

Northumberland

Parenting

handbook



A GUIDE FOR MUMS, DADS AND CARERS



Welcome

Welcome to the Northumberland Parenting Handbook.

Your job as a mum, dad or carer is one of the most difficult there is - it can be both challenging and rewarding. 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 and this can test the best of parents. When additional pressures come along, these can make a hard job nearly impossible. At these times it may be hard to think about what help or information you might need.

When things go wrong it does not mean that someone has failed in parenting - 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.

There is no such thing as the perfect parent. However, there are some ways that can make it a less stressful and more rewarding experience.

What is the handbook about?

It is hoped this handbook can offer some ideas and information to help you find your way through what can be a maze of issues and advice. It gives contacts and further information you can follow up when you are deciding how to deal with your worries and difficulties. This handbook also lists some of the warning signs of particular difficulties and offers helpful tips.

Who has produced this guide?

This 2009 revised version has been produced by Northumberland Care Trust in partnership with Northumberland Safeguarding Children Board and Northumberland Families and Children Trust for the benefit of local mums, dads or carers and everyone else who might find this information useful. It has been updated to include some new sections covering a range of topical issues.

It is also accessible electronically online, on the Northumberland Care Trust and Northumberland County Council websites. See local contacts at the back of this publication.

Northumberland Safeguarding Children Board is made up of all organisations and agencies that provide local services for children or their families and carers. This also includes the very large and diverse contribution made by the voluntary, community and private sectors both across Northumberland and beyond.



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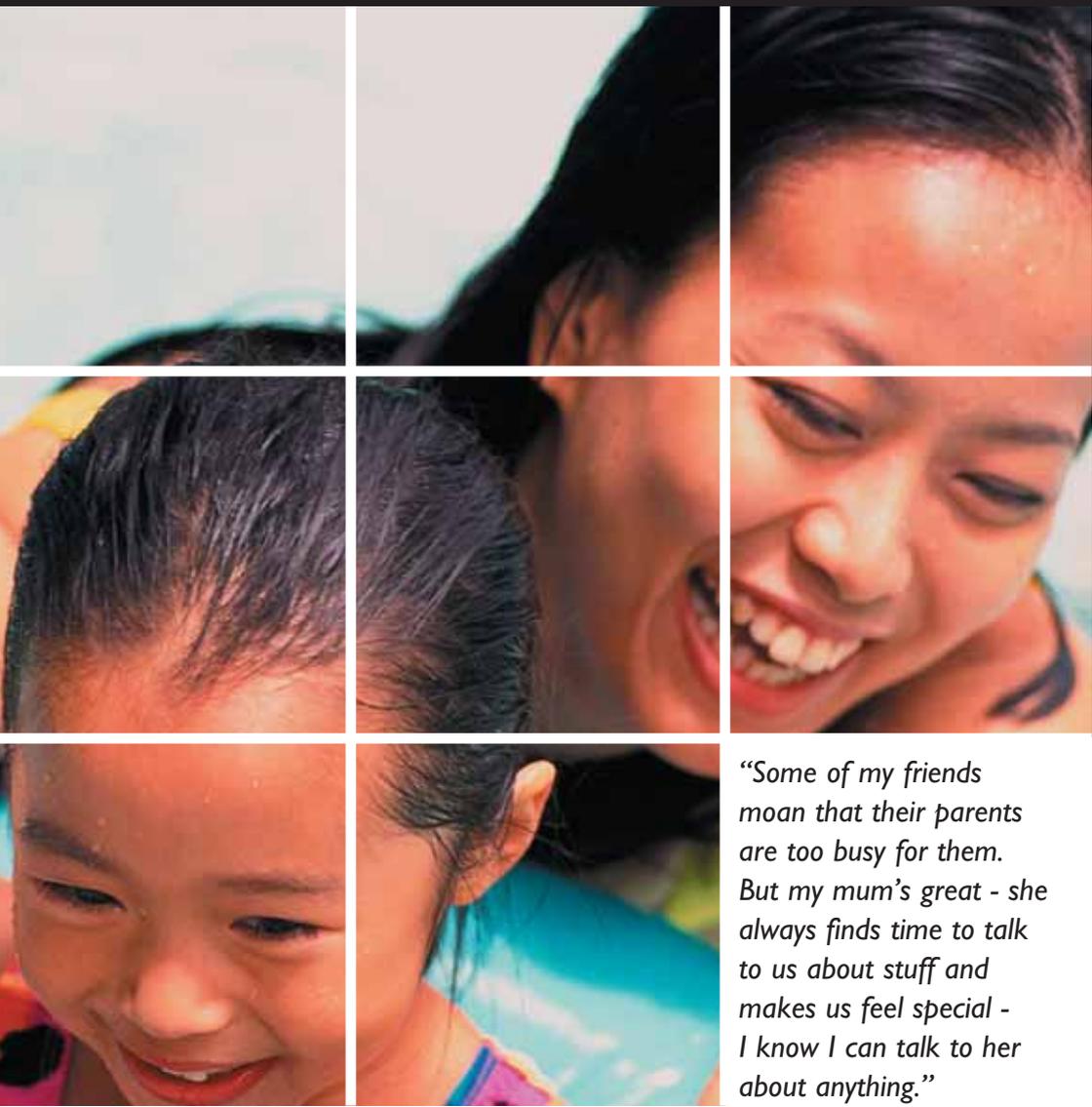
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“Some of my friends moan that their parents are too busy for them. But my mum’s great - she always finds time to talk to us about stuff and makes us feel special - I know I can talk to her about anything.”



WARNING SIGNS

There may be none. Is your child eating well? Getting enough exercise? Any changes in how they act? Is your child trying to tell you something? Are they constantly unhappy, with mood changes and temper tantrums?



ACTION

Be involved and develop a good relationship with your child before they reach their teens. Keep a healthy lifestyle. Do things together.



WHAT TO SAY

With younger children, set rules. With teenagers, remember that you are in charge. Even if you only get a grunt, don't give up on talking.



PREVENTION

Be a little crazy! Have fun with your child. Try to get them to make friends and have outside interests. Listen carefully to your child's point of view. Help them think through choices.



CONTACTS

- Northumberland Families Information Service 0800 023 4440
- Your local Sure Start Children's Centre (see Local organisations for a Children's Centre near you)
- Health Visitor
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222

- Children need to feel secure, loved and valued - this is the basis of self-esteem and confidence
- Noticing and praising good behaviour is the best way of having a good effect on how your child acts
- Be realistic about what you expect from your child
- Parents and carers need to work together and keep the same rules
- Listen to and talk to your child - it's good to talk!
- Do things together with your child that you both enjoy - have fun!

Positive parenting & self-esteem

Make them feel great!

Positive parenting is about bringing out the best in your child, by listening and understanding, praising and encouraging their efforts, noticing and rewarding good behaviour and doing things together that you both enjoy. In trying to be helpful, it is often easy to point out where a child is going wrong and forget to notice the things that go right. By doing this you are giving your child lots of attention for the unacceptable things that they are doing, rather than for the good things you would prefer them to do.

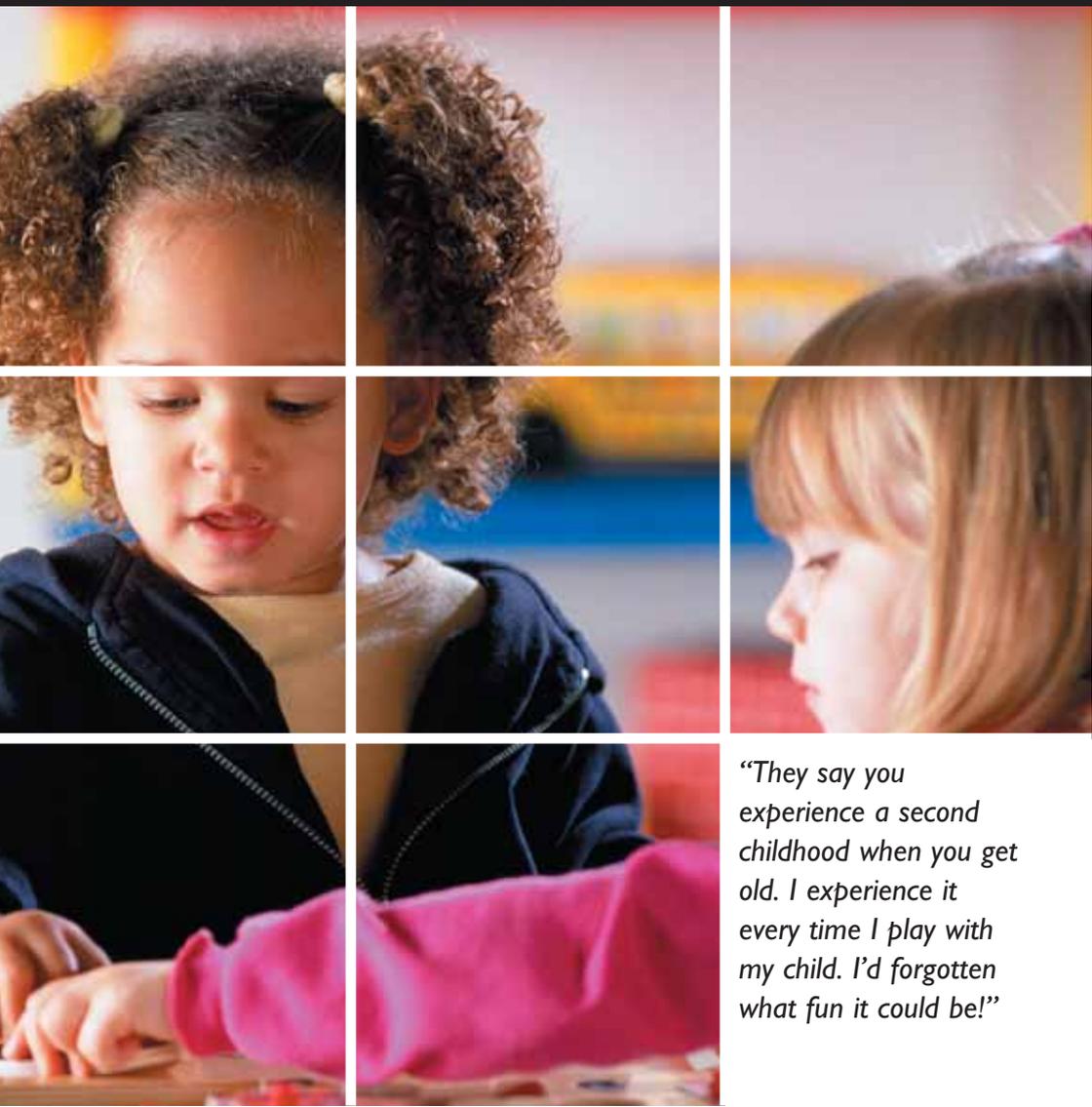
It can also undermine your relationship with your child. Parental attention and praise affects children so you need to use it in the right direction! Not only will this have an effect on your child's behaviour in a positive way, it will also make your child feel happy, loved, wanted and secure and this is the basis of life-long confidence and self-esteem.

