



The Coventry Parenting Handbook

If you need this information in another
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A guide for **mums, dads, grandparents** and **carers**
of 5-11 year olds



This booklet was given to me by

who can be contacted on

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Welcome

Welcome to The Coventry Parenting Handbook.

One of the most difficult jobs in the world is being a good parent. From my own experience I know how rewarding the experience of being a parent is - but also how challenging it can be. Every child is different, with their own reaction to new experiences, and every parent wants to support their child in the way that suits them best as they grow and learn.

We all want to be the best parents possible, but there is no such thing as perfect parenting, and sometimes we will need a helping hand. This handbook, produced by the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP), a collection of organisations working together to improve life for children and young people in Coventry, offers handy hints and practical tips for all parents. We hope you find it helpful and keep it in a safe place to use for many years to come.

Martin Reeves

Martin Reeves
Chief Executive, Coventry City Council
Chair of CYPSP

"I think it's great to be able to dip in and out of this book. I know that I would be able to learn about issues that not only affect me and my children now, but that may come up in the future." **Mum**

"It feels good to have this as a reference, a first port of call, to know that I can keep going back to it as me and my children grow and change is welcome." **Dad**



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"I had no idea my son was skipping school on a regular basis, until they called me about his attendance levels. Now I'm making more of an effort to be interested in his schoolwork so he feels more supported."

- » Children staying away from school is a big problem
- » Try to understand why they are not going to school
- » Missing school affects their progress
- » It is your responsibility to make sure your child goes to school
- » Missing school means you may not know where or who your child is with

Absence* from school

Are they at school?

If your child regularly misses school it can have a big effect not only on your child but also on you, the school and even the community.

Is it a problem when parents allow their child to miss school?

Some parents need their child's support at home more than others, perhaps they have an illness or other younger children at home. Any time away from school, even for a short family holiday can affect their education. Consider the unspoken message you might give your child if you let them think it is okay to miss school.

The results of missing school are serious for your child

The more schoolwork they miss, the harder it is to catch up and the more likely they are to skip days or even want to drop out. They are missing out on building and keeping friends who are often a real support during the teenage years.

If your child misses school they are more likely to come across situations where there are drugs or alcohol and are more exposed to possible sexual abuse.

How to stop children missing school

If this is a problem, you need to find out why they want to miss school. They may find school frightening, lack self-confidence, feel they are failing or maybe they are being bullied.

If you are struggling to get your child to attend school, please let the school know. The school provides a range of support for parents on tackling attendance problems. Once you understand the causes, it may be easier to get your child to return to school.

Make sure your child understands the importance that education and going to school everyday has on their future. Take an interest in what happens during their school day and with homework. Praise them when they do well and listen to any concerns they may have. Talk to Teachers about how they are getting on.

Attendance and the law

Parents of school age children must provide education for their children either by attendance at school or by other means. Where a child fails to attend, without reasonable excuse, the local authority has the power to refer the child to the children's panel or prosecute* the parents.



WARNING SIGNS

Notice what times your child is around, if they should be in school and check up if they say school has allowed them out. You may not even know until you are told by the school or Police.



ACTION

Find out why your child is missing school and talk about any problems such as bullying or fear of failure. Discuss what your child wants for their future and how to reach short-term goals.



WHAT TO SAY

Talk to your child about any school problems and listen to their worries. Take an active interest in schoolwork or activities such as arts or sports clubs.



PREVENTION

It is your job to make sure that your child gets an education. Always take an interest in their school life and what they are doing, so your child knows they can talk to you about any problems before they get out of control.



CONTACTS

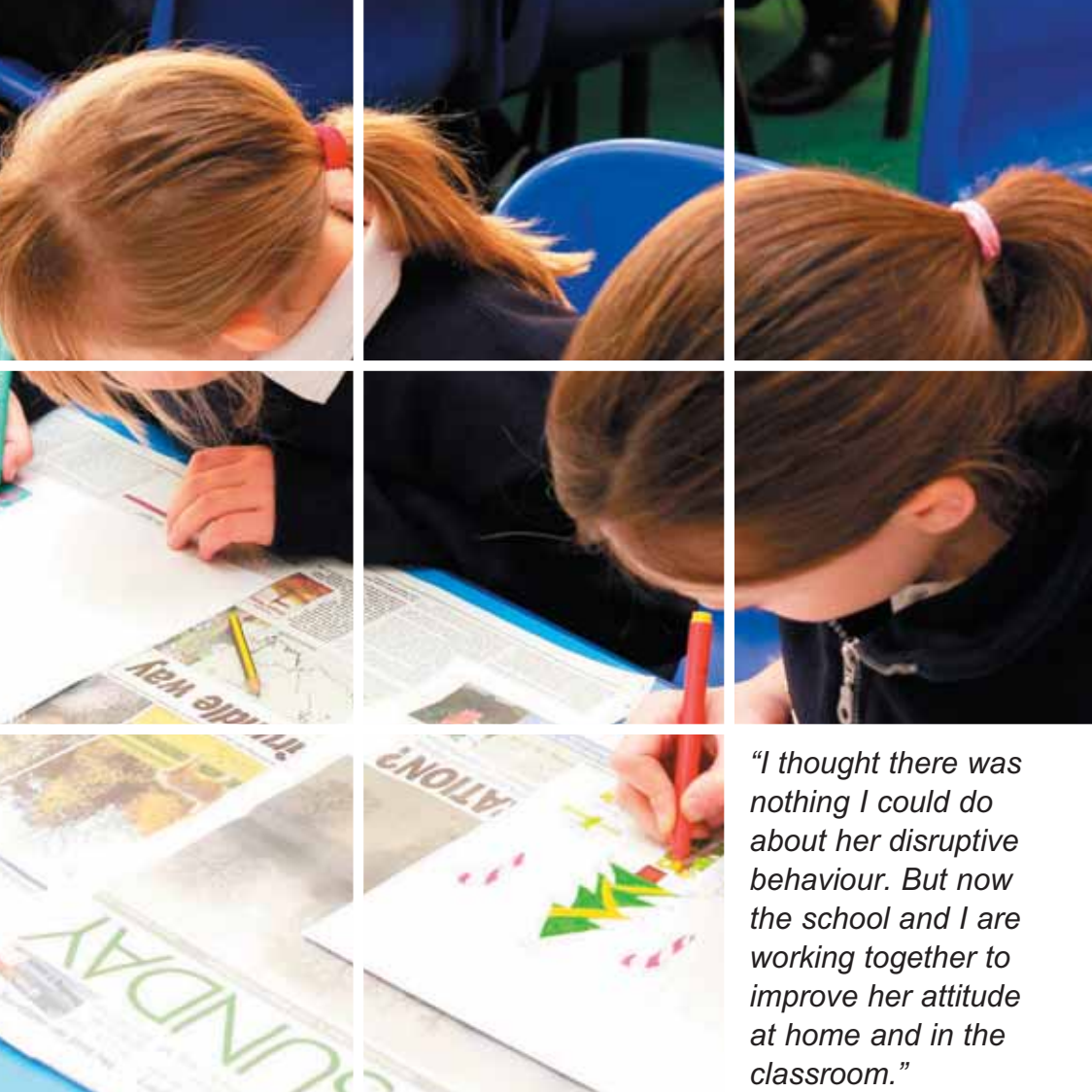
- Speak to your child's Teacher
- Common Assessment Framework* Team 024 7683 2669
- Multi Disciplinary Teams* 024 7683 4150
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222

WEBLINKS www.parentlineplus.org.uk • www.direct.gov.uk • www.ukparentslounge.com



Look up a word

- * **Common Assessment Framework** - A way of getting the right services and help for the family.
- * **Multi Disciplinary Teams** - A team of professionals who provide a range of support to children and young people and their families.
- * **Absence** - Not going, staying away.
- * **Prosecute** - Take to court.



"I thought there was nothing I could do about her disruptive behaviour. But now the school and I are working together to improve her attitude at home and in the classroom."

- » Identify the problems your child may be facing
- » Recognise the effects of disruptive behaviour at school
- » Work with the school to encourage positive changes
- » Understand the value of school for your child
- » Get support to learn effective ways of helping your child

Behaviour in school

Recognising problems

Children can be disruptive in the classroom in many ways such as playing up when they should be working, refusing to carry out requested tasks, talking back to the Teacher and distracting other children from their work by their behaviour. Often parents do not recognise this disruptive* behaviour in their child at home. Early intervention* by parents and the school in dealing with difficult behaviour, can bring long-term beneficial results.

The effects of disruptive behaviour

A child's disruptive behaviour at school not only affects their own schoolwork, it affects the concentration and behaviour of other children in the class. It also means the Teacher has to spend time controlling poor behaviour rather than teaching.

While bad behaviour may seem amusing to other children, in reality a disruptive child tends not to have close friends, or doesn't keep friends for long and they may find other children avoiding them at break-times. Teachers, too, may find it difficult to keep a balanced view of the child.

Future consequences

If a child is not taught how to become a considerate and active member of the class, then they are more likely to become disaffected with school and start to play truant. This means not

only are they missing out on the social interaction gained from peers, but are less likely to do well in exams and gain employment in the future. As a result of a child's behaviour they may be excluded from school for a fixed period of time or permanently. The school will talk to you about what happens next.

Getting support for your child

All schools should have strategies in place to help control behaviour. The school may suggest a written action plan, agreed by you, your child and them on how to deal with disruptive behaviour. They may impose sanctions*, such as the withdrawal of break or giving a lunchtime detention.

Your child may be mentored by an older pupil or supportive adults. If a child can see themselves as others see them and understand how their behaviour affects others, it can help them to behave in a more responsible way. Your child maybe referred to an educational psychologist, employed by your local authority, to assess the best way of helping them. Sometimes difficulties with behaviour can be linked to problems with learning.

There are also parenting support programmes available that can help you to build on your parenting skills and open the lines of communication between you and your child. Knowing that they have solid support at home will help your child to deal with problems at school.



WARNING SIGNS

Parents are often surprised it is their child being disruptive at school, but if a Teacher feels the need to point it out to you, listen and take action.



ACTION

Ask to have a meeting with the school and your child to discuss any problems and to try to work out positive solutions.



WHAT TO SAY

It can be difficult to accept that your child is being difficult, but it is important to remember that it is your child who will benefit from guidelines and support.



PREVENTION

Research shows early intervention is the best way to prevent your child's behaviour from getting worse - and to give them the chance of a good education.



CONTACTS

- Speak to your child's Teacher
- Parent Partnership Service 024 7669 4307
- Positive Parenting 024 7678 6949 or 0800 4346 127
- SEN Management Services 024 7683 1615
- Family Information Service 024 7683 4373
- Common Assessment Framework* Team 024 7683 2669
- Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) 0808 800 5793
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222

WEBLINKS

www.coventry.gov.uk/parentpartnership •
www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour •
www.ace-ed.org.uk • www.parentlineplus.org.uk



Look up a word

- * **Common Assessment Framework** - A way of getting the right services and help for the family.
- * **Disruptive** - Troublesome bad behaviour which affects others.
- * **Early intervention** - Getting involved early on.
- * **Impose sanctions** - Introduce punishments.



"I tell Sarah off if she's naughty but I don't like criticising her too much. Hurtful comments could damage her confidence. I think it's better to highlight her good behaviour - that way she wants to behave well for me."



WARNING SIGNS

Is your child's self-esteem low? Do they say things like "I'm stupid" or "I'll never be able to do this right"? If so, their confidence has been damaged somehow.



ACTION

What you say to your child and how you treat them can hugely influence their behaviour as they grow up. Develop a good relationship with them before they reach their teens.



WHAT TO SAY

Praise your child when they're good. When they do something difficult, say "Well done, you managed that, even though it was hard." Don't lose your temper when you discipline your child and make it clear that you're unhappy with their behaviour, not them as a person.



PREVENTION

You can help prevent bad behaviour when your child gets older by putting in the hard work now - it really is worth it!



CONTACTS

- Positive Parenting Programmes 024 7678 6949 or 0800 4346 127
- Your Doctor or Health Visitor
- Common Assessment Framework* Team 024 7683 2669
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222

- » Parents have a vital job teaching their children positive values and beliefs
- » Children want their parents' approval so childhood is a good time to teach them positive behaviour
- » Use positive feedback to build up your child's self-esteem*
- » When you praise your child, explain exactly why you're pleased with them
- » Children are happier if they have rules to follow
- » Use play to teach your child about good behaviour

Building blocks for good behaviour

Positive feedback

Every day, your child learns new things as they develop and start exploring the world around them. It's what makes childhood such an exciting time.

As a parent, you have an important job as you teach them about your values and beliefs. Start this when they're young and you'll see all your hard work pay off in the future when they grow into a happy teenager.

Childhood is a good time to teach them good behaviour because they respect and want to be close to you. This changes when they become a teenager, as they'll probably rely more on their friends.

