



I TOLD YOU... DID YOU
HEAR ME?

**Believing Children: A
Multiagency Approach to
Supporting Disclosures of
Sexual Abuse**

I Told You...Did You Hear Me?

A child's disclosure of sexual abuse is a moment of profound bravery. It is also a moment that defines how we, as professionals, respond. Will they be met with belief and action? Or silence and doubt?

The National Review into Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) within the Family Environment (Nov 2024) has made one thing clear: children need to be heard, believed, and protected without hesitation.

This briefing is for all professionals working with children. It provides a multi-agency roadmap to ensure we respond in a way that builds trust, safeguards children, and delivers justice.

[Click to read the CSA National Review](#)



Our Response Shapes Their Future

Belief isn't just about acknowledging what a child has said. It's about what happens next.

Children who feel believed are more likely to engage in support, provide more details, and begin to heal.

Children who are doubted may withdraw, change their story, or shut down completely—leaving them at risk.

Believing a child is not about proving the abuse. It is about ensuring they are safe and supported from the very first moment they speak out.

Key Lessons from the National Review

- **Training Matters** – Equip all professionals with skills to handle disclosures sensitively.
- **Risk Awareness** – Recognise the complexities of familial abuse and hidden harm.
- **Child's Voice First** – Every decision should centre on the child's needs and perspective.
- **No Missed Opportunities** – Every conversation could be the moment a child is ready to disclose. Be prepared.
- **Don't Rely on Criminal Prosecution** - if police are unable to gather enough information or progress with charging for an offense, it does not mean that the abuse did not happen. Support and belief should continue.

Creating a Culture of Belief

Children don't disclose abuse lightly. When they do, every word carries weight.

- **Listen with Intent** – Give them your full attention. No distractions. No interruptions.
- **Respond with Care** – “I hear you. You are brave for telling me. I will help you.”
- **Avoid Interrogation** – Let them speak in their own time. No leading questions.
- **Don't Make Promises** – Never say “I won't tell anyone.” Instead, say, “I will only share this to keep you safe.”
- **Challenge Practice** - Challenge poor practice to promote culture change.

Act Every Time, Without Delay

CSA disclosures don't fit neatly into office hours. They don't wait for the right moment. They happen when a child gathers enough courage to speak.

- **Immediate Response** – Act as soon as a child discloses. Waiting could put them at further risk.
- **Long-Term Support** – Healing takes time. Make sure there is ongoing care beyond the immediate response.
- **Multi-Agency Check-Ins** – Keep communication open. Is the child still safe? Are the support systems working? Adjust as needed.

Final Thought: What Will You Do?

Believing a child isn't just about nodding and listening. It's about what happens next. It's about action, safety, and change. It's about ensuring no child's disclosure is ever ignored.

So, when a child tells you, **will you hear them?**



[Click to read the NSPCC's information on recognising and responding to abuse](#)