Teenagers have to learn to make their own decisions and establish their independence from their parents. Unfortunately their decisions might not always fit with yours. That is why tension is normal. Choose your battles and let some go! Be friendly and supportive and let them know you have been through it and that you are

always willing to listen. The main concern for teenagers is whether what they are going through is normal. Remember to give them the practical information they need about the physical and emotional changes and reassure them that their development is perfectly normal.

Keeping your child fit and healthy is something that most parents do without even thinking about it. Whether it involves getting your child to brush their teeth or reminding them to pay attention to personal hygiene, you are an important source of information and advice and a role model for your child.

A sense of self-esteem is your child's best protection from other difficulties. You can help to make them feel good about themselves in many ways. By being a good role model, giving good feedback, understanding and helping your child and being natural and affectionate.



“They say you experience a second childhood when you get old. I experience it every time I play with my child. I’d forgotten what fun it could be!”



WARNING SIGNS

Are you anxious about your child getting the best start in life? Every family needs extra advice or support at some point and Children’s Centres are there to help.



ACTION

Make time to have fun playing with your child. Make sure other carers have a positive attitude to play and learning. Find out about playgroups and other play activities that are available in your area.



WHAT TO SAY

Introduce as many different experiences as you can. Try to discover what sort of play interests your child and play along with them.



PREVENTION

Avoid letting your child get bored. Spend time with young children - keep them stimulated. Try to think up new activities for your child, especially ones for rainy days.



CONTACTS

- Sure Start 0870 000 2288
- Your local Sure Start Children’s Centre (see Local organisations for a Children’s Centre near you)
- Extended Services 01670 533582
- Northumberland Families Information Service 0800 023 4440

WEBLINKS www.surestart.gov.uk • <http://childcarefinder.direct.gov.uk/childcarefinder>
<http://northumberland.childrensservicedirectory.org.uk>
www.extendedservicesncc.co.uk

For more information visit www.northumberlandcaretrust.nhs.uk

- A network of Sure Start Children’s Centres offer early education, access to health services, access to training, support and advice to families with young children
- A range of services are available across the county depending on local need and parental choice. Not all services will be the same
- Lots of services are available for mums, dads and carers as well as young children
- Play, at all ages, is a vital part of your child’s development
- Early childhood experiences affect children’s attitude to learning
- As a parent you have a continuing vital role in your child’s play and learning
- Everyone can use Sure Start Children’s Centre services, they are open to all families with children

Sure Start Children’s Centres

Enjoy learning together

Young families have a range of needs. From early pregnancy through until starting school the demands on you as mums, dads and carers never really stop. Sure Start Children’s Centres are about making sure that it is as easy as possible for you to get the help and advice you need from services, close to home, and when you need them.

There could be access to a range of services, the types of activities you may find can include, baby and toddler activities, speech and language sessions, baby massage sessions, drop-ins to see the Midwife or Health Visitor, breast feeding support, positive parenting courses and child development courses.

You can get help and advice during and after your pregnancy right through to when your child is preparing to start school, as well as meeting and talking to other mums, dads and carers. Sure Start Children’s Centres may also offer access to childcare, early education services, advice on what is available in your area, child and family health services or family support and outreach to parents.

If you are looking to return to training or work there will be links with Jobcentre Plus and the local College. There may be activities and training available for mums, dads and carers who want to learn new skills and meet others.

Sure Start Children’s Centre services can help both you and your

child prepare for school and education. They will be able to support you in accessing early education places in school, day nursery or local playgroups. The centre may offer you a variety of play and learning opportunities, as well as telling you what else is available in the local area.

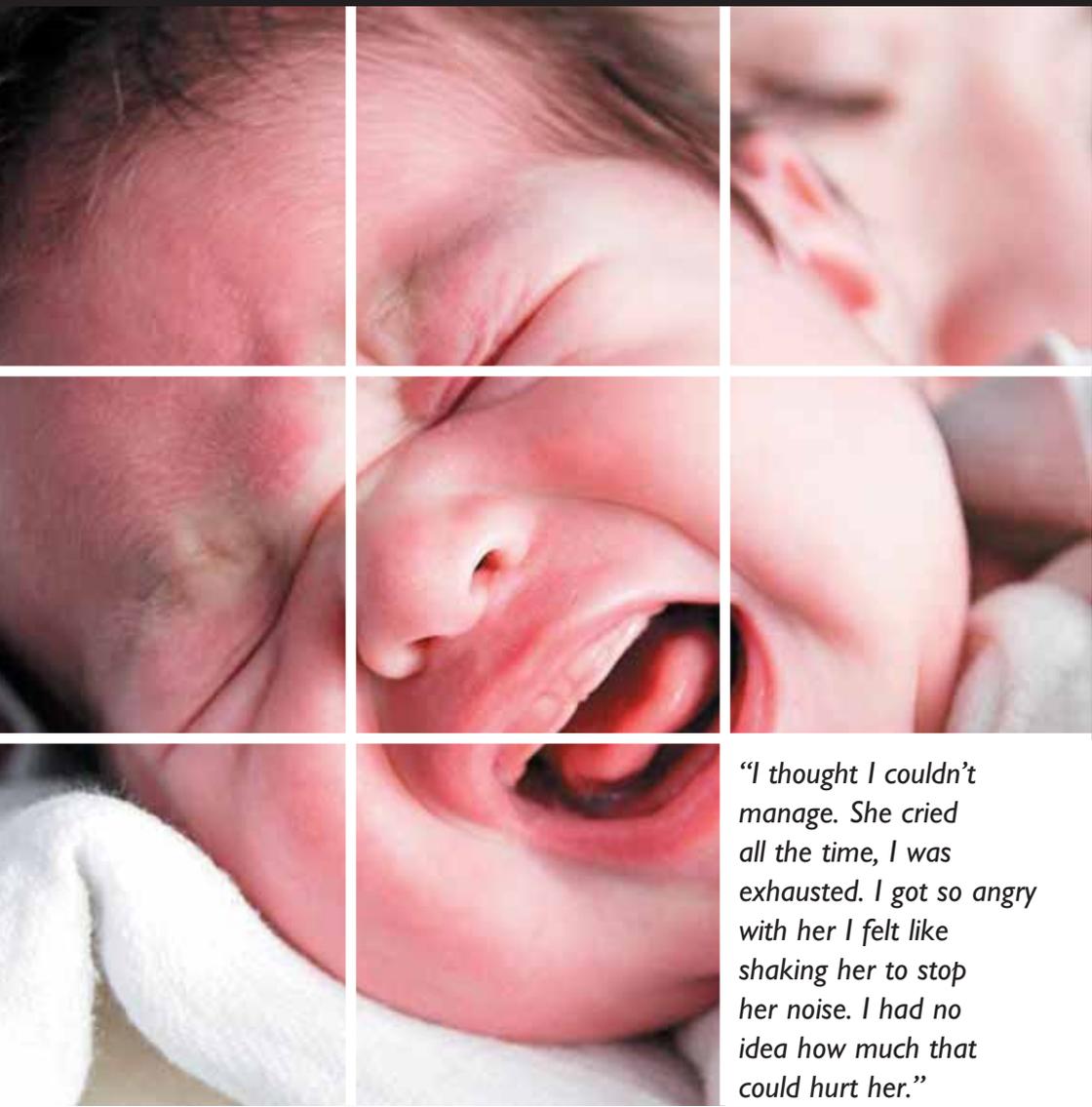
Extended Services

Many Children’s Centres now work in partnership with Extended Services Teams. Extended Services offer a variety of services and activities for school aged children, families and communities. These services are often based in schools or Children’s Centres.

Through partnership with Extended Services Teams, support and provision for all school aged children and their mums, dads and carers can be accessed. Contact your local Sure Start Children’s Centre for details of Extended Services in your area.

Families Information Service

Northumberland Families Information Service can provide you with impartial information, advice and guidance on Childcare Choices, free entitlement to early years provision for three and four year olds, paying for childcare (including tax credits and childcare vouchers), balancing childcare, work and training, supporting parents, families and young people and things to do and places to go.



“I thought I couldn’t manage. She cried all the time, I was exhausted. I got so angry with her I felt like shaking her to stop her noise. I had no idea how much that could hurt her.”

- 🚫 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

Don’t shake the baby

Different ways to cope

Why do people shake babies?

Often, although not always, babies and young children are shaken when a parent or carer becomes very frustrated when they will not stop crying due to colic, illness or feeding difficulties. On average a baby will cry for at least two hours every day. If a baby has additional difficulties, they will cry more than this and it can be very stressful and difficult to manage.

Many parents may not realise the extent of the damage that a shake can do to a young child. Parents and carers who have a low tolerance level may become angry and more likely to give in and shake the child. However there are many alternatives to try and people to talk to.

Some very rough play with a young child can also cause some similar injuries so **never** shake a young child.

What damage can shaking cause?

Shaking a baby can cause death or serious and long-lasting brain damage. Shaken Baby Syndrome is an injury that results when a baby is 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. This happens because a young child’s neck muscles are not strong enough to hold their head firmly. The action

of shaking can cause serious damage, even though the parent does not perceive it as fierce. Never ever shake a baby for any reason.

Ways to cope with a crying baby

Crying is the way all babies make sure that their basic needs are met - they may be hungry, thirsty, need a change of nappy or even some company. Crying is neither your fault nor the fault of your baby.

Some of the ways to cope include:

- Hug and cuddle your child - perhaps with the use of a baby-carrier so that they are close to your body in order to help soothe them.
- Gently rocking the baby in your arms, a cradle or a pram.
- Go for a walk or a drive to help them sleep.
- If necessary walk out of the room for a short time, ensuring that you are nearby.
- Ask someone else you trust to take over for a while.
- Try not to get angry with your baby as this will only make the crying worse.
- Never let things get so bad you feel desperate. Talk to your Health Visitor or contact one of the organisations listed under Contacts.



WARNING SIGNS

A range of signs can indicate if a child may have been shaken, including feeding difficulties, lethargy, eye injuries, vomiting, irritability, speech and learning difficulties, developmental delay, seizures and paralysis.



