

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN – SPOTLIGHT ON LISTENING TO & SEEING THE CHILD

Challenging parents and hearing the child's voice

- Although rare, parents can sometimes be deceptive or manipulative when reporting children's physical or emotional health problems.
- In some serious case reviews, professionals relied too much on parents' reports and did not examine the child or observe their behaviour.
- Research tells us to be straightforward in asking questions to parents and with children. Explain the nature of your concerns.
- **For example: "I need to talk to you about the injury to X" and if the child is old enough "How did that happen?" Record what is said and by whom.**
- **"Y appears tired and very lethargic, have you any ideas what might be troubling him?"**
- **"Where I am concerned about a child's welfare I have to inform children's social services. This is a statutory duty that all agencies have."**

Key Messages

- **Do not** automatically accept a parent or carer's report without talking to the child and other family members and close friends.
- When referring children, **highlight** anything that has only been reported by adults or has not been observed by professionals.
- **Be alert** to patterns in parents' and children's behaviour over time that may indicate the child is at risk of abuse or neglect.
- **Do not** give repeat prescriptions without a GP regularly examining the child.
- **Be prepared** to challenge parents and carers to gather information about a child's wellbeing.
- **Provide training for staff** that models how to challenge parents and carers effectively - give staff the confidence to inquire into potential abuse.

Demonstrate your Competence by:

- Having **core knowledge** (as appropriate to your role)
- Drawing on child and family-focused clinical and professional knowledge and expertise of **what constitutes child maltreatment**, abuse and/or neglect
- Understanding the **effects** of parental/carer behaviour and family factors on children and young people
- Working with other professionals and agencies, with children, young people and their families when there are **safeguarding concerns**
- Contributing to **inter-agency assessments**, the gathering and sharing of information and where appropriate analysis of risk
- Being aware of the **implications** of legislation, inter-agency policy and national guidance.