Using positive feedback is a great idea. That means giving lots of praise to build up your child's self-esteem, and talking about their strengths and not weaknesses. Your opinion of your child has a huge impact on what they think of themselves and so being too critical can damage confidence.

When your child does something good, praise them and explain why. So rather than saying "Good girl" when they put their toys away, say "You're a good girl for putting your toys away and helping me." Your child will see the value of good behaviour.

You can use positive feedback when your child is misbehaving too. That doesn't mean buying them sweets when they're naughty, but making it clear that you're upset about their behaviour, not them. For example, instead of saying "You're a very naughty child" if they do something wrong, try saying "That was a very naughty thing to do". That way, your child won't see themselves as a bad person and will know they have the power to change their behaviour.

It's up to you to set rules and boundaries* in your child's life - most children are happier living with rules. Always be consistent with boundaries. For example, don't tell your child off for jumping on the table one minute, and then let them do it the next. Rules also work better if your child knows why they exist.

Another way to make sure your child grows up happy and secure is to have fun with them. Modern life is often so busy that many parents don't have time to sit down and spend time playing with their child.

Play is important because it helps your child feel good about themselves. Also, your child enjoys being close to you. Having fun with your child is as important as them having their own friends and hobbies.



Look up a word

- * **Common Assessment Framework** - A way of getting the right services and help for the family.
- * **Self-esteem** - Self-confidence, feeling good about yourself.
- * **Boundaries** - Rules and guidelines.



"It happened most days and they said if he told it would be ten times worse. He is now worried about going to school. How can I help my son?"



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

- School Nursing Service 024 7624 6211
- Relate (Time for You) 024 7622 5999
- ChildLine 0800 1111
- Kidscape 08451 205 204

- Children have the right not to be hurt
- Bullying behaviour is never acceptable
- Bullying can happen to any child at any age
- Bullying can take many forms from verbal abuse, to physical attack as well as e-bullying via text or email
- 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. 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.

There can be different forms of bullying 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). 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. Reporting concerns may help them to get help.

- 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.

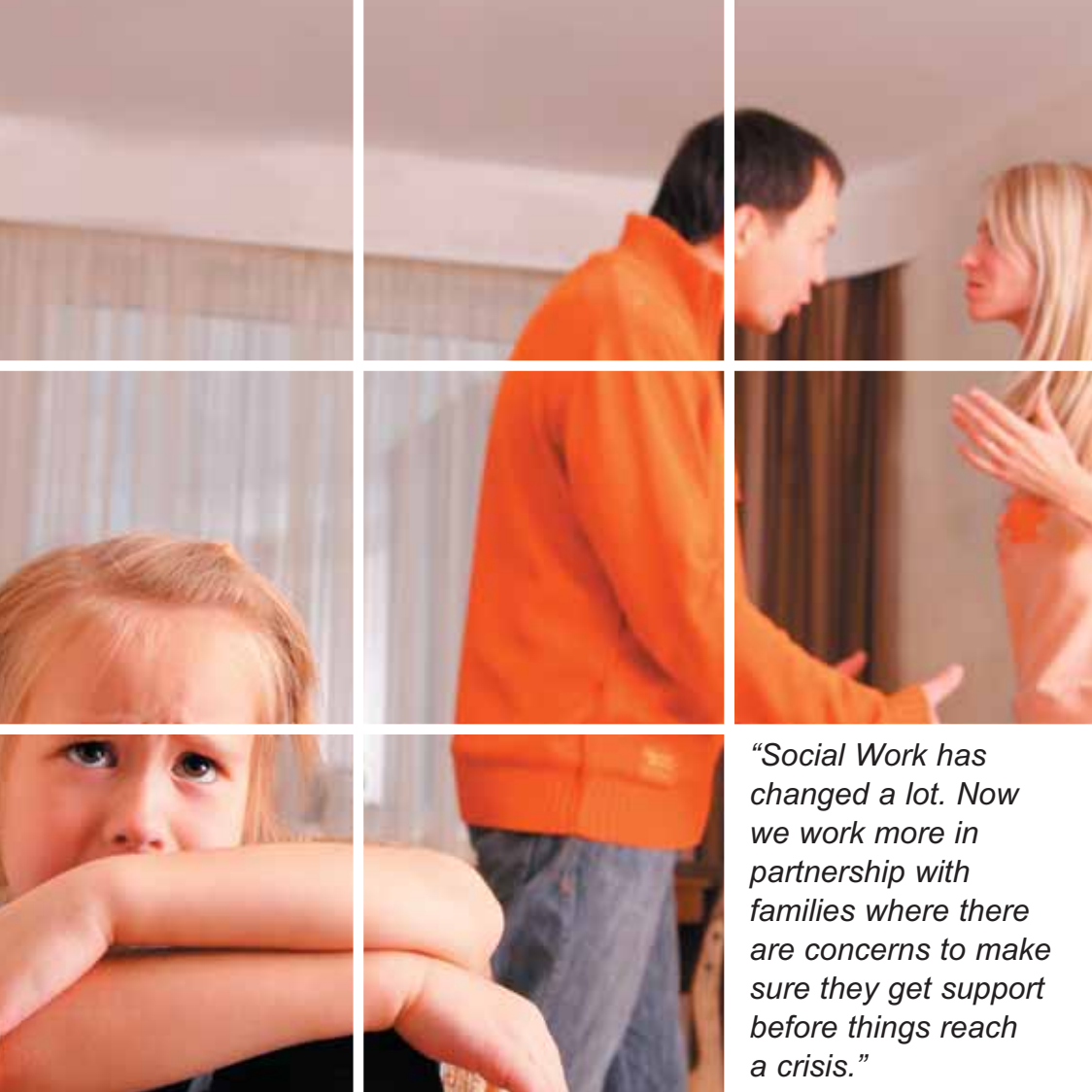
Racial harassment

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.



Look up a word

- * **Prejudice** - Unjust behaviour and opinions.
- * **Crucial** - Very important.



“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
- » It is your duty to protect your child and to speak up
- » Children’s Services become involved once concern is shared. This may involve support services that can be accessed by the Common Assessment Framework. Where there are concerns specifically about child abuse Children’s Social Care will take the lead
- » Children are best cared for by their own families as long as this is the safe thing to do

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 will investigate with Social Workers to help protect children and decide whether an offence has been committed against a child.

In many cases social care does not need to be involved and other professionals can help and provide support e.g. Children’s Centres, Multi Disciplinary Teams*, Family Nurses, etc.

There are myths that exist, so for the record:

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

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.

2. Professionals are not solely responsible for protecting children.

Social Workers rely on information from parents, family, other professionals and the local community to ensure that children are safe. Everyone who comes into contact with children has a responsibility to keep them safe.

Reporting child abuse

The aim of enquiry and assessment following an allegation of abuse is to ensure that the child is safe. This can often be achieved without removing the child from their home. A child cannot be removed from their parents by Social Workers unless the parent consents, or there is a court order. The Police may remove a child without a court order for a short period if they believe there is a serious risk.

Some parents choose to ignore their child is being abused or is in danger in order to protect someone else. Even if the abuser is someone you are close to you must speak up for your child. It is your duty to protect your child and let someone know (this could be a Social Worker or the Police) if you are worried about the safety of your child.



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 - for information see 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 to a safe place or person? If you are worried about your child, seek help early.



CONTACTS

- Social Care 024 7678 8555
- NSPCC 024 7622 2456 or 0808 800 5000
- Positive Parenting Headquarters 024 7669 6949 or 0800 4346 127
- Common Assessment Framework* Team 024 7683 2669
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222
- Family Rights Group 0800 801 0366

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



Look up a word

- * **Common Assessment Framework** - A way of getting the right services and help for the family.
- * **Multi Disciplinary Teams** - A team of professionals who provide a range of support to children and young people and their families.



"I am thankful there are so many people here to help. After all she has been through I really feel she is getting her life back together again."



WARNING SIGNS

Their needs can often be overlooked as they may find it hard to say what they need. Sometimes they don't even know. There is particular risk from health and welfare problems.



ACTION

Ensure contact is made with the child's own community and that their needs are being met. As a carer you have a responsibility to do everything you can to get the help they need.



WHAT TO SAY

Make sure you tell Social Workers, Doctors, education staff and care officials everything you can about the child. Ask for help if there's anything you don't understand.



PREVENTION

Painful or traumatic* experiences can damage a child for life. Health and education experts can work with you to heal any damage. Use the help that is on offer as soon as you can, to give the child you care for the best new start.



CONTACTS

- The Friends Project 024 7678 5575
- Coventry Refugee Centre 024 7622 7254
- Social Care 024 7678 8555
- Equality and Human Rights Commission 0845 604 6610

- » Children from abroad are children first - regardless of political or legal issues
- » Unaccompanied children from abroad, or those accompanied by someone who is not their parent are particularly vulnerable*
- » If you care for a child from abroad, you can get assistance to ensure that your child receives adequate health and education provision
- » You must speak up for your child. Help services for children in Coventry understand your child's needs
- » Children from abroad help to enrich the vibrant, cultural life of Coventry and should be welcomed regardless of race, religion or background

Children from abroad

Wherever they come from, children come first

Here I am!

Large numbers of children arrive in this country from overseas every day. Many are asylum seekers or refugees, escaping from danger in their home countries. They may be with their parents, with a relative or friend, or they may be alone. Whatever their circumstances, Coventry is ready to care for them.

Teams of Social Workers, Health Workers, Teachers and carers are all ready to offer a whole host of services to welcome them to our city. But help can only be given if the child can be seen. If you are caring for a child from abroad, your first duty is to make sure that Children's Services know all about your child. If this is a private fostering* arrangement Children's Social Care must be informed. Whatever your status, or the status of the child's parents - the child comes first.

The right start

To offer the best start for your child, the caring professionals in Coventry need to get to know all about them. People working with children will be interested in their background, their experiences, their family and any special needs they may have. Local Doctors welcome all children from abroad into the UK's free NHS and will be happy to arrange a health check for them. Specialist staff in education are

specially provided for children like yours. They will search for the best school for your child and work with you, the Teachers and other care staff to help them make new friends and begin an enjoyable learning experience. Naturally, in all their work, caring professionals will aim to understand cultural preferences and overcome any language barriers, to make you and your child feel confident and settled as soon as possible.

Helping children to heal

Many children who arrive in the UK are unhappy. Leaving your home and your family on a difficult journey can be very upsetting. Some children may be escaping from war or extreme violence and may have experienced terrible things. You may not even be aware of these things, but the caring professionals in Coventry will do all they can to help the child you care for to deal with their unhappiness and find a way to heal any pain they may have inside.

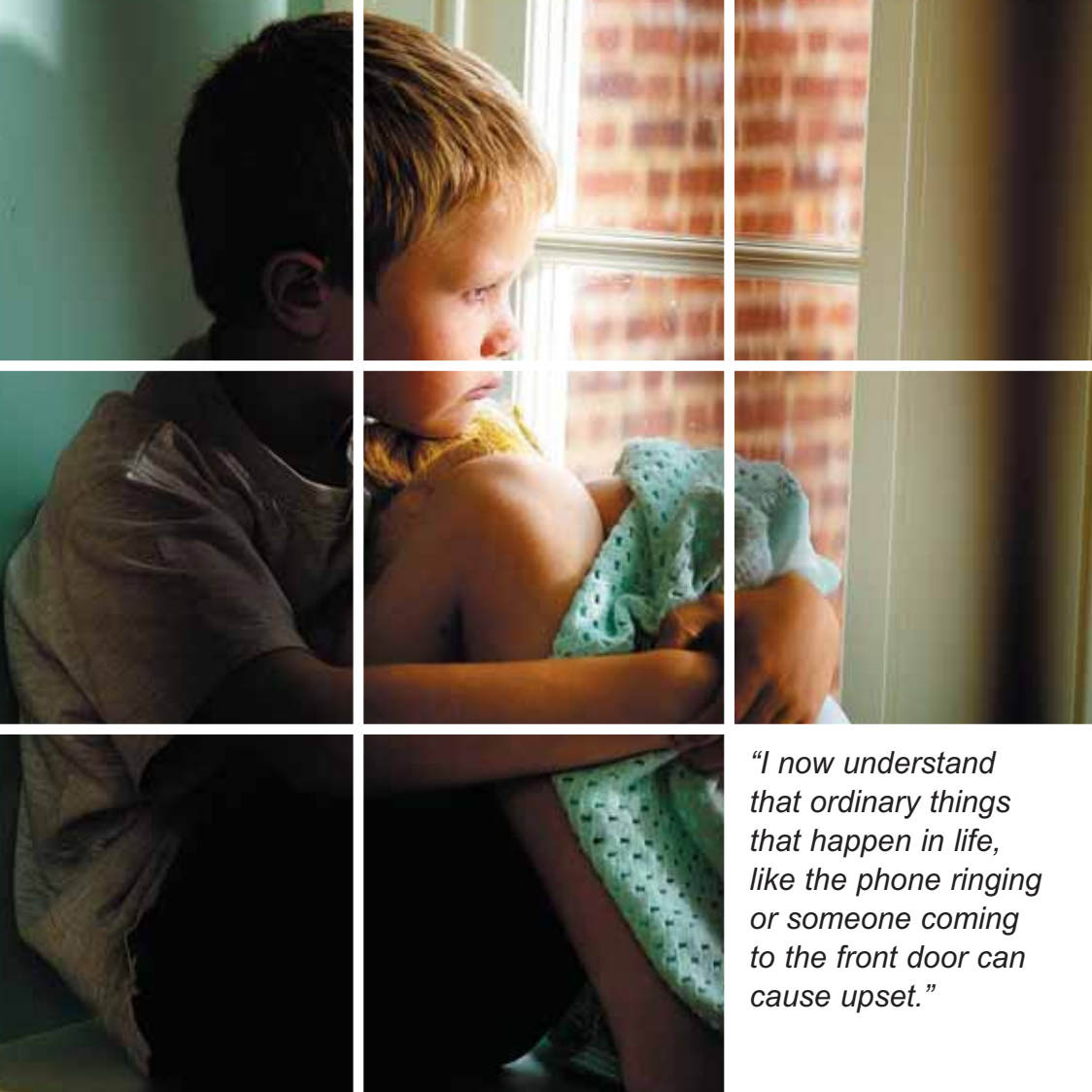
Get in touch

If you are responsible for a child from abroad who is not receiving the kind of care outlined above, or you feel that you or they need more help, you should get in touch immediately with one of the contacts on the page opposite. All children are special, but some of them need extra special care.