ACTION

If you are worried about your child, take them to see your GP, Health Visitor or to the Casualty Department. Seek support, including the helplines listed under Contacts.



WHAT TO SAY

Develop communication with your child using eye contact, smiling, cuddling and talking. This will develop your understanding and responsiveness to your baby’s needs when they are having difficulties.



PREVENTION

It is **never** safe to shake a child, not even in play. It is important for siblings playing together or for the babysitter or any other carer to be made aware of the dangers.

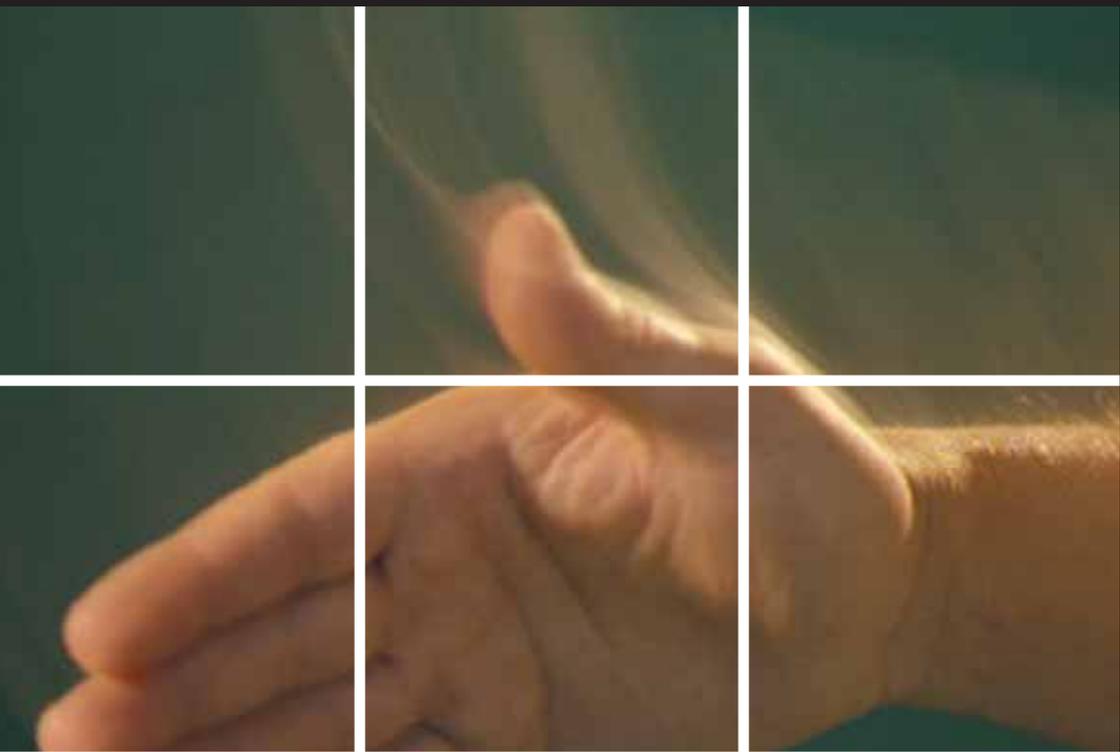


CONTACTS

- Health Visitor or Midwife
- Your local Sure Start Children’s Centre (see Local organisations for a Children’s Centre near you)
- NSPCC 0808 800 5000
- Cry-sis 08451 228 669
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222

WEBLINKS www.nspcc.org.uk • www.cry-sis.org.uk • www.parentlineplus.org.uk

For more information visit www.northumberlandcaretrust.nhs.uk



“I get so frustrated with him sometimes, that I occasionally feel like smacking him - I don't of course as I know that will not solve anything.”

- Smacking does not teach children self-discipline
- Smacking gives attention to a child's bad behaviour
- Children learn best by receiving attention for things they do well
- There are many better things to do than to smack
- Smacking teaches children to hurt others
- When self-discipline is taught, smacking is not needed

Smacking The great debate

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

the most immediate form of discipline. However, it is much more helpful and safer to notice and reward your child's good behaviour, in order to encourage the behaviour you want.

Teaching children from a young age by setting limits and explaining reasons for these limits helps them develop self-discipline. Smacking, which controls your child from the outside, has no long-lasting good effects. In fact smacking usually becomes harder in order to have the same impact on your growing child. This is where the thin line between smacking and hitting can be crossed.

Fewer parents are smacking their children now. Lots of those who keep doing so do it because they are not sure what else will work.

In UK society parents are not allowed to hurt their children whatever their individual, cultural or religious reasons. As a result, child protection professionals will look at cases of abuse of children, so that they can understand, stop it and explain the result of it happening again. In England and Wales the Children's Act says smacking is against the law if it causes bruises, reddening of the skin or mental harm.

Have you ever smacked your child?

The answer from many parents reading this will be 'yes'. Every parent experiences frustration with their child at some time. It is at these times that a parent may smack in the heat of the moment, but this is an outlet for the parent's feelings, rather than a helpful way of training a child.

There are a number of other ways to deal with your child's bad behaviour. Talk to one of the agencies listed under Contacts to find one that works for you.

However, simply because lots of people may have smacked their children does not mean it is the best way to punish your child or make sure they are good. Those who say smacking is okay have argued that it is not harmful in the long-term and is



WARNING SIGNS

A child who flinches or moves away when they fear they might be hit. Smacking a child hard with a force, which (when you look back at it) you feel you shouldn't have done and feel bad about. Leaving bruising and other marks on a child.



ACTION

If you are worried about your own or someone else's smacking get support from the organisations listed under Contacts. If it is someone you know, offer practical help and suggestions.



WHAT TO SAY

Tell your child they have gone too far or broken family rules. Use your tone of voice and the expression on your face to help them understand that they have reached the limit. Explain your reasons why.



PREVENTION

Make it a general rule not to smack your child. Use other ways to discipline, set clear limits and explain them, be firm and stick to rules, ignore minor bad behaviour and reward good (perhaps use a star chart).



CONTACTS

- Health Visitor
- Your local Sure Start Children's Centre (see Local organisations for a Children's Centre near you)
- NSPCC 0808 800 5000
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222
- Barnardo's 020 8550 8822

WEBLINKS www.nspcc.org.uk • www.parentlineplus.org.uk • www.barnardos.org.uk

For more information visit www.northumberlandcaretrust.nhs.uk



“He was standing over me. I know the kids heard. I’m worried how this will affect them. We must get some help.”

- Domestic abuse teaches children to use violence or abuse
- Domestic abuse can affect children in serious and long-lasting ways
- Where there is domestic abuse there is often child abuse
- Children will often blame themselves for domestic abuse
- Alcohol misuse is very common when domestic abuse occurs, as a contributing factor and survival mechanism

Domestic abuse

How does it affect children?

Domestic abuse is a crime and a major social problem affecting many families. Children who see, get involved or hear violence are affected in many ways. What is certain is that children do hear, they do see and they are aware of abuse in the family.

Children will learn how to act from what their parents do. Domestic abuse teaches children bad things about relationships and how to deal with people.

For instance:

- It can teach them that violence is the way to sort out arguments.
- They learn how to keep secrets.
- They often do not trust those close to them and think that they are to blame for abuse, especially if violence happens after an argument about the children.

Many people find it difficult to understand why people stay in or return to abusive situations. Fear, love, the risk of homelessness and financial issues can make it very difficult for partners with children to leave and some may just not want to.

Short-term effects

Children are affected in many ways by domestic abuse, even after a short time. These can include feeling frightened, becoming shy and quiet, bedwetting, running away, violence, behaving badly, problems with school, poor concentration and emotional upset.

Long-term effects

The longer children are exposed to violence, the worse the effects on them are. These can include a lack of respect for the non-violent parent, loss of self-confidence, which will affect how they form relationships in the future, being over-protective of parent, loss of childhood, problems at school and running away.

If you are worried about domestic abuse, discuss it with someone else such as your health visitor or the domestic violence helpline. If you are violent and have children, you can seek help to stop what is happening.

If you are affected by domestic abuse you are not alone - you can seek help from a range of services in Northumberland. You can also report incidents to the police. This will provide valuable evidence for any charges against your abuser in the future.

Apart from any criminal proceedings, you can apply for a injunction in the civil court to protect yourself. If you would like details of solicitors in your area who deal with family law contact the local domestic abuse services.



WARNING SIGNS

Any abuse between adults will affect children badly. Get support and help as soon as possible. The longer it lasts the more damaging violence is.



ACTION

Report your concerns about yourself or someone else to the police. If you are worried that your child might be affected, talk to them about what is happening. Spend time together talking through worries they have.



WHAT TO SAY

Children need time to talk about the feelings they have about abuse. Children need to know that it is not their fault and that this is not the way it should be.



PREVENTION

An abusive partner must seek help to stop their actions. Make sure that you offer a good role model for children so that they learn better ways of acting.



CONTACTS

- Northumbria Police 03456 043 043
- Northumbria Domestic Abuse Helpline 0800 066 5555
- Northumberland Victim Support 01670 822334
- Cease 24 01668 283224
- SixtyEightyThirty 01434 608030
- National Domestic Abuse Helpline 0808 2000 247

WEBLINKS www.womensaid.org.uk • www.refuge.org.uk

For more information visit www.northumberlandcaretrust.nhs.uk



“Leaving Natalie with anyone is difficult, but I really need to have a break sometimes. I’m really glad I spent the time I did finding the right babysitter.”

- 👉 Children rely on their parents for their safety
- 👉 Your child has the right to care which is free from harm
- 👉 Make sure your child gets the best quality care
- 👉 Select your babysitter carefully
- 👉 Avoid leaving your child with someone under 16
- 👉 Ensure your babysitter can be contacted in an emergency

Babysitting

Who can I leave my child with?

As parents you have responsibility for the safety and well being of your children. As a result it is important that you think very carefully about the person you are going to leave them with, whether this is a stranger, close relative or a friend.

Babysitters do not need qualifications or a certificate to look after children. As a result anyone can advertise his or her services as a babysitter.

When you leave your child in the care of someone else you are taking a risk with their safety and welfare. When considering a temporary carer for your child it is important that you choose someone with the abilities and high standards that you would expect of yourself. This includes someone who will make sure they are fed, changed, kept safe, given room to play, feel secure and can deal with difficulties which may occur.

The NSPCC recommend that the minimum age of a babysitter should be 16 years of age. This age limit is also linked with the possible action which could be taken by the police if anything were to go wrong and an injury resulted. It is most likely that you as a parent would be held responsible if anything goes wrong if your babysitter is under 16 years of age.

