

## Why it matters

'Non-disclosure and delayed disclosure continues to be prevalent among children and adolescents who experience abuse.' Many children who have been abused do not disclose until adulthood. Practitioners need to focus on what helps children tell rather than what hinders children telling. Adult studies continue to record significant numbers who never disclosed as children. Children need an environment in which to disclose.

## Information

Practitioners are well versed in the barriers to disclosure. Children feel responsible for the abuse, feel shame and stigma, fear not being believed, how they will be received, fear of family disruption and concern for the perpetrator, fear the threats by the perpetrator, lack of trust in other adults, lack of trust in services, lack of provision of services. However, they will tell if the child has concern for others or if they want the abuse to stop.

Learn how to spot the sign of child sexual exploitation

[Watch the Video Here](#)

Search YouTube: Learn how to spot signs of child sexual exploitation with Seen and Heard

## Behavioural indicators

Children do not have to disclose verbally, their behaviour will indicate something is wrong. Research shows that children acknowledge the psychological distress associated with keeping the secret and when the distress becomes too much to cope with, they may become angry, sad, use physical violence, self-harm or any other behaviour that is out of norm for that child. Quite often it is the behaviour that is concentrated on rather than the underlying cause.



## Question to ask

- How do you recognise distress in a child?
- Are you professionally curious as to the cause?
- How do you initiate conversations about well-being?
- How do you ensure children know what abuse is and that it is not acceptable?
- How do you let children know they can talk to you, and you can be trusted?
- Do you know what to do if a child discloses?

## Factors that help Disclosure

- Two key dynamics help children tell:
- needing to tell (pressure cooker effect)
  - opportunity to tell.
- They will need:
- Close relationship with a trusted adult,
  - Developmentally appropriate education, emotional support and understanding.
  - Feeling that they will be believed,
  - Adult initiating conversations about the child's wellbeing and life and asking the right questions.

## Key Practice Message

- 1) Need to focus on what helps children tell rather than what hinders children telling.
- 2) Children need those around them to notice when they need to talk about themselves and what is happening in their lives, when they are unable to cope with their distress, when they want something done about it.
- 3) Professionals and adults need to: ask Children about their lives and wellbeing, help them access someone they can trust, let them know they will be taken seriously, help them understand that abuse is wrong.



