

Other considerations when supporting vulnerable children and young people

Confidentiality

It is important that children and young people clearly understand the limits of confidentiality from the outset, as this provides them with an informed choice regarding what they want to share within those limits.

It's important to ensure that a child or young person understands their personal information will be treated respectfully and confidentially. This provides a safe space for them to be open and honest with the people caring for them. Establishing this form of trust is fundamental for the provision of safe and effective care. Make sure all staff know the process for sharing information within school so that students can trust that anything shared will only go to those who need to know.

Parents must always be informed if the young person is at risk, or placing someone else at risk, and children and young people may choose to tell their parents themselves. If this is the case, the young person should be given twenty-four hours to share this information before the school contacts parents. Children and young people should always have the option of you informing parents for them or with them.

Confidentiality

If it's possible, take some time to plan your conversation with the child or young person and think through the following:

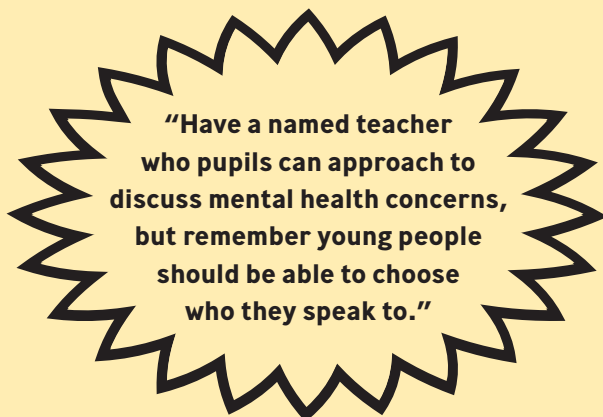
- What would make this conversation a helpful one for me?
- What would make this conversation a helpful one for the young person?
- Do I have any strong feelings (anger, anxiety, uncertainty, confusion) that might get in the way of open, authentic listening?
- Where and when might be a good place to talk to the young person?
- How could I start the conversation.....?

The following may support the opening of conversations:

- Noticing: I have noticed that you look sad over the last couple of weeks.
- Normalising: Lot of other girls here feel confused about who they are attracted to, and they've felt anxious about telling anyone. I wondered if you have a bit of worry too about talking...
- Needing advice: I need your help with something – I know a girl about your age who is really struggling with how to tell her parents a big secret. Can you think of any advice you would give her?
- Empathy statement: It can be very stressful here when you don't feel like you're getting the grades you want.
- Personal feeling: I've been feeling really sad for you over the last couple of weeks and it made me wonder whether you have been feeling sad too.
- Curiosity: I was curious about what you thought about the news story the other day...
- Naming the feeling: I can see that when your friend walks away you feel really angry... I wonder why?
- Offering a choice of feeling: I had a thought that you might feel either furious about that or just totally cut off?
- I Imagine: I could be wrong, but I imagine that would have been really tough.
- Not knowing: I've never been through anything like that, I can't imagine what that must have felt like. Can you give me a sense of what it was like for you?

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Key principles for communicating:

- Be empathic, try and step into the young person's world and imagine how things must be for them.
- Actively listen, give them the space to talk and reflect back what you feel you have heard.
- Take the conversation at the young person's pace. If you don't have much time, let them know upfront that because you care you want to make another time to meet with them.
- Be sincere, warm and caring in your responses.
- Commit to doing what you say you will and see it through until the end.
- Co-create solutions, so they have ownership over what's happening next.
- For highly anxious children and young people, activities such as colouring whilst talking can be supportive as this dilutes the intensity of the conversation for them, and subsequently reduces the anxiety.
- Try not to pretend to understand, we cannot always understand what others are going through and the young person will appreciate it more if you let them know that you cannot imagine what it's like yet you want to understand.
- Acknowledge how hard it must be to discuss these issues.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Observe their body language, what are they communicating to you?
- Reflect back your understanding of what you have heard; does this match what they needed to communicate?