www.wiltshirelscb.org

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# A Guide

FOR **PARENTS** AND **CARERS** in Wiltshire

# Keeping your child safe

Wiltshire Safeguarding Children Board

# Welcome

No job is as rewarding as being a parent. It is a job where very little training is given to prepare parents for what lies ahead. Every family experiences difficulty from time to time. When extra pressures come along, these can make a hard job even harder. At these times it may be difficult to think about what help or information you may need.
When things go wrong, and they almost always will at some point, it does not mean that you have somehow failed as a parent - things go wrong for everyone. It is often the way difficulties are handled that can make a difference to your children, both now and in the future.

**What is the handbook about?**
This handbook can offer some ideas to help you find your way through what can be a maze of issues and advice for keeping your child safe. It gives contacts and further information you can follow up when you are deciding how to deal with issues. This handbook also offers helpful tips from professionals and things to look out for.

**Who has produced this handbook?**
Wiltshire Safeguarding Children Board working with its member agencies from health, police and Wiltshire Council.

We hope you find this handbook helpful and a useful resource.

Throughout this booklet the term 'parents' has been used to mean mothers, fathers, carers and other adults with responsibility for caring for a child.

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# Contents


A guide to services 4

Positive parenting 6
Children in need 8
Bullying 10
Children left alone 12
Children with a disability 14
Domestic abuse 16
Don't shake the baby 18
Drug, alcohol and substance misuse 20
Body image and eating disorders 22
E-safety 24
Equality and diversity 26
Fear of crime 28

Healthy lifestyles 30
Missing from home or school 32
Missing someone 34
Safer sleeping 36
Safety in the home 38
Safety outside the home 40
Self-harm 42
Sexual exploitation 44
Smacking 46
Stress and anxiety 48
Worried about a child 50
Young carers 52

Useful contacts 54

# A guide to services

## Wiltshire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB)

The WSCB includes representatives of local authorities, health bodies, the police, schools, voluntary organisations and many others. Our objective is to coordinate and to ensure the effectiveness of their member agencies in safeguarding (keeping children safe) children.

**Child at risk?**

If you think a child or young person is at risk of significant harm, or is injured, contact the Children's Social Care Team on 01380 826200 (out of hours: 0845 6070 888) or if there is immediate danger phone the police or emergency services on 999.

## Family Information Services

For information and signposting on a wide range of family issues contact 'ask' 08457 585072 www.askwiltshire.org

For childcare information contact 0300 003 4561.

For benefits advice contact 0300 456 0110.

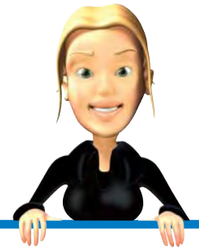
For services and support for children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disability contact 01672 569300 www.wiltshireparentcarercouncil.co.uk

## Health Visitor

The Health Visitor is there to support you and your family. They are there to support you when you need them. They will visit you at home or see you in a clinic and can offer support and advice and can tell you where to get extra help if you need it. They are part of a team of nurses and nursery nurses who are there to support you during the early years.



**Here in Wiltshire we have a wide range of professionals. See which professional is best to help you.**



## Children's Centre

Children's Centres provide a variety of advice and support for families. These services are available to you from pregnancy right through to when your child goes into reception class and beyond. Drop in to your local centre and see what's available for you. You can make an appointment to visit healthcare professionals who are based at, or hold sessions at a number of our centres. See contact details at the back of this handbook

## School

Teachers develop skills, not only around the curriculum but also social skills to help our children develop and progress. Our teachers challenge and inspire pupils to help them deepen their knowledge and understanding of the world around. It is often a teacher who a parent may first contact if they are worried.

## Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo)

Ensures the liaison between parents and carers.
Ensures that Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) are in place.
Advises other staff about SEN and having a school policy for dealing with SEN children.
Puts in place a graduated response system to meet children's needs at the earliest opportunity.

# Positive parenting

## Make them feel great!

Positive parenting is about bringing out the best in your child. Listen and try to understand their point of view, encourage their efforts and you will really start to form the basis of a good relationship. They will always be your child but allowing them to develop, grow and establish their independence will give them the confidence they need.

In trying to help, it may appear that you are nagging. Learning from their mistakes, where it is safe to do so, is a good thing. It can be easy to point out where you think things are going wrong and forget to notice the things that go right. Everyone enjoys a bit of praise and encouragement, so when they do well, tell them.

Children gradually learn to make their own decisions, which may not always fit with yours. That is why tension is normal. Choose your battles and let some go! You might find that their friends seem to take priority as they get older. This is normal but you might feel jealous and even feel a bit left out.

### Stop

They seem unhappy, have mood changes, are unusually secretive and are avoiding you.

### Think

Could you be doing what you think is right without listening to how they feel?

### Do

Try to develop an open relationship. Be supportive and let them know you are always there to listen.

### Growing & developing

A sense of self-esteem and being aware of dangers is the best protection you can give your child. Let them know you're around to talk about puberty and changes in their body, sexual health and relationships. Let them know that you will always be there as a support through growing up, at exam times and on into adulthood.

# Children in need

## Accessing the right level of support early on

All children and young people deserve the best possible start in life. They need to be cared for, protected from harm and supported in their development. Sometimes a child or young person needs some extra support to reach their full potential. They are vulnerable due to their individual needs or pressures within their own family, peers and wider community. Sometimes parents realise there is a problem but struggle to know how to get help.

In Wiltshire there are many services available to help meet children's needs. Early help can provide support before difficulties reach crisis point.

If you think your child needs further support talk to someone who works with them, maybe at School, the Health Visitor or Children's Centre. They will discuss with you whether a referral should be made to a service that could help.

### If in doubt...

If you think a child or young person is at risk of significant harm, neglect, or is injured, contact the Children's Social Care Team on 01380 826200 (out of hours 0845 6070 888) or if there is immediate danger phone the police or emergency services on 999.

