It is hoped this handbook will offer advice and information on finding your way through a range of adults and children's services. It will offer contacts and further information, but it cannot provide all the help you need.

This handbook cannot replace professional advice, but may help you to make an informed decision about how to manage any concerns or difficulties.

It is hoped this handbook can offer ideas and information in helping you find your way through what can be a maze of issues and advice. It will offer contacts and further information you can follow up in your decision making about how to manage any concerns or difficulties.

The booklet contains advice available in other home languages and a form to request further help.

Such a booklet has been produced with the advice of parents of children involved in the Safe Parenting Project, and has been adapted for use in other areas. It has been produced with the help of funding from the European Social Fund and the Department of Health and Social Services.
Welcome to the Northern Ireland Safe Parenting Handbook.

Your role as a parent is one of the most difficult. It can be rewarding but sometimes challenging. It is a job where very little training is given to prepare parents for what lies ahead. Hopefully this handbook will add to your skills and knowledge.

The 'Troubles' have had a significant impact on the lives of children and young people living in Northern Ireland. Parents who have suffered a trauma or bereavement as a result of the 'Troubles' may find it even more difficult to cope.

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.

It is how you deal with difficulties that makes a difference to how your children react, both now and in the future.

There are some ways that can help make parenting a less stressful and more rewarding experience.

What is this handbook about?

This handbook offers some ideas and information to help you find your way through what can at times seem a maze of issues you might need 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 handbook has been produced by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in partnership with the four Health and Social Services Boards' Area Child Protection Committees.

Contents

- Babysitting
- Bedwetting & sleeping difficulties
- Bullying
- Child protection
- Childminding & daycare
- Children left alone
- Children with disabilities
- Choosing children’s activities
- Domestic abuse
- Drug & alcohol misuse
- Electoral voting
- Health & safety
- Healthy eating
- Healthy living
- Positive parenting & self-esteem
- Sexual exploitation
- Sexual orientation
- Teenage pregnancy & sexual activity
- Temper tantrums
- Worried about a child?

Helpful organisations
- Useful publications
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 aged under 16. Ensure your babysitter can contact you in an emergency.

Who can I leave my child with?

In order to have responsibility for the safety and well being of your children, it is important that you think very carefully about the suitability of any person you are going to leave them with, whether this is a stranger, close relative or a friend. When you leave your child in the care of someone else you are relying on that person to ensure your child's safety and wellbeing. As a result it is important that you think very carefully about the suitability of any person you are going to leave them with, whether this is a stranger, close relative or a friend.

When you leave your child in the care of someone else you are relying on that person to ensure your child's safety and wellbeing. As a result it is important that you think very carefully about the suitability of any 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. The NSPCC recommend that the minimum age of a babysitter should be 16 years of age. This is based on the idea that, at 16 and above, an individual is much more aware of potential dangers and risks and could seek help quickly if necessary. This age recommendation is also linked with the possible action which could be taken by the police if anything were to go wrong and an injury resulted. In certain circumstances, you, as a parent, would be held responsible if anything goes wrong if your babysitter is under 16 years of age.

Often a reliable 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.
WARNINGSIGNS

There may be a physical reason for your child to bed wet but you should also check to see if there is any recent change in him/her. Does your child have a physical problem that is causing him or her to wet the bed? Has something happened in the family or in your child's life such as a traumatic event that is causing him or her to worry?

ACTION

Stay calm if your child is wetting the bed. Try to check whether there is a particular time when your child wets. Make sure your child is relaxed and calm before going to bed. If you are worried, discuss your concerns with your health visitor or GP. Seek support for yourself.

WHAT TO SAY

Praise your child when they sleep all night. Do not scold your child if they do not sleep through the night, or if they bed wet. If your child has wet the bed, try to develop an understanding for how they feel and whether they are worried about wetting etc.

PREVENTION

Make sure your child is aware that they can share any worries with you. If you want advice about things you can do to try to prevent wetting, discuss your concerns with your health visitor or GP.

CONTACTS

• Your health visitor
• Your GP
• ERIC - Enuresis Resource and Information Centre in Bristol, for details of your nearest clinic or for further information - 0117 960 3060 or visit their website www.eric.org.uk

I felt myself getting panicky every time I put him to bed. Maybe it was a lack of proper routine, but at the time I felt so tired and had so little energy to do anything.

Bedwetting

Your child is more likely to learn to control their bladder if you are relaxed and calm about it. Remember your child will be learning to control this during the day before they are ready to control it all night. It is not easy to have a child wetting the bed and you may feel frustrated and upset. It is important to remember that your child did not mean to wet the bed. It is quite normal for your child to have any accidents at any age.

It is important to discuss any concerns you may have with your child's GP or health visitor. They can provide further advice and support. Your child may have had other accidents in the past. This is often not an instant change but a gradual process where more and more days will be dry days.

It is not easy to know why some children take longer to be dry at night than others. However, bedwetting is not due to laziness or lack of willpower. One in six seven year olds still wet the bed at night. It is estimated that 1 in 4 three year olds and 1 in 6 five year olds repeatedly wet the bed. Bedwetting may be a sign of a physical problem, but more often your child will have had more normal bedwetting at these ages.

Each child's sleep pattern is different. It is important to try to establish a regular bedtime routine. Take time to establish a bedtime routine, including a time for your child to relax and unwind before going to bed. If your child often wakes in the night try to find out why he or she has woken, for example, a bad dream or hunger.

How can I help my child?

Sleeping difficulties

• There are many different reasons why babies and young children do not sleep through the night.
• Try to establish a sleep routine as early as six weeks if possible.
• Feel confident in yourself to know whether your child is really distressed or just restless.
• If your sleep is frequently disrupted by your child's restlessness, arrange for a trusted relative or friend to care for your baby or child so that you can get some sleep.

Establishing a routine

Many babies and children experience sleeping difficulties at some time. It is important to try to establish a regular nighttime routine. This may include a bedtime story, a quiet bath or other activity. If your child is frequently interrupting your sleep at night, try to establish a regular bedtime routine. If your child is frequently interrupting your sleep during the night, try to find out why he or she is waking. For example, a bad dream or hunger.

It is estimated that 1 in 4 three year olds and 1 in 6 five year olds repeatedly wet the bed. Bedwetting may be a sign of a physical problem, but more often your child will have had more normal bedwetting at these ages.

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How can I help my child?

7 6

Children rarely wet deliberately. It is estimated that 1 in 4 three year olds and 1 in 6 five year olds repeatedly wet the bed. Bedwetting may be a sign of a physical problem, but more often your child will have had more normal bedwetting at these ages.

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Children may run away or not attend school. They may not always be able to tell you if something is wrong. Note changes in their moods, behaviour and physical appearances for no obvious reason. Also your child may have injuries with no reasonable explanation for them.