Look up a word

- * **Traumatic** - Upsetting.
- * **Vulnerable** - At risk.
- * **Private fostering** - Where parents make arrangements with someone outside of their family to look after their child for them for 28 days or longer.



"I now understand that ordinary things that happen in life, like the phone ringing or someone coming to the front door can cause upset."

- Never leave a young child alone
- Make sure you leave your child with an adult you trust if you need to go out
- Children are not ready for this amount of responsibility*
- Leaving a child alone places them at risk of harm
- Plan who you could contact for emergency care
- The law does not set a minimum age at which children can be left alone, but it is an offence to leave a child alone when doing so puts them at risk

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.

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 child 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*.

There are many important things to consider before you decide to leave a child alone.

These include:

- The age of your child.
- The child's level of maturity and understanding.
- Is the place where your child will be left safe?
- How long the child will be left alone, and how often.
- Whether or not there are any other children alone with the child.



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 their parent or carer, 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 playschemes.



CONTACTS

- Social Care 024 7678 8555
- Contact your Health Visitor
- NSPCC 0808 800 5000
- Gingerbread 0808 802 0925
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222

WEBLINKS

www.nspcc.org.uk • www.gingerbread.org.uk • www.parentlineplus.org.uk • www.direct.gov.uk/en/parents/yourchildshealthandsafety/index.htm



Look up a word

- * **Responsibility** - To take control.
- * **Preparation** - Getting ready for something.
- * **Vital** - Very important.



"I just didn't think I'd be able to do it alone. I soon realised I didn't have to. There are lots of organisations out there who can help."

- » Your child is protected by the Disability Discrimination Act
- » 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

Children with SEN* & disabilities

You're not alone

If your child has a disability the future may seem like a real struggle, not just for them, but for you too. The Government, local Council, Health and Education Authorities give a wide range of benefits, facilities, support and advice for children with disabilities and their carers.

Legal protection

Your child is protected by law. The Disability Discrimination Act says it is against the law for any service provider (including schools, businesses and organisations) to treat disabled people less fairly than other people because of their disability. It also asks them to make reasonable adjustments to their services like ramps or additional support.

Health

From the start, your Doctor and local Health Service are there for you. They'll give the help and advice you need to discover and assess your child's disability. They'll help you plan the treatment, therapy, equipment and ongoing medical care that your child may need.

Benefits

There are several benefits that you could receive to help you with the costs of caring for a disabled child. These include Disability Living Allowance, Carers Allowance, help with extra housing costs and Carers Blue Badge Scheme. Don't forget free

dental treatment and prescriptions, help with the cost of glasses, travel costs and school meals.

Education

Your child **will** get the extra support they need through the Special Needs Provisions in a mainstream school. Your Education Authority and Health Service Providers will help you assess your child's special education needs and help you find the best way forward for their education. A small number of children, depending on their disability, may need more specialist support by attending a special school appropriate to their educational needs.

All schools have a Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO), this is the person responsible for coordinating help for children with special educational needs.

Extra support

Your Council can give extra support for you and your child. This can include special leisure facilities, holidays, short breaks and many additional services for particular needs. There are many local, national and international organisations and charities specially set up to give 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.



WARNING SIGNS

Some children's disabilities are spotted early. Others take time to appear or may happen suddenly. If you think your child may have some form of disability, contact your Health Visitor or Doctor for advice.



ACTION

Don't think you have to go it alone. Get as much information as you can about your child's condition. Take a look at the handbook for parents and carers of children with a disability (see below).



WHAT TO SAY

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



PREVENTION

You can't stop your child's condition. You can help by making sure that they get the best support available and by remembering that they have rights.



CONTACTS

- Common Assessment Framework* Team 024 7683 2669
- SEN Management Services 024 7683 1615
- NHS Direct 0845 4647 • Carers UK 0808 808 7777



For your copy contact:
Children's Disability Team 024 7678 6087
Parent Partnership Service 024 7669 4307

WEBLINKS www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk • www.carersuk.org • www.ndcs.org.uk • www.mencap.gov.uk



Look up a word

- * **Common Assessment Framework** - A way of getting the right services and help for the family.
- * **SEN** - Special Educational Needs.



"At first I thought she was just being stropky. She's getting counselling now - it's slow, but I know she'll get through this."

- » Just like adults, children can suffer from depression
- » Many things can set off mental ill health
- » Listen to your child if the problem persists* or gets worse
- » Get professional help

Depression & mental health

Dealing with the uncertainties of life

Just like adults, children can suffer from depression. Unlike adults, however, they may not be able to explain how they are feeling and ask for help. It is important for the adults around them to understand the basic facts about childhood depression so they can help their child. Depression and mental ill health are much more than just feeling a bit down - we all feel like this from time to time.

Children are not immune to depression

Depression is a biologically-based illness and children can fall prey to it just like adults. We might expect that children experiencing extreme stress due to things like divorce or abuse might be more at risk, but even children who seem to have a 'perfect' life can suffer from depression. Children with an inherited* tendency towards depression are more sensitive to stress. What might seem trivial*, like losing a certain toy or missing a club one day, to an adult could easily trigger depression in these children.

Depression can be started by a number of things, such as: parents divorcing or separating, feeling ignored and unloved, not being listened to, losing friends, changing school, moving home, worries about their looks, sexuality, health, exams or abuse.

To escape from their feelings or let them out in the only way they know how there is a risk they may start taking drugs or drinking, not going to school, becoming violent or getting involved in crime.

What may seem like small problems or worries to an older person can seem like a much bigger problem to a child. Boys are more likely to get depressed than girls and suffer from serious mental ill health.

How to help

If your child is suffering from depression they need help. Don't ignore their worries, listen to them and let them know you are there for them. Try to understand what they are going through and get professional help if you need to.

Get them to talk about why they feel like this. If they don't feel they can talk to you, there are a number of helplines they can contact. If you are concerned, help them to see their Doctor or School Nurse. They may want you to come with them or may like to go alone (remember they will still need your support). The Doctor can discuss ways to help, often a referral to a trained Therapist or Counsellor if needed.



WARNING SIGNS

May include being unable to sleep, eating too much or too little, mood swings, staying in their bedroom all day, or giving up interests and hobbies, crying, avoiding friends and family. They may find it hard to do schoolwork and not care about their appearance.



ACTION

If you think your child is depressed, talk to them and find out if there is any way you can help. Be patient and understanding. Talk to your Doctor and discuss what treatment may be helpful.



WHAT TO SAY

Help and encourage them to get their lives together. Depression can't just be switched off, it takes time and understanding to overcome it. Try to get them to contact useful organisations they can talk to in private.



PREVENTION

Listen to and talk to your child. A supportive and understanding family means your child may feel more able to talk to you about any problems, rather than bottling them up.



CONTACTS

- School Nursing Service 024 7624 6211
- Relate (Time for You) 024 7622 5999
- Vibes 024 7663 1835 or 024 7655 2847
- Common Assessment Framework* Team 024 7683 2669
- YoungMinds Parents Helpline 0808 802 5544
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222 • NHS Direct 0845 4647

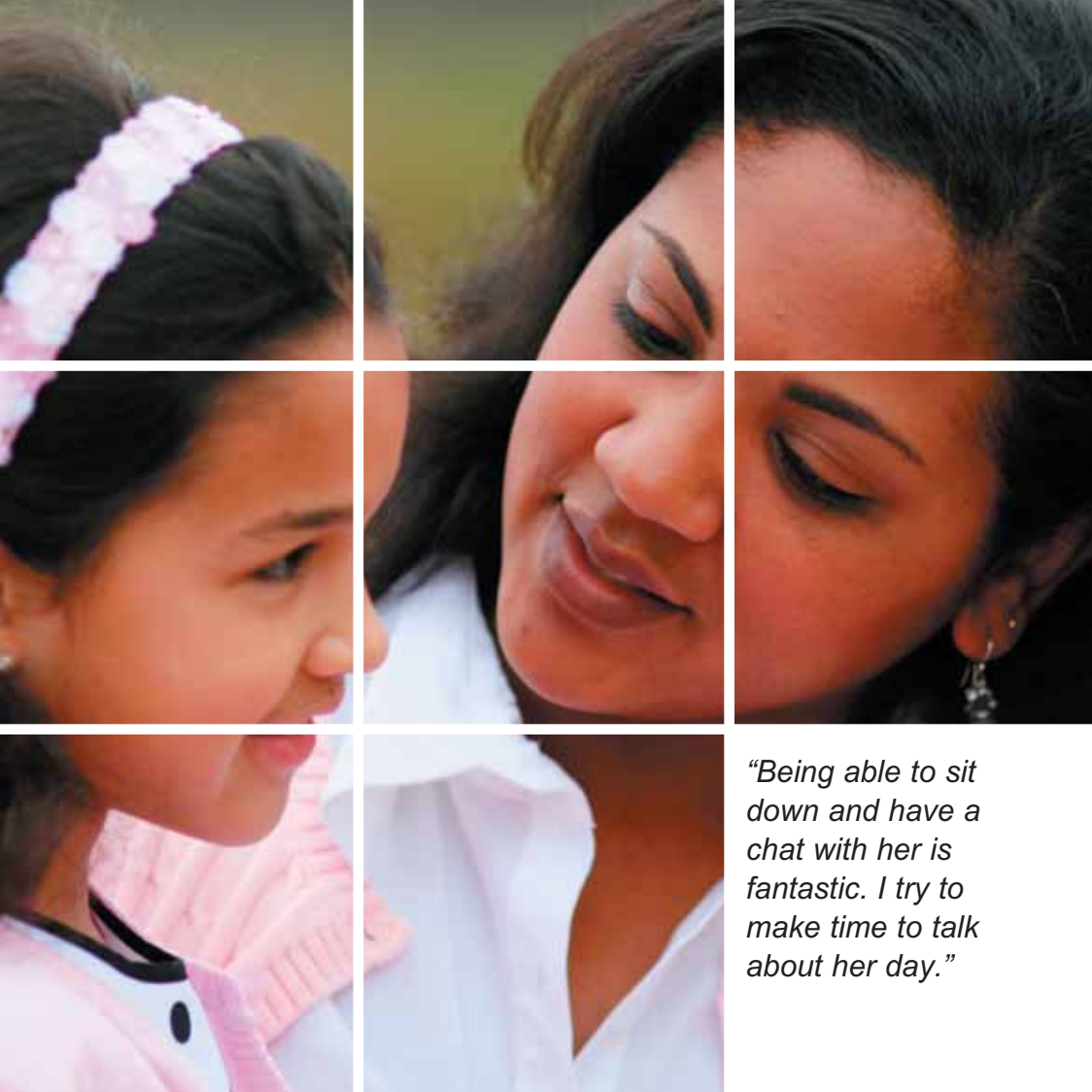
WEBLINKS

www.youngminds.org.uk/parents • www.parentlineplus.org.uk • www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk



Look up a word

- * **Common Assessment Framework** - A way of getting the right services and help for the family.
- * **Persists** - Carries on.
- * **Inherited** - A condition or illness which can be passed down from parent to child.
- * **Trivial** - Not important.



"Being able to sit down and have a chat with her is fantastic. I try to make time to talk about her day."