**Stop**

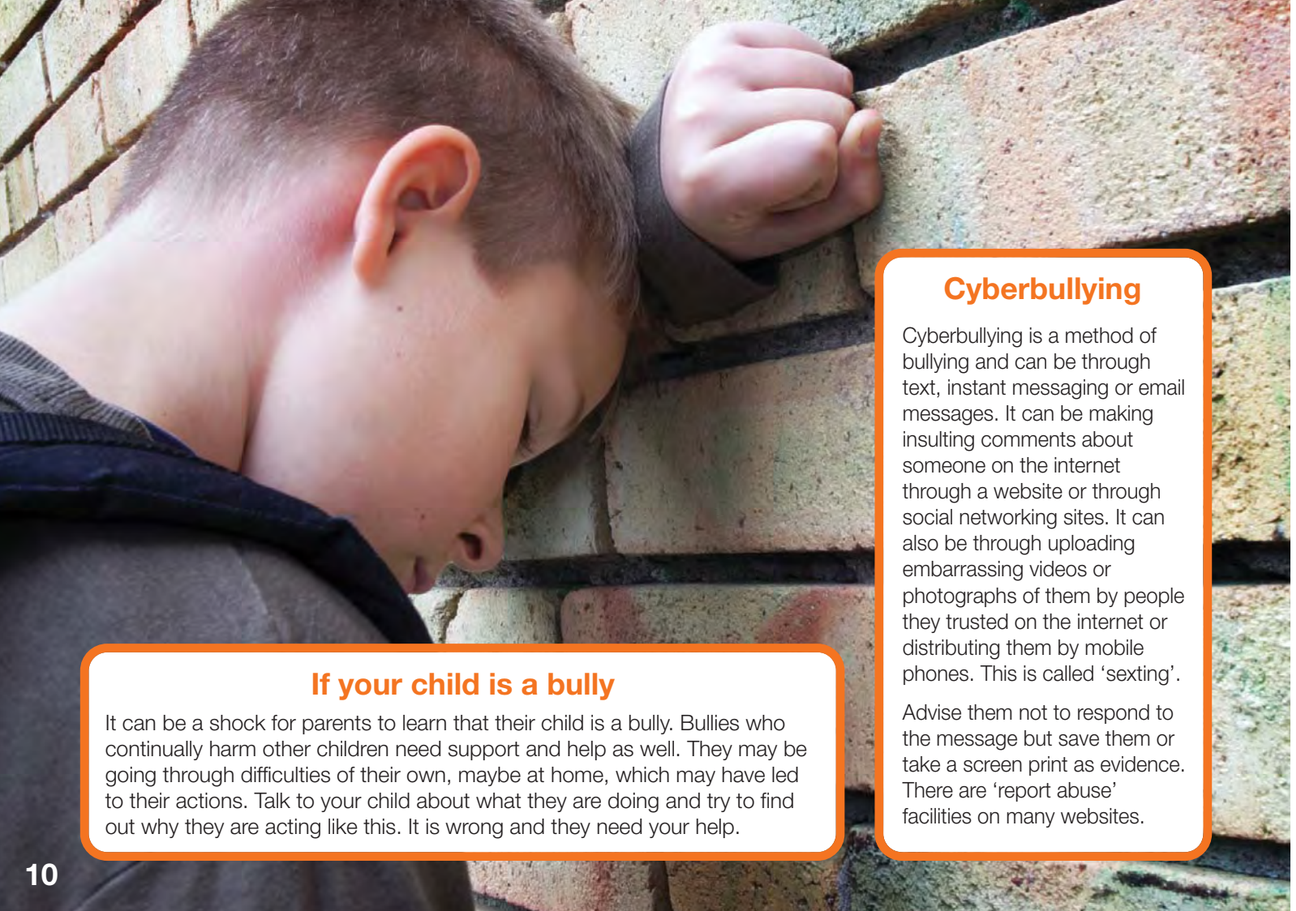
Have you concerns about a child?

**Think**

Could it be helpful to have some support?

**Do**

Speak to someone who can advise on what help is available.



## If your child is a bully

It can be a shock for parents to learn that their child is a bully. Bullies who continually harm other children need support and help as well. They may be going through difficulties of their own, maybe at home, which may have led to their actions. Talk to your child about what they are doing and try to find out why they are acting like this. It is wrong and they need your help.

## Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is a method of bullying and can be through text, instant messaging or email messages. It can be making insulting comments about someone on the internet through a website or through social networking sites. It can also be through uploading embarrassing videos or photographs of them by people they trusted on the internet or distributing them by mobile phones. This is called 'sexting'.

Advise them not to respond to the message but save them or take a screen print as evidence. There are 'report abuse' facilities on many websites.



# Bullying

## Children have the right not to be hurt

Bullying is a frightening experience. It can isolate and damage self-confidence. Bullying can have negative long-term effects on children, leading to depression and even suicidal thoughts and actions.

What other children think is very important to your child and fitting in is a must. Those thought of as different for any reason may be picked on and bullied. Be aware of the possibility of bullying and make sure you know the tell-tale signs.

You may think that your child is unlikely to be bullied but the reality is that bullying can happen at any time and to any child. If your child tells you about a 'friend' who is being bullied listen carefully and take them seriously. They may be trying to tell you it's happening to them.

All schools in Wiltshire have an Anti-Bullying Policy. School action alone cannot guarantee it stops, so it is important that you work together with your child's school.

### Stop

You notice injuries with no explanation. Behaviour seems different, they may seem secretive.

### Think

They may be being bullied. You need to do something about it and find out what is happening.

### Do

See the Headteacher. Outside school consider contacting the Police. Reassure your child.

## The facts

- Bullying is unacceptable.
- Bullying can happen anywhere to any child.
- It can take many forms, from cyberbullying or verbal abuse to physical attack.
- Bullying is the repeated abuse of a child by one or several people.
- Most bullying is done by children who are the same age as the victim.
- Bullies may be children who are experiencing bullying themselves, maybe at home.
- Children with a disability or special educational needs are more likely to be bullied.

### What is neglect?

Neglect happens when a parent or carer fails to meet a child's basic needs of food, shelter, security, attention or protection.



# Children left alone

## It can be a lonely and frightening experience

If a child is left alone it can be a sad, lonely, frightening and dangerous experience. There are possible risks, both physical and emotional.

The level of responsibility which is given to the child to look after themselves and to somehow manage whatever may happen is impossible for a younger child. They may say that they do not mind being left and may find it exciting at first, but they cannot fully know the possible risks and how to handle them.

Everyday things that happen in life such as hunger, a storm, the phone ringing or someone coming to the front door can cause problems. An accident, feeling ill or a power cut may occur and these may not be issues that a child could cope with.

If they are told, the Police and/or Children's Services may take action if they think that a child has been neglected by being left alone.

### Stop

You notice a child who appears to be left alone regularly or for long periods of time.

### Think

Is there immediate risk of harm to the child?

### Do

If you are worried contact Children's Services. If they are in danger now, call the Police.

### Guidelines

The NSPCC have guidelines advising that children under 13 should not be left alone. For some children even where they are over 13 they may not be able to manage being left on their own. This does not have the force of Law but it is suggested as good practice.

As a child grows up and becomes more responsible, leaving them alone after school, or during the day is okay as long as they are prepared. If your child is 13 or over and you feel they can deal with this, it is important that they know where you are and who to contact in an emergency.

## Education

Depending upon the disability or Special Educational Need (SEN) that your child has, they may need additional support in their childcare setting/school or Children's Centre. In some circumstances your child may need to attend a special school - a specialist environment designed to match their educational needs. Every school has a Special Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) who can discuss any issues with you. You can also contact the Ask Parent Partnership Service on 08457 585072 for impartial information and advice.



# Children with a disability

## Make sure that they get the best support available

If your child has a disability the future can feel like a real challenge, but you are not alone. You can't stop your child's condition, but you can help with the disability they experience by making sure that they get the best support available. Wiltshire organisations provide a range of services and support.

Your Doctor and Health Authority provide the help you need to understand your child's disability and help you plan treatment, therapy, equipment and ongoing care. The Early Years Inclusion Team at Wiltshire Council co-ordinates services for children under 5 and their families. They make sure that children with difficulties and disabilities are identified early and that effective support is in place for them, ensuring that families are kept at the heart of discussion and decision making about their child. There is extra support, including short breaks, available for children with a disability aged 4-17. The Parent Carer Council provides information about what's available and a service for parents to voice their opinions about the support that their families receive.

Your child is especially protected by Law. The Equality Act 2011 makes it unlawful for any service provider to treat disabled people differently because of their disability. We support equal rights.

**Stop**

You think your child may have some form of disability.

**Think**

Some children do not appear to have a disability at birth, it can develop over time. Do not panic.

**Do**

Contact your Health Visitor, Doctor, Children's Centre, childcare setting or school to access further support.

## Benefits

Benefits that you could receive to help you include Disability Living Allowance, Carer's Allowance, help with extra housing costs, Carers Blue Badge Scheme, free dental treatment and prescriptions and help with the cost of glasses. In some cases travel to hospital, school meals and road tax exemption. The Wiltshire Passport Scheme will also give discounts at some businesses.

## How domestic abuse affects children

Children are affected in many ways. They may feel frightened, become withdrawn, aggressive or difficult, bedwet, run away, have problems at school, lack concentration and suffer emotional upset.

**Long-term effects:** The longer children are exposed to violence, the more severe the effects on them are. These can include a lack of respect for the non-violent parent, loss of self-confidence (which will affect their ability to form relationships in the future), being over-protective of a parent, loss of childhood, problems at school and running away. Children need time to discuss the feelings they have about violence or abuse. Children need to know that it is not their fault and that this is not the way relationships should be.



