

SAFE TO GROW PROCEDURE IF ABUSE IS DISCLOSED OR DISCOVERED

Possible Signs of Abuse

The following may indicate abuse, but do not jump to conclusions. There could be other explanations.

- Physical** unexplained or hidden injuries, lack of medical attention (See Appendix 1 - C)
- Emotional** reverting to younger behaviour, nervousness, stealing, lying, sudden underachievement, attention seeking, running away; may be frightened by threats or taunts, or are given responsibilities beyond their years.
- Sexual** preoccupation with sexual matters evident in words, play, drawings; being sexually provocative with adults; disturbed sleep, nightmares, bedwetting, secretive relationships with adults.
- Neglect** looking ill -cared for and unhappy, being withdrawn or aggressive; having lingering injuries or health problems.
- Spiritual** where an adult with spiritual authority uses that authority to coerce

Where there is clear evidence of abuse:

- Do not delay
- Do not confront
- Do not act alone
- Do not start to investigate
- Consult with your Children's Advocate as soon as possible.
- Seek advice from the Diocesan Child Protection Officer a.s.a.p. – see telephone number below
- As and when appropriate and following advice given: Inform the local Social Services and/or the Police immediately and in any event within 24 hours.

In an emergency involving a child protection issue ring one of the following statutory child protection agencies:

- The Police Dial 999 or 01793 528111
- Social Services Children's Intake (Office hours only) Dial 01793 463000
- Child Protection Officer – Diocese of Bristol Dial 0844 892 0104
- NSPCC Dial 0800 800500
- Childline Dial 0800 1111
- Vulnerable Adults Unit Dial 01793 507828

The following is a summary, for reference only and is no substitute for training.

When talking with a child:

- Look at the child directly
- Reassure the child that they are right to tell you and you believe them.
- Accept what the child says
- Do not press for information.
- Tell the child they are not to blame.
- Be aware that the child may have been threatened.
- Do not appear shocked or appalled.
- Let them know that you may need to tell someone else; do not promise confidentiality.
- If you are informed of anything illegal you must inform your **Children's Advocate(s)**.
- Let them know what you are going to do next, who you are going to inform and why.
- Let them know roughly what will happen next, yet be sensitive. (See below)
- Finish on a positive note.
- As soon as possible afterwards make hand-written factual notes of exactly what the child said and the date and time of your talk.
- Do not take on board other people's problems as if they were your own. Remember, empathy is standing in someone else's shoes with your feet firmly in your own.