**WARNINGSIGNS**

**ACTION**

See the headteacher at your child's school to get his/her support and to ensure appropriate action is taken. If bullying continues, 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**

Refuse to put up with bullying. Walk away, tell an adult or friend and avoid fighting. Parents - 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 are unacceptable behaviours.

**CONTACTS**

• Your child's teacher/headteacher
• The Education and Library Board for your area (see page 44)
• PSNI 028 9065 0222
• Parents Advice Centre (helpline) 080 8801 0722
• Kidscape (parents' helpline) 0845 1 205 204

Children have the right not to be hurt
Bullying behaviour is unacceptable
Bullying can happen to any child at any age
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 is the repeated abuse of a child by one or several people
Bullying can happen anywhere but most commonly it happens in school
Bullying can take many forms, from verbal/emotional abuse to harassment and physical attack
Bullying can make a child feel isolated

The real story

Bullying can happen to any child at any age
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 is a frightening experience. It makes many children feel isolated and depressed. It affects a child's self-esteem and can result in permanent damage. It can lead to depression and even suicide.

Bullying can happen to any child at any age. It is crucial to be alert to the possibility of bullying and to make sure that 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.

All schools in Northern Ireland are required to include, within their discipline policy, measures to prevent all forms of bullying. However, school action alone cannot guarantee success and so it is important that parents and schools work together.

If you are not satisfied with the way your child's school is dealing with the matter, you can get support from the Education and Library Board for your area.

Bullying is the repeated abuse of a child by one or several people
Bullying occurs when a child is threatened, humiliated, overpowered, isolated or victimised on account of their race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or other similar reasons.

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Bullying is the repeated abuse of a child by one or several people
Bullying occurs when a child is threatened, humiliated, overpowered, isolated or victimised on account of their race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or other similar reasons.
Parents are responsible for their children's safety. Social services become involved once concern is shared. Decisions about abuse need careful assessment. Professionals want to work in partnership with families. Very few children are removed from home following allegations or investigations of abuse. Children are best cared for by their own families.

Very few children are removed from home following allegations or investigations of abuse. Children are best cared for by their own families.

Child abuse can take many forms such as physical injury, neglect, sexual or emotional abuse. Abuse takes place in a variety of places and can be perpetrated by adults or other children. Some adults abuse children deliberately and most often, when abuse 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 additional help and support. A specialist team of social workers, health workers and police officers work together to provide support for those at risk of abuse.

Social workers and the police have a responsibility in law to investigate child abuse. The NSPCC also has a power, under current legislation, to investigate and bring care proceedings in its own right.

Professionals are not solely responsible for protecting children. It is not possible or always practical for professionals to ensure every child is safe. Children and their families also have a responsibility to keep children safe. This means that adults in a child's life should tell them about child protection and what to do if they feel unsafe.

1. Reporting child abuse early means that inspections can be made and support given to children and their families. This can help to prevent harm from happening.

2. Social workers do not always want to be involved. They may work with families to help them find solutions and keep children safe.

3. Professionals work in partnership with families to make sure they get support before things reach a crisis.

4. Social workers and other professionals get involved when parents may be unable to protect their child and need additional help and support.

5. Many myths exist about protecting children. The realities are:

a) Reporting child abuse rarely results in the child being removed from home. Removing children from their carers is not the main aim of child protection investigations and rarely happens. Social workers and health practitioners need to keep the child's wellbeing in mind when making decisions. The police also have powers in emergency situations to protect children when they consider it necessary.

b) Children may not tell anyone of their abuse even those trusted by them.

Children may not be able to tell that they have been abused or understand what has occurred. They may however show signs which alert parents and carers to what has happened to them.

The police have powers in emergency situations to protect children when they consider it necessary. Social workers and other professionals get involved when parents may be unable to protect their child from harm and need additional help and support. A specialist team of social workers, health workers and police officers work together to provide support for those at risk of abuse.

It is important that children know:

- What to do when they feel unsafe.
- How to say no to adult requests which make them feel uncomfortable.
- That you will listen carefully to them when they are telling you about things which cause them concern.
- Who to talk to and how to get to a safe place or person when they feel uneasy or frightened.

Children suffering abuse may display physical or behavioral signs such as:

- Acting out in an inappropriate sexual way, perhaps with toys or objects.
- Becoming withdrawn or excessively clingy.
- Personality changes.
- Becoming insecure.
- Regressing to younger behaviors such as bedwetting or thumb sucking.

Make sure you know what child abuse is - contact the helplines in the Contacts column for more information.

**Contact Details**

- Your local HSS Trust (see page 44)
- Your social worker
- Your health visitor
- PSNI 028 9065 0222
- NSPCC 0808 800 5000 24 hr free helpline
- Parents Advice Centre 0808 801 0722
Content unavailable due to image quality issues.
Parents who have limited support. A child who is frequently observed outside and alone for extended periods of time. Childcare arrangements that keep going wrong.

**WARNINGSIGNS**

**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 discuss this with neighbours, friends or other parents you have contact with. Find out about after-school clubs and holiday playschemes.

**CONTACTS**
• Your local HSS Trust (see page 44)
• NSPCC 0808 800 5000
• PSNI 028 9065 0222

Never leave a young child alone. Young 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.

Children may feel that it is not responsible to go out and play or stay indoors to escape boredom. They may know other children who have the freedom to go out and enjoy the outdoors, and they may feel left out.

The new guidelines are clear: children under the age of 13 should not be left alone. While the guidelines are voluntary, they should be considered in the light of all other agreements reached by the child, such as the child’s right to choose and the importance of being able to protect themselves.

As a young person, you are entitled to make decisions about how you spend your time. This includes who you spend it with, where you go and how long you stay there. However, you must also be aware of your responsibilities. For example, if you are a child, you may have a legal obligation to ensure that you are safe and not a risk to others. You may also have a responsibility to attend school or other educational establishments.

It is important to be aware of your responsibilities and to be able to make decisions about how you spend your time. This includes being able to say no to requests that you feel are unreasonable or harmful to you. It is also important to be aware of your rights, including the right to privacy and to be treated with respect.

Children may say that they do not mind being left alone and may find it exciting initially, but they cannot fully know the possible risks and how to handle them.

Even the relatively 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 issues that a child could deal with.

It is rarely, if ever, possible to leave your children and assume that someone will lookout for them, if necessary. If they are alerted, the police and/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 fails to meet children’s basic needs of food, shelter, security, attention or protection from exposure to danger.

The NSPCC have issued guidelines advising that children under the age of 13 should not be left alone. While this recommendation does not have the force of law, it is important to consider the child’s maturity and ability to manage the responsibility of being left alone. Parents should exercise caution in this area.

As a young person reaches adolescence, leaving them alone after school, for an evening or during the day is less concerning as long as they are prepared and aware. It is important to ensure that you know where you are and who to contact in an emergency.