# Domestic abuse

## You are not alone

Domestic abuse is a crime and can be carried out by both men and women. It affects many families across Wiltshire. Women (often pregnant) and children are those mostly affected by domestic abuse.

Children do hear, they do see and they are aware of violence at home, even if you think they don't. Children react in different ways to violence and research suggests that they are more likely to become abusers or victims later in life. Offer them a positive role model so that they learn other ways of behaving.

Many people find it difficult to understand why people stay in abusive situations. Fear, love, the risk of homelessness, isolation and money worries can make it difficult for women with children to leave. It is your responsibility to protect your child and help remove them from harm. You can seek help from a range of specialist services in Wiltshire that work in partnership to offer the best support. You can also report incidents to the Police.

If you are or know someone who is living with the affects of domestic abuse, please speak out and seek support, call the National Domestic Abuse Helpline 0808 2000 247 (freephone in partnership with Women's Aid and Refuge) or www.speakoutwiltshire.com. In an emergency please call 999.

**Stop**

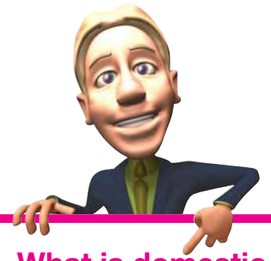
Any violence or abuse between adults at home will negatively affect children.

**Think**

Take responsibility by seeking help to stop or make it stop.

**Do**

In an emergency, call 999. Get support and help now. The longer it lasts, the more damaging it becomes.



## What is domestic abuse?

Abuse can be physical, sexual or verbal. It can also include things such as the constant breaking of trust, psychological games, harassment and financial control.

**What do I do now?**

If you want to leave an abusive relationship and are worried about safety, you do not have to suffer alone. There is support out there.

There are three important steps you must take:

- Recognise that it is happening.
- Accept you are not to blame.
- Get help and support.

## Ways to cope

Some of the ways to cope include:

- Count to ten before doing anything, allow yourself to calm down.
- Hug and cuddle your child.
- Check they are not hungry, too hot or cold or need changing.
- Go for a walk or a drive to help them sleep.
- Make use of a helpline in times of crisis.
- Walk out of the room for a short time, but stay nearby.
- Ask someone else you trust to take over for a while.



# Don’t shake the baby

## Different ways to cope

It is normal to get frustrated sometimes when a baby will not stop crying. It is the way all babies make sure that their basic needs are met. It is neither your fault nor the fault of your baby. A baby with additional difficulties may cry more which can be very stressful.

Shaking can cause death or serious and long-lasting brain damage. Shaken Baby Syndrome is an injury caused as a result of a baby being shaken so that their head wobbles rapidly back and forth. The force of this can tear the blood vessels that connect the brain and skull. A baby’s neck muscles are not strong enough to hold their head firmly. Never ever shake a baby for any reason. It is never safe to shake a child, not even in play. It is important for other children at home, your babysitter or any other carer to understand the dangers.

Contact your Health Visitor, Doctor, local Children’s Services or Children’s Centres. Do not allow a situation to go on where you feel unable to cope.

### Stop

Your baby will not stop crying and you cannot sleep. You feel tired and frustrated.

### Think

It is not your baby’s fault, they may be feeling upset or uncomfortable in some way.

### Do

Try to understand your baby’s needs when they are having difficulties. Take a break if you can.

## The facts

- Shaking is often a response to extreme frustration.
- Shaking can cause damage that you cannot see.
- Shaking can cause damage that is long lasting.
- Never shake a child for any reason.
- There are different ways to cope with a crying baby.
- Do not suffer alone, seek support from others.

## Tell-tale signs

Signs to look out for are:

- Appearing anxious.
- Being drowsy and lacking concentration.
- Complaining of sickness.
- Strange eating patterns.
- Has no energy.
- Seem depressed.
- Has skin problems or spots.
- Is aggressive.
- Unable to sleep.
- Seem secretive.

Not all of the signs above mean your child is taking drugs. Look out for changes in their behaviour and relationships.



# Drug, alcohol and substance misuse

## Look out for the signs

There are many reasons why young people may start to drink or use drugs. They want to show they are growing up and see it as a sign of maturity. They may also feel under pressure from friends to experiment. It is also seen as a means of escape and having fun.

There are many tell-tale signs that your child may be using drugs or alcohol, take a look at the box on the left. There may be a change in relationships with family and friends, how they act or a change in performance at school.

Other signs can involve changes in a financial situation and personal possessions 'disappearing' and being sold.

It is important to discuss drugs and alcohol early with your child. Some parents worry that doing this may encourage their child to use drugs but avoiding talking about drugs will not protect them.

### Stop

Your child's behaviour seems to have changed completely.

### Think

Could they be using drugs or drinking alcohol?

### Do

Don't jump to conclusions, find out the facts. If your child needs help get it now.

## The facts

- If you or someone at home uses drugs or alcohol you are seriously affecting the care and well-being of your children.
- Children of users are more likely themselves to become addicts.
- Most children will be aware of drugs and alcohol before they leave primary school.
- Children will be more responsive to being told about the risks.
- Provide good information about the dangers. It does not guarantee non-use but will increase the chance of an informed choice.

## Warning signs

**People with Anorexia:** Experience excessive weight loss, avoiding food while obsessing about it, pretending to have eaten already, hiding body shape, loss of periods, feeling cold, sleep problems, moodiness, not growing, thinning hair growth and dental problems due to being sick.
**People with Bulimia:** Binge-eating, sore throat and related infections, dental problems from vomiting, missed periods, disappearing after meals, puffy skin, not drinking enough and using laxatives.



# Body image and eating disorders

## Getting the balance right

Food is an important part of our lives. For some, mostly young people, how much or how little food they eat becomes the most important thing in their lives. Eating disorders develop when food is used as a way of dealing with personal problems. How much is eaten, when, and where, can sometimes seem like the only thing in their lives that they can control and have a say about.

There are many reasons why people have eating disorders and if your child has a problem, you will need to try to understand what started it in the first place. Triggers may include abuse (physical, emotional or sexual abuse), bullying, family problems, parents pushing their child too hard at school (people with Anorexia are often high achievers), not being able to express feelings, lack of self-esteem, feelings of self-hatred or guilt, wanting to look like people in magazines and on TV and wanting to be popular.

### Stop

My daughter avoids meal times and I never seem to see her eat a good meal.