- » Children love to learn
- » Talking with your child is an essential part of bonding
- » Listening to your child is very important
- » Verbalising* your love and support can make all the difference.
- » Children with speech and language problems are at risk of increased academic difficulties

Developing speech, language & communication

Chatter matters

Communicating with your child, is one of the most pleasurable and rewarding experiences for both parent and child. Children love to learn, taking in information through daily experiences with other children, adults and the world around them.

As children grow up they become more independent, spending much of their day outside the home, in school and with friends.

You may notice that:

- Your child is starting to ask more detailed questions about the world.
- Your child challenges what you say. This is normal behaviour as children gain knowledge outside of the home and become more independent.

Share ideas, opinions and information with your child. Talking is an essential part of bonding. Children may face peer pressures, including underage drinking, drugs and sexual activity. If you are used to talking through your feelings with one another early on it can be invaluable in helping your child deal with new challenges and situations. They are less likely to keep secrets and important things from you.

Here are a few suggestions:

- Make time to hear about their day.
- Remember to talk *with* your child, not at your child.

- Take advantage of opportunities to chat. Talk to your child during car trips or while standing in line at the supermarket.
- Make sure to tell to your child how proud you are of their achievements. The school years are a crucial time for the development of self-esteem.

Keep in mind that behaviour is a way of communicating. Your child may behave badly when they do not know how to express their feelings.

You can help your child develop their communication skills by encouraging reading and writing, telling stories and dropping in new words in conversation.

What should I do if I think there is a problem?

Children with speech and language problems are at risk of getting left behind at school. Discuss your concerns with your child's teacher. A child who has difficulty understanding what is said to them or expressing themselves may need referral to the Speech and Language Therapy Service. If you are worried make sure you get professional guidance.



WARNING SIGNS

Hearing difficulties, difficulty with attention and concentration. poor vocabulary*, difficulties in reading and writing, unclear speech or persistent stuttering or difficulty understanding what is said to them.



ACTION

Talk to you child and see if there is anything you can do at home to help. Keep talking with and reading to your child. Story telling can help too.



WHAT TO SAY

Talk to you child and see if there is anything you can do at home to help. Praise them for their achievements to help with confidence and self-esteem. Speak to your child's school if you are worried.



PREVENTION

If you are worried make sure you get professional guidance.



CONTACTS

- Coventry Talk Now 024 7678 6043
- Speech and Language Therapy* Service 024 7684 4187/9
- Coventry Community Health Services 024 7684 4187
- I Can 0845 225 4071

WEBLINKS www.coventrytalknow.co.uk • www.ican.org.uk



Look up a word

- * **Poor vocabulary** - Limited use of words.
- * **Speech and Language Therapy** - Assessment and treatment to help children with speech and language difficulties.
- * **Verbalising** - Saying what you are feeling or thinking.



"Children need to know that it is not their fault and that this is not the way it should be."



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 abuse is.



ACTION

Report your concerns 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.



PREVENTION

A violent 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 behaving.



CONTACTS

- Coventry Victim Support 024 7683 9950
- Relate (Time for You) 024 7622 5999
- Haven 024 7644 4077
- Panagher (Asian Women's Organisation) 024 7622 8952
- Defuze 024 7622 1112
- Common Assessment Framework* Team 024 7683 2669
- Police 999 in an emergency
- National Domestic Violence Helpline 0808 2000 247

WEBLINKS www.womensaid.org.uk • <http://refuge.org.uk>

- » Domestic abuse* may teach 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
- » If you are being abused your child is also at risk

Domestic abuse

How does it affect children?

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 can be 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 a 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 Coventry. You can also report incidents to the Police. This will provide valuable evidence for any charges against your abuse in the future.

Apart from any criminal proceedings*, you can apply for an 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.



Look up a word

- * **Common Assessment Framework** - A way of getting the right services and help for the family.
- * **Domestic abuse** - Treating someone with cruelty or violence within the home.
- * **Criminal proceedings** - Law action taken in court.



"Greg is six just like me. 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."



WARNING SIGNS

Using the Internet in secret, changes in how they act, unusual sexual questions, leaving clues (such as emails), problems at school. They may not tell the truth about where they are going or who they are meeting.



ACTION

Set up Internet use rules and stick to them. 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.



PREVENTION

Keep the computer in a family room, with the monitor facing outwards. Discuss which websites your child is looking at and take a look for yourself. Make sure they are aware of the dangers.



CONTACTS

- Safeguarding Children's Service 024 7683 3443
- Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) 0870 000 3344

WEBLINKS

www.ceop.gov.uk • www.kidsmart.org.uk • www.chatdanger.com • www.direct.gov.uk

- » Use the Internet together - it can be fun and is useful
- » Have family Internet rules to encourage safer use
- » Paedophiles* can use the Internet to contact children
- » It is important that parents understand the Internet
- » Keep your computer in a family room so you can see sites they are visiting

E-safety

New technology, old problem

The Internet is a wonderful and quick way to find information, help with school work and keep in contact with friends.

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. They may ask for personal information like names, addresses or telephone numbers, make sure your child knows that they should not give this information to anyone they do not know. 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.

Talk to other parents about good chatrooms or websites your child can visit. 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 children 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.



Look up a word

- * **Paedophile** - Adults who have a sexual preference for children.
- * **Browsing** - Looking at.



"I couldn't bear to see what my son was doing to himself. We managed to help him before things got too bad. Family meal times are much better now."

- Controlling food is a way of controlling their lives
- Recognise the problems that set off eating disorders and self-harm
- Find out how to help your child
- If your child is not eating properly or self-harming they are trying to tell you something

Eating disorders & self-harm

Getting the balance right

Eating disorders in younger children are obviously very worrying. Most people think that eating disorders only affect teenagers but in fact, there's a growing problem in the under 12s. Boys as well as girls are affected. They are growing fast and therefore need more energy in the form of calories than older children and can lose weight easily. They should not be losing weight unless they really need to do so and in this case it should be supervised by a Doctor or Dietician.

and avoid conflict and anxiety* around eating. Eat meals at the table with the rest of the family and don't give in to ridiculous requests (like only wanting ice cream). Don't overload their plate.

Self-harm

Self-harming is a cry for help. By injuring themselves a child is controlling their life which they may feel is otherwise chaotic and out of their control.

Those who self-harm do not go on to commit suicide in the vast majority of cases - it is rather as if this is a way of letting off steam, a safety valve. It is difficult to give specific guidance on how to spot self-harming because most children who are self-harming themselves are very clever at hiding it. They often have very strong persuasive arguments when asked if they are okay or why they have injuries.

Look out for the following:

- Cutting out favourite foods.
- Being fussy with food with rules about what they will and won't eat along with panic if you suggest they eat something they don't want to.
- Under 11s should be gaining not losing weight.

What should you do if you think there is a problem?

Don't blame yourself and try not to panic, not all children who show signs of a problem go on to develop a full-blown eating disorder. Getting help now can make all the difference.

There are lots of reasons why children develop problems with eating. Look at what your child eats in a whole day (including snacks and drinks) - they may be eating more than you think and therefore not hungry at mealtimes. Keep mealtimes as 'normal' as possible

A few clues on spotting self-harm

Over and above obvious cuts and bruises can be that your child may seem very down and talk about failing or unhappiness. They may take to wearing many layers of clothes, hiding their arms for instance. They may have an unusual number of injuries or accidents. Eating disorders are seen to be linked to self-harming as are disrupted sleep patterns, so look out for these too.



WARNING SIGNS

Weight loss should always be taken seriously. Eating disorders are linked to self-harming as are disrupted sleep patterns. Cutting out favourite foods and avoiding eating with you. Unexplained injuries.



ACTION

Getting help now can make all the difference. Speak to your Doctor. Try not to panic and become obsessional about it, it may make things worse. Look for the cause of the problem and don't get cross.



WHAT TO SAY

Try not to Judge them. Get them to talk about any problems that may be setting off the eating disorder. If they feel they can't talk to you, encourage them to talk to someone they trust like a friend, relative or Teacher.



PREVENTION

Giving your child the 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

- Relate (Time for You) 024 7622 5999
- Vibes 024 7663 1835 or 7655 2847
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) 024 7624 6330
- Common Assessment Framework* Team 024 7683 2669
- Samaritans 08457 90 90 90 (24 hrs)

WEBLINKS

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk • www.samaritans.org • www.childline.org.uk • www.nshn.co.uk



Look up a word

- * **Common Assessment Framework** - A way of getting the right services and help for the family.
- * **Anxiety** - Worries.



"My son's learning fast. He doesn't need me to tell him that everybody's different. But I do want him to understand that everybody's equal too."



WARNING SIGNS

Children notice difference all the time in things, people and places. They need to know that we are all different but that we are all equal and that difference should not be met with suspicion, envy or fear.



ACTION

You should expect every place your child is in to have made a visible commitment to equality and diversity. All should listen and act at once if discrimination happens or you have worries.



WHAT TO SAY

There are many organisations specially set up to give support and advice to parents, including parents of vulnerable children or children from overseas. See Contacts listed.



PREVENTION

All parents have a right to expect a safe place and support for their child whatever their individual needs, experiences or background. Schools are becoming more inclusive with diversity and equality expected in all areas of school life.



CONTACTS

- Community Policy Team 024 7683 3333
- Equality and Human Rights Commission 0845 604 6610

EMAIL community-policy@coventry.gov.uk

WEBLINKS www.equalityhumanrights.com

- » Your child is protected by the Human Rights Act, the Disability Discrimination Act, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, the Sex Discrimination Act
- » Your local Council, Education and Health Authorities are there to help
- » Ask your child's school how they deal with racism and other forms of harassment and ask them to talk through their policies with you
- » Support groups, parent groups and other organisations are out there to help you

Equality & diversity

Different and equal

Diversity is all about differences. We are all different - physically, socially, culturally and sexually. Diversity means variety.

But not everyone values and respects the differences in society. Discrimination* is when you are treated differently just because of who you are. You could experience discrimination from an individual or from a business, a service, an agency or even a school. Although we're all different we all have the right to equal respect, opportunity and justice*, so there are laws in the UK to prevent discrimination on all levels. If you feel you or your child has experienced discrimination, your local Authority, local organisations and the legal system are there to help you.

Racism

Thanks to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 all public bodies have a clear duty to stop unlawful racial discrimination and to promote equal opportunity and good relations between 'racial groups'. This includes schools, so the curriculum and the teaching in our schools should reflect racial diversity and should have clear processes for handling, reporting and watching out for racist incidents.

Homophobia

We live in a diverse country with a lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender community. Diversity

should be welcomed and reflected across all services. It is not acceptable that anyone is targeted for abuse or discrimination because of their sexuality or the sexuality of their parents, carers or family members.

Sex Education in schools helps young children understand and respect sexual orientation - whether lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

Disability

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 says it is against the law for any service provider (including schools, businesses and organisations) to treat disabled people less well than other people because of their disability. It also means they should make reasonable adjustments to make their services suitable for disabled people to use.