Generally a babysitter will come to your home to take care of your child. Make sure you talk to your babysitter before you leave. Let them know when to expect you back and make sure they have contact details in case of emergencies.

Often a good babysitter will have a good reputation locally and can be recommended by a friend or neighbour. However it is essential that you meet personally with the prospective babysitter before you decide to leave your child in their care.



WARNING SIGNS

Children will not always be able to tell you if something is wrong, so note changes in their mood, behaviour and physical appearance. Agree with the babysitter to discuss, from the beginning, all accidents and incidents.



ACTION

Use people you trust to care for your child or ask them to recommend someone. Speak to other families who have used the babysitter you are considering.



WHAT TO SAY

Tell the babysitter all about your child’s routine and their likes and dislikes. Tell the babysitter about your rules. Always leave a contact number in case of emergencies.



PREVENTION

Make sure you feel completely comfortable about your babysitter before you leave your child in their care.



CONTACTS

- Northumberland Families Information Service 0800 023 4440
- Your local Sure Start Children’s Centre (see Local organisations for a Children’s Centre near you)
- NSPCC 0808 800 5000

WEBLINKS <http://childcarefinder.direct.gov.uk/childcarefinder> • www.nspcc.org.uk

For more information visit www.northumberlandcaretrust.nhs.uk



“Before Joe was born I never thought about where I left things. Nowadays, everything in the house seems dangerous so I never leave him unsupervised.”



WARNING SIGNS

Spend some time exploring your house as if you were a young child. This will show you the many potential dangers that, if not removed, could harm your child.



ACTION

Make a list of these potential dangers and remove them to safety or protect your child from them by using safety devices. Talk to the contacts listed if you are unsure about this.



WHAT TO SAY

With very young children the tone of your voice and facial expressions alongside explanations are extremely important. Children will begin to sense the warning tone in your voice over time.



PREVENTION

Remove dangerous objects like medicines and household chemicals out of the reach of children and lock them away safely. Do this before your child is exposed to any hazard.



CONTACTS

- Health Visitor
- Your local Sure Start Children’s Centre (see Local organisations for a Children’s Centre near you)
- Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT) 020 7608 3828
- The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) 0121 248 2000

WEBLINKS www.capt.org.uk • www.rospace.co.uk

For more information visit www.northumberlandcaretrust.nhs.uk

- Accidents are one of the biggest causes of death in children aged 1-14
- Each year 1 million children visit A&E as a result of an accident in or around the home
- Babies and young children learn by exploring their surroundings but they aren’t able to tell what is likely to hurt them
- Try and remove as many potential dangers from your home as possible, this will make keeping children safe much easier
- Babies and young children need you to keep a close eye on them, to keep them safe, until they learn to do that for themselves
- Explain about safety to your child from an early age

Preventing injury

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 and this is why it is important to ensure that your home is safe for all your family especially for young children. There are many situations each year in which children have overdosed on their parents’ drugs and medicines.

Some dangers around the home:

- Make sure that all medicines and drugs are locked away well out of reach and your use of them is private to avoid your child copying you.
- Certain rooms are necessarily full of danger, such as the kitchen, and should remain out of bounds or 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 even for a very active toddler?
- Crawling and exploring are an essential part of their development - keep an eye on your young children, especially near wires and sockets.

- Small children should never be left alone with pets. Even trained and good natured animals can be tested when children are around.
- Make sure that irons, saucepans and hot drinks are kept out of the reach of children. Never hold a baby or child and a hot drink at the same time. Scalding and burns are common and avoidable accidents.
- Inhaling cigarette smoke is bad for children’s health. Children will be affected by passive smoking and your 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. Unsafe toys can be very dangerous.

Low cost safety equipment scheme

Low cost safety equipment is available to all families with children under five who live in Northumberland. Some families will be able to have safety equipment supplied and fitted free. Contact your Health Visitor or Sure Start Children’s Centre for more information. Remember it is best to start thinking about safety equipment to make your home safer, before your child starts crawling.



“When mum goes out, I lock the door from the inside - she calls in the letterbox to say goodbye, I leave the lights on in case anyone tries to get in. She usually comes home in the night when I am asleep.”



WARNING SIGNS

Parents who have little support. A child who is often seen outside and all alone for long periods of time. Childcare arrangements that keep going wrong.



ACTION

If there is immediate risk of harm to a child, call the police.



WHAT TO SAY

If you are worried about a child being left alone, talk to the parent, a Health Visitor, Teacher or a Social Worker.



PREVENTION

Think about shared babysitting and chat to neighbours, friends or other parents. Find out about After School Clubs and Holiday Play Schemes.



CONTACTS

- Northumberland Families Information Service 0800 023 4440
- NSPCC 0808 800 5000
- ChildLine 0800 1111
- One Parent Families/Gingerbread 0800 018 5026

WEBLINKS www.nspcc.org.uk • www.childline.org.uk • www.oneparentfamilies.org.uk • www.gingerbread.org.uk

For more information visit www.northumberlandcaretrust.nhs.uk

- Never leave a young child alone
- Children are not ready for this amount of responsibility
- Leaving a child alone places them at risk of harm
- It can be a lonely and frightening experience
- Plan who you could contact for emergency care

Children left alone

Common sense and the law

If a child is not ready to be left alone they can feel sad, lonely, frightened and it can be dangerous. There are many possible risks, both physical and emotional, which could affect your child in a bad way.

Also it is not possible to rely on a child to let you know how much care they need. They may say that they do not mind being left and may find it fun at first, but they cannot fully know the possible risks and how to handle them.

Even ordinary 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 are not things that a child would know how to deal with.

It is never possible to leave your child and assume that someone will look out for them unless you have already spoken to a trusted friend or neighbour and asked them to keep an eye out.

If they are told, the Police or Social Services may take action if they think that a child has been neglected by being left alone. Neglect happens when a parent or carer does not meet children’s basic needs of food, shelter, security, attention or protection from danger.

The NSPCC issued guidelines advising that children under the age of 13 should not be left alone. While this is not the law, it is suggested as good practice. Children under this age cannot manage the responsibility of being left alone and this may be particularly so if they have a disability.

As a young person grows older, leaving them alone after school, for an evening or during the day is less worrying as long as they are prepared and know what to do if they are worried or need anything. So preparation for this is vital. If your child is 13 or over and you feel they have the understanding to deal with this, it is important that they know where you are and who to contact in an emergency.



“Social work has changed a lot. Now we work more in partnership with families where there are concerns, to make sure they get support before things reach a crisis.”

- 🔴 Parents are responsible for their children’s safety
- 🔴 A Social Worker may become involved once a concern is shared
- 🔴 Children are best cared for by their own families
- 🔴 Professionals want to work in partnership with families
- 🔴 Professionals want to work with families to reduce the risk of harm to children

Child protection Myths and realities

Very few adults harm children deliberately and most often, when harm does happen, families need support, not punishment or the removal of their children.

Social Workers and other professionals get involved when parents may be unable to protect their child from harm and need some help. In some cases the Police Child Protection Unit will investigate with Social Workers to help protect children and decide whether an offence has been committed against a child.

There have been lots of negative reports in the media about Social Workers and what happens when concerns about child abuse are reported.

Many myths exist, so for the record:

Child abuse is not easy to recognise, prevent or stop.

It is rarely possible to definitely say that a child has been abused or by whom. A careful assessment is needed in order to find out what has happened and what support and protection will best help the family. As a result it can be difficult to avoid some intrusion into family life. A Social Worker will ask questions about the family circumstances, consider the frequency and the seriousness of the incident and the effect on the child. All of these factors will help to decide what

should happen next to support and protect the child and family.

Social Workers and the Police have a duty (they have no choice about this) under The Children Act 1989 to investigate concerns of child abuse.

Professionals are not solely responsible for protection of children. Traditionally, social workers have been expected to make sure that children are safe. In order to do this well, they rely on information from parents, family, other professionals and the local community who all play an important part in identifying concerns about those close to them. This helps to ensure that they are offered support before the situation becomes far worse.

Reporting child abuse rarely results in the child being removed from home. This is not the main aim of social work enquiries and rarely happens. Social Workers can only remove children from home with a court order, having demonstrated that there is serious and immediate risk. In emergency situations the Police have the power to remove a child for 72 hours.

If you are concerned about a child and would like to talk to someone for further advice, please contact the NSPCC. The NSPCC can put you in touch with local teams in your area and if you prefer, you don’t have to give your name.



WARNING SIGNS

Social Workers will get involved when they believe that physical injury, neglect, sexual or emotional abuse has occurred or is likely to occur. Make sure you know what child abuse is - contact the helplines listed under Contacts.



ACTION

A Social Worker (and sometimes a Police Officer) will meet with the family when abuse is reported. They will also talk with other professionals in order to make decisions about how to help.



WHAT TO SAY

If you are worried about your own or someone else’s treatment of a child, seek advice about what practical and emotional support is available.



PREVENTION

It is important that children know what to do when they feel unsafe. Do they know who to talk to and how to get a safe place or person? If you are worried about your child, seek help early.



CONTACTS

- NSPCC 0808 800 5000
- Family Rights Group 0808 801 0366
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222

WEBLINKS www.nspcc.org.uk • www.frg.org.uk • www.parentlineplus.org.uk

For more information visit www.northumberlandcaretrust.nhs.uk



“Greg is ten the same age as me. I haven’t met him but we chat on the Internet all the time. He’s really funny. He wants to meet up tomorrow to play football. I can’t wait to see what he’s like.”

- The Internet can be fun and is useful for learning and homework
- Have family Internet rules to encourage safer use
- Paedophiles can use the Internet to contact children
- It is important that parents understand the Internet
- Limit total screen time - television and computer, to a maximum of two hours each day

Internet safety

New technology old problem

The internet can be fun, and is useful for learning and homework.

Unfortunately, the Internet is also an easy tool for child abuse. Paedophiles use chatrooms to become friendly with children or young people, often by pretending to be another child. Other risks include people who want to get personal information like names, addresses or telephone numbers for fraud. Using the Internet too much can lead to an unhealthy lifestyle and can be addictive.

Keep it safe

Keep an eye on what’s going on by keeping the computer in a family room, rather than in a bedroom. Learn how to use a computer, access Internet sites and try out a chatroom for yourself so you understand what can happen. Check out which sites your children are visiting to see if they are acceptable.

Ask other parents to tell you about good chatrooms or websites for your child. Look for sites that check messages in chatrooms and those, which include clear guidelines for use, child-friendly advice, warnings and how to report concerns.

