



## Handling Disclosures and Sensitive Topics

Safer Internet Day provides a brilliant opportunity to discuss online safety with children and young people and think about how being online has changed our day to day lives. In the course of these discussions about how they use the internet, it is possible that children and young people may make disclosures about things they have seen or experienced online.



48% of teachers surveyed after Safer Internet Day 2017 said it led to disclosures of potential safeguarding issues online.

**Therefore, it is imperative to ensure that any disclosures made are handled sensitively and that you follow your school or setting's safeguarding procedures.**

Here are some important things to consider in the event of a disclosure:

- If you are worried about a young person for any reason then it is important to tell someone straight away.
- Ensure that you are familiar with reporting procedures in your setting and that confidentiality is not promised to the child in question.
- Report immediately to the designated person, for example the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), so that the correct steps are taken from the start.
- Ensure that the child's own words are used and are not changed in any way; avoid asking leading questions.
- A calm and non-judgemental approach is key if a young person come to you with a disclosure, particularly if it is about a sensitive issue.
- The child or young person in question may want to accompany you when you make your report, to be part of the process.

### Handling Sensitive Topics

Some of the discussions and questions raised by young people about the internet may include sensitive topics (including but not limited to sexting, pornography, grooming/exploitation, sexual harassment and abuse, and mental health).

**The NSPCC** provide guidance for all adults on things to consider when discussing sensitive topics (including online issues) with children and young people.  
[www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/talking-about-difficult-topics/](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/talking-about-difficult-topics/)

**The PSHE Association** have guidance for educators on how to set ground rules around discussions involving mental health and emotional wellbeing to help create the right environment for young people to explore and discuss issues.

[www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/ground-rules-teaching-about-mental-health-and](http://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/ground-rules-teaching-about-mental-health-and)

**Childnet's Crossing the Line PSHE Toolkit** contains lesson plans, activities and guidance on topics such as cyberbullying, sexting, peer pressure and self-esteem.  
[www.childnet.com/psheetoolkit](http://www.childnet.com/psheetoolkit)

#### Further advice:

The UK Safer Internet Centre's Need Help? page contains further information on reporting specific concerns to organisations outside of your school/setting:

[www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/need-help](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/need-help)

