

investigating officer. It does not in any way relieve the investigating officer of his/her duties.

### Where suspicion of sexual abuse arises indirectly

e) Less direct evidence of sexual abuse may arise from a child's behaviour or play, or from oblique attempts to communicate. Such suspicions should be discussed with your manager, or specialist officer within your agency.

f) Any request to discuss such cases should be responded to by the senior officer as a matter of urgency, and consultation should be sought from professionals with experience in this area. These include:-

Area Social Work Managers (P 101 for Telephone Numbers)  
Child Psychiatrist, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
Department, Birch Hill Hospital, Tel Rochdale 77777.

The NSPCC Child Protection Team, (24 hrs) Tel Rochdale  
56121.

The Professional Officer, Child Protection, Tel Rochdale  
515237.

### Guidelines in cases of suspected sexual abuse between children

#### Introduction

Agencies will already be aware that sexual abuse between children exists, and that the effects on the victim can be as severe as for victims abused by adults. In such cases there is a need for a multi-disciplinary approach to investigate, protect and provide treatment for the victim, his/her family, and the abuser. Cases of child to child sexual abuse may originate from adults in a family sexually abusing the children.

#### a) Criterion for Child to Child Sexual Abuse

"The involvement of children under the age of 17 years, in sexual activities which they do not truly comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent, or that violate the social taboos of family roles."

b) Clearly not all sexual contact between children is abusive and it is the nature of childhood to explore and to enjoy their bodies. Secondly cultural and family norms about touch, and privacy, vary. Therefore the following list of factors is given to provide guidance in assessing situations in which sexual contact between children may be suspicious and abusive. *Particular regard must be paid to the nature of the incident, age, maturity and intent.*

c) Factors to consider in assessing possible child to child abuse:-

- i) Where the children engage together in sexual activity inappropriate for their age, maturity, or that is illegal.
- ii) Where there is a marked discrepancy between the ages, development or maturity of the children.
- iii) Where the sexual contact between children is intense, or frequent.
- iv) Where the sexual contact results in physical or psychological trauma for any of the children.
- v) Where threats, secrecy or violence are features.
- vi) Where several children are or have been involved.
- vii) Where there is a family history of sexual abuse.
- viii) Where parents have reacted inappropriately once aware of, or have prior knowledge of the incident(s).

Action to be followed by all agencies, other than social work agencies, in cases of suspected child to child sexual abuse.

- d) Immediately inform manager or head teacher who will be responsible for:-
  - i) Providing advice and support throughout these procedures.
  - ii) Checking the Child Protection Register held by the Child Protection Team, tel Rochdale 56121.
- e) Carefully note in writing the child's statements, behaviour or play. Where the child makes a disclosure to any professional, she/he should be taken very seriously and reassured that it was right to tell.

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