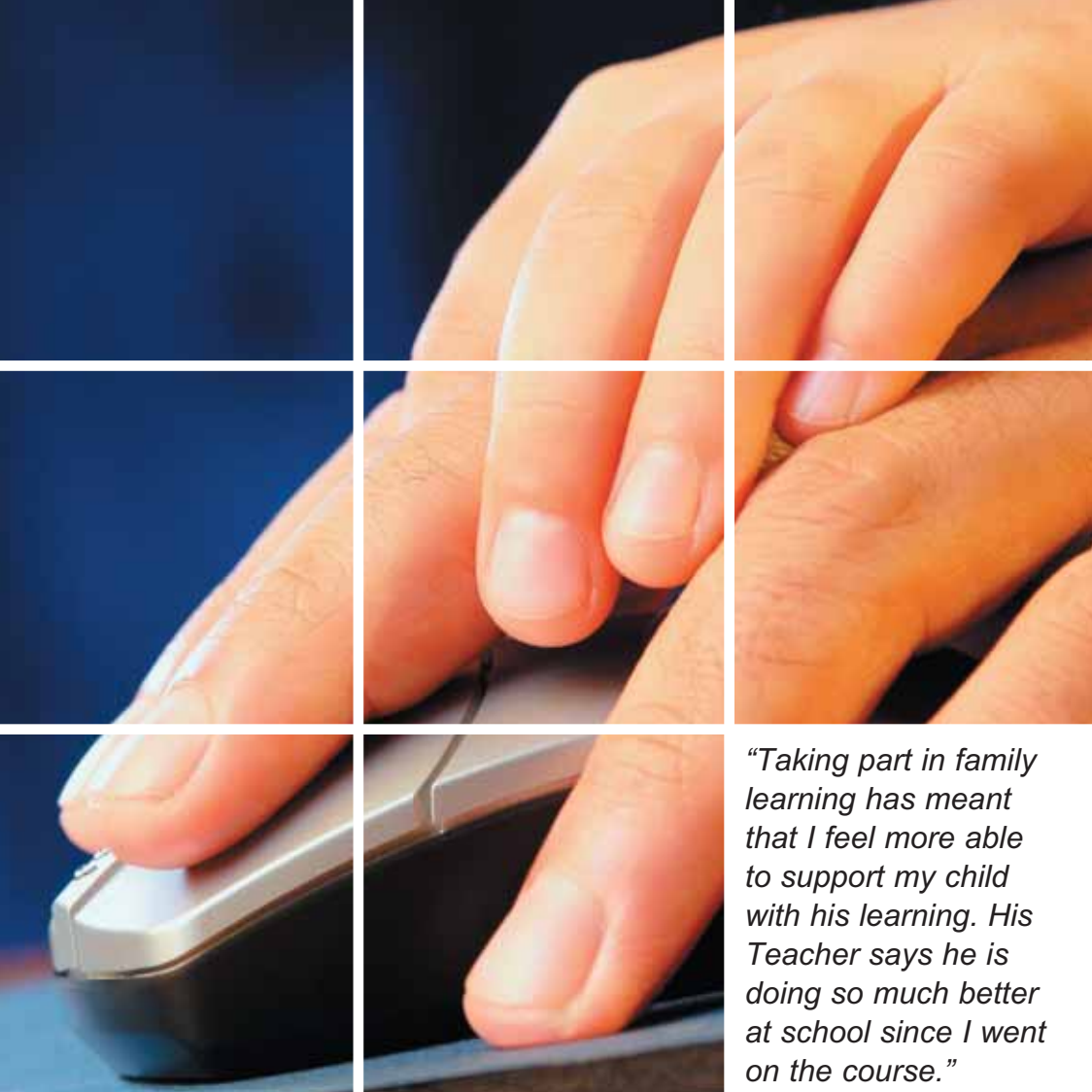
Sexism

Sexism arises out of common stereotypes that exist regarding male and female roles in society. It can be based on experiences some people have of relationships between adults of both genders. Sexism can be experienced in the home, in social situations or in the workplace, leading to discrimination in a variety of situations, including serious forms of physical or psychological abuse. The Sex Discrimination Act is there to provide a legal framework for promoting equality between the sexes.



Look up a word

- * **Discrimination** - Treating people unfairly.
- * **Justice** - Fairness.



“Taking part in family learning has meant that I feel more able to support my child with his learning. His Teacher says he is doing so much better at school since I went on the course.”

- Learning together within the family is a great opportunity to show your child that you value learning
- Learning together is a really good way of bonding
- The best start you can give your child in terms of their education is talking to them
- Taking part in learning as an adult can lead to increased confidence, skills and even qualifications

Family learning

Enjoy learning together

Family learning is a planned activity which involves parents, carers and wider family members in their children's learning. Learning together is a great way of spending time with your child and gives you more things to talk about.

You can get involved in workshops, short sessions and longer courses that will help you support your child at all stages of their learning. These can take place during the school day or in the evenings in schools, Children's Centres, extended schools, libraries or in the local community.

The Council and the local Learning and Skills Council fund Family Learning Programmes to enable adults to return to learning while supporting their children's learning. The Council has a team of Teachers, learning support assistants and coordinators who deliver Family Programmes.

Wider Family Learning covers all aspects of the national curriculum including health issues, citizenship, eco programmes and the arts. Some courses are accredited*.

Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy Programmes aim to support the whole family with their Literacy and Numeracy Skills in a variety of ways. This includes activities, making games and resources to use at home; discussions, working alongside their children. These programmes enable adults to achieve qualifications if desired.

As well as programmes where parents work with their children, the service also offers adult only sessions with a tutor where parents learn about the curriculum and make resources to support children's learning at home. Some sessions can help us brush up on old skills and help us understand the changes in subjects since we were at school. All Family Learning Programmes effectively support for families in school and at home with learning.

Working with parents in groups is a powerful means to provide experiential learning opportunities, build peer support networks as well as a way for parents and children to express their needs.



WARNING SIGNS

If you are concerned about how your child is coping with learning or you do not feel able to help your child you are not alone. Talk to their Teacher or to the Family Learning Team for advice.



ACTION

Talk to your child about their learning and life in school. It's never too late to return to learning even if you did not enjoy it the first time around. Learning as an adult is fun!



WHAT TO SAY

Be positive about your child's efforts with learning new skills. Enrolling on a Family Learning Programme will help you to keep up with the children and see how things are taught so that you can help them at home.



PREVENTION

You can brush up your own literacy and numeracy skills so that you are better able to help your child, by contacting the Family Learning Team or your local College.



CONTACTS

- Children's Centres 024 7683 4373
- Family Learning Service 024 7678 7978
- National Family Learning Team 0121 773 3133
- Your child's school
- Your local library



Look up a word

* **Accredited** - Officially recognised.



"I encourage my children to be as active as possible. We do a lot of activities as a family which is good for my health too!"

- » Balance is the key to a healthy lifestyle
- » If they eat more calories than their body burns, they will put on weight
- » Act now and protect your children from secondhand smoke
- » Life is too short to waste time being unhealthy
- » Establishing good habits now, will help your child become a healthy adult

Healthy lifestyles

Looking after their body

Read all the quick-fix fad books you like! The fact is that getting active combined* with healthy eating, is a great way for children (and adults) to become really healthy and stay that way. And it goes much further than managing their weight - it gives kids crucial* physical and social confidence, helps them make friends and improves levels of self-esteem*.

We all want our children to be healthy, through good diet, exercise and lifestyle. By getting into good health habits from a young age, children are more likely to maintain health, because these habits become a natural part of everyday life as they grow up. But they can't do it on their own - they need role models. It is really important that the whole family gets involved so that children see eating healthily and keeping active as normal behaviour.

Exercise

Encourage your children to be as active as possible. The whole family can get involved with swimming, long walks, bike rides, kicking a ball around the park or even walking to school counts as exercise. There are often after-school clubs where your child can take part in activities such as football or dance class.

Smoking

The health problems associated with cigarettes such as cancer and heart disease are well known, which is why you and your family should stay smoke free.

However if you smoke you should protect your child from secondhand smoke and reduce the risk of them becoming ill. Your Doctor can help you kick this damaging habit for good.

Teeth

Special care is needed for teeth. No one likes going to the Dentist, but it's much less unpleasant if you take your child for regular check-ups and help them look after their teeth in-between times. Children should not have too many sugary snacks and drinks, which can lead to tooth decay. Where possible use non-sugar alternatives and always make sure they brush their teeth regularly (twice a day) with a family fluoride toothpaste. If your child has problems with their teeth please ensure you take them to the Dentist. This will help to prevent serious problems in the future.

What they eat

It can be confusing to know how to plan healthy meals for you and your family. Obesity and heart disease are major problems in the UK today, because we eat too much saturated fat, salt and sugar in fast food and snacks, and not enough fresh fruit and vegetables. Balance is the key. It's important to make sure your child eats a good variety of foods in sensible amounts. A balanced diet is vital for a healthy body to grow and develop at its best, but sometimes 'fussy' eaters and mixed advice can make it a bit challenging. Get more advice if your child is showing real signs of difficulty with food and eating.



WARNING SIGNS

An unhealthy diet can lead to health problems child. They may not sleep well, be able to concentrate, feel less active and not have sufficient energy to live life to the full.



ACTION

Make sure they eat a healthy balanced diet. You can ask your Doctor for diet and exercise advice for a healthy lifestyle for you and your family. If you are a smoker get help to give up. Take your child to the Dentist regularly.



WHAT TO SAY

Explain to your children the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. Suggest activities you can do as a family like cycling or swimming so you can get fit and have fun together.



PREVENTION

Balance is the key! Too much saturated fat, salt and sugar are bad for the body. Make sure your child eats a healthy balanced diet and takes plenty of exercise.



CONTACTS

- School Nursing Service 024 7624 6211
- Children's Centres 024 7683 4373
- Your Doctor, Health Visitor or Midwife
- NHS Smoking Helpline 0800 022 4 332
- Beating Eating Disorders 0845 634 1414

WEBLINKS

<http://smokefree.nhs.uk> • www.b-eat.co.uk • www.nhs.uk/Change4Life



Look up a word

- * **Combined with** - Mixed with.
- * **Crucial** - Very important.
- * **Self-esteem** - Self-confidence, feeling good about yourself.



"I know she is finding things really hard at the moment. She knows I'm here for her and talking seems to help."

- » You might have split up with your partner - this could be a loss to your child
- » The death or loss of a pet can be upsetting for a child
- » Death affects everyone differently
- » Talking can help ease the pain
- » Understanding how to cope will help
- » Be there for each other
- » Let your child take the lead and talk if they want to

Loss & bereavement

Coping with grief*

Loss or death is difficult for everyone but is especially so for children who can find it hard to deal with their feelings.

The death of a loved one can seem too much to take. The death of a pet who has been a part of the family for many years or the loss of a close friend moving away can also be really tough on children.

Children need a lot of support and understanding to help them work through their grief.

There is no right or wrong way to react and everyone handles things in different ways. **There will be a range of feelings your child is likely to go through:**

- Feeling numb as they try to understand that someone is really not coming back.
- Anger at the person who died, at you, at others or themselves.
- Guilt possibly blaming themselves in some way, or feeling guilty because they don't think they're grieving 'enough'.
- Fear that the world as they know it has changed forever.
- Sadness at never seeing that person again.
- Relief, if the person who died was in pain or suffering.
- Depressed, feeling that life has lost all meaning.

Their behaviour may change as they

deal with their emotions and try to come to terms with their loss. They may find it hard to cope with day-to-day life. They may take their anger out on you, get into trouble at school, find it hard to do schoolwork or want to go out with friends more, pushing the limits and maybe behaving badly, as a way of forgetting. Not sleeping well is common at this time too.

How you can help a child

It is easy for a child to think they are the only ones who have lost someone and that no one else understands them, but talking to other people will help. Talk to your child about what has happened as much as they want to, they may find this hard, so encourage friends or a Teacher to be there for them too. It may help if they talk to a Bereavement Counsellor.

Make sure the school knows of their loss and that they will need time and understanding as they work through their feelings. The organisation, Cruse which has a website aimed at young people (see left) helps explain how to deal with feelings.

If you too are suffering, then it is going to be especially hard for you to not only deal with your own feelings, but those of your children too. Try to keep talking to each other, so you can share your grief, rather than each of you grieving alone. Working through this together will help.



WARNING SIGNS

Everyone reacts to death differently and it takes some people longer than others to come to terms with a loss. Give your child as much time and patience as they need, but if you think they are having long-term difficulties, you may want to think about talking to a Bereavement* Counsellor.



ACTION

Take your cue from your child. You may not be the person they find it easiest to talk to, so encourage others to be there for them. But always let them know that you are there for them if they need you.



WHAT TO SAY

Your child may think it's too painful for you to talk about a loved one who has died. Let them know that there are times when you want to talk. Talking about someone who has died helps keep their spirit alive. Remember to let them know it's alright to still laugh or have fun - it doesn't mean you're grieving any less.



PREVENTION

Keep the lines of communication open as the more you talk, the easier the healing process will be. As a parent you can help your child through this difficult time. You can tell them if someone you know has died, and how you felt.



CONTACTS

- School Nursing Service 024 7624 6211
- Relate (Time for You) 024 7622 5999
- Common Assessment Framework* Team 024 7683 2669
- Cruse Bereavement Care 0844 477 9400

WEBLINKS www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk • www.rd4u.org.uk



Look up a word

- * **Bereavement** - Sadness over the loss of a loved one.
- * **Common Assessment Framework** - A way of getting the right services and help for the family.
- * **Grief** - Deep feelings of sadness.



"I love sending dad letters, it makes me feel close to him and he knows I am thinking about him."

- » Talk to your child about how they feel
- » Let your child know that their parent in prison still loves them
- » Discuss whether your child is ready to make a prison visit
- » Tell people around you who you trust and can support you
- » Tell your child they have done nothing wrong and shouldn't feel guilty

Parents in prison

It's tough for everyone

Lots of children and young people know someone in prison. It might be their mum or dad, older brother or sister, aunt, uncle, a grandparent, a friend or someone dear to them. They may feel a range of really confusing emotions like shame that it has happened at all, anger at being left behind, worry about what will happen to the family, and anxiety that people will come to expect the same sort of behaviour from them.

There are also practical worries for children around being able to visit people in prison if it is very far away, and whether people will forget them or change when they are in prison. Sometimes all these emotions* can stop them from sleeping or eating - and that can make them feel worse too.

Sometimes children will be bullied or picked on if friends at school find out about the family member concerned. It's often difficult for children to judge what they can or should say to the people around them. It's often best to say nothing if they really don't want to. Just telling one or two people that they can really trust may be enough to take the pressure off their 'secret'.

As a parent it is vital that normal life for your children goes on as far as possible, even if you are really upset

and worried yourself about what may happen in the future. It may be worth having a quiet word with your child's Teacher asking them to watch out for any unusual behaviour your child may display. Encourage your child to stay in contact with their family members, by telephone if possible, by letter, drawing pictures and visiting them if they are able and they feel up to it. Keeping contact, even by letter is important.

