

Ask yourself what life is like for me?

Understanding what is happening in every part of my life is crucial if you are going to be able to help me to be safe.

Ask about my daily routines and how things work in my house; I may not know that I am not being looked after properly or realise that someone is not treating me right.

There are other ways I might show what is happening; what do my eyes tell you? What is my facial expression? How am I behaving? These things might give you clues about how happy and safe I feel. Think about when you've seen children who are happy, well and safe; then ask yourself 'is what I am seeing telling me I need to find out more?'

Just because you've seen me does that mean I'm safe? – probably only at the precise time you saw me, not necessarily before, and not necessarily as soon as you've gone.

Just because you've spoken to me and I said I was OK, am I? What I say might depend on who else is around, or how safe you made me feel; would you tell someone you've just met how you really are? Remember that what I say may not be what I mean, especially if I feel under pressure to protect someone or feel afraid of what might happen. Test out what I am saying by speaking to me more than once.

If you make me feel safe and I do talk to you, then please really listen, don't put words into my mouth, use the words I say when you write things down, don't change things into words that I can't understand. Check out that you have understood what I have said.



I am a complex picture and all children are different. To understand me you will need to think about how well these things fit together:

- **What I say** (do I change what I say or say different things to different people?)
- **How I behave** (do I say everything is ok but then behave as though it isn't?)
- **What you see** (do your observations of me interacting with my family match what I or others are saying?)
- **What other people who know me say** (does this match what I am saying or what you are seeing?)

Most people think that adults, especially parents and carers, will always do their best to help children; so they will ask *them* what they think is happening for us. But sometimes parents and carers are unable to do their best for us; sometimes their own things become more important and they can forget us, or even harm us. So please speak with me too. Listen to what I say; see what I am trying to let you know. If you've made me feel safe I will feel more able to tell you if I am not OK.

There may be times when I can't actually talk to you; I may not have learned how to talk yet or I may have a disability. If you watch how I behave this will give some clues about how I am feeling. Also watch how I interact with other people in my house or with people in my family. It may also be important to listen to other people who know me (like extended family members or neighbours) because they might have seen or heard things which I am unable to tell anyone about.

It's important to listen to children, but also look at what we are doing; we can't always find the words to tell you things

When I'm telling you something needs urgent attention, that isn't the time to tell me how I could have prevented it.

Be honest and tell us in a way we can understand

Tell me what is happening and why straight away, and if you make promises keep them

Some people may feel scared to talk; explain why it's good to talk for our health not just the issue

Be honest

Recognise and take action

Recognise feelings are expressed in different ways

Help us do things that make us happy

If I've shut down and stopped talking ask yourself why? Don't just carry on in the same way- it makes me angry.

What do I say?

What do other people who know me say?

How do I behave?

Find out what we like, take an interest in what we are good at; then if something is wrong we may be more likely to tell you.

If you don't listen to me how do you know what to do for me?

Listen to children & young people & explain what is

What do you see?

Take every opportunity to talk

Think of different ways you can communicate with us and help us

I don't have family here so having people to listen; it's important for people who can't speak English

Respect confidentiality

I want the chance to speak for myself before others speak for me

Make sure you have private space to talk so people who don't need to know don't hear.

We don't want you to just talk, it's important, but we do need you to do something with what we say.