### Think

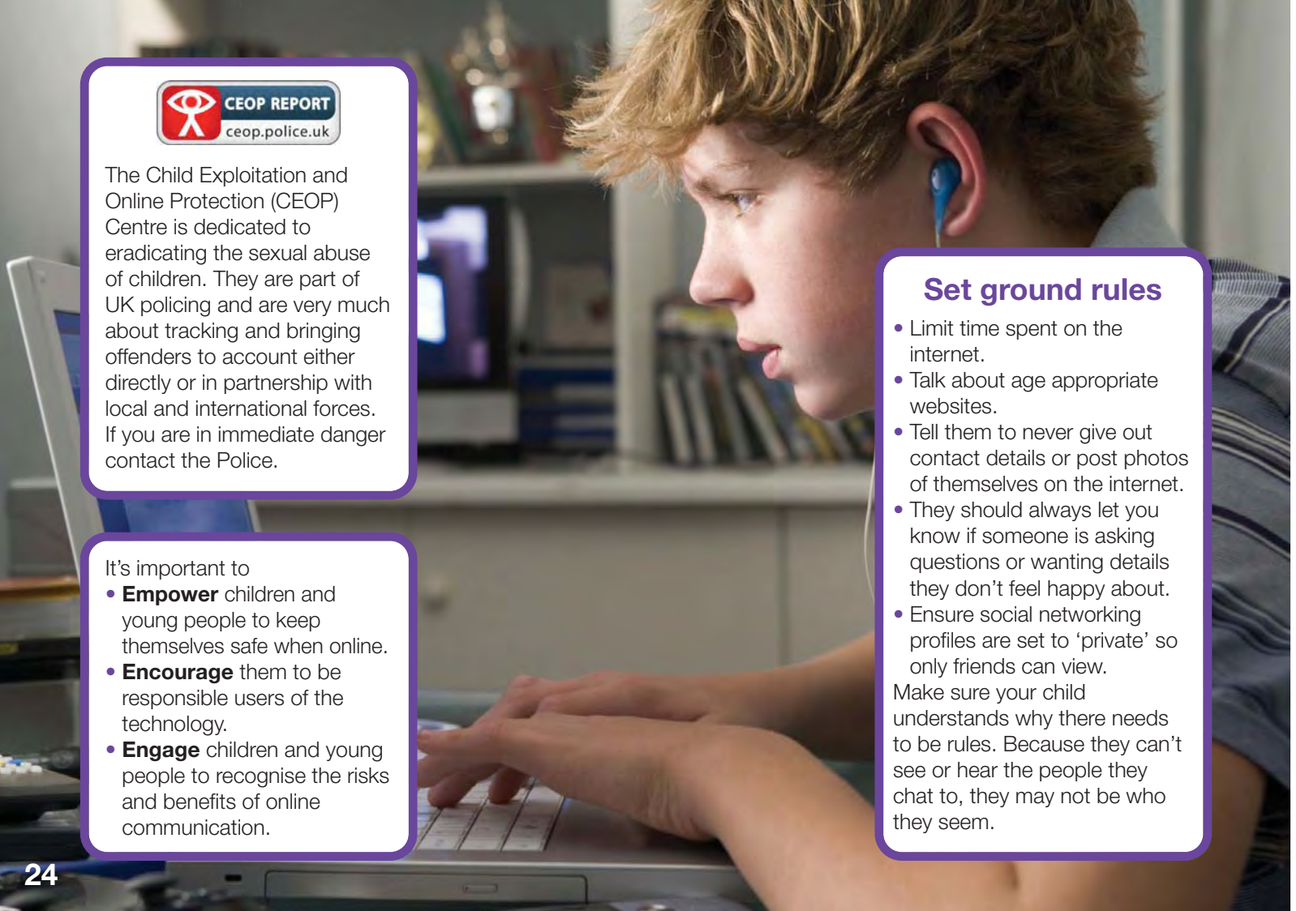
Could she be hiding an eating disorder? Are there changes in her weight and the way she acts?

### Do

Chat to her about your concerns. Take an easy approach and try not to judge. Get help if needed.

## What to do

You can't make somebody eat, but you can give your child the chance to talk about their problems. Let them know that you are there to help. It may also help if you to speak to other parents who have gone through similar experiences and to share and support each other.
Girls are more likely to develop eating disorders during their teenage years. If your child knows they can talk to you about any worries, they are less likely to use food as a way of dealing with their problems.



CEOP REPORT
ceop.police.uk

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre is dedicated to eradicating the sexual abuse of children. They are part of UK policing and are very much about tracking and bringing offenders to account either directly or in partnership with local and international forces. If you are in immediate danger contact the Police.

It's important to

- **Empower** children and young people to keep themselves safe when online.
- **Encourage** them to be responsible users of the technology.
- **Engage** children and young people to recognise the risks and benefits of online communication.

## Set ground rules

- Limit time spent on the internet.
- Talk about age appropriate websites.
- Tell them to never give out contact details or post photos of themselves on the internet.
- They should always let you know if someone is asking questions or wanting details they don't feel happy about.
- Ensure social networking profiles are set to 'private' so only friends can view.

Make sure your child understands why there needs to be rules. Because they can't see or hear the people they chat to, they may not be who they seem.



# E-safety

## New technology, old problem

The internet is a very valuable and useful resource which can be used in a positive way. It opens up many educational and social opportunities, giving access to a world of information and experiences. Whether on a computer at school or at home, a games console or mobile phone, children are accessing the internet whenever they can and wherever they are. Talk to your children about what they do on the internet and get them to show you some of their favourite sites.

If you and your child understand the risks you can get the most from the internet and stay safe. Chatrooms can be used by paedophiles to meet children and often the child thinks they are the same age. They can also 'groom' children to become victims, either psychologically on the internet itself, or by arranging to actually meet with them, gain their trust and abuse them. Make sure your child does not give away any personal details. Paedophiles can also make chatroom friendships with parents to gain their trust and meet children.

Avon and Somerset Police have a team trained to counter these forms of exploitation. They have strong links with Wiltshire Police and Schools to offer support to children and parents.

### Stop

Your child is using the internet in secret.

### Think

Could they be visiting unsuitable sites, or chatting with someone who may harm them?

### Do

Learn about the internet yourself. Keep the computer in a family room.

## Internet hazards

- **It's easy and fast** - making a decision at the click of a button can cause long-term problems.
- **I am in the privacy of my own home** - because they may be at home, and cannot be seen, children may be more reckless and bold in their actions. The emotional and physical distance of being online gives a false feeling of security.
- **Mob mentality** - social networking groups may have 'pages' specifically designed to target and bully individuals. It's easy to be anonymous and feel less responsible for their actions.

**Stop**

They need to know that we are all different but equal, and that difference should not be met with suspicion, envy or fear.

**Think**

You should expect your child to be treated equally. Listen and act if discrimination happens or you have worries.

**Do**

Schools are becoming more inclusive with diversity and equality expected in all areas of school life.