You can buy software filters which block access to websites with a sexual content. These don’t make Internet use totally safe so it is still much better for you to take an active interest in the sites your child is browsing.

Set ground rules:

- Limit the amount of time your child spends on the Internet - and stick to it.
- Discuss the kind of websites they can visit which are right for their age.
- Make it clear to your child that they must never give out their real name, address, home or mobile phone numbers or any other personal 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 giving.

It’s important that your child understands why there needs to be rules. Explain that because they can’t see or hear the people they chat to on the Internet, they may not be who they seem. Paedophiles gain the trust of young people on the Internet. Remind your child that strangers on the Internet can be just as dangerous as strangers on the street.

If your child keeps it secret when using the computer, if you notice changes in how they act, problems sleeping or changes in routine or they are suddenly asking about sexual matters you could look into whether their Internet use has anything to do with it.



WARNING SIGNS

Keeping it secret when using the Internet, changes in how they act, unusual sexual questions, leaving clues (such as emails) that they are having chats with others which seem sexual or you are not comfortable with, or problems at school and not telling you where they are going.



ACTION

Set up and stick to your Internet-use ground rules. Learn all you can about the Internet and how to use it yourself so you can understand what your child is viewing and whether it is suitable.



WHAT TO SAY

Discuss with your child the dangers of chatrooms and looking at unsuitable websites. Make sure they know that any personal information, including their real name, should not be passed on to anyone else.



PREVENTION

Keep the computer in a family room, with the monitor facing outwards, so you can always see what’s on screen. Discuss which websites your child is looking at and take a look for yourself. Make sure your child is aware of the dangers.

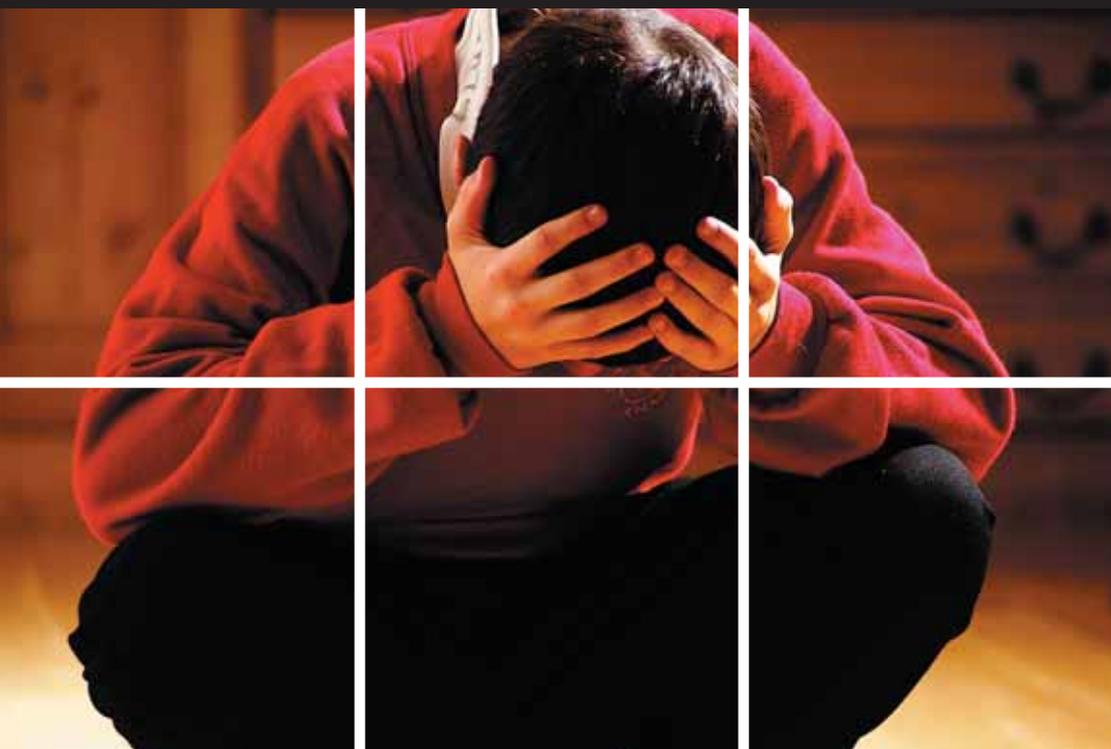


CONTACTS

- Northumbria Police 03456 043 043
- Northumberland Safeguarding Children Board 01670 714411
- Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) 0870 000 3344

WEBLINKS www.thinkuknow.co.uk • www.ceop.gov.uk

For more information visit www.northumberlandcaretrust.nhs.uk



“It happens most days. They’re in the same class and they’re always laughing at me. They said if I tell it will be ten times worse. Sometimes I don’t go to school. I can’t stand it anymore.”



WARNING SIGNS

Running away, non-attendance at school, other learning and behavioural difficulties for no obvious reason. Your child has injuries with no feasible explanation for them.



ACTION

See the headteacher at the school for their support and action. If bullying is occurring outside school, consider contacting the family of the child who is bullying and try to find a way to work together to sort it out.



WHAT TO SAY

Tell your child to refuse to put up with bullying, walk away, tell an adult or friend and avoid fighting. Listen to your child, reassure and be there for them.



PREVENTION

Talk to your child about their school day. Teach your child to respect others from a young age. Teach your child that prejudice and bullying is unacceptable.



CONTACTS

- Kidscape 08451 205204
- ChildLine 0800 1111

WEBLINKS www.kidscape.org.uk • www.childline.org.uk • www.bullying.co.uk

For more information visit www.northumberlandcaretrust.nhs.uk

- Children have the right not to be hurt
- Bullying behaviour is unacceptable
- Bullying can happen to any child at any age
- Speak to your child’s school immediately if you have any concerns
- Act immediately if you think your child is being bullied
- Children need ways to protect themselves and seek help
- Advise your child to run, yell and tell

Bullying

The real story

Bullying is a frightening experience and it can isolate and damage a young person’s self-confidence. Some ongoing bullying can have negative long-term effects on children, leading to depression and even suicidal thoughts and actions.

School days are a time when the influence of other children is very important and fitting in is seen as essential. If children are thought of as different for any reason, they can be picked on and bullied. Sadly, we still live in a society in which to be different in any way can mean ridicule and bullying (often copied from parents) and this ensures that prejudice will continue into the next generation. It is crucial to be alert to 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. Bullies who continually harm other children need support and help as well. They may have experienced difficulties of their own at home, which may have led to their actions. Reporting concerns may help them to get help as well.

- Bullying can happen anywhere but most commonly it happens in school.
- Bullying can take many forms, from verbal abuse to physical attack.
- Bullying is the repeated abuse of a child by one or several people.
- Bullies are not always older than the child they harm.
- Most bullying is done by children who are the same age as the victim.

If your child tells you about a friend or any other child who is being bullied -

listen carefully and take this seriously. That child may not be able to say for themselves what is happening.

Today all schools are required to have an Anti-Bullying Policy. However, school action alone cannot guarantee success. It is important that parents and schools work together in partnership to secure support and protection for the child for both the present and the future. It is essential that parents make contact with their child’s school as soon as they become aware of any problems before they become huge.

Racial harassment

Racial harassment is any hostile or offensive action against individuals or groups because of their skin colour, ethnic origin, religion or cultural background. Racial harassment can severely affect a child’s ability to learn effectively and the effect of harassment can remain with a person throughout their life.

There can be different forms of racial harassment including: Verbal abuse (name calling, insulting slurs and persistent teasing); Physical abuse (hitting, kicking, spitting, taking belongings and threats of violence); Indirect (excluding, humiliation, spreading nasty rumours and ridicule).

Practical steps to take if your child is being racially harassed:

- Make an appointment with your child’s school.
- Be specific, give dates, places, and names of other children involved.
- Make a note of what action the school intends to take.
- Enquire if there is any existing policy against racial harassment incidents.



"I know that smoking is bad for me, but I didn't know, that second-hand smoke was endangering the health of my children. Now I never smoke in the house or around my children and I am seeking help to give up."



WARNING SIGNS

A range of signs may indicate if a child is suffering from the effects of secondhand smoke including wheezing, coughing, asthma, chest infections, glue ear (child has difficulty hearing and often speech/language difficulties), regularly suffers poor health.



ACTION

If you are worried about your child/baby's health, take them to your GP. If you are a smoker do not smoke in the house, in the car or around your children. Consider giving up.



WHAT TO SAY

Ensure that all people who come into your home are aware of your own 'No Smoking in the Home' rules that you have decided to put in place. Explain to your children the health risks associated with smoking.



PREVENTION

Keep your children away from all cigarettes and smoky places. Never smoke if you are pregnant.



CONTACTS

- Northumberland Stop Smoking Service 01670 813135
- Fresh North East 0191 387 2139
- NHS Smoking Helpline 0800 022 4 332

WEBLINKS www.freshne.com • <http://smokefree.nhs.uk>

For more information visit www.northumberlandcaretrust.nhs.uk

- Secondhand smoke is harmful to everyone especially children
- Children are at a greater risk because their lungs are still developing. They breathe more rapidly and so absorb more toxic chemicals
- If you are a smoker consider giving up - free and friendly help is out there!

Smoking Secondhand smoke

What is secondhand smoke?

Secondhand smoke is made up of 'mainstream' smoke breathed in and out by the smoker and 'side stream' smoke from the burning tip of a cigarette.

What's in tobacco smoke?

- Over 4,000 toxic chemicals.
- Many of which are known causes of cancer.

How to protect your child

The best thing you can do is to keep them away from all cigarettes and smoky places (a smoky place is not just where you can see smoke hanging in the air, it is any room where even one person is smoking).

- Keep children's playing, sleeping and eating areas smoke free.
- Make your car a smoke free zone because smoke is more concentrated in such a small space.
- Ask other people not to smoke around your child.
- Choose smoke free places when out and about with your family.
- Avoid smoking around your children.
- If you choose to smoke - go outside.

Don't forget - smoking in the house, even with the door or a window open is still not ventilated enough to stop smoke drifting into other rooms and lingering for a long time in the air and on furniture.

Seriously consider the many benefits of giving up smoking for your own and your family's health - help and advice is out there make contact today.

Adults do not deliberately set out to endanger their child's health or encourage them to smoke. Yet every time someone smokes around a child, that child or baby is smoking too!

Children copy and learn from their parent's actions - if you smoke they are more likely to smoke when older. Most parents know that smoking is bad for them, but they may not know that secondhand smoke is endangering their health. Parents can suffer the same way as their children, but sometimes it can be worse as they may go into many smoky places.