Common Sense and the Law

It is important to understand the law and common sense when deciding how to spend your time. It is also important to be aware of your rights and responsibilities.

A child under the age of 13 should not be left alone. If you think that a child under the age of 13 has been neglected by being left alone,
If you have concerns about your child’s development you should seek professional help or advice from your GP or health visitor.

**ACTION**

Don’t think you have to go it alone. Get as much information as you can about your child’s condition. Find out what services, support, benefits and advice is available and make contact.

**WHAT TO SAY**

There are many organisations specially set up to give support and advice to parents of disabled children. Contact them and tell your story. There will be others out there just like you.

**PREVENTION**

Prevention is not always possible with disability but by ensuring you get the best support available you can minimise its effect and get help for you and your child.

**CONTACTS**

- Your local HSS Trust (see page 44)
- Your local Education & Library Board (see page 44)
- Mencap 0845 7636 227
- Disability Action 028 9029 7880
- Contact a Family (freephone helpline) 0808 808 3555

When I found out that Mary was disabled I didn’t know how I was going to cope. I just didn’t think I’d be able to do it alone. Pretty soon I realised I didn’t have to.

If your child has a disability you may be concerned or worried about the future. The word ‘disabled’ covers a very wide range of different conditions and it is important to remember that not everyone with a disability faces the same challenges.

Legal protection

Your child is especially protected by law. Under Article 18 of the Children Order you may be eligible for social services assistance for your child and family given your child’s needs. You may be able to receive financial help to assist with caring for your child. There are many forms of extra services and support available to you and your child. Support groups, parent groups and other organisations are out there to help you cope.

Health

From the start, your GP and local HSS Trust are there for you. They’ll provide the help and advice you need to discover and get the best treatment. They’ll help you plan the treatment, therapy, equipment and ongoing medical care that your child may need.

Benefits

There are several specific benefits that you could receive to help you with the costs of caring for a disabled child. These include Disability Living Allowance, Carer’s Allowance, help with extra housing costs and with a disabled parking badge. The Carers and Direct Payments Act (Northern Ireland) 2002 gives parents rights to an assessment of their needs and to receive financial help with the cost of glasses, and, in some circumstances, travel to hospital, school meals, and even road tax exemption.

Education

Depending on their individual educational needs, your child may benefit most by attending a special school. An educational needs assessment will assess your child’s educational needs and recommend the most appropriate way forward for their education.

Extra support

Your HSS Trust can provide extra support for you and your child. This can include special leisure facilities, holidays, extra support at home and school, and help from support workers. There are many organisations and charities specially set up to provide further help, advice and support to people just like you.

Make contact

On the left you’ll find a list of contacts that you may find useful. You’re not alone, so make contact today and get the support you need.
Children have a right to have fun and be safe

Organisations should be open and welcoming and should share information about themselves and their activities

You have the right to the same standards of care from all organisations, whether their workers are paid or are volunteers

Listen to your child and ask questions about the activities they take part in

Have fun and be safe

Check it out

1. Find out as much information as you can about the organisation, ask other parents.

2. Don’t be afraid to ask questions.

3. Are the staff/volunteers suitable? What are their policies on child protection?

Prevention

Find out as much as you can before letting your child join an organisation or activity.

Contacts

• VDA - Volunteer Development Agency
  028 9023 6100

• Playboard
  028 9080 3380

• NSPCC
  0808 800 5000

• PSNI
  028 9065 0222

There are so many activities to choose from in local communities and parents and carers want to encourage children and young people to take part. But how do you know if they’re safe?

Children have a right to have fun and be safe

Organisations should be open and welcoming and should share information about themselves and their activities

You have the right to the same standards of care from all organisations, whether their workers are paid or are volunteers

Listen to your child and ask questions about the activities they take part in

Check it out

A good organisation will welcome questions about their activities and the safety of their surroundings. All organisations should have a child protection policy, including a statement on, and guidelines about, keeping children safe. In addition these are questions you may want to ask:

1. Are the staff and volunteers suitable to work with children?
   All staff and volunteers should go through a proper recruitment process, which includes interviews and references and, where appropriate, police checks.

2. Is there a written code of behaviour?
   All organisations should have a written code of behaviour, which outlines good practice when working with children. An environment that allows behaviour such as bullying, shouting, racism and sexism is not acceptable.

3. How does the organisation manage staff and volunteers?
   There should be someone in charge who supervises staff and volunteers.

4. How does the organisation provide for personal care needs?
   In the case of very young children, or those with a disability, you should ask about routines for toileting, feeding and administering medication.

5. Does the organisation have a health and safety policy?
   Find out if there is a leader qualified in first aid, that there is a first aid box and that the premises have passed fire regulations.

6. What are the arrangements when children go on outings?
   You should be told about all the necessary arrangements - including transport to and from - for every outing, no matter how long or short, and you should be asked for your agreement.

Be wary of:

• Behaviour that encourages rough play, sexual innuendo or embarrassing punishments.

• Staff who take charge and operate independently of organisational guidelines.

• Staff who show favouritism or personally reward specific children.

• Encouragement of inappropriate physical contact.

• Poor communication and lack of parental involvement, leaving you feeling uneasy.

• Invitations for children to spend time alone with staff or volunteers (even to visit their home).

Remember, listen to your children and ask questions about the activities they take part in.

Safe at all times

Parents and carers have a right and a responsibility to ensure that children are safe at all times. Organisations have a duty of care and must make sure that children are safe at all times. This includes anyone who is not a member of the organisation, such as teachers, teaching assistants, staff members and volunteers.

Many activities are supported by volunteers who generously give their time to provide regular activities for your child. However, whether or not workers are paid, you have the right to expect the same standards from all organisations.

Voice your concerns

Organisations should tell you where to go and what to do if you or your child has any worries. You may feel reluctant to voice your concerns in case you are wrong or worried about the impact on your child, but if you are concerned you must take action:

• Speak to other parents.

• Speak to the leader in charge.

• If you are not confident that they are the right person, talk to someone more senior.

• If you are unhappy about the response you receive, remove your child and contact any of the organisations listed in the Contacts column (left).
Any violence or abuse between adults will negatively affect children. Seek support and help as soon as possible. The longer it lasts, the more damaging living with domestic abuse becomes.

**ACTION**

Report your concerns about yourself or someone else to the police or Women's Aid. If you are worried that your child might be affected, talk to them about what is happening. If necessary, Women's Aid will visit you in your own home.

**WHAT TO SAY**

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.

**PREVENTION**

A violent partner can take responsibility for violence by seeking help to stop. Make sure that you offer a positive role model for children so that they learn other ways of behaving.