# Equality and diversity

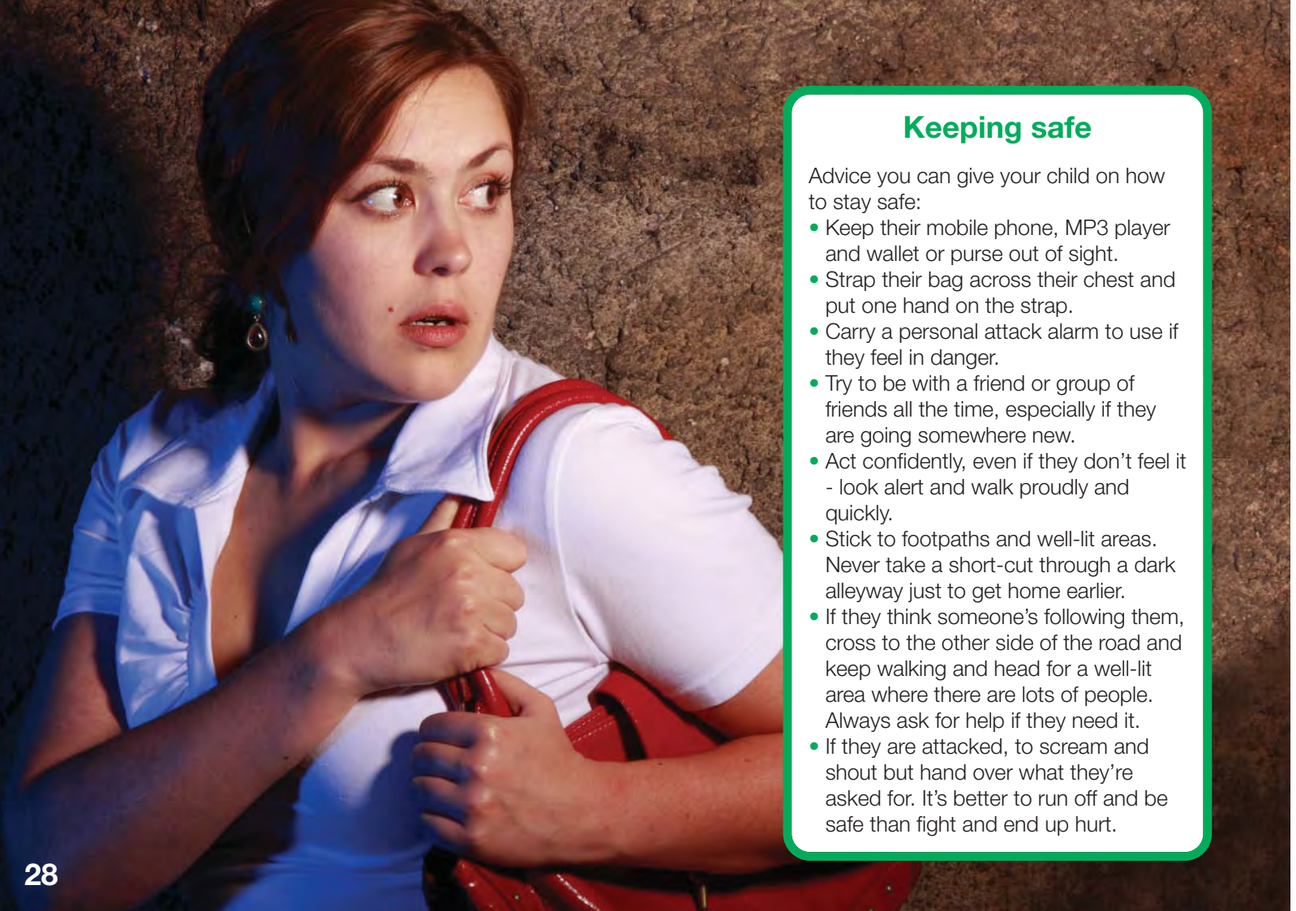
## Different and equal

Diversity is all about differences. Diversity means variety, it means a rich and vibrant culture. Not everyone values and respects the differences in society. Discrimination is when you are treated differently just because of who you are. Although we're all different we all have the right to equal respect, opportunity and justice, so there are laws to prevent discrimination.

**Racism** - All public bodies have a clear duty to stop racial discrimination and to promote equal opportunity and good relations between 'racial groups'. This includes schools, so the curriculum and the teaching in our schools should reflect racial diversity and should have clear processes for racist incidents.
**Homophobia** - We live in a diverse country with a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. It is not acceptable that anyone is targeted for abuse or discrimination because of their sexuality or the sexuality of their parents, carers or family members. Sex Education in schools helps them to understand and respect sexual orientation - whether lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.
**Disability** - It is against the law for any service provider (including schools, businesses and organisations) to treat disabled people less well than other people because of their disability. It also means they should make reasonable adjustments to make their services suitable for disabled people to use.
**Sexism** - Sexism arises out of common stereotypes that exist regarding male and female roles in society. It can be based on experiences some people have of relationships between adults of both genders. Sexism can be experienced in the home, in social situations or in the workplace, leading to discrimination in a variety of situations, including serious forms of physical or psychological abuse.

### The facts

- You and your family have the right to be treated fairly and without discrimination. You and your children are protected by the Human Rights Act, the Disability Discrimination Act, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, the Sex Discrimination Act.
- Your local Council, Education and Health authorities are there to help.
- Ask your child's school how they deal with racism and other forms of harassment and ask them to talk through their policies with you.
- Support groups, parent groups and other organisations are out there to help you.



## Keeping safe

Advice you can give your child on how to stay safe:

- Keep their mobile phone, MP3 player and wallet or purse out of sight.
- Strap their bag across their chest and put one hand on the strap.
- Carry a personal attack alarm to use if they feel in danger.
- Try to be with a friend or group of friends all the time, especially if they are going somewhere new.
- Act confidently, even if they don't feel it - look alert and walk proudly and quickly.
- Stick to footpaths and well-lit areas. Never take a short-cut through a dark alleyway just to get home earlier.
- If they think someone's following them, cross to the other side of the road and keep walking and head for a well-lit area where there are lots of people. Always ask for help if they need it.
- If they are attacked, to scream and shout but hand over what they're asked for. It's better to run off and be safe than fight and end up hurt.



# Fear of crime

## Trust your instincts

Your child may know someone their age who has been a victim of crime. Maybe they've had their phone stolen or been made to hand over money - this is called being mugged. Perhaps they've been attacked because of their religion or skin colour.

Young people today carry around more valuable items than ever, for example mobile phones and MP3 players. And there are so many crime stories on TV and in the newspapers that it's easy to think that every time you step outside you'll be attacked or mugged. It might be tempting to protect your teenager by stopping them going out anywhere, but this won't help them - it will only make them overanxious about crime.

The best way to minimise the risk of being the victim of a crime is by taking sensible precautions. Most people automatically do this as part of their everyday lives. When you're out and about, there are lots of things you can do to keep safe and feel more confident. Trust your instincts - they are often right, so if a situation doesn't feel right or you feel uncomfortable, walk away.

### Stop

Watch for signs that your teenager is at risk of being a victim of crime.

### Think

Teenagers need to know how to stay safe e.g. staying with a trusted group of friends when out at night.

### Do

Talk to your child calmly about the risks and dangers when they're out and how they can minimise them.

## Keeping their mobile phone safe

- Avoid showing it off to groups of people.
- Try not to use it where there are lots of other people.
- Type *#06# into it to get your IMEI number, and write it down. If the phone gets stolen this can stop calls being made on it.
- Have a PIN number that only they know and use it to lock the phone when not in use.
- Switch on GPRS when going out so stolen phones can be found or their location traced.

## Smoking and alcohol

If you smoke it is more likely your child will smoke. If you smoke at home you are exposing them to your secondhand smoke. This is called 'passive smoking'. Why not give up smoking? Visit http://smokefree.nhs.uk for more information.

Most young people will want to try alcohol. Try to get them to do this in a controlled environment. Make sure you know where they are and what they are doing.



# Healthy lifestyles

## Looking after their health

**What they eat** - Make sure your family eats a good variety of foods in sensible amounts - balance is the key. Meal times can be a really good time to sit down to eat, enjoy food and socialise together as a family. To get the best possible start to the day, it is important they have a good healthy breakfast. Setting a good example is one of the best ways of encouraging healthy eating habits.
**Exercise** - Food is used in our bodies to create energy. If we don't use it we get fat. Encourage them to be as active as possible. Getting fit need not be expensive and it could be something you could do together.
**Sleep** - We all need a good night's sleep to be at our best. Lack of sleep can impact on behaviour and achievement at school or college. Try to agree on a set time for bed, especially on a school night.
**Hygiene** - During the teenage years hygiene becomes more important. Encourage them to use deodorant and shower regularly as body odour becomes more of a problem. Leave shower gel and mouthwash in the bathroom for them to use and make sure they visit the dentist regularly.

### Stop

Do you drink too much alcohol, take drugs or smoke?

### Think

You may be passing these habits onto your child. Now is the time to get healthy together.

### Do

Get help if you need it from NHS websites and speak to your Practice Nurse.

### Doctor says

- Balance is the key to a healthy lifestyle.
- If you eat more calories than your body burns, you will put on weight.
- It is easy not to notice weight gain when you see someone every day.
- Act now, don't let them smoke and protect them from secondhand smoke.
- Try to make sure they get plenty of sleep and exercise.

## Missing from school

Do you know where your child is today? If you ever suspect they may be missing school contact their school at once. A child who does this and is not where you or the school think they are during the day may be vulnerable. This is when your partnership with their school is most important. They will tell you about suspected absence from school, but you should contact them if you have any concerns too. Together you can find out what is causing the problem and take the right steps to put it right.



# Missing from home or school

## Be aware

Missing school is also a serious matter. By Law parents must ensure their children receive an effective full-time education. Missing school means missing out on valuable learning time, on life skills, fun and friendships. They are more vulnerable to crime by being away from their peers, possibly alone and risk getting into bad company or being exploited.

