

FACT SHEET — *This fact sheet is for parents, carers, educators and community members.*

## How an investigation into the sexual assault of children works

Detectives in the Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams (SOCITs) are trained to investigate child abuse with care and respect. The role of a SOCIT is to investigate, apprehend offenders, work with other services and initiate prevention strategies. They work in partnership with Child Protection. SOCITs are responsible for a case from the time of disclosure, right through the court proceedings.

### The investigation

When a disclosure has been received, a SOCIT and Child Protection respond together. They will treat your child and you and your family with empathy and deal with your case as confidentially as possible. Child Protection is responsible for making sure that your child is now safe. The police will conduct the investigation and gather evidence. This may include examining the crime scene for evidence and talking to others who might have information about what has happened.

### Interviews and statements

#### *By parents, carers and other adults*

- As a result of the investigation and evidence gathered, the Police will decide whether you as a parent or carer, or other family members or friends should be interviewed. When adults are interviewed the details are typed up by the police. You'll be able to read this before signing it to make sure that it's correct.

#### *By your child or other children*

- When children and young people are interviewed an electronic recording is made. The recording, also known as a statement, contains a detailed account of what is said during the interview. This statement will be used as
- evidence in court proceedings. If your child is a witness, the recording of their interview will be played to the court.
- In some situations, they may need to answer questions. If so, special arrangements will be made, and they may give evidence in a room called a Remote Witness Room. Adjournments can be made to another date or location to enable evidence to be given. Your child may be offered a support person to be with them during the interview or the giving of evidence. Your child does not have to see their abuser in a court room.

### **It's important you don't talk to your child about what they said in their statement**

While you should ask your child how they're feeling and coping, it's important that you don't ask them details about the abuse, or what they said to the SOCIT. Asking detailed questions can be distressing for you and them. If the abuser is charged and the matter goes to court, your child must be able to recount the story in their own words. This can be difficult if they've had multiple conversations with different people.

### **Viewing the statement or listening to the interview**

Although you can't talk to your child about what they said, you do have the right to view or listen to their statement. Though please don't question them after you have read or heard their statement. A CASA counsellor can help you to manage these discussions should they come up at home. Your request will be assessed on a case by case basis. If your request is denied the SOCIT may provide information about what was disclosed in the interview.

The following considerations are taken into account when making a decision:

- your child has consented to you seeing the interview (if your child is over 14 years, they have a right to deny consent);
- your child's age and maturity;
- the level of protection the non-offending family can provide; or
- the circumstances of the offence(s).

### **Medical and forensic examinations**

Your child may need an examination by a specially trained doctor or senior nurse. The purpose of this is to treat any injuries, to collect any forensic evidence, and to provide reassurance for you and your child.