

One minute guide

Difficult Conversations With Children

December 2020

When you see or hear something about a child that concerns you, or a child says something to you that raises your concern, you need to respond to the child in an appropriate way.

Do:

- ❖ Consider who is the best person to speak to the child who has a good relationship with them – there may be someone working with the child or someone the child relates well to
- ❖ Find the right environment to have the conversation
- ❖ If a child says something to you make sure you respond to the child at the time even if you won't be the person having the more in-depth conversation
- ❖ Allow enough time for the conversation
- ❖ Use open questions that allow the child to talk without any influence e.g. that sounds difficult tell me more
- ❖ Body language - be calm and reassuring, don't indicate that you are shocked
- ❖ Tell them you take seriously what they are saying, and you are sorry that it happened
- ❖ Reassure them that they did the right thing in telling
- ❖ Reassure them that they are not to blame
- ❖ Use child friendly tools
- ❖ Build your confidence around speaking to children – learn about the best way to do it, learn from others

Don't:

- **Speak to the child in front of parents or other children**
- **Home is not necessarily the best place**
- **Rush the conversation**
- **Use jargon / professional terminology**
- **Make false promises**
- **Promise confidentiality**
- **Ascribe blame to anyone else**
- **Over emphasis how terrible / wrong the situation is**

Recording

Consider whether it feels right to make recording notes at the time

If it does, e.g. with an older child, ask them and explain what you are doing and why

If it doesn't make your recording as soon as possible afterwards

Record in detail – facts, times and dates, what was said, use chronologies, be mindful of the words and language you use – your recording may be needed later in statutory / formal procedures

Next steps: if conversations with children raise concerns about their safeguarding / welfare, consider what is the Right Help that is needed at that point in time and take appropriate and timely action:

Speak to your Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Refer to the MASH Team using a MARF (Multi Agency Referral Form), complete an Early Help Assessment or provide Early Help support.

If the child is at imminent risk ring the MASH Team on 024 76788555 followed by a MARF within 24 hours.

Early Help: Call the Family Hubs on 0800 8870545 or visit www.coventry.gov.uk/familyhubs