

## 7. As the placement progresses

### CHILDREN TELLING ABOUT THEIR ABUSE

#### How might they feel?

When a child tells you they have been harmed or abused, they may be feeling:

- scared, guilty, ashamed, angry, powerless

#### How might you feel?

- a sense of outrage, disgust, sadness, anger, uncomfortable, worried about saying the wrong thing, sometimes disbelief

#### How to respond?

- listen carefully to what they say
- tell them you believe them
- acknowledge how difficult telling you might have been.
- reassure them it's not their fault and they are not responsible for what happened to them
- explain you will tell their caseworker
- record what the child tells you
- thank the child for telling you

### What will not help the child?

- responding emotionally e.g.crying loudly. This may make the child worry they have upset you. If you do feel tearful, explain that you're upset because adults should care for children and you are sad that didn't happen for them
- making promises you cannot keep such as promising you will not tell anyone
- pushing child into giving details of the abuse

Your role is not to interview the child but to listen to what they want to tell you and offer support, belief and comfort. You might feel uncomfortable or worried about saying the wrong thing but it is important you do not stop the child telling. This might send the message that you are not interested in their experiences or that they shouldn't talk about what happened to them. If the child has told you some worrying things but not enough to be sure they have been hurt or abused, you may want to ask some simple open questions like "do you want to tell me more about that?" or "gosh that must have been hard did anything else happen?"

- Discuss the situation with people who don't need to know.

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'Responding to children and young people's disclosures of abuse'