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#### **Sample Procedure for Responding to Suspicions and Allegations of Child Abuse**

**Introduction**

It is not the responsibility of anyone working at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities so that they can then make inquiries and take necessary action to protect the young person. This applies **BOTH** to allegations/suspicions of abuse occurring within \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and to allegations/suspicions that abuse is taking place elsewhere.

**Signs of Abuse**

* Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries
* An injury for which an explanation seems inconsistent
* The young person describes what appears to be an abusive act involving them
* Another young person or adult expresses concern about the welfare of a young person
* Unexplained changes in a young person’s behavior e.g. becoming very upset, quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper
* Inappropriate sexual awareness
* Engaging in sexually explicit behavior
* Distrust of adults, particularly those whom a close relationship would normally be expected
* Difficulty in making friends
* Being prevented from socializing with others
* Displaying variations in eating patterns including over eating or loss of appetite
* Losing weight for no apparent reason
* Becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt

**If you Become Aware of Possible Abuse**

It is particularly important to respond appropriately. If a young person says or indicates that they are being abused, you should:

* **Stay calm** so as not to frighten the young person.
* **Reassure** the child that they are not to blame and that it was right to tell.
* **Listen** to the child, showing that you are taking them seriously.
* **Keep questions to a minimum** so that there is a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. The law is very strict and child abuse cases have been dismissed where it is felt that the child has been led or words and ideas have been suggested during questioning. Only ask questions to clarify.
* **Inform** the child that you have to inform other people about what they have told you. Tell the child this is to help stop the abuse continuing.
* **Safety of the child** is paramount. If the child needs urgent medical attention call an ambulance, inform the doctors of the concern, and ensure they are made aware that this is a child protection issue.
* **Record** all information.
* **Report** the incident to the your supervisor **immediately.**