Most prisons have a point of contact for families, although this may vary depending on the category and the prison they are in. All prisons have some form of children's visits by arrangement, facilitated* by prison staff or another partner organisation. Structured play encourages interaction between the child and the person in prison to maintain that special bond between family members.

Life after prison

When family members leave prison it can be difficult to re-adjust. Your new life may be different to the one you had before and it may take time to get used to one another again. There are people who can help you deal with the issues this may bring. See the Contact section for details.



WARNING SIGNS

If your child looks like they are really unhappy, are not sleeping or eating or are being bullied, talk to them and keep doing it - don't let them bottle up their feelings.



ACTION

Talk to your child about how they are feeling - encourage them to keep thinking about their about their family member, draw them pictures, if it's easier write them letters as if they were away on a special holiday or top secret mission.



WHAT TO SAY

Tell your child it's not their fault and they shouldn't feel guilty about things. They are entitled to feel confused, try to continue with normal life as much as possible, some routine will be reassuring.



PREVENTION

Build up a strong relationship so that your child can talk to you or someone else they can trust. Call one of the support services listed, or download some of the free literature available on the websites, ask someone to help you do this if you need to.



CONTACTS

- Common Assessment Framework* Team 024 7683 2669
- ChildLine 0800 1111
- Samaritans 08457 90 90 90
- Prisoners Family Helpline 0808 808 2003

WEBLINKS

www.childline.org.uk • www.samaritans.org • www.prisonersfamilieshelpline.org.uk • www.barnardos.org.uk



Look up a word

- * **Common Assessment Framework** - A way of getting the right services and help for the family.
- * **Emotions** - Feelings.
- * **Facilitated** - Set up, organised by.



"I'd forgotten what fun just making biscuits can be! They say you experience second childhood when you become a parent."



WARNING SIGNS

If your child isn't receiving enough stimulation from you or from other carers, they may not be getting the opportunity they need to learn. It could seriously affect their development and future attitude to learning.



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

Just go with the flow. 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

- Children's Centres 024 7683 4373
- Family Information Service 024 7683 4373
- ChildLine 0800 1111
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 222

WEBLINKS www.childline.org.uk • www.parentlineplus.org.uk

- ▶ Children of all ages learn through play
- ▶ Play is an important part of your child's development
- ▶ Early childhood experiences affect children's attitude to learning
- ▶ Children need a safe and supportive environment where they can play, learn and develop
- ▶ Parents have a continuing vital* role in your child's play and learning

Play & learning

Make learning fun

Playing is a natural way for your child to learn about the world around them. Children learn through play at home, at Children's Centres, Nurseries and Playgroups, with their friends and at school. Play is a vital part of your child's development and you have an important role to play.

Early learning through everyday experiences.

Children who are encouraged to express themselves freely through play tend to be more able to adapt, learn skills and perform better at school. As a parent it's important to spend time playing with your child. Involving children in daily activities such as shopping, laying the table or cooking will provide 'real life' opportunities for children to learn. From birth your child begins to learn through play about using their senses, social interaction, language and mobility.

A helping hand

The Government has introduced Children's Centres to provide a range and quality of services for children and their families. There are all sorts of programmes, covering a wide range of services and support, particularly when it comes to play and learning.

The Foundation Stage

All Government-funded playgroups, nurseries, reception classes and other childcare settings carry out the Foundation Stage of education.

From age three to five almost all

children's learning will be around play based activities as this is the best way for them to learn.

You can find out more about Children's Centres and the Foundation Stage using the contact information in this handbook.

School years

Primary schools recognise the value of play and use it as a crucial learning tool throughout the school day. At home your child will begin to play more on their own or with friends, but it is still vital to be involved in your child's play activities, as well as any hobbies, artistic or sporting interests that they may develop as they grow. Giving your child time and encouragement is of greater value than new toys or games, and being involved in their play means that you are part of their personal, social and emotional development.

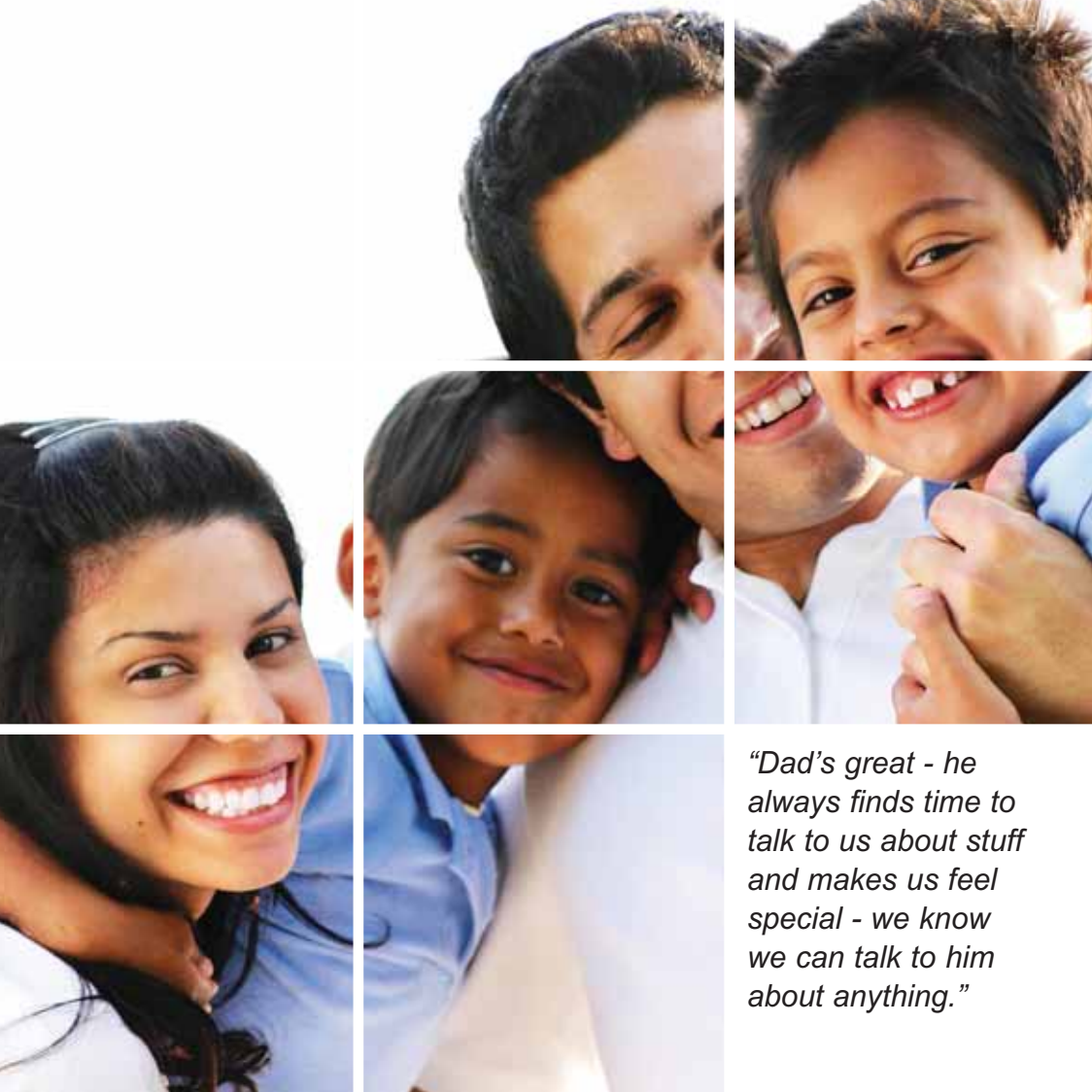
As they grow older you will need to establish ground rules about playing outside and visiting friends. Try to find a way of encouraging your child to get out and interact with others, whilst ensuring* that you know where they are and that they are fully aware of dangers and threats to their safety.

As children, we all enjoyed playing once - perhaps we still do. Learning to play again with your child can be great fun. It will bring you closer and play an important part in preparing them for a full and active life.



Look up a word

- * **Vital** - Very important.
- * **Ensuring** - Making sure of something.



"Dad's great - he always finds time to talk to us about stuff and makes us feel special - we know we can talk to him about anything."

- 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 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. Notice and reward good behaviour and do 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. This is the basis of life-long confidence and self-esteem.

Children have to learn to make their own decisions and eventually establish their independence from their parents. They still need your guidance and support. Encourage them and even if their ideas don't fit with yours be positive where you can.

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 many pre-teens 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.

Take time to relax and enjoy one another's company. Try to do something you enjoy together on a regular basis



WARNING SIGNS

There may be none. Are they eating well, getting enough exercise, changes in how they act and are they trying to tell you something? They may seem 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 pre-teens, 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

- Positive Parenting 024 7678 6949 or 0800 4346 127
- Children's Centres 024 7683 4373
- School Nursing Service 024 7624 6211
- Common Assessment Framework* Team 024 7683 2669
- Your Doctor or Health Visitor
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222

WEBLINKS www.parentlineplus.org.uk • www.parenting.org.uk • <http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive>



Look up a word

- * **Common Assessment Framework** - A way of getting the right services and help for the family.
- * **Secure** - Safe and happy.
- * **Self-esteem** - Self-confidence, feeling good about yourself.



“It was very hard to think about the children’s needs when we separated. But I made an effort to talk to them about it, as I know they all found it really difficult too.”

- » Separation can be as upsetting for your children as it is for you
- » Talking helps them understand what will be happening in their lives
- » Let them know you will both still be there for them
- » Try not to talk your child into taking sides
- » Let them know it’s not their fault

Separation & divorce

It’s not their fault

When a relationship breaks down it is hard for the whole family. While you may think it is kinder to try and protect your children from the details, the truth is that the more your child understands what is going on, the easier they will find it to cope.

If possible, have both parents there when you explain what’s going to happen and why. Try not to fight in front of them and make clear that even though you will be living apart you will both be there for them whenever they need you. They may have mixed feelings during this time including feeling hurt, confused and unloved. You both need to be patient and understanding of their needs as well as your own.

A child can often think that their parents’ breaking up is somehow their fault and that they’ve done something wrong. They may also feel that if they do things differently in the future you may get back together. They need to understand that what’s happened is not their fault.

While most children want contact with both their parents, an older child can view what’s happened differently and may blame one of you for the break-up. You may find your child taking the side of one parent.

Hopefully, this will pass and by explaining the facts, a good relationship can be kept with both parents. It is important not to try to be a favourite parent and help them understand that you both love them.

Learning to listen

Talk to your child and listen to what they have to say. How you handle the break-up is important for their well-being. Try to get them to talk about their feelings and involve them in making choices about the future. As well as feeling like they are losing a parent in some way, they may also be worried that they will have to move house or change schools, so tell them about what may need to happen. Talk to your child about who they will live with, where and what other changes may happen. Even though you are going through a difficult time yourself, your child will also be feeling a sense of loss and hurt. Let them know what is happening to help them deal with their own feelings.

Making arrangements

If you and your partner are finding it hard to talk and agree you can get help from the Coventry Family Mediation Service*.



WARNING SIGNS

Saying bad things or fighting with your partner in front of your children is only going to hurt them. Talk about what’s going to happen as this will have a big impact on their future.



ACTION

Tell your child about what’s happening and how it will affect their lives. Show them that their well-being is important to you both by listening to their feelings and wishes.



WHAT TO SAY

A child can often think the break-up of their parents is their fault. Explain that it is nothing to do with things your child may have said or done. Always give them a chance to talk about their feelings and worries.



PREVENTION

If you do separate or divorce talk to them so they understand why you are breaking up. Let them know that both of you will do what you can to keep their lives as normal as possible.