**CONTACTS**

- PSNI 028 9065 0222
- Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation (24 hour helpline) 028 9033 1818
- Men's Advisory Project (MAP) 028 9024 1929
- Relate 028 9032 3454

Domestic abuse is a crime and a major social problem affecting many families. In 90% of reported domestic violence incidents, children have either been present in the violence or have been affected by it. It is estimated that 70% of women are affected by domestic abuse and that one in five children are affected by domestic abuse and men who are the perpetrators, although there are reported cases where men are victims.

Children who witness, intervene or hear incidents are affected in many ways. What can be guaranteed is that children do hear, they do see and they are aware of violence in the family. Children learn how to behave in part from examples parents set for them. Domestic abuse teaches children negative things about relationships, and how to deal with people. For instance:

- It can teach them that violence is a way to resolve conflict.
- They learn how to keep secrets.
- They learn to mistrust those close to them and that children are responsible and to blame for abuse, especially if it erupts after an argument about the children.

Many people find it difficult to understand why people remain in, or return to, abusive situations. A combination of fear, love, the risk of homelessness and financial issues can make it very difficult for them to leave and some may want to stay put, and get their abuser to leave.

**Short term effects:**

Children are affected in many ways by domestic abuse, even after a short time. These effects include: feeling frightened, becoming withdrawn, bedwetting, running away, aggressiveness, behavioural difficulties, problems with school, poor concentration and emotional turmoil.

**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.
- Over-identification with abusing parent and copying that behaviour.
- Loss of self-confidence, which will affect their ability to form relationships in the future.
- Being over-protective of parent.
- Loss of childhood.
- Problems at school.
- Running away.

If you are worried about domestic abuse, discuss it with someone else. If you are violent or abusive, you can also seek help and support to stop what is happening.

If you are affected by domestic abuse, you are not alone—there are specialist services to help you. 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 court injunction to protect yourself. Contact a solicitor in your area who deals with family law.
WARNINGSIGNS

- Parent/carers who are isolated with limited support.
- Parents/carers who are under stress or unable to cope.
- Babies who cry inconsolably.

ACTION

If you are worried about your child, take him or her to see your GP, health visitor or to the A&E department. Seek support, including the helplines listed under Contacts.

WHAT TO SAY

Communicate with your child using eye contact, smiling, cuddling and talking. This will develop your understanding and responsiveness to your baby's needs when he/she is having difficulties.

PREVENTION

It is never safe to shake a child, 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 of shaking.

CONTACTS

- Child Protection Nurse Advisor in your local HSS trust (see page 44)
- Your health visitor/midwife
- Parents Advice Centre (freephone helpline) 0808 801 0722
- NSPCC 0808 800 5000

Never ever shake a baby for any reason.

Shaking a young child in rough play can cause injuries – never shake a young child.

Shaking can cause serious long-lasting injury or death.

Shaking is often a response to extreme frustration.

There are different ways to cope with a crying baby.

Do not suffer alone, seek support from others.

...I thought I couldn't manage. She cried all the time, I was exhausted and nothing worked. I felt such a failure. 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.

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... in ten babies cry much more than this average and many parents experience a great deal of difficulty managing this.

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

What damage can shaking cause?

Shaking a baby can cause death or serious and long-lasting brain and/or eye damage. Shaken Baby Syndrome is an injury that can occur when a baby is shaken... 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:

- Count to ten before doing anything and allow yourself to calm down.
- Gently 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.
- Use eye contact, smiling and talking to communicate with your child.
- Take the child for a walk or a drive to help them sleep.
- If necessary, make sure baby is safe and 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.
- It is important to contact your community midwife or health visitor for advice.

...
WARNINGS

In general terms if your child's appearance, behaviour or financial situation changes dramatically you should include drug and alcohol use in your list of “I wonder if…” questions.

ACTION

Observe and talk to your child if you are worried. In an emergency contact an ambulance immediately. If your child is not in immediate danger talk with them about their drug use at another time when they are not using.

WHAT TO SAY

Use every opportunity to discuss drug use, for example, when drugs are mentioned in a television programme. You can give accurate information regarding the risks of drug use at an early age.

PREVENTION

Ensure that you are informed about drug use and the effects of different types of drugs. There are many helpful guides available - See Contacts.

CONTACTS

• Education Welfare Service in your Education & Library Board (see page 44)
• Your GP
• Your local HSS Trust (see page 44)
• Specialist drug / alcohol services in your area
• National Drugs Helpline 24 hr free advice 0800 77 66 00

Many parents worry that their child may use drugs

Prevention is better than cure

Drug and alcohol misuse is increasing among young people

Make sure you know about drugs and their possible effects

Talk to your children about drugs from a young age

Northern Ireland schools teach drug prevention in the curriculum

Why do young people use drugs and alcohol?

Drug and alcohol misuse among young people can stem from a desire to break the rules, to escape reality, to cope with difficult situations or feelings. Young people might use drugs or alcohol for prestige, to relax, to cope with stress or help with intimacy. Young people need to be aware of the risks of using drugs, alcohol and volatile substances (e.g. solvents). More young people experience problems caused by too much drinking than through drug use.

If you find out that your child has or may have taken drugs or alcohol, it can be frightening because of the potential effects. This can be due to your lack of knowledge or fear of your child being serious about drugs or alcohol. If you suspect that your child may have been using drugs or alcohol, it is important to talk to them and understand how they feel about it. It is natural to feel angry or upset but try to avoid telling them that you are worried. Your child may need to talk to a professional about their drug or alcohol use.

Drug and alcohol misuse among young people - how widespread is it?

Drug and alcohol misuse is more widespread among children and young people than ever before.

Research carried out amongst 6000 secondary school children in Northern Ireland found that around 13% of 12 year olds, 26% of 14 year olds and 40% of 16 year olds admitted to having tried drugs.

Why do young people use drugs and alcohol?

They are curious 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.

How would I know?

There may be a change in relationships with family and friends, or a change in performance at school. Other signs can be lack of sleep, a change in eating habits, change in appearance, and body odour. There may be signs of drug testing in your child's school and, if possible, attend information evenings with your child.

Drug and alcohol misuse by parents

Drug and alcohol misuse by the adults in a household can seriously affect the care and well being of children and it may encourage them to behave the same way.

2 'Drug & Alcohol Use amongst Young People in Northern Ireland' a report produced by the Drug & Alcohol Information & Research Unit, DHSSPS, October 2002

WARNINGS

Spend some time exploring your house as if you were a young child. This will show you the many potential dangers which, 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 drugs, syringes, 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

• Talk to your health visitor or midwife
• Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) 028 9050 1160
• Child Accident Prevention Trust 020 7608 3828
• Health & Safety Executive for Northern Ireland
  www.hseni.gov.uk/kids.cfm

Children learn by exploring their surroundings
Children do not automatically know what is dangerous
Children need guidance to stay safe at home

Remove all potential dangers in your home from the reach of your child

In the event of an accident in the home seek immediate medical attention

Before Sean was born I never thought about where I left things. Nowadays, everything in the house seems dangerous. I feel I have to follow him everywhere. Yesterday he found my painkillers in the bedroom and nearly swallowed some. It happened so quickly.

