

Managing Allegations of Abuse against Adults whose work bring them into contact with children

ASKING QUESTIONS

- Information gathering should not be more than that necessary to clarify the allegation/disclosure, and should normally involve only speaking to the child/ren directly involved.
- It is preferable if the child/ren can give a free narrative account - don't interrupt to ask questions; these should be kept for later. You can encourage the child/ren to tell you what happened in their own words by the use of non-specific prompts such as "explain to me what happened", "describe to me what happened", "is there anything else you want to tell me?"
- If you have to clarify what happened by asking questions use open-ended questions. Open-ended questions are framed in such a way that the child/ren can give an unrestricted answer, rather than just a "yes" or a "no". This questioning style also minimises the risk that you will impose your view of what happened on the child/ren.
- The most common open-ended questions are:
 - What happened?
 - When did it happen:
 - Where did it happen?
 - Who was there?
- Questions starting with "why" should be avoided with children as this can make them feel like they are being blamed, accused or required to explain adult behaviours.
- Do **not** gather "witness" statements unless requested by a Strategy Meeting.
- Keep an accurate record of what the child has said - in their own words- and of any questions you have asked. Note the date and time on your written record and who took the record.