

Dealing with allegations of abuse against a child or young person

What to do if a child discloses allegations of abuse to you

Children rarely tell if they are being abused. If a child or young person gives you information that suggests that he or she is being abused or may be at risk of abuse this should never be ignored. All staff and volunteers of Theatrics are required to respond immediately in accordance to the following procedures:

- Remain calm, no matter how difficult it is to listen to the child or young person.
- Give your full attention to the child or young person and keep your body language open and encouraging. Let them take the lead in the conversation, respect pauses and never interrupt. Take them seriously and reassure them they were right to tell.
- Reflect back what they've said to check your understanding when they have finished – and use their language to show it's their experience.
- Tell the child or young person you are going to have to tell someone who can help. Reassure them and thank them for telling you. Make sure they know what you are going to do with the information.
- As soon as possible write down everything the child or young person has told you using their exact words and phrases when possible.
- Make a note of the date, time, place and persons present. Ensure all the persons present sign the note.
- Immediately report your concerns to the nominated child protection lead.
- It is the responsibility of the nominated child protection lead to share the concerns immediately and without delay with the police or local child protection services.
- If you are unsatisfied with the response of the nominated child protection lead it is your right to contact the police or child protection services yourself to express all concerns.

Important contacts

If you believe that a child or young person is at immediate risk, this should be reported without delay to the **police on 999**.

Belfast HSC Trust: 028 9050 7000