CONTACTS

- Relate (Time for You) 024 7622 5999
- Coventry Family Mediation 024 7663 3434
- Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) 024 7655 3601
- Common Assessment Framework* Team 024 7683 2669

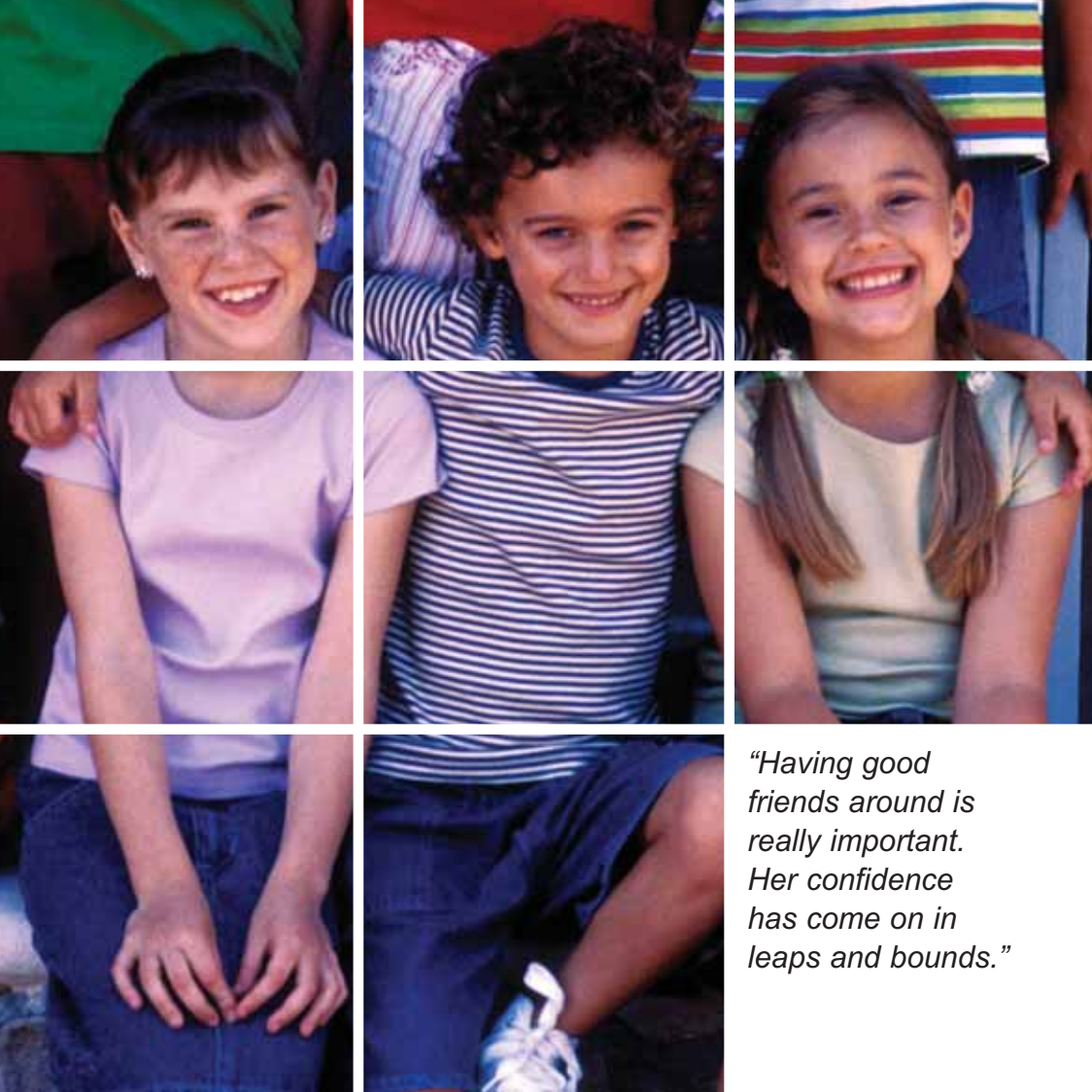


Look up a word

- * **Common Assessment Framework** - A way of getting the right services and help for the family.
- * **Mediation Service** - An organisation that helps couples reach decisions regarding separation and divorce.

WEBLINKS

www.cwfm.org.uk • www.nfm.org.uk • www.cafcass.gov.uk • www.justice.gov.uk • www.itsnotyourfault.org



"Having good friends around is really important. Her confidence has come on in leaps and bounds."



WARNING SIGNS

Children will not always tell you if there is something that is worrying them. You need to understand their needs and let them know that you are there for them and be ready to listen.



ACTION

Try to have regular conversations about relationships and sex. Gradually introduce more information as your child is ready. Make sure they understand and value good relationships. Lead by example.



WHAT TO SAY

You can ask them what they know and then fill in the gaps. Help them by making it easy for them to ask you questions. They may not ask much, but you will have shown that you're approachable and a good listener.



PREVENTION

Talking to teenagers is difficult! Talk about relationships/ friendships from an early age.



CONTACTS

- Positive Parenting Programmes 024 7678 6949 or 0800 4346 127
- Your Doctor or School Nurse
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222
- Ask Brook 0808 802 1234
- British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) 08457 30 40 30

WEBLINKS www.parentlineplus.org.uk • www.brook.org.uk • www.bpas.org.uk • www.fpa.org.uk

- » Explain that relationships and friendships are really important
- » Start early and build on information as your child gets older
- » Be a good role model - if they see you are kind, considerate and responsible, your child is more likely learn by example
- » Find out what your child knows already and fill in the gaps when the time is right
- » Don't just have a one-off talk about relationships and sex, but make it a regular thing
- » Try not to be embarrassed and do not avoid talking about relationships and sex
- » Discuss the issue of contraception and Sexually Transmitted Infections at the right time

Talking to your child about relationships & sex

Build a better relationship

In England our teenage pregnancy rates are very high, over 43,000 in under 18's in 2006, more than 7,000 of whom are under 16. Nearly half of these pregnancies end in abortion. Research shows that young people who have a good relationship and sex education at home and at school start sex later and are less likely to have an unplanned pregnancy and be sexually healthy.

It is important that children learn the value of good relationships and friendships. It can be difficult for children to understand the difference between friendships. All these confusing messages may mean children can get into situations they don't know how to deal with. As a parent you have an important job to make sure your child has the right information and is able to cope.

Use proper names for the body parts and answer questions truthfully and briefly. Children hate lectures, if they want more information they'll ask another question. Always respond when they ask a question or they may think it is wrong to ask.

At school relationship and sex education will look at the importance of family life, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care. They will also teach at the right time sexual health, sex and sexuality.

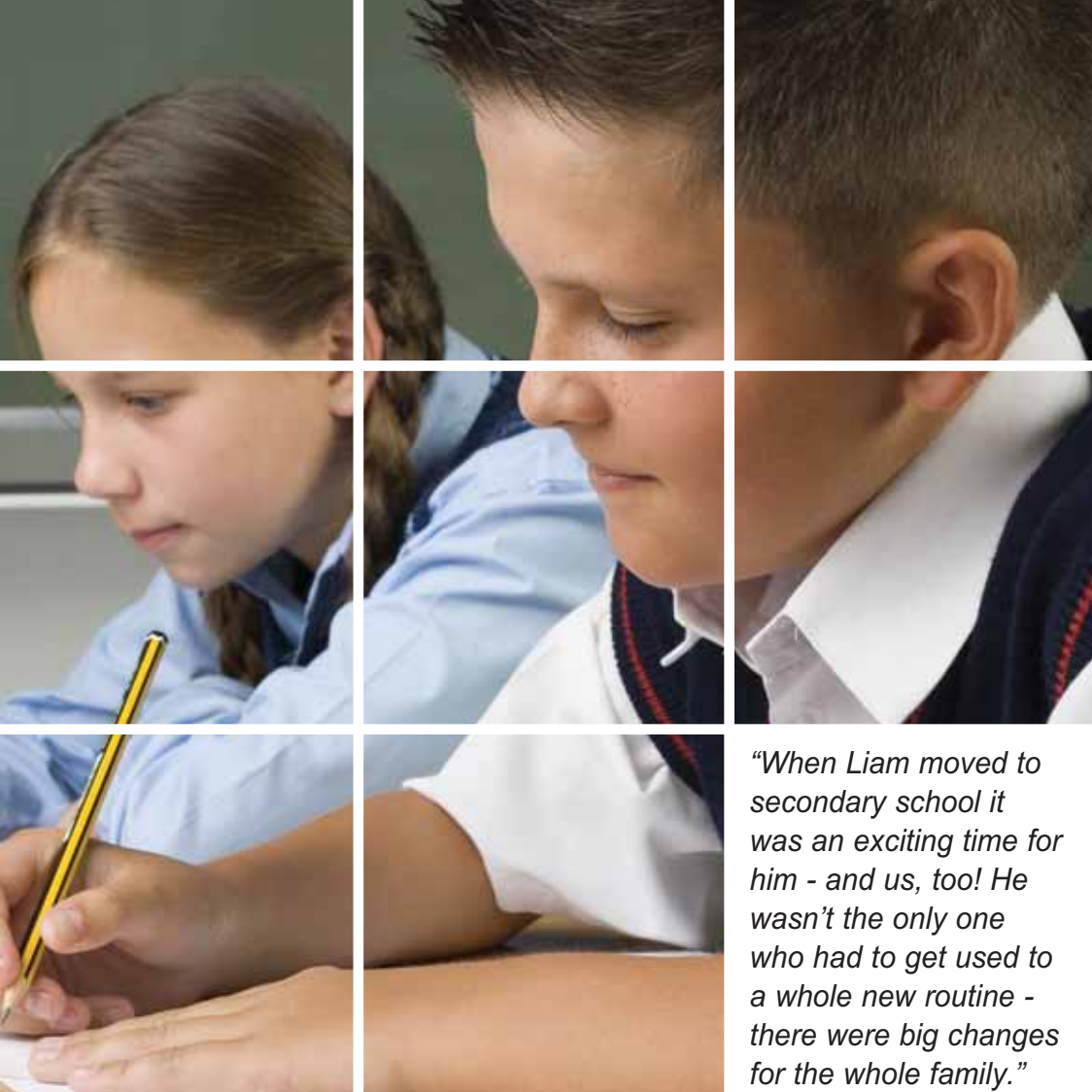
If you feel uncomfortable or unsure about talking about relationships and sex with your children, don't worry - this is common. Start talking early to your child about sex and relationships. Very small children get wrong ideas that frighten and confuse them. Talk to them about their feelings, friendships and relationships in the family.

If you do not know the answers to all the questions your child has just say so. Try finding out together at the library, online, or through the School Nurse.



Look up a word

- * **STIs** - Sexually Transmitted Infections you can catch by having unprotected sex i.e. Chlamydia - this infection often has no symptoms and can lead to infertility.



“When Liam moved to secondary school it was an exciting time for him - and us, too! He wasn’t the only one who had to get used to a whole new routine - there were big changes for the whole family.”

- Moving from primary school to secondary school will be a huge change for your child
- Start thinking about which secondary school you’d like them to go to well in advance
- Find out as much as you can about their new school
- It can sometimes be a difficult time for parents too
- Visit the school in advance with your child

Transitions

Moving on

Choosing which school your child will move to can be a very stressful time for parents. There are lots of questions that need to be answered and decisions to be made.

Start thinking about it during year five. Then during the autumn term of year six you will receive a booklet called ‘Transfer to Secondary School’.

Find out as much as you can about the schools near you. Go to open days, and read recent Ofsted* reports if you can. Of course, you should make the decision with your child. Which school would they prefer to go to? A school might not have enough places for everyone who wants to go there. Make sure you know what happens if so.

A Choice Adviser can give you support and guidance to help you decide which secondary school you would prefer your child to attend (see Contacts).

When you’ve decided which schools you’re interested in, fill out the Common Application Form. You can do it online or on paper (see Contacts). This needs to happen in the autumn term a year before your child would start there. Do this by the closing date, or you might not get the school you want. You’ll find out if your child has been accepted by 1 March. If they haven’t been given a place, you can appeal against the school’s decision.

When your child starts secondary school, it’s a big change for them. They’re used to being the oldest in their school - soon they’ll be the youngest. Everything will be brand new and much bigger. They’ll have more books, more Teachers and more homework.

Moving school can be scary but exciting too, so give your child lots of support so it’s easier for them. Make sure they know what’s happening and make your decisions together.

Visiting the school with your child to meet their Teachers before they start can help. Find out who else is going to their new school - can you go together on the first day?

There are lots of things that your child will need when they start at secondary school, so try to be prepared - think about their uniform (if they wear one), a bag for their books, sports kit, stationery and equipment.

As a parent, you might worry how your child is going to cope with new friends and new subjects to learn, or how they’ll deal with the pressures of being a teenager. While you probably feel excited for them, maybe you also feel a little sad that your child is growing up and doesn’t need you so much any more. It’s natural to feel like this sometimes.



WARNING SIGNS

Your child might not want to leave their primary school. They might feel nervous and insecure about the big changes and say they feel too ill to go to school. They might be angry towards you or cry, too. These feelings are all quite normal.



ACTION

Start thinking about which secondary school you want your child to go to well in advance. Your child’s primary school will probably arrange visits to local secondary schools. If it doesn’t, try to visit them yourself. Remember to make the decision with your child, not for them.



WHAT TO SAY

If your child feels nervous, talk about how you felt when you changed schools. Explain that it’s natural to feel like this and that everyone’s in the same situation. Talk to your child about bullying and explain that it’s wrong. Tell them to let you know if anything like this is happening.



PREVENTION

If you’re feeling anxious about your child starting at secondary school, try not to let them see this. Be positive about the exciting change they’re about to go through. Talking to your child openly and often about what’s going to happen will help them feel prepared about the next stage in their life.



