



<b>Professional curiosity (series of 4 articles)</b>	<b>Bexley Safeguarding Children's Board</b>
<b>2. Communicating with children and young people</b>	<b>July 2017</b>
<p>In June 2017 the BSCB e-Bulletin launched the first in a series of pieces on <a href="#">professional curiosity</a>. This feature focuses on the importance of communicating with children and young people when you are concerned about their welfare, and what to do if a child makes a disclosure of abuse or neglect.</p> <p>A recent <a href="#">NSPCC study</a> found that many young people said that it would have helped if someone had noticed the signs and asked them if anything was happening. If you're in a situation where you suspect abuse or neglect of a child, but they haven't actually said anything to you, there are a number of steps you can take:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❶ <b>Continue to talk to the child</b> - most children who are being abused find it very difficult to talk about it and often fear there will be consequences. By having on-going conversations, the time may come when they're ready to talk.</li> <li>❷ <b>Record your concerns</b> - this can also help to spot patterns of behaviour.</li> <li>❸ <b>Seek advice</b> - talk through your worries with the designated safeguarding lead in your organisation, Bexley's Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) 020 3045 5440 or the NSPCC (24/7) helpline 0808 800 5000.</li> </ol> <p><b>Managing disclosures</b></p> <p>As the adult they have chosen to tell, it is vital that you act on what you've been told. Children and young people can make a disclosure in a number of ways such as: verbally or non-verbally, directly or indirectly, fully or partially.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✅ <b>Listen carefully to the child and take them seriously.</b> Avoid expressing your own views and be mindful that a reaction of shock or disbelief could cause the child to shut down, retract what they have disclosed, or stop talking.</li> <li>✅ <b>Let them know they've done the right thing.</b> Reassurance can make a big impact to the child who may have been keeping the abuse secret.</li> <li>✅ <b>Tell them it's not their fault.</b> Abuse is never the child's fault and they need to know this.</li> <li>✅ <b>Say you believe them.</b> They've told you because they want help, and trust you'll be the person to believe them and help them.</li> <li>✅ <b>Explain what you'll do next.</b> If age appropriate, explain to the child you'll need to report the abuse to someone who will be able to help. It is important to maintain confidentiality, but you should not promise that you won't tell anyone, as you may need to do so in order to protect the child.</li> <li>❌ <b>Don't talk to the alleged abuser.</b> Confronting the alleged abuser about what the child has told you could make the situation a lot worse for the child.</li> <li>❌ <b>Don't delay reporting the abuse.</b> The sooner the abuse is reported the better. Report as soon as possible so details are fresh in your mind and action can be taken quickly.</li> </ul> <p><b>Information sharing - If in doubt, report!</b></p> <p>Poor or non-existent information sharing is a factor repeatedly flagged up as an issue in Serious Case Reviews. The most important consideration is whether sharing information is likely to safeguard and protect a child. Always think of the safety and wellbeing of the child first.</p>	

**Getting consent**

Ask for consent to share confidential information unless asking for consent may increase the risk of significant harm to the child or young person, or a delay in sharing information may increase the risk of harm to the child or young person.

It's important to respect the wishes of a child or young person who doesn't consent to share confidential information. If a child or young person refuses to give their consent to share confidential information, you may still lawfully go ahead if it can be justified to be in the public interest. For example, to protect children from significant harm or promote the welfare of children. You'll need to make a professional judgement and should discuss this with your designated safeguarding lead. If you share information without consent you'll need to explain to the child or young person you're going to do this and why, unless doing this will put the child at risk of significant harm.

**Further information**

[What to do if you're worried a child is being abused: advice for practitioners](#)

[NSPCC: What to do if a child reveals abuse](#)

[Information sharing: advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services](#)