

Keeping children safe is everybody's business



How you can help if
you think a child is
being harmed



A vertical strip on the left side of the page shows a close-up, slightly out-of-focus image of a child's face, showing their eyes and part of their nose and mouth. The child appears to be looking towards the camera.

How you can help if you are worried about a child

Many parents, relatives, friends and neighbours are concerned about the welfare of the children they know. This booklet will help you to understand what child abuse is and how to get help if you think a child you know is being harmed.

Although you may understandably feel reluctant to get involved, safeguarding children is everybody's responsibility.

What is child abuse?

Abuse can happen to a child at any age, from pre-birth up to the age of 18. It can happen in well-off families and in poor families; it can happen to children from any ethnic and cultural background; it can happen to children with or without disabilities; it can be deliberate or unintentional.

Children can experience abuse at home, at school, in leisure activities, in children's homes - in fact anywhere. The abuse is usually caused by someone the child knows and rarely by a stranger.

Abuse can happen because of the way adults or other children and young people behave towards a child; it can also result from adults failing to provide proper care for the children they look after.

Why is it so important to prevent child abuse?

There are obvious risks to the health and well-being of children who suffer abuse, and in extreme cases a child may die if concerns are not acted on.

Abuse is likely to cause long-term damage to a child's present and future life. It may lead to permanent physical and/or mental health problems, difficulty in achieving success in such areas as education, social relationships, job prospects, and parenting ability.

Children who are being abused may show their unhappiness in many ways including being nervous, anxious, withdrawn and isolated. They may be angry and aggressive, truant from school and run away from home. In addition they may, when older, misuse drugs and alcohol and/or deliberately cause serious harm to themselves even to the extent of suicide.

If you have any doubt about reporting your concerns, please take some time to imagine what life is like for that child.

Physical abuse

This is when someone physically hurts or harms a child. Hitting, squeezing, biting, or twisting a child's arms or legs can cause injuries like bruises, grazes, cuts or broken bones. Sometimes someone burns a child, perhaps by holding a part of their body against something very hot, by scalding, or by using something such as a cigarette.

Violently shaking a baby can cause brain injuries, which can lead to permanent disability or even death. Poisoning a child, perhaps by giving them alcohol or drugs and deliberately making them ill, is also physical abuse.

WARNING SIGNS:

Any injuries at all to young babies who are not yet able to move on their own

- Bruises in places where you would not normally expect to find them on a child
- Bruises which have a distinctive shape or pattern, like handprints, grasp or finger marks, or belt marks
- Burns or scalds with clear outlines
- Bite marks and bruises like 'love bites'
- Bruising in or around the mouth, especially in babies



A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a young child's face, looking downwards with a serious expression. The child's skin is light-toned, and they are wearing a light-colored, possibly white, garment.

Neglect

Neglect can result when adults fail to meet the physical or emotional needs of the children they are responsible for. All children need food, clothing, warmth, love and attention, in order to grow and develop properly.

WARNING SIGNS:

- A child who always appears dirty and smelly
- A child who looks thin and ill
- A child with illnesses that have not been treated
- Inadequate or unsuitable clothing for the weather conditions
- A child who suffers repeated accidents
- A child who is not safely supervised
- A child who does not respond when given attention
- A child who craves attention and affection from any adult

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

The abuser(s) may use different methods to persuade the child to co-operate and not to tell, like bribery, threats or physical force. He or she may spend time developing a relationship with a child and also his/her family.

Sexual abuse can take many different forms from touching to intercourse and may also include involving children in looking at, or being forced to take part in, the production of pornographic material, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Both boys and girls can be sexually abused.

WARNING SIGNS:

- A child who displays sexual knowledge or behaviour inappropriate for their age
- Injuries or unusual appearance to private areas of the body
- A child who is being encouraged into a secretive relationship with an adult
- A child who hints at sexual activity through words, play or drawings
- A child with a sexually transmitted infection

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse occurs when a child's basic needs for love, security, praise and recognition are left unmet. It may result in a child becoming withdrawn, nervous, unhappy or lacking in confidence.

Emotional abuse may happen when an adult constantly behaves in an uncaring and hostile way towards a child, perhaps through inconsistency, bullying rejecting, frightening, criticising, racially abusing or scapegoating the child. Some adult carers can be very possessive or over-protective towards a child.

In severe cases, children may be subjected to cruel treatment and punishment like being locked up in cold, dark surroundings. Children may be in a situation where basic needs like food, drink and warmth may be withheld or have to be 'earned'.

WARNING SIGNS:

- A child who is constantly blamed for things that go wrong
- A child who is made to carry out tasks inappropriate to their age
- A child who is not allowed to do usual childhood activities
- A child in a household where there are arguments and violence





What you can do to help

It is very important that you take action straight away if you think a child you know is being abused. The longer the abuse goes on, the longer it will take for a child to recover.

Sometimes abuse gets worse over time if nothing is done and the child suffers increasingly serious harm. Children are dependant on others for their survival and have a right to be protected.

In the majority of cases when concerns are reported families may only need extra support to help them keep their children safe. Only in extreme circumstances do concerns reported to Children and Young People's Service result in children having to live apart from their families.

You can discuss your concerns **in confidence** with your local office for the Children and Young People's Service:

8.30am-5.00pm Monday-Thursday

8.30am-4.30pm Friday

CITY OF LEICESTER:

1 Grey Friars, Leicester LE1 5PH.

Tel: **0116 252 7004**

Email: **DAS.Team@leicester.gov.uk**

LEICESTERSHIRE:

The new single access point for all contacts and referrals to Leicestershire Children's Social Care came into effect on 27th September 2010, based in County Hall.

Tel: **0116 305 0005**

Email: **childrensduty@leics.gov.uk**

RUTLAND:

Rutland County Council, Catmose, Oakham LE15 6HP.

Tel: **01572 758407**

Email: **c&fduty@rutland.gcsx.gov.uk**

POLICE: Tel: **0116 222 2222**

EMERGENCY TEAM:

(Out of hours – when the Children and Young People's Service local office is closed)

Tel: **0116 255 1606**

Children and Young People's Service

Social workers have a major role in enquiring into child abuse and assessing the needs of families. When an allegation of child abuse is made enquiries are made to decide what action is needed to ensure a child is safe and protected and their needs are met.

In some cases, social workers and police officers work together to investigate allegations of child abuse.

Police Child Abuse Investigation Unit

The police have to become involved in some cases of child abuse because of their responsibility to prevent and investigate crime. It is important to remember that child abuse can be a criminal matter. In Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland there is a team of specially trained and experienced police officers who are skilled in working with children and families.

Leicester City Safeguarding Children Board and Leicestershire & Rutland Local Safeguarding Children Board

The child protection work of the police and social services together with that of all other professionals working with children and their parents is conducted according to Leicester City, Leicestershire and Rutland Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. These are based on 'Working together to Safeguard Children' (HM Government 2010).

This is available on the Leicestershire & Rutland LSCB website: www.lrlscb.org OR Leicester City SCB website: www.lcitylscb.org



If you have concerns about a child, please contact the Children and Young People's Service of the area where the child lives. The numbers are on pages 6 and 7.

If you wish to comment about the information contained within this leaflet, or to order further copies, please contact:



Tel: 0116 260 0004
Fax: 0116 264 5838
Email: lscb@leics.gov.uk
Website: www.lrlscb.org



Tel: 0116 256 5151
Fax: 0116 256 5091
Website: www.lcitylscb.org