Children from all sorts of backgrounds run away from home for a variety of reasons. If your child runs away they need your help. They may be trying to find out how much you care for them. Children who run away often have problems that they feel they are unable to talk to their parents about. Many also run away because of drug abuse or because they are pregnant. Look for signs that your child might not be happy at home and remember help is available - please don't be too embarrassed or afraid to ask. Your child will be at risk from harm if they are sleeping rough.

**Stop**

You suspect your child is missing school.

**Think**

Where could they be going and what could they be doing?

**Do**

Talk to them. Find out why, are they being bullied? Talk to the school (see Bullying pages 10-11).

## Missing from home

Make sure that your child knows how important they are to you. If you have to tell your child off, tell them that it's their behaviour that's the problem - not them. If something has gone wrong in the family, don't let your child think that it's their fault. Be aware that if a child goes missing from home repeatedly, receives unexplained gifts and possibly has an older 'friend', it is possible they could be being sexually exploited (see pages 44-45).

# Missing someone

## Coping with loss

Loss of a loved one can be through their death, moving away, divorce or separation, or a parent in prison.

Death of a loved one causes a range of feelings as they try to cope with what's happened. They may feel anger at the person who died, at you, at others or themselves. They may feel guilty, possibly blaming themselves in some way. Talk about what has happened as much as they want to.

Separation and divorce is hard. The more your child knows what is going on, the easier they will find it to cope. Children can think that their parents breaking up is somehow their fault and they've done something wrong. Let them know that what's happened is not their fault. Tell them you are both there for them.

Whoever your child misses is important to your child. Support them and let them know you are there.

**Stop**

You and your partner have separated.

**Think**

How will this affect my child?

**Do**

Let them know you will both still be there for them.

### Parents in prison

Encourage your child to keep in touch, perhaps by writing letters or drawing pictures. Let them know that their parent in prison still loves them and talk to them about a possible prison visit. Talk about what you will tell others and how your child feels about that. They may not wish friends at school to know. You may wish to tell your child's school in confidence so they can offer them support.

## Accidents can happen

**The safest place for your baby to sleep is in a cot. If your baby sleeps with you:**

- You might roll over in your sleep and suffocate your baby.
- Your baby could get caught between the wall and your bed.
- Your baby could roll on to the floor and be injured.
- Co-sleeping on the sofa or chair is just as dangerous as co-sleeping in a bed.

**If you sleep with your baby the risk of your baby dying unexpectedly is increased if you or your partner:**

- Are very tired.
- Have recently drunk alcohol.
- Have taken medication or drugs that make you sleep more heavily.
- Are smokers (no matter where or when you smoke and even if you never smoke in bed).

**Or**

- If your baby was premature (born before 37 weeks); was low birth weight (less than 21/2kg or 51/2lb).



# Safer sleeping

## Where does your baby sleep?

The safest place for your baby to sleep is on their back in a cot in your room for the first six months and after that, your baby can be in it's own room. To prevent wiggling down under the covers, always place your baby in the feet to foot position (with their feet at the end of the cot). Keep the baby's head uncovered and bedclothes should be firmly tucked in and no higher than their shoulders.

Babies can overheat, so try to keep the room at a temperature that is comfortable for you, about 18°C (65°F) is ideal. Do not use duvets, quilts, baby nests, wedges, bedding rolls or pillows. Use sheets and lightweight blankets instead. Babies should never sleep with hot water bottles, electric blankets, next to a radiator, heater or fire or in direct sunshine. Visit www.fsid.org.uk for more information.

If you are worried, contact NHS 111 or a Doctor.

**Stop**

Always place your baby to sleep in the feet to foot position.

**Think**

Babies aren't good at keeping their temperature constant, so make sure they don't get too hot or too cold.

**Do**

Keep your baby's cot in your room for the first six months. Keep the room temperature at about 18°C.

## Why is it unsafe to sleep with my baby?

Falling asleep with your baby if you are tired or under the influence of alcohol, drugs or medication significantly increases the risk of your baby dying. It's lovely to have your baby with you for a cuddle or a feed, but it's safest to put your baby back in their cot before you go to sleep.

## Dangers around the home

- Make sure that all medicines and drugs are locked away well out of reach and you use them privately to avoid your child copying you.
- Certain rooms such as the kitchen, are full of danger and should remain out of bounds or be made safe by the use of safety devices.
- Are your children contained within the house? Is the safety chain high enough on the front door?
- Keep an eye on young children, especially near wires and sockets.
- Make sure that irons, saucepans and hot drinks are kept out of the reach of children. Scalding and burns are common and avoidable.
- Children will be affected by passive smoking. Smoking may encourage them to smoke when they are older.
- Check toys for safety marks. Ensure that your child does not play with toys that are not suitable for their age, especially if the pieces are small enough to choke on.



# Safety in the home

## Making your home safe

Babies and young children learn about their world by exploring it. This means that, as soon as they are able to, they will crawl, touch and grab at whatever is in their line of vision. They are curious by nature and need careful and gentle guidance from a young age about what danger is and what to stay away from. Shouting at or smacking children will not teach them about safety.

Most accidents happen in the home so it is important to ensure that your home is safe for all your family especially for young children. There are many situations each year where children have overdosed on their parents' drugs and medicines.

**There are many benefits of having a dog in the family**
Having a dog in the family can be fun, a source of exercise and help children learn about responsibility and respect for animals. You should always have some guidelines when it comes to dogs and children. If you are thinking of getting a dog, research to find out which breeds behave best with children. Buy from a reputable breeder and make sure that the dog has no history of aggression and that it is a legal breed.

**Stop**

Spend some time exploring your house and garden as if you were a young child.

**Think**

Make a list of potential dangers and move them to safety or use safety devices.

**Do**

Watch your child and remove them from danger.

## Around dogs

- Never attempt to stroke/touch any dog without the owner's permission.
- Never run past a strange dog, this could make it chase you.
- Never stare at a dog as they may see this as a challenge or an attack.
- Dogs and small children should never be left together unsupervised. No matter how good-natured the dog is, a dangerous situation could develop if the dog is hurt, frightened or feels threatened.
- Children must be taught to handle animals gently and carefully.

## Protecting children in the pub

Signs that your child might come to harm in a licensed premises include you're drinking a lot, you don't know where your child is, there's adult entertainment available. They can wander off or receive unwanted attention from strangers.

Adults can buy young people aged 16 or 17 beer, wine or cider (not spirits) to drink with a meal as long as they're with them. It's against the Law for children under 18 to buy alcohol, or for an adult to buy it for them.

It's important to know about any risks there are for children in pubs, as well as other licensed premises, which means anywhere that supplies alcohol or entertainment. Children have a right to be protected from harm - not just physical but emotional and moral. It's up to everyone to do what they can to protect them.



# Safety outside the home

## Be aware, be safe

As your child gets older they will need to take more responsibility for looking after themselves in every way. This includes things like keeping safe, clean, healthy and happy.

When they are out, make sure you know where they are and how to contact them. Make sure there are arrangements for how they are getting home, whether you or another parent are collecting them.

There are lots of things you can do to help your child keep safe and feel more confident. Help them to trust their instincts as they get older and tell them that if a situation doesn't feel right or they feel uncomfortable they should walk away. If they are a little older make sure they travel with friends and do not wander around alone. Tell them it's not safe to go around flashing an iPod or mobile as they may become a victim of assault or robbery. Find out about safe sex, and how to prevent Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). Growing up means doing everything you can to help them stay safe and healthy.

### Stop

My daughter just leaves without telling me where she is going.

### Think

She may not understand how worried you are.

### Do

Come to an agreement where you know where she is and how to contact her.

### Getting it right

As a parent you will want to encourage your child to have an active social life. Children enjoy the company of their peers. Try to get the balance right between being over protective and keeping them safe. As they grow up it is natural for them to have some independence and want to make choices of their own. Support them in their new independence, if they are safe.

