

# Inquire sensitively about a child or young person's circumstances

Having a conversation with a child or young person provides an opportunity for them to share what they are going through. It also shows your concern and willingness to help.

## Early Support

This module is the second of the three Be You Professional Learning modules within the Early Support domain.

The **Notice**, **Inquire** and **Provide** modules are designed to be completed in order as the information in the later ones builds on your learning from the earlier ones.

If you are yet to visit the **Notice** module, Be You recommends you complete that before beginning the **Inquire** module.

## Why is it important to inquire about the mental health and wellbeing of a child or young person?

As an educator, you are often in a position to observe signs that may indicate a mental health issue.

As a trusted professional, you or one of your colleagues may be well placed to start conversations that demonstrate empathy, use active and reflective listening and validate a child or young person's feelings.

Making sensitive and informed inquiries about behaviours and actions you have observed is an important part of supporting a child's mental health and wellbeing.

## How can you prepare for and have conversations with children and their families?

Starting conversations about mental health is about showing you care and are prepared to listen.

After reflecting on what you've observed in a child or young person, it can be helpful to consider the following strategies.

- Check in with colleagues: A colleague's perspective can help to confirm your observations and develop a cohesive strategy to support the child or young person and their family.
- Consider who is the best person to have the conversation, and the timing and place of the conversation.
- Consider stigma and how this may impact how someone responds.
- Know your options: Be familiar with your early learning service or school's policies and procedures around mental health.

It's important to remember you're not diagnosing a mental health condition – you're discussing the behaviours you've observed and documented that have raised your concern about a child. Avoid using mental health condition labels. The conversation should demonstrate that you care and you're there to support them.

It will be important to support the families to feel safe and comfortable to share their concerns or factors they feel may be relevant so that together, you can understand what the child or young person is experiencing and what may be helpful for them.

This can make all the difference in ensuring children and young people get any support they may need.

This module can help you feel prepared for those conversations.

## By completing the Inquire module, you will be able to:

- appreciate that educators play a role in supporting early intervention through inquiring about possible mental health issues
- understand the educator's role and the importance of confidentiality while making inquiries
- be able to use strategies to inquire about the mental health of children and young people
- take steps to prepare yourself for potential inquiries about the mental health of children and young people.