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 they see. 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.

Most accidents happen in the home or just outside and this is why it is important to ensure that your home is safe for all children. There are many situations each year in which children have overdosed on their parents’ drugs and medicines.

Keeping safe within 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. Consider using cupboard locks, stair safety gates, fire and cooker guards to make your home safer.
• Can your children get out of 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.
• Never leave young children unattended in the bath.
• Small children should never be left alone with pets. Even trained and good natured animals can turn on them.
• Make sure that irons, saucepans, kettles (including cables) and hot drinks are kept out of the reach of children. 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 his or her age, especially if the pieces are small enough to choke on. Unsafe toys can be very dangerous.

Keeping safe outside the home:

• Keep children away from building sites and derelict buildings - they are not adventure playgrounds and can kill.
• Children should always wear safety helmets when cycling and other recommended protective wear for outdoor activities such as skate boarding.
• Always ensure children are properly restrained in the car.
• Keep children away from unattended farming machinery or gardening equipment. These can kill. Stress the dangers of this machinery to children from a young age.
• Never leave young children unsupervised near rivers, garden ponds or paddling pools.
• Teach children how to safely cross the road and be a good example to them when you are crossing the road.

keeping your child safe
29

**WARNINGSIGNS**

If your child is either overweight or underweight this will have implications for your child's health in the short and longer term. Contact your GP or health visitor for advice.

**ACTION**

Encouraging your child to develop good eating habits when they are young will also mean they are more likely to eat healthily as they grow up.

**WHAT TO SAY**

It's not just what you say - it's what you do - set a good example to your children.

**PREVENTION**

Avoid your child becoming dependent on things like fizzy drinks, crisps and processed foods.

**CONTACTS**

- Central health promotion resources in your local HSS Board area for leaflets - see page 44
- Your health visitor
- Your GP

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Breast milk offers the most natural and healthy start for your baby. Six months is the recommended age for the introduction of solid foods for both breast and formula fed infants. Don’t give up if your child does not like certain foods at first – keep trying. It can take several attempts before your child accepts a new food. Moving your own body from Alvarez and Gill’s baby centred meal is also changed and gives your baby time to process new foods.

**Building a good foundation for health**

Good nutrition is needed during childhood and pre-school age to support growth, development and learning in early childhood.

**Food**

Solid foods should not be started until your baby is at least four months old. It is important to introduce a variety of foods to help prevent allergies and develop good eating habits for life. Your baby will probably need milk and staple foods such as rice, pasta, potatoes, and vegetables before he or she can eat solid food. The type of solid food your baby chooses at 6-12 months will depend on the type of babies milk your baby is fed. A range of foods and flavors should be introduced at this stage. Your baby will probably be ready for solid food when:

- He or she is sat up with support and has mastered rolling
- He or she can happily play with a spoon
- He or she can accept a small amount of food

**From 6-11**

Active children have good appetites. Encourage exercise as this will develop good appetites and discourage weight problems. Encourage children to choose the healthier options from the school meals menu. If they take packed lunches ensure variety and include fruit and raw vegetables.

**From 12 to adulthood**

Bones are still growing at this stage - aim for 1 pint of milk per day, or the equivalent from yoghurts and cheese. Good sources of iron eg from red meat, breakfast cereals, pulses and eggs, are also important, especially for teenage girls. All children will enjoy a healthy diet if they are given it.
Child exploitation has devastating effects on children, both physical and mental.

Exploitative adults have been quick to use the Internet as a tool; they are very sophisticated and well practised in how they approach children.

Children are fascinated by the 'adult' world, but there are measures you can take to protect your child from online risks and help them make the most of the Internet safely.

Be sensitive to changes in your child's behaviour. It is up to attentive adults to recognise the signs of sexual exploitation.

Recent research from the NSPCC revealed that one in five 9 to 16 year-olds use Internet chat rooms.

Risks from the Internet

The Internet has proved a useful tool for people wishing to exploit children. Recent high profile cases in the news have involved adults trying to contact children online. If you are aware of this happening, please contact the police immediately.

Internet pornography can cause psychological damage to children who are exposed to it. But worse still, the Internet is a major method by which pornographic images of children can be disseminated.

Making it safe to surf

There are ways in which you can help to protect your child online and ensure that the Internet is a safe way to learn and have fun.

Ask your Internet Service Provider or local computer specialist about installing parental controls, which can prevent your child accessing websites with sexual content. These methods cannot provide a total safeguard but do offer some degree of protection.

Learn all you can about the Internet. In the same way that you would teach your child about dangers from strangers, warn your child about dangers on the Internet. Tell them they should never arrange to meet a new friend made on the Internet unaccompanied.

Watch out for possible signs of exploitation or abuse. Some of these signs are completely innocent, but look out for changes in your child's mood or behaviour, or any unusual spending habits.

If your child does experience some form of exploitation, whether mild or severe, it is crucial to be 100% supportive, make it clear that it is not their fault and that you are there to help and protect them no matter what.
WARNINGS

A child may be unhappy but does your child seem to be unhappy? Are you sure that they are not skipping school? Has anything happened in the family that you haven’t talked to your child about?

ACTION

If you think your child might be skipping school, talk to the school or an Education Welfare Officer. Contact the police if your child goes missing.

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 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.

PREVENTION

Be alert to any unexplained changes in your child’s behaviour. Spend time with them and be interested in their lives and worries. Do you know who your child’s friends are? Be very careful about their access to the Internet and ‘chat rooms’.

CONTACTS

• PSNI
  028 9065 0222
• Your child’s school
• Missing Persons Helpline (24hrs) 0500 700 700
• Message Home (for young people to get a message to their parents) 0800 700 740

I was shocked when she ran away although, looking back, she was more of a loner than her brother. I now know that she had been missing school quite a bit.

Children from all sorts of backgrounds run away from home for a variety of reasons. Many of us will remember planning to run away when we were younger because we felt . . . until the child thinks that the parent has noticed. Often, they will turn up at the home of a friend or relative.

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.

However, if a child goes missing from home repeatedly, receives unexplained gifts, and possibly has an older ‘friend’, there is a possibility they could be being sexually exploited (see page 36).

The law says that parents must ensure that their children receive suitable, full time education and they can be prosecuted if their child does not attend school regularly. Children who miss school are much more likely to have problems with their learning and getting into trouble. They are more likely to come across adults or other young people who might want to cause them harm.

When children miss school without their parents’ knowing, this is called truancy. Children who truant regularly often do . . . be reluctant to leave home because they are worried that their parent might come to some harm whilst they are at school.
**WARNINGS:** There may be none.