As parents you may experience difficult times and you may feel that smoking helps you to cope. However research shows that smoking actually increases stress.

You have to decide whether to smoke or to stop. If you choose to smoke, you should try to protect your children from secondhand smoke and reduce the risk of them becoming ill or smokers themselves. Not only will your health benefit but more importantly your child's health will too!



“My parents explained so little to me about sex, I had to find out from friends - and half of what they said was wrong. I’m determined that my kids know exactly what to expect and learn about safer sex.”

- ☛ Talking to young people openly about sex can help to delay the age at which they first have sex and make it more likely that they will use contraception when they do
- ☛ Many Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) do not have any symptoms, therefore you may not know if you have one. Testing is the only way to know for sure
- ☛ If left untreated some Sexually Transmitted Infections can cause problems with fertility
- ☛ If a young person is sexually active condoms help protect against STIs and pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy & sexual health

Communication is important

Why should I talk to my child about sex?

Young people receive many different messages about relationships and sex. They get information from TV, magazines, friends and Sex and Relationship Education.

age are already having sex. Therefore it is important to start talking to young people from an early age to make sure they are informed. However, try to remember that this figure does mean that most young people under 16 are **not** having sex.

Some of this information will be accurate, other bits will not. As a parent you have an important role in ensuring that your child learns about relationships, sexuality and sex and that the information they get is appropriate and factually accurate.

How to tell them
Answer questions your child has with simple, clear, accurate answers. If you are not sure about something they ask be honest - tell them you don't have the answer but that you are happy to try and find out or maybe suggest that you find out together. Use magazines and TV programmes to help bring up subjects and to use as examples. Remember there are plenty of useful books and leaflets, as well as websites for both parents and children that can help you.

Even though it can be difficult to talk about sex with your child - it is important. Not having accurate and/or sufficient information about relationships and sex can result in negative outcomes for your son/daughter. Good parent-child communication about relationships and sex can help delay the onset of sexual activity and reduce these negative sexual health outcomes. Young people who talk to their parents openly about relationships and sex are more likely to practice safer sex when they do become sexually active.

Speakeasy is a fun and relaxed course that can help parents and carers gain knowledge and confidence needed to talk openly, honestly and positively with their children about sex, relationships and growing up. For information on Speakeasy courses in Northumberland call 01670 819049.

It's important that your child learns about relationships, love, sex, STIs and using contraception before they have sex. Although the law says that both boys and girls can have sex at 16 one third of young people under this



WARNING SIGNS

Young people are starting to have sex younger and younger. Don't think that this won't happen to your child. By the time you see the warning signs it may be too late to give them the help they need.



ACTION

There are many leaflets, books and websites that can give you advice on how to tackle the subject of sexual health with your child. The more you read, the more comfortable you will be talking to them about it.



WHAT TO SAY

Rather than having a one off talk about sex, STIs and relationships it may be better to have regular chats. Use magazines and TV programmes to help bring up subjects and to use as examples.



PREVENTION

The more your child knows about sex, the longer they are likely to wait for their first time. They are also more likely to use contraception to stop STIs and pregnancy. Talk to your child about sex early on.



CONTACTS

- Confidential appointments and information in Northumberland 01670 543131
- Northumberland Teenage Pregnancy Team 01670 819049
- Your GP
- R u thinking? 0800 28 29 30
- Ask Brook 0808 802 1234
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222
- NHS Direct 0845 4647

WEBLINKS www.checkyourbits.org • www.ruthinking.co.uk • www.brook.org.uk
www.parentlineplus.org.uk • www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

For more information visit www.northumberlandcaretrust.nhs.uk



“I’ve decided that I’m going to let my daughter have the HPV vaccine. Anything I can do now to protect her against getting a serious disease later in life is a sensible idea.”

-  HPV can cause genital warts and cervical cancer
-  Your daughter’s school will talk to her about having a vaccine to protect her from it and you can decide together
-  The best time for your daughter to have the HPV vaccine is before she starts having sex

Human Papilloma Virus Vaccines (HPV)

Giving your daughter a healthy future

HumanpapillomaVirus, or HPV, is the most common STI. There are more than 100 types of HPV and most HPV infections clear up but some can cause genital warts and others can cause cervical cancer.

You can get HPV by having sex without a condom just once. There are no symptoms, so if you’ve got it you probably won’t know. But there’s now a vaccine that can help protect girls from getting it and spreading it to other people.

If your daughter is in Year 8 (usually about 12 or 13 years old) she will be asked if she wants to have the vaccine. It is up to her and you as her parents/carers to decide if she has it. The vaccine is not compulsory, but strongly recommended, and you’ll probably need to sign a consent form before she has it.

It will mean having three injections in her arm over six months - the second one a month after the first one, then the last injection six months later. Usual side effects from having a vaccine injection are a sore arm, redness and slight swelling on the arm. It is important that she completes the course and has all three doses.

Some people think that that the HPV vaccine will encourage young people to have sex. But the government thinks it’s really important to have the vaccine - they hope it will stop about

400 women dying from cervical cancer every year. Your daughter’s school nurse or your GP will be able to give you more information if you have any questions.

Whether your daughter has the HPV vaccine or not, it’s still important to know all about safe sex. Make sure she knows that the only way to protect herself from getting pregnant or catching an STI is to use a condom when she has sex.

The best time for your daughter to have the HPV vaccine is before she starts having sex. If she’s sexually active already it’s still a really good idea to have it as it might protect her against cervical cancer for the future. If your daughter is older than Year 8 but under 18, she will still be able to have the vaccine.

Boys can’t get cervical cancer, so it’s not as important that they have the vaccine. Even if your daughter has the HPV vaccine, she must still have smear tests. She will be invited for smear tests once she is 25 years old.



WARNING SIGNS

There are no symptoms, so if you’ve got it you probably won’t know. Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) can cause genital warts and cervical cancer. It’s a very common Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) and you can get it through sexual contact, particularly through sexual intercourse.



ACTION

Find out as much as you can about the HPV vaccine from your daughter’s school or GP. The best time for your daughter to have the HPV vaccine is before she starts having sex, but she can have it if she’s having sex already as well.



WHAT TO SAY

Deciding whether to have the HPV vaccine should be a joint decision, so talk to your daughter about how it can help protect her against cervical cancer in the future. Also explain that she shouldn’t feel pressured into having sex before she’s ready.



PREVENTION

Whether she has the HPV vaccine or not, it’s important to know all about safe sex. The vaccine won’t protect her from other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), like chlamydia, syphilis and HIV, so make sure she knows how else she can avoid catching an STI.

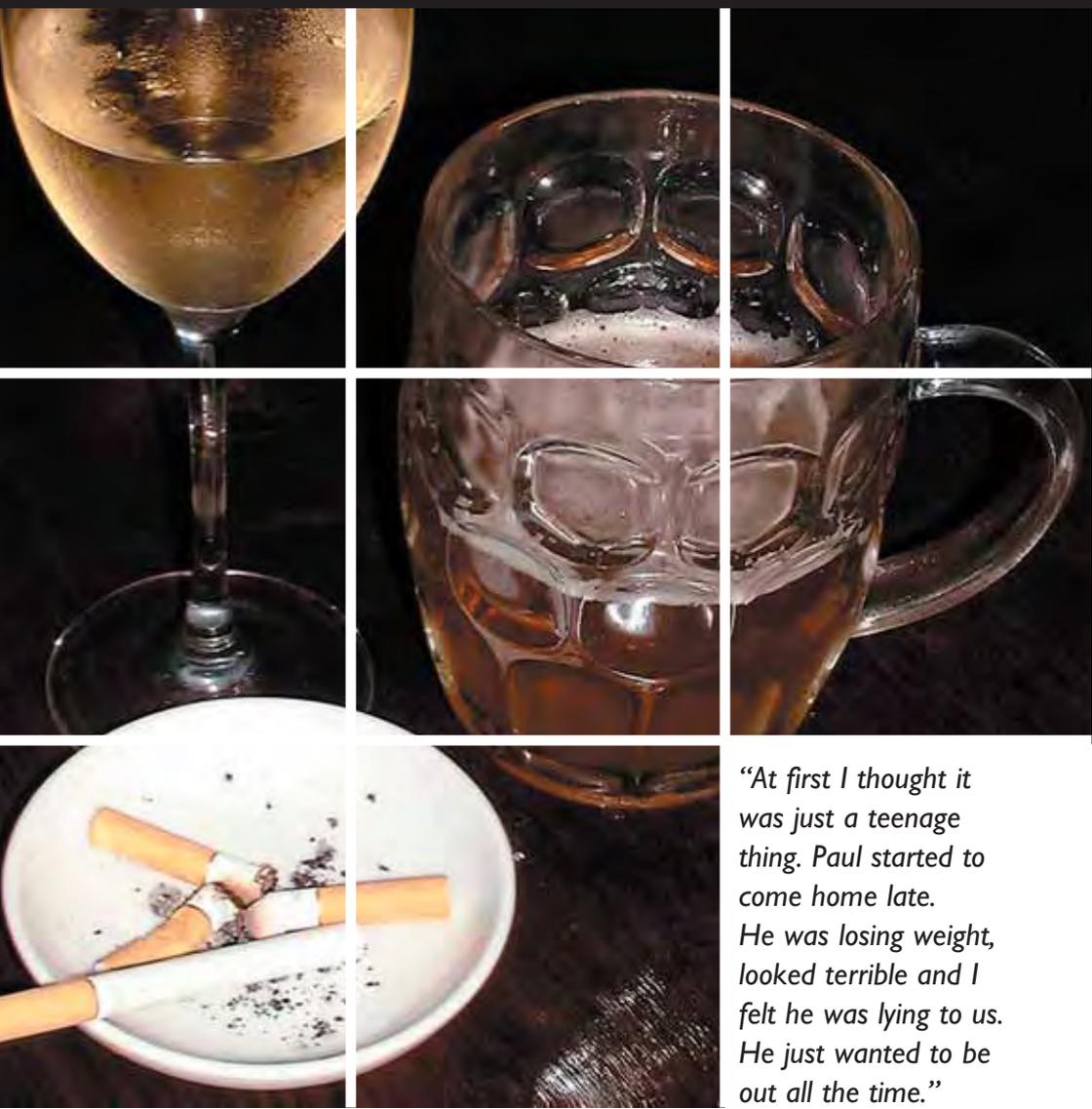


CONTACTS

- Northumberland HPV Team 01670 564107
- Your GP
- HPV Helpline 0845 602 3303

WEBLINKS www.immunisation.nhs.uk/vaccines/HPV • www.yפש.net
www.need2know.co.uk/health • www.ruthinking.co.uk

For more information visit www.northumberlandcaretrust.nhs.uk



“At first I thought it was just a teenage thing. Paul started to come home late. He was losing weight, looked terrible and I felt he was lying to us. He just wanted to be out all the time.”



