

FACTsheet

If someone alleges that you have abused a child or a vulnerable adult, the first thing you need to do is ask yourself whether the allegation is true. If it is true you should seek immediate legal advice and admit to it. Telling lies will only make situation worse.

- 1 Always obtain legal advice.** If necessary consult your trades union, professional association, or citizens advice bureau. Make sure you get a solicitor who is experienced in defending cases of alleged child abuse. If the complaint made against you has arisen from a police investigation into historical abuse (that is abuse which took place several years ago) or in an institution (e.g. children homes or residential school), make sure you obtain the services of a solicitor and, when necessary, a barrister, who is experienced in this particular field. Consult FACT if necessary.
- 2 Never speak to the police without your solicitor being present.** You may think that because you have nothing to hide, there is no harm in talking to the police. Sadly this is not always the case – what you say may be misunderstood or misrepresented. This is particularly likely if you are asked about events you no longer remember, and about people you no longer recall.
- 3 Respond accurately.** When responding to allegations, only give answers you are sure of. Do not be tempted to 'fill in the detail' unless you are certain of your answers. If you do not know the answers to the questions say so. If you are asked about any other person or incident only give accurate information. Do not sign anything unless you are 100% confident it is accurate and true.
- 4 Right to know.** You have a right to know what it is that is being complained about. If the investigative authorities are reluctant to give details of the allegations made against you make it clear that you cannot possibly defend yourself against such allegations or comment about them.

- 5 Keep a detailed note of all that happens to you whilst under investigation.** Share this information with your solicitor. You might not feel up to it but you can do a lot to help yourself.
- 6 Write down everything you know about the period under investigation.** Gather as much evidence as possible as to your movements, dates of leave or other absence. Make a list of all the colleagues (including social workers etc) who worked with you at the time of the alleged incident, and of the clients you came into contact with. Draw up rough sketches of the location and environment in which you worked and where the alleged offences took place. Make a note of all the different records systems (e.g. diaries, log books, registers, case files etc.) that were in use at the time of the alleged offence, so that your solicitor can apply to see them. Enlist the help of family, friends, colleagues, anybody who can help. Their memory of key events in your career may be better than yours. Seek the help of someone who understands the context of your working environment at the time of the alleged complaint.
- 7 Never talk to the persons who have accused you, or their relatives.** If you do it will appear as though you are seeking to intimidate them, or put undue pressure on them.
- 8 Try to discover if your complainants have featured in other trials, and whether they have been motivated by a claim for compensation.** If your case goes to trial make sure your solicitor obtains as much unused evidence from the Police/Crown Prosecution Service as possible.
- 9 Coping with the stress involved.** You are bound to find things stressful. Don't be surprised if you become depressed. This is quite normal. if your depression seems to be particularly long lasting or particularly tense consult your doctor
- 10 Join FACT - you'll be surprised how helpful we can be!**