

Potential conversation starters:

- *You don't seem your usual self today. Would you like to talk about anything?*
- *You look sad/worried today. Do you want to have a chat about it/is there anything I can do to help?*
- *You said something interesting in circle time about how you felt when... How do you feel about it now?*

Points to remember:

- Find an appropriate time and relaxed place to have the conversation.
- If a child discloses in class, offer empathy, invite them to talk in a safer, more private setting and talk to your designated safeguarding lead (DSL) for advice about how the situation should be managed.
- If you invite a young person to tell you their personal issues, be clear what you will do with this information. Consider how you will respond if asked 'not to tell anyone'.
- Sit on a low chair if you can – so there is less height difference and you will be more approachable.
- Check with the child if there are other trusted adults (parents, the wider family, teachers) or friends they have talked to or could talk to.
- Listen carefully, be patient and friendly and give your full attention.
- Check your body language so that the child knows you are focusing on them.
- Take what they're saying seriously. Don't over-react but don't try to minimise or dismiss what they are saying. Ask open questions to encourage them to talk.
- Be calm and acknowledge their feelings.
- For young children drawing, modelling or playing with toys while the conversation is progressing can be helpful.
- Offer empathy and understanding rather than solutions. When a child receives empathy they begin to develop trust.
- Remember we are all different and children will respond in their own unique way to their experiences.
- Remember that children with SEND (special educational needs & disability) may struggle even more to articulate their feelings and thoughts and may need extra support. See this factsheet from I CAN which outlines techniques to help children with speech, language and communication needs and includes useful general guidance.

Note: When protecting and supporting children, **there are always limits to confidentiality.** Talk to your designated safeguarding lead (DSL) if you are at all concerned and follow your school's safeguarding policy/procedures. Make sure the child knows you may seek advice or guidance from other professionals.