Responding to a Child or Young Person expressing a Concern or making an Allegation

The Church aims to create and maintain a safe environment for children and young people. This includes being open and willing to listen to and respond appropriately to concerns or allegations of abuse they raise concerns. However, avoid intentionally instigating a meeting with a child or young person to receive a disclosure or take a statement from them – that is the role of Children’s Social Care and/or the Police.

However, if a child or young person directly discloses about abuse happening to them, the following general guidelines should be adhered to:

• Remain calm;

• Listen to the child or young person carefully and in a manner, that conveys they are being heard and taken seriously;

• Give the child or young person the opportunity to tell their story in their own time;

• Ask questions only for clarification;

• Reassure the child or young person they have done the right thing by telling;

• Do not make promises that cannot be kept;

• Explain to the child or young person what will happen next, i.e. passing the information on to the DSA, explaining to them about the limits of confidentiality, etc. Make a note of your conversation as soon as possible. Make careful notes of what is said, record dates, times, events and when you are told.

(It is good practice in this situation, if possible, to have another adult present for the protection of the child or young person and yourself against allegations and to ensure corroboration of any account provided).

Remember – even professionals are sometimes distressed by hearing what children and young people have to say. Although you must only tell those who need to know, if you are upset by something, share it: the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser will be able to point you in the right direction.