## How can I help?

It is normal to feel upset, angry and powerless to find a child is self-harming but remember they need your understanding and support. Listen without judging them and stay calm. This is their way of handling problems. Find ways to help them learn to deal with stress and understand the things that cause them to self-harm in the first place. If they can't talk to you, encourage them to talk to another family member, friend, Teacher, Youth Worker, Social Worker or your Doctor.



# Self-harm

## Understanding and support

Self-harming or hurting yourself can take many forms. This may include cutting, burning or scalding, hitting, picking skin, head banging against a wall or other object or taking an overdose. Eating disorders are also a form of self-harm.

While the aim is to hurt, it is not usually to kill themselves and it may carry on for years.

People who self-harm often use it as a way of dealing with problems, such as depression, bullying, abuse or feeling unloved. Those who self-harm usually think badly of themselves and need even more attention and support.

Self-harming is not just about getting attention, as it is most often carried out in private and kept secret. Children and young people go to great lengths to cover up their self-harming. What they are doing is a sign that they need help.

### Stop

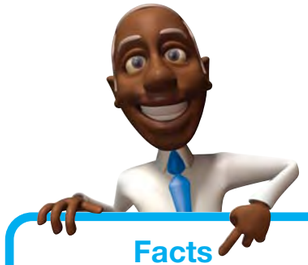
I suspect she is hurting herself. She always wears long sleeves and seems secretive.

### Think

Find out the facts. Try to understand why it is happening. Has something happened at home?

### Do

Give them time to talk. Do not be cross. Call 999 if it looks serious or they have taken an overdose.



### Facts

- Self-harming is a sign of deeper problems such as bullying, abuse or feeling unloved.
- Young people who self-harm say it is a way of being in control and use it to help them cope, as the physical pain takes their mind off their problems.
- Young people who self-harm often do not get help for themselves because they may be worried about what you will think of them and their self-harming.

## What is exploitation?

Child exploitation is a broad term, which includes forced or dangerous labour, child trafficking, child prostitution and sexual abuse. The scary truth is that the UK has a serious problem with child exploitation - through the child sex trade, forced prostitution and forced labour in homes, restaurants, factories and farms. These children are denied the rights to attend school and may be separated from their families and friends. Exploitation is wrong.



# Sexual exploitation

## Reduce the risks

It is up to us to protect our children. Children are vulnerable to exploitation. Exploitation takes many forms. A close and positive relationship with your child can reduce their vulnerability. Making sure they have high self-esteem and feel good about themselves can stop them falling into abusive relationships.

All children have a right to be safe from harm, wherever they are. If you both understand the risks of the internet you can make sensible and informed choices online. The Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre delivers a multi-agency service dedicated to tackling the exploitation of children.

Children involved in sexual exploitation can become victims of serious physical and sexual attacks, which can sometimes lead to death. They can easily become addicted to drugs and alcohol and face a high risk of catching Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). The emotional and psychological damage can be huge and can lead to self-harm, severe depression and even suicide.

**Stop**

My teenager seems to have extra money and new clothes I didn't buy.

**Think**

Could they be being exploited in some way?

**Do**

If so, get help to make it stop. Talk about what's happening. Offer a supportive home life.

## Sexual exploitation

Adults who benefit from child sexual exploitation use many different methods to target children. It can begin with an 'exciting' new friendship with an older boyfriend or girlfriend. The child may receive expensive gifts and be given alcohol or drugs. Before long they create a loyal and dependent relationship with the victim. It is against the Law and a form of sexual abuse, which puts the child at risk from physical, emotional and psychological damage.

## Is it legal?

It is unlawful for a parent or carer to smack their child, except where this amounts to 'reasonable punishment' regardless of any individual, cultural or religious justification. There is a grey area in the Law as to whether a 'smack' amounts to reasonable punishment. However, physical punishment will be considered 'unreasonable' if it leaves a mark on the child or if the child is hit with an implement such as a cane or a belt*. As a result, child protection professionals will assess incidents of physical ill-treatment of children, in order that they can understand, prevent and explain the consequences of further incidents to parents.

*Source www.childrenslegalcentre.com



# Smacking

## The great debate

It is important that children learn how to behave. Parents have a very important job as role models for their children in helping them to learn how to do this.

Setting limits early on and explaining reasons for these limits helps to instill self-discipline. Smacking has no long-lasting positive effect and in fact smacking usually has to increase in severity in order to have the same impact on your growing child. This is where the fine line between smacking and hitting can be crossed. Smacking does not teach self-discipline and may teach your child to hurt others.

Every parent gets frustrated at times and it is at these times that a parent may smack in the heat of the moment. However this is an outlet for the parent's frustration, rather than a helpful way of influencing the child's behaviour. Try to use different ways to teach acceptable behaviour. Praise them when they are good and try to distract them from misbehaving.

**Stop**

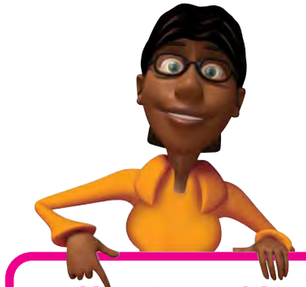
My child is being so naughty I feel like smacking them.

**Think**

This has happened in the past and does not seem to be working.

**Do**

Think about different ways of showing your child how to behave. Explain why you are angry.



## How to avoid smacking

- Try not to let a situation get so bad that you feel you need to smack your child.
- Set limits early on.
- Explain why you may be unhappy with their unacceptable behaviour and praise their good behaviour.
- If you feel so angry you are out of control take time out and walk away.
- Try to take a break, all parents get frustrated sometimes.

## Signs of stress

It is important that you know and recognise the signs of stress. This way you can support your child and get extra help if you need to. Signs can include:

- Mood swings.
- Being unable to sleep.
- Trouble concentrating on schoolwork.
- Sudden stomach aches or headaches and wanting to stay away from school.
- Overreacting and being emotional.



# Stress and anxiety

## Helping them cope

Children of all ages can get stressed and anxious. They can feel stressed for many reasons but the most common reasons are parental divorce, exam pressure and being bullied or abused. Be careful what you say, even when you don't think your child is listening to you. Children overhear parents talking about money worries or problems they are having at work and they start to feel anxious about these things themselves and take on worries beyond their years.

Many children and young people feel under pressure to do things they are not happy about because of peer pressure. This might mean wearing certain clothes or shopping in the right places. On a more serious level, this might mean being absent from school, trying alcohol or drugs, shoplifting or going further with a boyfriend or girlfriend than they feel ready to. Let them know you are there for them and that they can talk to you if they are worried. Mental health issues can affect children. If you have concerns speak out.

**Stop**

Your child seems stressed out.

**Think**

Are they under lots of pressure with school work and exams?

**Do**

Try to break down their workload into small easy to manage amounts. Talk to their Teacher.

## Relieving stress

There are lots of ways you can help your child overcome or cope with stress and anxiety:

- Talk to your child about what is causing their stress.
- Tell them it is normal to feel stressed now and again.
- Help them learn to relax and cope better when they're upset.
- Do not put extra pressure on your child by expecting too much from them.
- If their anxiety goes on for longer than a month, let them know you will support them in getting help.

## What can I do?

If someone you know is having difficulties, you could offer the following:

- A listening ear.
- Ideas to cope with problems.
- Encouragement to get help.
- Practical support (e.g. babysitting).

If the family is unable to cope and they do nothing to get help you need to report it.



# Worried about a child

## Receiving support

Very few adults harm children deliberately and most often, when harm does happen, families need support, not punishment or the removal of their children. Wiltshire social workers and other professionals get involved when parents may be unable to protect their children from harm and need some help.

Speak out and consider how you would feel if it was your child. If you think a child or young person is at risk of significant harm, or is injured, contact the Children's Social Care Team on 01380 826200 (out of hours 0845 6070 888) or if there is immediate danger phone the police or emergency services on 999.