WARNING SIGNS

In general terms if your child changes their appearance, how they act or if they have extra money that you did not know about you should include drug and alcohol misuse in your list of “I wonder if...” questions.



ACTION

Keep an eye on and talk to your child if you are worried. In an emergency contact an ambulance at once. Try to talk with them about their drug use.



WHAT TO SAY

Discuss drug use as much as you can, for example, when drugs are mentioned on TV. You can give information regarding the risks of drug use at an early age.



PREVENTION

Make sure that you are informed about drug use and what can happen. There are many helpful guides available from the helplines listed below.



CONTACTS

- Sorted 0800 633 5872
- Drug Scope 020 7520 7550
- FRANK 0800 77 66 00
- Alcohol Concern 020 7264 0510

WEBLINKS www.sortednorth.co.uk • www.drugscope.org.uk • www.talktofrank.co.uk
www.alcoholconcern.org.uk

For more information visit www.northumberlandcaretrust.nhs.uk

- Many parents worry that their children may be smoking, drinking or using drugs
- Stopping something from happening in the first place is better than trying to sort it out once it has already happened. Don't let your children see you smoke, drink or take drugs - your example is crucial
- More young people are drinking, smoking and taking drugs than ever before

Drug & alcohol misuse

How would I know?

There are many signs, which include a young person who is panicky, tense or sleepy; complaining of sickness; cannot concentrate; lacks energy; is depressed; has skin problems; is aggressive; there may be a change in relationships with family and friends; a change in the way they act; a change in how they do at school; a change in how much money they have; personal things ‘disappearing’ or being sold.

If you find out that your child has or may have taken drugs, it can be frightening because of the possible effects. This can be due to you not knowing about drugs and not feeling confident about talking about them. It is very important that children know about the risks of using drugs, alcohol and volatile substances (e.g. solvents).

It is important to discuss drugs use early.

Some parents/carers worry that doing this makes their child want to try drugs. By not talking about drugs you will not protect them. Children will be aware of drugs in some way before they leave primary school. It is likely that at this early stage, children will take more in when being told about the risks of drug use. Make sure you tell your children about the risks. Clear information and support

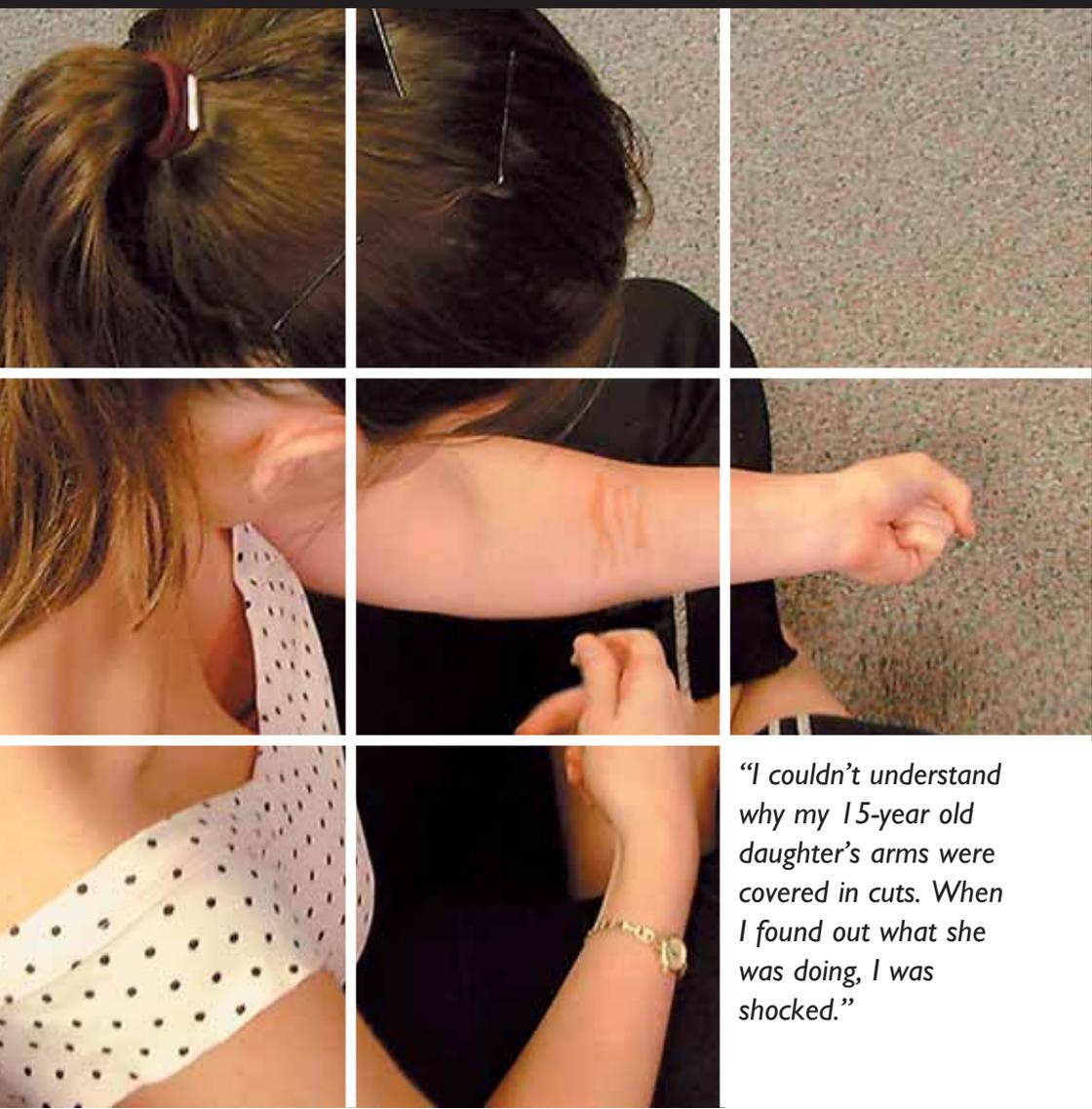
will help them decide what to do. You cannot be sure they will not try drugs but it will increase the chance of making an informed choice.

Why do young people use drugs, abuse substances or drink alcohol?

They want to find out about them, they want to break the rules, to escape reality, to cope with difficult situations or feelings, because they enjoy them, because their friends do it.

Drug, alcohol and substance misuse by parents

Drug, alcohol and substance misuse by adults in the home can seriously affect the care and well-being of children. If you are concerned speak to one of the organisations listed under Contacts.



“I couldn’t understand why my 15-year old daughter’s arms were covered in cuts. When I found out what she was doing, I was shocked.”

-  Self-harm is a sign of deeper problems
-  Understand the reasons why your child self-harms
-  Find out how to help your child

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.

People who self-harm often use it as a way of dealing with problems, such as depression, 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.

Self-harm is not just about getting attention, as it is most often carried out in private and kept secret from family and friends. What they are doing is a sign that they need help. Those who self-harm usually think badly of themselves and need even more attention and support. 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.

Hurting yourself is a serious problem, even if the person only lightly cuts themselves. A person who self-harms can’t just decide to stop - they need help to get over their problem. Most cases of harming do not lead to death, but can be a sign that your child may be thinking about more serious harm or even suicide.

How you can help

If you know that your child hurts, themselves on purpose it is normal to feel very upset, angry and powerless. Your child needs your understanding and support. Listen to what they are telling you without judging them and try not to show you are angry or upset or try to force them to stop. If this is their way of handling problems then other ways of dealing with them need to be found and tried before they can stop harming themselves. Helping them learn to deal with stress and stopping the things that cause them to self-harm in the first place will be more useful.

If your child finds it difficult to tell you about their feelings try to get them to talk to someone they trust like a family member, friend or teacher or their GP, who can tell them about other ways of dealing with stress and who can tell them where to get more help. One-to-one counselling, support groups and practical support can all help.



WARNING SIGNS

Look out for injuries such as cuts, burns, scalds or bruises. Your child may try to hide them from you.



ACTION

Try to find out if your child is self-harming. Think of reasons why they might be doing this so that you can talk through problems and find out ways of dealing with them.



WHAT TO SAY

You will be upset but try not to judge them, show them you are angry or try to force them to stop. Make time to really listen to them and try to get them to talk about their problems. Suggest they see their GP who can get them more help if needed.



PREVENTION

People, who self-harm feel lonely and unloved. Giving your child time to talk to you, discussing difficulties they have and letting them know you are there for them will help. Your support will make them feel better about themselves.



CONTACTS

- ChildLine 0800 1111
- Samaritans 08457 90 90 90 (24hr helpline)

WEBLINKS www.childline.org.uk • www.samaritans.org • www.nshn.co.uk
www.selfharm.org.uk • www.siari.co.uk

For more information visit www.northumberlandcaretrust.nhs.uk



"I was shocked when she ran away. I now know that she had been missing school quite a bit. We stopped talking when my partner moved in but had been really close before that."

- Make time for your child to talk to you about their worries - even when you have to tell them off
- You know how important a good education is - let your child know this
- Only keep them off school if they are too ill to attend and not for days out or shopping trips
- Be honest about things that might be happening in the family
- Look for early signs that your child might not be happy and talk to their school about these
- Help is out there - please don't be too embarrassed or afraid to ask

Missing From home and school

The law says that parents must make sure that their children get a proper, full-time education and it is against the law if their child does not go to school regularly and on time. Children who miss school are much more likely to have problems with their learning and getting the job or college place that they would like. They will often find it harder to make and keep friends and they are at much greater risk of getting into trouble in and out of school.

Children from all sorts of backgrounds run away from home for lots of reasons. Many of us will remember planning to run away when we were younger because we felt unable to cope with our problems, or thought that nobody cared about us or because we thought we had been treated unfairly.

If they are missing out on school or lessons they are more likely to come across adults or other young people who might want to cause them harm.

Usually, if a child does go missing from home, it will be for a very short period - usually until the child thinks that the parents have noticed they are not there. Often, they will turn up at the home of a friend or relative.

Children who miss school regularly often do this because they are worried about something. There might be something happening on the way to or from school that is worrying them. They might be being bullied. They might be finding some lessons or subjects too hard (or too easy) or they might be having problems in finishing their homework. Sometimes, children will not want to leave home because they are worried that their parent might come to some harm whilst they are away.