CONTACTS

- Admissions and Benefits Team 024 7683 1577/2499
- Choice Adviser 024 7683 3792
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222

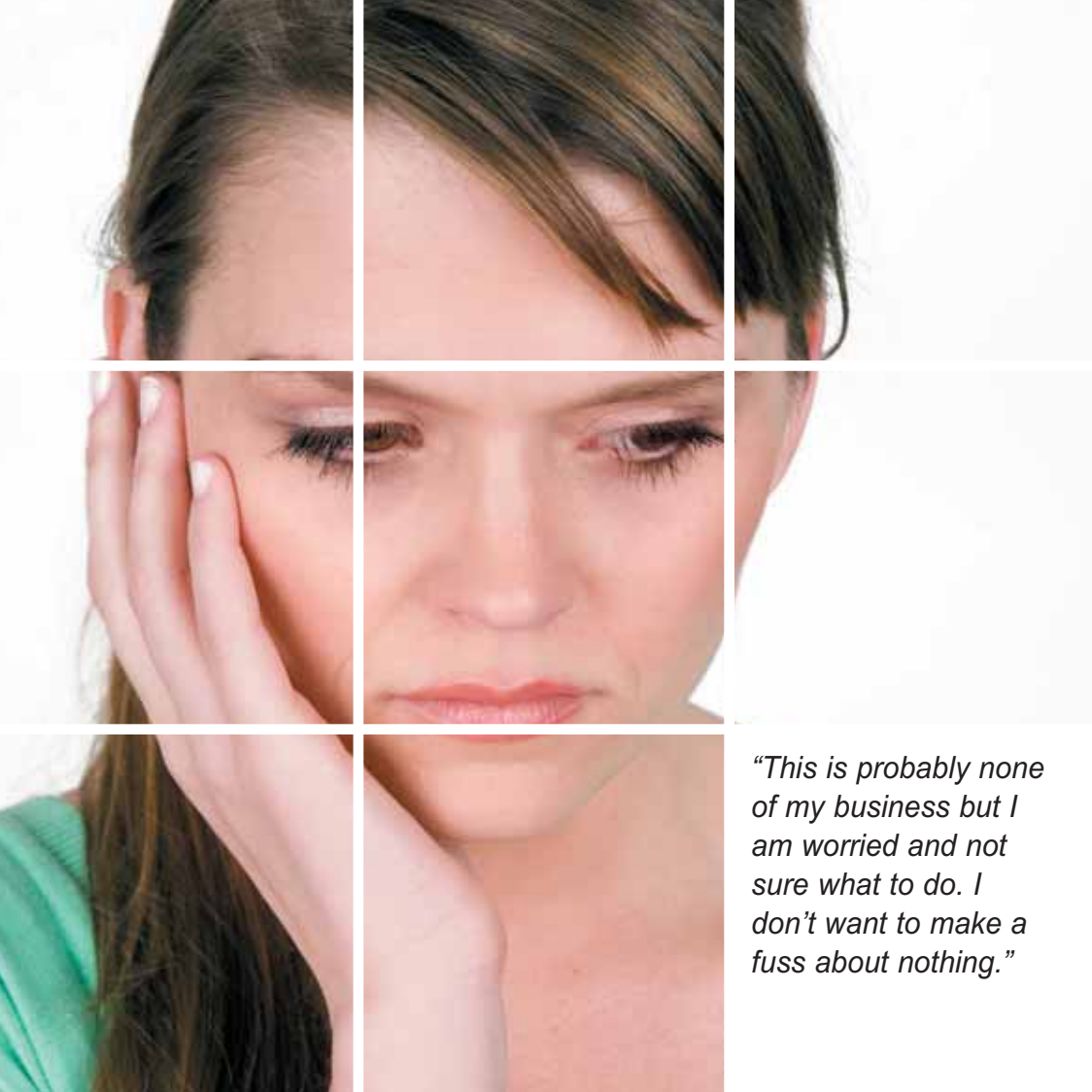
EMAIL admissions.benefits@coventry.gov.uk

WEBLINKS www.parentlineplus.org.uk • www.direct.gov.uk • www.edubase.gov.uk • www.ofsted.gov.uk



Look up a word

* **Ofsted** - Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills.



"This is probably none of my business but I am worried and not sure what to do. I don't want to make a fuss about nothing."

- » 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
- » Act now - long-term abuse is damaging for children

Worried about a child

Should you mind your own business?

All families have problems at times but can be helped by other family members or close friends.

If someone you know is having difficulties, you could:

- Listen to their problems.
- Help them cope.
- Encourage them to get more help.
- Support them by babysitting or doing shopping.

There may be times when a child is at risk of harm and you need to get help.

When we think, see or are told about a child that is being hurt we can react in many different ways. We may feel guilty, angry, or shocked. Some people's reactions can stop help getting to a family who need it.

Many people do not tell because they fear that:

- Children will get hurt more.
- They believe that nothing will be done.
- They believe that the child would be taken away.
- They worry that the family may find out who reported them.
- Telling may ruin family relationships.

In truth, it is best that action is taken early to stop things getting worse. Long-term abuse is much more likely

to cause problems for a child as they get older. Even if you think something is just a one off, other agencies may already have concerns about the child. Your information could be very important.

If you report your concerns to Social Services or the Police, you will be asked for your details and the worries you have. You should write down what you want to say before you speak to them so that you can remember everything.

Reporting suspected child abuse is vital* and it is the duty of all adults to protect children. Do not feel that you are judging a family or interfering as it could be easy to overlook suspected abuse.

The main aim of Child Protection Investigations is not to take the child away from their family but to make sure they are safe.

Social Workers can only remove children from home with a court order, having shown that there is serious risk. In emergency situations the Police have the power to remove a child from home for 72 hours.



WARNING SIGNS

There are many possible signs of abuse, ranging from injury to changes in the way a child is acting. You could see something happen or a child may tell you that they are being hurt.



ACTION

If you think that a child has been hurt, contact the Duty Social Worker or the Police. If you are unsure, you can speak to a helpline such as the NSPCC and your call will be kept private.



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.



PREVENTION

Make sure your child knows who they can share worries with if and when they need to. Listen carefully to children and notice any changes in them.



CONTACTS

- Social Care 024 7678 8555
- Common Assessment Framework* Team 024 7683 2669
- NSPCC 024 7622 2456 or 0808 800 5000
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222
- ChildLine 0800 1111
- Family Rights Group 0808 801 0366
- Police 999 in an emergency

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



Look up a word

- * **Common Assessment Framework** - A way of getting the right services and help for the family.
- * **Concerns** - Worries.
- * **Vital** - Very important.



"It has taken a while but I'm trying to be the best mum I can. It's really great spending time with them."



WARNING SIGNS

You may be finding it hard to cope and feel tearful. You may find it difficult looking after your baby and notice you have little interest. You may not be eating or sleeping well.



ACTION

You need to learn to look after your baby. Ensure you are eating well and sleep while the baby sleeps. If possible encourage the baby's dad to help and get involved.



WHAT TO SAY

Encourage your partner to get involved. Find out more together about your options and support services available to you.



PREVENTION

The more support you have during pregnancy, the more likely you will be able to cope once the baby is born. Ask about local support groups and try to meet other young parents.



CONTACTS

- Family Information Service 024 7683 4373
- Common Assessment Framework* Team 024 7683 2669
- Ask Brook 0808 802 1234
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222
- Health Visitor
- Childrens Centres 024 7683 4373

WEBLINKS www.brook.org.uk • www.parentlineplus.org.uk • www.teenissues.co.uk

- » Many young parents are surprised by their pregnancies, but just because you did not plan to have a child at this time does not mean you will be a bad parent
- » You need to be prepared for changes in your life
- » Keep in touch with your best friends and family!
- » Being a parent means some big changes to your life no matter what age you are

Young parents

Getting the support you need

It's going to mean some big changes to your life and no matter what age you are, there will be times when you will need extra support and have questions that need answering.

Just because you are young doesn't mean you won't be just as good a parent as anyone else, but there are things that can make being a young parent a bit daunting. The demands of a child combined with sorting out your own future can affect even the most energetic, enthusiastic parent.

However, there is support for young parents and keeping everything in perspective can help keep you from feeling overwhelmed. Coming to terms with your situation, finding out about help, understanding your rights about education and employment and getting support from friends and family can all help you cope.

You could think about going back into education, training or work. Re-visit some of the plans and dreams you had before you had the baby.

Looking after yourself

Having a baby can be exhausting and stressful. Boost your energy levels by eating a healthy diet - you need to stay on top of things.

Ask friends and family for help and involve your baby's father, even if you do not live with him.

What about losing baby weight?

Start by taking some gentle exercise and aim to give yourself a year to get back into shape. The best way to lose weight after having a baby is to follow a balanced diet and avoid fatty or sugary foods. Your body has just gone through a huge change and trying to lose weight too quickly will drain you of energy.

Cigarettes and alcohol

Smoking during pregnancy is dangerous and is linked to low birth weight babies. Also, if you are breastfeeding, the nicotine from the cigarettes can be passed through your breast milk. Don't let your baby inhale secondhand smoke. Never smoke when you are around them and ask family or friends not to smoke at home. You should avoid alcohol and drugs too as chemicals pass quickly into your bloodstream and therefore your baby's milk.

Keep in touch with your best friends and family!



Look up a word

* **Common Assessment Framework** - A way of getting the right services and help for the family.

National contacts

ADFAM
020 7553 7640
www.adfam.org.uk

Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)
0808 800 5793
www.ace-ed.org.uk

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

Beating Eating Disorders
0845 634 1414
www.b-eat.co.uk

Bullying UK
www.bullying.co.uk

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

Child Exploitation and 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

Cruse Bereavement Care
0844 477 9400
www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

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

Daycare Trust
0845 872 6251
www.daycaretrust.org.uk

Drinkline
0800 917 8282

Equality and Human Rights Commission
0845 604 6610
www.equalityhumanrights.com

Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (FFLAG)
0845 652 0311
www.fflag.org.uk

Family Information Direct
www.dcsf.gov.uk/familyinformationdirect

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

Gingerbread
0808 802 0925
www.gingerbread.org.uk

Internet Watch Foundation
www.iwf.org.uk

Kidscape
08451 205 204
www.kidscape.org.uk

Missing Persons Helpline
0500 700 700 (24hrs)
www.missingpeople.org.uk

National Day Nurseries Association
01484 407070
www.ndna.org.uk

National Domestic Violence Helpline
0808 2000 247
www.womensaid.org.uk
<http://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>

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)
0808 800 5000
www.nspcc.org.uk

Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)
0300 123 1231
www.ofsted.gov.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 (24 hrs)
www.samaritans.org

Shelter
0808 800 4444 (24 hrs)
www.shelter.org.uk

Victim SupportLine
0845 30 30 900
www.victimsupport.org.uk

YoungMinds
0808 802 5544 (Parents Helpline)
www.youngminds.org.uk

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

Local contacts

Admissions and Benefits Team
024 7683 1577/2499

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
024 7624 6330

Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS)
024 7655 3601
www.cafcass.gov.uk

Children's Centres
024 7683 4373

Common Assessment Framework Team
024 7683 2669

Community Policy Team
024 7683 3333

Coventry Community Health Services
024 7684 4187
www.coventrypct.nhs.uk

Coventry Family Mediation
024 7663 3434
www.cwfm.org.uk

Coventry Refugee Centre
024 7622 7254
www.covrefugee.org

Coventry Talk Now
024 7678 6043
www.coventrytalknow.co.uk

Coventry Victim Support
024 7683 9950

Defuze
024 7622 1112

Family Information Service
024 7683 4373

Family Learning
024 7678 7978

Haven
024 7644 4077

I Can
0845 225 4071

Multi Disciplinary Teams
024 7683 4150

NSPCC
024 7622 2456

Panagher (Asian Women's Organisation)
024 7622 8952
www.safehouse.org.uk

Parent Partnership Service
024 7669 4307

Positive Parenting
024 7678 6949 or 0800 4346 127

Relate (Time for You)
024 7622 5999
www.relatecoventry.org

Safeguarding Children's Service
024 7683 3443

School Nursing Service
024 7624 6211

SEN Management Services
024 7683 1615

Social Care
024 7678 8555

Speech and Language Therapy Service
024 7684 4187/9

The Friends Project
024 7678 5575

Vibes
024 7663 1835 or 024 7655 2847
Email: vibes@coventrymind.org.uk

Useful websites

www.mensadvice.org.uk • www.grandparents-association.org.uk • www.dads-space.com • www.dadtalk.co.uk • www.netmums.co.uk • www.mumsnet.com • www.grandparentsplus.org.uk • www.childrenslegalcentre.com • www.toast-uk.org • www.ican.org.uk/TalkingPoint/ • www.childcarseats.org.uk • www.parentsintouch.co.uk • www.nhs.uk/change4life

Every effort has been made to keep the information in this booklet up-to-date and accurate. However, we cannot guarantee that inaccuracies will not occur. Coventry Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership will not be held responsible for any loss, damage or inconvenience caused as a result of reliance on such information.

Throughout this handbook we refer to 'parents'. This term also refers to carers, grandparents and those who care for our children.