Is your relationship with your child difficult at times? Does your child get enough exercise? Are there any changes in their behaviour? Is your child trying to tell you something?

**ACTION:** Be involved and develop a good relationship with your child before they reach their teens. If you are concerned about your parenting methods get support from the organisations listed under Contacts.

**WHAT TO SAY:** With younger children, set boundaries. With teenagers, try to agree boundaries. With teenagers, even if you only get a grunt, don’t give up on communication.

**PREVENTION:** Have fun with your child. Encourage friendships and outside interests. Listen carefully to your child’s point of view. Help them think through choices. Be better informed about child issues - consider their point of view.

**CONTACTS**
- Parents Advice Centre - freephone helpline 080 8801 0722
- Barnardo’s Parenting Matters Programme 028 9049 1081

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Children need to feel secure, loved and valued - this is the basis of self-esteem and confidence.

Noticing and acknowledging good behaviour is the best way of influencing your child’s behaviour.

Be consistent with your discipline, using positive approaches to change your child’s behaviour.

Parents and carers need to work together and be consistent. Listen to and talk to your child - it’s good to talk!

Do things together with your child that you both enjoy - have fun!

"What do I get out of it?"

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Do things together with your child that you both enjoy - have fun!

Positive Parenting

Parenting can be difficult and parenting in Northern Ireland can be especially difficult. Often parents have no control over outside environments and influences.

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.

This starts from the earliest days of your relationship with your child. In trying to be helpful, it is often easy to point out wrongs. Parents and carers need to work together and be consistent. Listen to and talk to your child - it’s good to talk!

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Do things together with your child that you both enjoy - have fun!
WARNINGSIGNS
Absence from home or truancy from school; unexplained money, clothes, jewellery or other gifts; new relationships with older men; evidence of drug use; lack of friends; leaving home in unusual clothing for your child.

ACTION
Try to encourage your child to confide in you about their situation; avoid alienating your child or making them feel that they are to blame; get in touch with information and support agencies that can help you and your child.

WHAT TO SAY
Make sure that your child knows that you are there to help them, no matter what they have experienced. Assure them that they shouldn't feel ashamed, that they are victims of abuse and that you understand how difficult it must be for them.

PREVENTION
Offer a positive and supportive home environment. Warn your child of the risks and know who your child's friends are. 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
• PSNI 028 9065 0222
• Your local HSS Trust (see page 44)
• Barnardo’s 028 9067 2366

The prostitution of children is a form of sexual exploitation and abuse. Children can be abused and exploited through prostitution by manipulative adults who wish to make money. Adults who abuse and exploit children are responsible, not the children. Children abused through prostitution face severe physical, emotional and psychological risks. It's never too early or too late to get help.

How it happens
It may be hard to imagine how any child could be abused through prostitution, but it is happening on our streets today. The sad fact is that those who benefit from abusing children in this way use sophisticated methods to entice young people into prostitution. The abuse of children in this way can be identified in the use of drugs, alcohol and manipulative language.

The damage
Children abused through prostitution can become victims of serious physical and sexual attacks, which can sometimes be fatal. The emotional and psychological damage can be devastating and can lead to self-harm, severe depression and suicide.

How to spot it
There are some warning signs detailed on the opposite page that could indicate that your child is at risk from, or is being abused through prostitution. If all, or even some, of them apply to your child, you should consider that they might be at risk. Boys and girls of any age can be victims of sexual exploitation. The abuser may be a stranger but can be a family member or a friend.

How to stop it
Preventing children from being abused in this way or helping them exit it can require specialist help. A close and positive relationship with your child is vital in any case. A number of organisations (see Contacts) work with families to combat abuse through prostitution. If you feel your child is at risk, consult these agencies to ensure that they are no longer left vulnerable to those who wish to exploit them. It is never too early or too late to get help.

Abused through prostitution...
WARNINGS

Young people will not always tell you if there is something that is worrying them. Good communication with your children is very important. You need to be attentive to their needs and let them know that you are there and be prepared to listen.

ACTION

It is important that your child knows where to get reliable information on birth control and prevention of sexually transmitted infections. If you think your daughter may be pregnant, ensure she sees her GP.

WHAT TO SAY

Talk to your children about relationships and sexuality. If you think your child is sexually active it is important to talk to them about practising safer sex.

PREVENTION

It is important that your child has the knowledge and skills that will help them build self-esteem and strong relationships while postponing sexual activity.

CONTACTS

• PSNI
  028 9065 0222
• Barnardo’s Young Parents’ Network
  028 9047 3856
• Brook Advisory Clinic
  028 9032 8866
• Family Planning Association
  028 9032 5488
• Your GP
• School Age Mums Project
  www.youngmums.org.uk
• Parents Advice Centre
  0808 801 0722

Northern Ireland’s rate of teenage pregnancy is among the highest in Europe.

Take the initiative in raising the issues about relationships and sexuality with your son or daughter.

Most young people aged under 17 are not having sex.

Stress the importance of making responsible decisions in a relationship and not being forced into having sex because “everybody is doing it.”

Try not to be judgmental, but don’t be afraid to say if you think an activity may be unhealthy or could put them at risk.

“Talking to teenagers is wonderful if you have children of your own, but sometimes it’s a bit different when you’re not a parent yourself. But remember, sometimes our teenagers need us even more than we need them. They may need us more when they are 17, which is why many teenagers who have been brought up in a happy, loving home are more likely to wait until they are older before they start having sex and they are more likely to use contraception. They are more likely to be a contraception.

Many teenagers say ‘I don’t want to use contraception until I’m 17’ or ‘I don’t want to talk to my parents about it.’ But it’s important to remember that they are still children and you can’t be too careful. You need to make sure that they understand the risks and the consequences of not using contraception. You need to make sure that they understand the importance of birth control.”

Children will learn about sex whether you want them to or not. Sex is everywhere around us – in magazines and newspapers, in advertisements and soap operas. Children and teenagers learn from each other – and what they hear in the playground may not be accurate or what parents want them to hear.

All these confusing messages may lead young people into situations they don’t know how to deal with. Adolescence is often a time of violence, and sometimes this can lead to teenage pregnancy.

You need to make sure that your children understand the risks and the consequences of not using contraception. You need to make sure that they understand the importance of birth control.

Most young people aged under 17 are not sexually active but the numbers rise sharply after that age. All young people need information about sex, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/Aids, pregnancy and contraception to help them make informed choices.

If you feel uncomfortable or unsure about talking about sex with your children don’t let this put you off. Sex education is an important part of growing up.

Sex education can help your children feel more confident and secure about their sexuality. It can help them to make informed decisions about their relationships.

Sex education can also help your children to understand the importance of healthy relationships and to avoid violence.

Sex education can help your children to understand the importance of living a healthy lifestyle and to avoid drugs and alcohol.