When children run away, they are not being naughty - they are trying to tell us that they are unhappy or trying to find out just how much we do care about them.

If your child goes missing and you don't know where they have gone, contact the Police.



WARNING SIGNS

There may be none but does your child seem to be unhappy? Are you sure that they are not missing from school? Has anything happened in the family that you haven't talked to your child about?



ACTION

If you think your child might be missing from school, talk to the school or an Education Welfare Officer. Contact the Police if your child goes missing and you don't know where they have gone.



WHAT TO SAY

Make sure that your child knows how important they are to you. When you have to tell your child off, tell them that it's the way they are acting 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.



PREVENTION

Keep an eye out for changes in the way they act. Spend time with them and be interested in them. Do you know who your child's friends are? Be very careful about their access to the Internet and 'chatrooms'.



CONTACTS

- Northumbria Police 03456 043 043
- Northumberland Education Welfare Service 01670 533000
- Missing People 0500 700 700 (24 hours)
- Message Home 0800 700 740

WEBLINKS www.missingpeople.org.uk

For more information visit www.northumberlandcaretrust.nhs.uk



“He said he loved me, but all along he knew exactly what he was doing. How could I have been so stupid. I am so glad I that I managed to get help and get away from this situation. Now I know better.”

- Children who are sexually exploited are the victims of sexual abuse and need to be safeguarded from further harm
- Children can be sexually exploited by manipulative adults who wish to make money
- Adults who abuse children should be held responsible, rather than blaming the children
- Children involved in child sexual exploitation face devastating physical, emotional and psychological risks
- It is never too early or too late to get help

Sexual exploitation

Working together to protect children and young people

What is sexual exploitation?

Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons), receive ‘something’ (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money), as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities.

Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child’s immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources.

Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person’s limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability.

Behaviour of children and young people

Because of the grooming methods used by their abusers, it is very common for children and young people who are sexually exploited not to recognise that they are being abused. The needs of children and particularly of young people aged 16 and 17 years are likely to be overlooked for this reason. Although faced with limited choice, they may believe themselves to be acting voluntarily.

It may take many weeks or months for those who work with young people to build up their trust, help them to recognise that they are being sexually exploited by challenging their perceptions with factual information, and overcome their resistance to interventions.



WARNING SIGNS

Not going to school or staying away from home, unexplained money, clothes, jewellery or other gifts, new relationships with older men, evidence of drug or alcohol abuse, changes in mood or behaviour, loss of contact with former friends and new relationships with an older age group, lack of self-esteem.



ACTION

If you have concerns, try to get your child to tell you as much as possible. Do not ignore the situation or make your child feel that they are to blame for what may be happening to them. Get in touch with information and support agencies that can help you and your child (see website addresses below), and contact children’s services locally.



WHAT TO SAY

Make sure that your child knows that you are there to help them, no matter what may be happening.



PREVENTION

Offer a positive and supportive home life. Watch out for low self-esteem and other warning signs. Get information and support from local agencies if you feel your child may be at risk.



CONTACTS

- Northumbria Police 03456 043 043
- NSPCC 0808 800 5000
- Samaritans 08457 90 90 90

WEBLINKS www.nspcc.org.uk • www.barnardos.org.uk
www.dcsf.gov.uk • www.samaritans.org

For more information visit www.northumberlandcaretrust.nhs.uk



“How could I care for my son, when he was caring for me and his baby brother? I made a few phone calls and found out that even with my illness, I can still be a good parent.”

- 🔗 Young carers are protected by the Children Act 1989, Carers (Recognition and Services Act) 1995 and Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000
- 🔗 The Government, your Local Council, and Education and Health Authorities are there to help and will act once concern is raised
- 🔗 There are many types of support to help you and your child cope with their caring
- 🔗 You care about your young carer! So make contact with the support groups and organisations that are there to help

Young carers

Getting the support they need

Many people need special care in their homes. They may be ill, disabled or elderly, or they may have drug or alcohol problems. Care from a member of the family can be a 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.

Health

Sometimes young carers can be so busy looking after others, that they forget to look after themselves, and can become ill, stressed or depressed. The best way to avoid this is to get help from your GP and Local Health Authority. Let them know all about what is happening so that they can give the help and advice that both you and your child need.

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. Most importantly, tell your local Department of Social Services, and your Local Education and Health Authorities about this. You don't have to cope alone; they can help you and your child get the support and advice you both need.

Extra support

Your council can give extra support to carers. This can include special breaks for carers and extra support services for particular needs. There are also many local and national organisations set up to help young carers and their parents.

Education

You will want your child to do well at school. Many young carers achieve good results but research has shown that caring can have a bad effect on a child's education. To help stop this, it is important that your Local Education Authority and your child's school are told about their caring role. This way they can give your child extra help if needed and will understand and support them.



WARNING SIGNS

Late homework, missing school, feeling tired all the time and acting unusual may be signs that your child is struggling with their caring role. It is very important that you talk and listen to your child so you can take action to help them cope.



ACTION

Don't think that you and your child have to deal with things alone. Get as much information as you can and find out what services, support, benefits and advice are available. You're not alone - make contact!



WHAT TO SAY

Make sure your Local Department of Social Services, your Local Education and Health Authorities, and your GP know about what is happening and keep them up-to-date if things change.



PREVENTION

Being a young carer could have a bad effect on your child's health, education and well-being. You can help stop this by making sure that they get the best support and advice available.



CONTACTS

- Junior Young Carers Club 01670 531843
- Young Carers Project Sorted 01670 500150

WEBLINKS www.youngcarers.net

For more information visit www.northumberlandcaretrust.nhs.uk

National organisations

Action for Children
www.actionforchildren.org.uk

ADFAM
020 7553 7640
www.adfam.org.uk

Ask Brook
0808 802 1234
www.brook.org.uk

Barnardo's
www.barnardos.org.uk

Beating Eating Disorders
0845 634 1414
0845 634 7650 (youthline)
www.b-eat.co.uk

Bullying UK
www.bullying.co.uk

Carers UK
0808 808 7777
www.carersuk.org

Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT)
020 7608 3828
www.capt.org.uk

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

ChildLine
0800 1111
www.childline.org.uk

Connexions Direct
080 800 13 2 19
www.connexions-direct.com

Contact a Family
0808 808 3555
www.cafamily.org.uk

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

Daycare Trust
020 7840 3350
www.daycaretrust.org.uk

Department for Children, Schools and Families
www.dcsf.gov.uk

Drinkline
0800 917 8282

Family & Parenting Institute
020 7424 3460
www.familyandparenting.org

Family Planning Association
0845 122 8690
www.fpa.org.uk

Family Rights Group
0808 801 0366
www.frg.org.uk

FRANK
0800 77 66 00
www.talktofrank.com

Internet Watch Foundation
www.iwf.org.uk

Kidscape
08451 205 204
www.kidscape.org.uk

Message Home
0800 700 740
www.missingpeople.org.uk

Mind
0845 766 0163
www.mind.org.uk

Missing People (24 hours)
0500 700 700
www.missingpeople.org.uk

National Childbirth Trust (NCT)
0300 33 00 770
www.nct.org.uk

National Domestic Violence Helpline
0808 2000 247
www.womensaid.org.uk
www.refuge.org.uk

National Self-Harm Network
www.nshn.co.uk

NHS Direct
0845 4647
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

NHS Smoking Helpline
0800 022 4 332
<http://smokefree.nhs.uk>

NSPCC
0808 800 5000
www.nspcc.org.uk

One Parent Families/Gingerbread
0800 018 5026
www.oneparentfamilies.org.uk
www.gingerbread.org.uk

Parentline Plus
0808 800 2222
www.parentlineplus.org.uk

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

Samaritans
08457 90 90 90 (24hr helpline)
www.samaritans.org

YoungMinds
0808 802 5544
www.youngminds.org.uk

Youth Justice Board for England & Wales
020 7271 3033
www.yjb.gov.uk

Local organisations

Cease 24
01668 283224

Confidential appointments & sexual health information in Northumberland
01670 543131

Fresh North East
0191 387 2139
www.freshne.com

Junior Young Carers Club
01670 531843

Northumberland Care Trust
01670 394400
www.northumberlandcaretrust.nhs.uk

Northumberland County Council
01670 533000
www.northumberland.gov.uk

Northumberland Education Welfare Service
01670 533000

Northumberland Families Information Service
0800 023 4440

Northumberland HPV Team
01670 564107

Northumberland Stop Smoking Service
01670 813135

Northumberland Victim Support
01670 822334

Northumbria Domestic Abuse Helpline
0800 066 5555

Northumbria Police
03456 043 043

SixtyEightyThirty
01434 608030

Sorted
0800 633 5872 (range of services including drop-ins throughout Northumberland)
www.sortednorth.co.uk

Teenage Pregnancy Support in Northumberland
01670 819049

Young Carers Project Sorted
01670 500150

Sure Start Children's Centres

Alnwick
01665 600896

Amble
01665 713672

Ashington
01670 819988

Bedlington
01670 822714

Berwick
01289 309734

Blyth Central
01670 798800

Blyth West
01670 541150

Choppington
01670 829809

Coquet
01670 761496

Cramlington East
01670 739528

Cramlington Village
07500 835253

Cramlington West
01670 710080

Hexham
01434 601698

Lynemouth
01670 863010

Morpeth
01670 511581

Newbiggin
01670 812751

North Tyne
01434 220716

Pegswood
01670 505376

Prudhoe
01661 839350

Rothbury
01669 621681

Seahouses
01668 283372

Seaton Valley
0191 237 5184

Western Tynedale
01434 321761

Wooler
01668 283605



If you would like more information in your own language,
please contact us at the address shown in the bottom box.

Arabic إذا أردت معلومات إضافية بلغتك الأصلية الرجاء الاتصال بنا
في العنوان المدون ضمن الإطار أدناه.

Bengali যদি আপনার নিজের ভাষায় লেখা আরও তথ্য চান তাহলে দয়া করে
আমাদের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করুন, তলার বক্ সে আমাদের ঠিকানা রয়েছে।

Chinese 如果你需要用中文印成的資料，
請按低端方格內提供的地址與我們聯系。

Polish Jeśli chciałbyś uzyskać więcej informacji w Twoim języku, prosimy
o kontakt pod adresem podanym w ramce na dole.

Spanish Si usted desea mas informacion en su propia lengua, por
favor contactenos en la direccion al pie del formato.

Families and Children's Trust (FACT)
Northumberland County Council
County Hall
Morpeth NE61 2EF
Tel: 01670 533000 Fax: 01670 534117

This booklet was given to you by

who can be contacted on