

# Concerns about a child FAQs

- **What should someone do if they are worried about a child being abused or at risk of abuse?**
- **If a child tells you about abuse and then stops, what do you do?**
- **What if the child uses a hypothetical statement about a 'friend'?**

What should someone do if they are worried about a child being abused or at risk of abuse?

Staff and volunteers must follow the guidelines contained within their organisation's Child Protection Policy. They should inform the organisation's Child Protection Officer (CPO) who will then immediately inform the local social services or police. If the CPO is not available, or the concern is about the behaviour of the CPO towards a child, staff/volunteers should contact the local social services or police directly. They do not have to give their name, although it is helpful if they do. Social services and/or the police will give advice about informing the child's parents about concerns. If your organisation or club does not have a policy or CPO phone Safeguarding in Sport for advice. If a child is in immediate danger call the police on 999.

If a child or young person talks about possible abuse, the member of staff or volunteer should:

- Never ignore any statement made by a child or young person that they have been abused. Take what the child says seriously
- Try to react calmly. Remember that the child is likely to be frightened or anxious
- Tell the child that he or she was right to tell and is not to blame
- Reassure the child but do not promise confidentiality. Tell the child what they have said will need to be shared with others and exactly what will be done with information given
- Avoid asking questions. If necessary, only ask enough open-ended questions (e.g. what happened?) to gain basic information to establish the possibility that abuse may have occurred
- Make a full written record of what was said, heard and/or seen as soon as possible.

Staff and volunteers should not:

- Panic
- Allow their shock or distaste to show
- Probe for more information than is offered
- Speculate or make assumptions about what has happened
- Make negative comments about the alleged abuser
- Approach the alleged abuser
- Make promises or agree to keep secrets.

Child protection is everybody's responsibility. However, it is not your responsibility to decide if a child is being abused but it is your responsibility to pass on any concerns you have, no matter how small they may seem.

## If a child tells you about abuse and then stops, what do you do?

Remember that it takes a lot of courage for a child to disclose abuse. Children are likely to be frightened or worried about what might happen to them when people find out. If a child tells you, it is likely that they trust you enough to share this huge secret. You should reassure the child they have done the right thing by telling you and they can talk to you anytime. You must however be honest with the child and tell them/or remind them that you need to share the information. It is then the child's choice to continue or not. You have been honest with them and they can then make an informed decision about what to do next.

You should pass whatever information the child gives to the Child Protection Officer and record what the child tells you, using the child's words. If you have concerns about the child's immediate safety, you should contact the local social services and/or police without delay.

It's a good idea to give all children and young people in the organisation information about keeping safe and who they can talk to within or outside the organisation. Such information should address the issue of confidentiality and make it clear that information which makes adults concerned about the safety of children cannot be kept secret.

## What if the child uses a hypothetical statement about a 'friend'?

We know that most children are likely to tell a friend about abuse rather than report it to an adult. So if a child tells you about a 'friend', they may actually be worried about a friend and trying to seek help/information on their behalf.

Children might also refer to a 'friend' when they are really talking about themselves (just in the same way adults do!). They could be testing your reaction to the information. In either case, the child should be reassured that it is ok to share that kind of information but that adults would need to pass the information to those who want to help keep the child safe.