Talking to teenagers is wonderful if you have children of your own, but sometimes it’s a bit different when you’re not a parent yourself. But remember, sometimes our teenagers need us even more when they are 17, which is why many teenagers who have been brought up in a happy, loving home are more likely to wait until they are older before they start having sex and they are more likely to use contraception.
WARNING SIGNS
It could happen anywhere, but watch out for a tired or hungry child in any situation when he or she wants something that you have said “No” to, especially when out shopping, or during a social event or a day out.

ACTION
Keep calm, consider whether your child needs food or rest. Give your child attention and if possible, find a quiet place or do something else interesting. Try to keep your child calm but don’t be afraid to let them know when you can’t help them. Understand your child’s feelings. If necessary, be prepared to cut short your trip out. (See also section on Positive parenting)

WHAT TO SAY
Try to offer your child a choice or a positive way out. Be calm and understanding. Keep it simple and clear. Praise your child for calming down afterwards.

PREVENTION
Avoid long shopping trips or tiring days out. It often helps to give your child extra attention and affection. Try to foresee possible causes for tantrums in the day ahead and find ways to avoid them.

CONTACTS
• Health visitor or GP
• Parents Advice Centre 0808 801 0722

1 in 5 two-year-olds has a tantrum at least twice a day
The ‘Terrible Twos’ are a normal part of your child’s development
Getting angry is a natural reaction but it just makes the situation worse
Be firm and look for a positive way to deal with the problem
Plan to avoid the causes of tantrums
Remember, tantrums are not bad control

Temper tantrums

Why temper tantrums happen
Temper tantrums are a natural part of young children’s development. They are a way of expressing frustration and anger. It is important not to label your child as a ‘temper tantrummer’ but to understand that their behaviour is part of their development. It is also important to remember that your child’s behaviour is not always their fault.

Temper tantrums can happen in any situation where your child feels frustrated or angry. They can happen in any setting, whether at home, at school or in public places. It is important to try to understand why your child is behaving this way.

If you are around, your child will expect you to help them. It is important to try to keep your child calm but don’t be afraid to let them know when you can’t help them.

Dealing with temper tantrums
• Keep calm. Getting angry and shouting at your child will only make things worse.
• Your child might be tired or hungry so rest or food might help. Or they might just need something else interesting to do or look at.
• Try to find a distraction. Finding something else interesting to do or look at can help. If you’re in a busy or noisy place try to go somewhere quieter.
• If none of the above works, try to see things from your child’s point of view and understand what they actually want. Try offering them a choice, as this gives your child a sense of control and can be more effective than simply saying “no”. Always try to offer a positive way out.
• If you do say “no” don’t be tempted to give in later to calm them down. If you give in your child will repeat the tantrums as a means of getting their own way.
• If you’re at home you can try ignoring the tantrum, perhaps walking away into another room if it’s safe to do so. Encourage your child to cool down on their own and talk more calmly about what they want.
• After the tantrum, praise your child for settling down. Even though they may no longer be angry they may still be upset, so give them a cuddle and make it clear that you still love them no matter what.

Avoiding temper tantrums
You can reduce the likelihood of a tantrum by planning ahead:
• Try to avoid your child becoming hungry or overtired.
• Make sure your child is getting enough personal attention and affection.
• Make sure your time together is quality time together especially if you work for most of the day.
• Keep shopping trips and outings as short as possible.
• Try to plan a regular method that you’ll use to deal with tantrums when they do happen.

Remember, temper tantrums are normal and do not usually lead to serious problems. As your child gets older they will learn to deal more calmly with the stresses of everyday life. (See also sections on Positive parenting and Don’t shake the baby)

When every day is a difficult day
There are many possible signs of abuse, ranging from physical injury to changes in behaviour. Alternatively, you may witness an incident or a child may tell you that he/she is being harmed.

**ACTION**
If you think that a child has been harmed, contact the social services or the police. If you are not sure, you can speak to a confidential helpline, namely the NSPCC.

**WHAT TO SAY**
Explain exactly what you have seen or been told. If you can, keep a note of dates, injuries and the exact words used. These will help you to explain.

**PREVENTION**
Make sure your child knows who they can share worries with if and when they need to. Listen carefully to children and be alert to changes in them.

**CONTACTS**
- Your local HSS Trust (see page 44)
- PSNI 028 9065 0222
- NSPCC 0808 800 5000
- Parents Advice Centre 080 8801 0722

Protecting children is everybody's business. Adults have a responsibility to report abuse. Consider offering some support if you are worried. If in doubt, share your concerns about children. Reporting concerns rarely leads to a child being removed from the care of parents.

If you suspect a child is in a harmful situation, you can take the following steps:
- Report your concerns to the authorities through the local HSS Trust, PSNI, or NSPCC.
- Offer support and encouragement to the child.
- Provide practical support such as childcare or shopping.

However, it is important to understand that different forms of abuse are reported differently. For example, physical abuse is usually reported to the police, while neglect may involve reporting to social services.

When we suspect that a child is being harmed, we can take many different actions. We may feel guilty, angry, or hurtful. However, if we suspect that a child is in danger, it is important to act quickly and report our concerns.

When we report our concerns, we are not just helping the child who is being harmed; we are also helping to prevent further harm. It is important to remember that reporting concerns is not a guarantee that the child will be safe, but it is a step towards ensuring that the child receives the help they need.

It is important to remember that reporting concerns is not a guarantee that the child will be safe, but it is a step towards ensuring that the child receives the help they need.

Everyday I hear the young child next door crying, her parents constantly shout at her. Yesterday, in the street, I saw her mother hit her hard across the side of the head. This is probably none of my business but I am worried and not sure what to do.

All parents experience difficulties at various times that can be helped by other family members or close friends. The legacy of the conflict in Northern Ireland means parents may experience additional difficulties.

If someone you know is having difficulties, you could offer the following:
- A listening ear.
- Ideas to cope with problems.
- Encouragement to get some help.
- Practical support (childcare/shopping).

However, there may be times when a child may be at risk of abuse and professional support needs to be provided.

How would you want other people to act if your child was being harmed?
- Would you want them to mind their own business?
- To report their worry to a professional who could help?

When we suspect, witness or are told of a child that is being harmed, we can take many different actions to help the child. It is important to remember that everyone has a responsibility to report abuse and to support the child in any way possible.
### Helpful Organisations

Organisations listed here are key organisations who will be able to signpost you to the appropriate organisation if they cannot help.