When we suspect, witness or are told of a child that is being harmed, action should be taken to stop things getting worse. Your information could be very important. Long-term abuse can have a negative affect on a child for the rest of their lives so getting help as early as possible is vital.

### Stop

There are many signs of abuse and neglect, from physical injury to changes in behaviour. If in doubt, speak out - contact Children's Services or the Police.

### Think

Make sure the child knows who they can share worries with if and when they need to.

### Do

Seek advice about what practical and emotional support is available from schools and Children's Centres.

## Abuse at home

When we suspect abuse of a child in our own home, we can react in many different ways. We may feel guilt, anger, disbelief or denial. Some of these reactions can prevent help getting to a child who needs it. You may not tell others because you fear that the child will be at further risk of harm. You may love the person who is causing the harm and not want to believe what is happening. You need to put your child's safety first.

# Young carers

## Who cares? You care. They care.

Many people need special care in their homes. They may be ill, disabled or elderly, or they may have drug or alcohol problems. Caring for a member of the family can be a big help. When the carer is a child or a young adult it is very important to make sure that they are getting everything they need too.

If your child has any caring role, for yourself or another member of their family, it is most important that they do not suffer because of their caring role. It can be difficult for a child to take on the responsibilities of an adult and find themselves supporting a parent as well as younger brothers or sisters.

They can be so busy looking after others that they forget to look after themselves and their health, schoolwork and friendships may suffer. You don't have to cope alone, there are organisations that can help you and your child get the support and advice you both need.

### Stop

Your child is missing school, feeling tired all the time and acting unusually.

### Think

They may be finding their caring role difficult to cope with. Are they doing too much?

### Do

Find out about support. Tell the relevant authorities. Talk about relieving their pressure.

### Extra support

Sometimes caring for others can have a negative effect on a child carer's education and health. Young carers can get extra support that may include special breaks and support services for particular needs. Your child may just need to be able to step away from their responsibilities from time to time and meet with other young carers like them. Let them know they are not alone.

# National contacts

**Alateen Al-Anon (for young people)**
020 7403 0888
www.al-anonuk.org.uk

**Child Accident Prevention Trust**
020 7608 3828
www.capt.org.uk

**Child Exploitation & Online Protection (CEOP) Centre**
0870 000 3344
www.ceop.police.uk

**Cruse Bereavement Care Helpline**
0844 477 9400
www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk
www.rd4u.org.uk

**Cry-sis Helpline**
08451 228 669
www.cry-sis.org.uk

**FRANK (24hrs)**
0800 77 66 00
www.talktofrank.com

**Kidscape**
08451 205 204
www.kidscape.org.uk

**National Domestic Abuse Helpline**
0808 2000 247
www.womensaid.org.uk
http://refuge.org.uk

**NSPCC**
0808 800 5000 Childline 0800 1111
www.nspcc.org.uk

**NHS 111**
24 hour - for when it is less urgent than 999

Young Minds
0808 802 5544
www.youngminds.org.uk

**Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)**
0121 248 2000
www.rospa.co.uk

**Supportline**
01708 765200
www.supportline.org.uk

**UK Safer Internet Centre**
www.saferinternet.org.uk

**www.actionforchildren.org**



# Local contacts

**Children's Social Care**
If you think a child is at risk of significant harm or is injured call 01380 826200.
Out of hours 0845 6070888
**Police**
In an emergency dial 999, In a non emergency dial 101
**Wiltshire Safeguarding Children Board**
01225 718093 www.wiltshirelscb.org
**Ask Information and Advice centre**
08457 585072 www.askwiltshire.org
**Childcare information** 0300 003 4561
**Early Years Inclusion Service**
01225 757950
**Wiltshire Adult Substance Misuse Service** 0845 603 6993 (over 18's)
**Motiv8** 0800 169 6136 (under 18's)
**Splitz** Domestic abuse
01225 775276 www.splitz.org
www.speakoutwiltshire.com
**Wiltshire Citizens Advice Bureau**
0844 375 2775 (from a landline) or
0300 456 8375 (from a mobile)
**Wiltshire Council - Housing Options**
0300 456 0100
**South West Grid for Learning Trust**
Internet safety www.swgfl.org.uk
**Parent Carers Council**
For parents of children with disabilities or special educational needs. 01672 569300
www.wiltshireparentcarercouncil.co.uk

**Wiltshire Pathways**
Wiltshire Children and Young People's Trust. www.wiltshirepathways.org
**Wiltshire's Little book for Wellbeing and Mental Health**
www.wiltshirepathways.org/
**Wiltshire Revenue and Benefits Team**
0300 003 4560
**Young Carers** 01380 720671
www.youngcarerswiltshire.org
**Sparksite** www.sparksite.co.uk

**Children's Centres**

**Five Wishes Children's Centre**
Kitchener Rd, Amesbury SP4 7AA.
01980 677218
**Bulford Children's Centre**
Hubert Hamilton Road, Bulford Camp, Salisbury SP4 9JY. 01980 632660
**Clearbury Children's Centre**
Breamore Rd, Downton SP5 3HN.
01725 511459
**Little Folly Children's Centre**
Winding Way, Bemerton Heath, Salisbury SP2 9DY. 01722 414301
**Salisbury City Children's Centre**
24 St Edmund's Church Street, Salisbury SP1 1EF. 01722 323208
**Mere Children's Centre**
Springfield Road, Mere BA12 6EW.
01747 861108
**Wilton Children's Centre**
9 West Street, Wilton SP2 0DL.
01722 743364
**Tisbury Children's Centre**
Weaveland Rd, Tisbury SP3 6HJ.
01747 870449
**Elim Children's Centre**
The Factory, Dews Road, Salisbury SP2 7SN. 01722 580034
**Bradford on Avon Community Children's Centre**
Frome Rd, Bradford-on-Avon BA15 1LE.
01225 867184
**Kings Park Children's Centre**
Lowbourne, Melksham SN12 7ED.
01225 707770
**Canberra Children's Centre**
56a Spa Road, Melksham SN12 7NY.
01225 705225
**Studley Green Children's Centre**
Westfield Rd, Trowbridge BA14 9JQ.
01225 719753
**Bellefield Children's Centre**
Windermere Rd, Trowbridge BA14 8TE.
01225 763274
**Longfield Children's Centre**
Broadcloth Lane, Trowbridge BA14 7HE.
01225 781464
**Happy Feet Children's Centre**
Princecroft Lane, Warminster BA12 8NT.
01985 221020
**White Horse Children's Centre**
Eden Vale Rd, Westbury BA13 3NY.
01373 824593
**Calne Community Children's Centre**
Prince Charles Drive, Calne SN11 8TG.
01249 823247
**Spring Rise Children's Centre**
Frogwell, Chippenham SN14 0DG.
01249 464008
**Kings Rise Children's Centre**
Lodge Rd, Chippenham SN15 3SY.
01249 445288
**The Rise Children's Centre**
The Oaks, Chippenham SN15 1DU.
01249 463040
**Cricklade Children's Centre**
Bath Road, Cricklade SN6 6AX.
01793 759187
**Corsham Children's Centre**
Kings Avenue, Corsham SN13 0EG.
01249 716254
**Malmesbury Children's Centre**
Tetbury Hill, Malmesbury SN16 9JR.
01666 825577
**Wootton Bassett Children's Centre**
Byron Avenue, Wootton Bassett SN4 8BA. 01793 851224
**Devizes South Children's Centre**
The Green, Devises SN10 5AA.
01380 738691 (South & North Centres)
**The Corner House Children's Centre**
George Lane Car Park, Marlborough SN8 4BY. 01672 513010
**Windmill Hill Children's Centre**
Wylye Road, Tidworth SP9 7QR.
01980 843010
**Pewsey Children's Centre**
Wilcot Road, Pewsey SN9 5EW.
01672 562351