



## Appendix IV

### How to react when a Child or Young Person wants to talk about abuse

The most important thing to remember is that when a child or young person discloses that abuse of any nature is taking place (or has taken place), they are divulging a secret. It is not the place for this document to provide guidance for counselling in this scenario, but please make sure that the young person knows that you believe them. Many situations have arisen where the first person to be told of such events failed to demonstrate that they believed the young person in the first instance and this led to the abuse being covered up for years.

If a young person or child wants to talk to you about some form of abuse use the following guidelines as much as possible and as appropriate to the situation.

#### General points are;

- Accept what the person says
- Keep calm
- Be honest
- Look directly at the young person
- Do not appear shocked
- Let them know that you may need to tell someone else – do not promise confidentiality
- Assure them that they are not to blame for the abuse
- Never ask leading questions
- Never push for information
- Do not fill in words; finish their sentences or make assumptions
- Be aware that the young person may have been threatened

#### Helpful things to say:

- “I believe you” (or showing acceptance of what the person says)
- “I am glad you told me”
- “It’s not your fault”
- “I will help you”

#### Avoid saying:

- “Why didn’t you tell anyone before?”
- I can’t believe it”
- “Are you sure this is true?”
- Avoid questioning the child: Do not begin with WHY? WHEN? WHO? WHERE?
- Never make statements such as: “I’m shocked – don’t tell anyone else”