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<th>Organization</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Contact Number</th>
<th>Website</th>
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<tr>
<td>Barnardo's</td>
<td>028 9067 2366</td>
<td><a href="http://www.barnardos.org">www.barnardos.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Barnardo's Young Parents Network</td>
<td>028 9047 3856</td>
<td><a href="http://services.barnardos.org/youngparentsbelfast/">http://services.barnardos.org/youngparentsbelfast/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Brook Advisory Clinic</td>
<td>028 9032 8866</td>
<td><a href="http://www.brook.org.uk">www.brook.org.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Child Accident Prevention Trust</td>
<td>020 7608 3828</td>
<td><a href="http://www.capt.org.uk">www.capt.org.uk</a></td>
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<td>Children in Northern Ireland</td>
<td>028 9065 2713</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ci-ni.org.uk">www.ci-ni.org.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Children's Law Centre</td>
<td>028 9024 5704</td>
<td><a href="http://www.childrenslawcentre.org">www.childrenslawcentre.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Contact a Family</td>
<td>0808 808 3555</td>
<td>freephone helpline</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cafamily.org">www.cafamily.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Health, Social Services &amp; Public Safety (DHSSPS)</td>
<td>028 9052 0500</td>
<td><a href="http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk">www.dhsspsni.gov.uk</a></td>
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<td>Disability Action</td>
<td>028 9029 7880</td>
<td><a href="http://www.disabilityaction.org">www.disabilityaction.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>EDUCATION &amp; LIBRARY BOARDS - Belfast ELB</td>
<td>028 9056 4006</td>
<td><a href="http://www.belb.org.uk">www.belb.org.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>EDUCATION &amp; LIBRARY BOARDS - North Eastern ELB</td>
<td>028 2566 2296</td>
<td><a href="http://www.neelb.org.uk">www.neelb.org.uk</a></td>
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<td>EDUCATION &amp; LIBRARY BOARDS - South Eastern ELB</td>
<td>028 9056 6200</td>
<td><a href="http://www.seelb.org.uk">www.seelb.org.uk</a></td>
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<td>EDUCATION &amp; LIBRARY BOARDS - Southern ELB</td>
<td>028 3751 2200</td>
<td><a href="http://www.selb.org">www.selb.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>EDUCATION &amp; LIBRARY BOARDS - Western ELB</td>
<td>028 8241 1411</td>
<td><a href="http://www.welbni.org">www.welbni.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Employers for Childcare</td>
<td>0800 028 3008</td>
<td><a href="http://www.employersforchildcare.org">www.employersforchildcare.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Enuresis Resource &amp; Information Centre - ERIC</td>
<td>0117 960 3060</td>
<td>for details of your nearest clinic</td>
<td><a href="http://www.eric.org.uk">www.eric.org.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Planning Association</td>
<td>028 9032 5488</td>
<td><a href="http://www.fpa.org.uk">www.fpa.org.uk</a></td>
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<td>HSS Trust - Mater Infirmorum Hospital</td>
<td>028 9074 1211</td>
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<td>HSS Trust - Newry &amp; Mourne</td>
<td>028 3026 0505</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSS Trust - North &amp; West Belfast</td>
<td>028 9032 7156</td>
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<td>HSS Trust - Royal Group of Hospitals and Dental Hospital</td>
<td>028 9024 0503</td>
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<td>HSS Trust - South &amp; East Belfast</td>
<td>028 9056 5556</td>
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<td>HSS Trust - Sperrin Lakeland</td>
<td>028 8283 5285</td>
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<td>HSS Trust - Ulster Community &amp; Hospitals Trust</td>
<td>028 9181 6666</td>
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<td>HSS Trust - United Hospitals</td>
<td>028 9442 4673</td>
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<td>Homestart N.I.</td>
<td>028 9046 0772</td>
<td><a href="http://www.home-start.org.uk">www.home-start.org.uk</a></td>
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<td>Kidscape</td>
<td>08451 205 204</td>
<td><a href="http://www.kidscape.org.uk">www.kidscape.org.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lifestart Foundation Ltd.</td>
<td>028 7136 5363</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mencap</td>
<td>0845 7636227</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mencap.org.uk">www.mencap.org.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Message Home (for young people to get a message to their parents)</td>
<td>0808 800 7070</td>
<td><a href="http://www.missingpersons.org">www.missingpersons.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Missing Persons Helpline</td>
<td>0500 700 700 (24hrs)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.missingpersons.org">www.missingpersons.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>National Drugs Helpline</td>
<td>0800 77 66 00</td>
<td>24 hour free advice</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCH - National Children's Charity</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nch.org.uk">www.nch.org.uk</a></td>
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<td>NICEM - N.I. Council for Ethnic Minorities</td>
<td>028 9023 8645</td>
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<td>NIPPA - The early years organisation</td>
<td>028 9066 2825</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nippa.org">www.nippa.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland Childminding Association (NICMA)</td>
<td>028 9181 1015</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nicma.org">www.nicma.org</a></td>
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<td>Northern Ireland Online - <a href="http://www.onlineni.net">www.onlineni.net</a></td>
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<td>Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation</td>
<td>028 9033 1818</td>
<td><a href="http://www.niwaf.org">www.niwaf.org</a></td>
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<td>NSPCC</td>
<td>0808 800 5000</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nspcc.org.uk">www.nspcc.org.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents Advice Centre</td>
<td>0808 801 0722 - Freephone helpline</td>
<td><a href="http://www.pachelp.orge">www.pachelp.orge</a>: <a href="mailto:parents@pachelp.org">parents@pachelp.org</a></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Playboard</td>
<td>028 9080 3380</td>
<td>e: <a href="mailto:ceoffice@playboard.co.uk">ceoffice@playboard.co.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>PSNI</td>
<td>028 9065 0222</td>
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<tr>
<td>Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)</td>
<td>028 9050 1160</td>
<td><a href="http://www.rospa.co.uk">www.rospa.co.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>School Age Mums Project</td>
<td><a href="http://www.youngmums.org.uk">www.youngmums.org.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Family Trauma Centre</td>
<td>1 Wellington Park Belfast 028 9020 4700</td>
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<tr>
<td>VDA Volunteer Development Agency</td>
<td>028 9023 6100</td>
<td><a href="http://www.volunteering-ni.org">www.volunteering-ni.org</a></td>
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</table>
Useful Publications

- Bullying
  - A toolkit for parents
  - Produced by Parents Advice Centre

- Childcare Advice Leaflets
  - Available from Employers for Childcare
  - Department of Education
  - Leaflets available from www.deni.gov.uk

- Encouraging Better Behaviour
  - NSPCC leaflet

- First Steps to Safety
  - RoSPA leaflet

- Handle with Care - a guide to positive parenting
  - Available from the Central Health Promotion Unit of your local HSS Board:
  - Weaning made easy
  - Getting a good start
  - Nutrition matters for the early years

- Home Alone
  - NSPCC leaflet

- Opportunities for Safety Education
  - RoSPA leaflet

- Reduce the Risk of Cot Death
  - Available from the Central Health Promotion Unit of your local HSS Board

- The Incredible Years: A Guide for Parents of Children 3-8 years old
  - Available from the following website www.incredibleyears.com

- Toddler Taming
  - Produced by Dr Christopher Green