to do something about it

#### THE DON'Ts - leading/closed questions/comments

- Was it your father/coach/friend that did this to you?
- Are you sure that's what happened?
- Why did you let them do that to you?
- Why do you think this happened?
- I expect you must be very upset about this.

### Police or Medical Intervention

If there is ever a concern that a child might be in immediate danger then do not hesitate to contact PSNI immediately. Leaders should also consider if there is any need for medical attention, in all but very minor injuries a paramedic should be called.