

The Safer Parenting Handbook

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS



STOCKPORT
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL



Introduction



Welcome to the Stockport Safer Parenting Handbook.

Your role as a parent or carer is one of the most difficult there is - it can be both challenging and rewarding. It is a role where very little training is given to prepare you for what lies ahead.

Every family experiences difficulties from time to time and this can test any parent or carer. When additional pressures come along, these can make a hard job nearly impossible. At these times it may be hard to think about what help or information you might need.

When things go wrong it does not mean that someone has failed in parenting - things go wrong for everyone. It is often the way difficulties are handled that can make the difference to your children both now and in the future.

Sometimes the right information just might prevent things going wrong in the first place.

There is no such thing as a perfect parent, but we all want to do our best for our children.

What is the handbook about?

This handbook offers ideas and information to help answer questions about issues that parents or carers face. It can't answer everything, but gives contacts for following up specific issues in detail. It also gives warning signs to watch out for and advice for when a problem appears. It aims to help you find your way to the advice you need in order that you feel supported in your role.

Who is this handbook for?

This handbook is for all parents and carers and is relevant for those with very young children as well as those with teenagers. Its aim is to prevent problems arising, but to provide advice if they do.

The handbook has been produced by the Stockport Local Safeguarding Children Board which has members from all the key agencies who work with families; our aim is to make sure children and young people are kept safe and that their welfare is promoted.

I hope that you find this handbook useful.



A. Webb
Chair of Stockport Local
Safeguarding Children Board

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Babysitting & childcare

“ Leaving Natalie with anyone is difficult, but I really need to have a break sometimes. I would worry all the time if I could not rely on and trust the person looking after my child. I'm really glad I spent the time I did finding the right babysitter. ”



WARNING SIGNS

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



ACTION

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



WHAT TO SAY

Tell the babysitter all about your child's routine and their likes and dislikes. Tell the babysitter about your rules, like no smacking. Always leave a contact number in case of emergencies.



PREVENTION

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



CONTACTS

- Stockport Children's Social Care 0845 644 4313
- Family Info Link 0808 800 0606
- ChildLine 0800 1111
- NSPCC 0808 800 5000

Check website for any recent changes in telephone details • www.stockport.gov.uk

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

Who can I leave my child with?

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

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

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

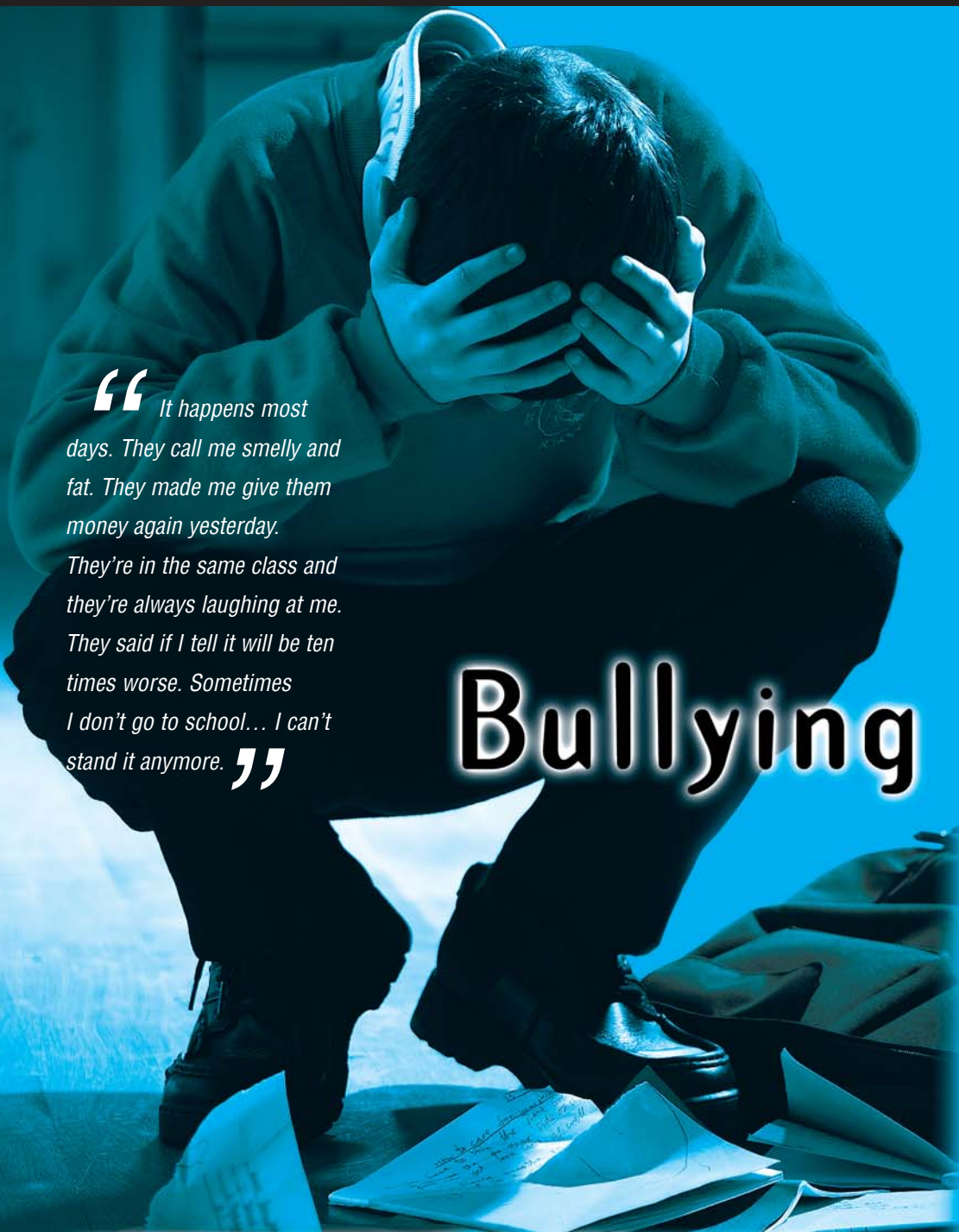
Babysitters do not need qualifications or a certificate to look after children. As a result anyone can advertise his or her services as a babysitter. Children's Law and the NSPCC

recommend that the minimum age of a babysitter should be 16 years of age. This is based on the idea that at 16 and above, an individual is much more aware of potential dangers and risks and could seek help quickly if necessary.

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

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





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

Bullying

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

The real story

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

School days are a time when the influence of other children is very important and fitting in is seen as essential. If children are thought of as different for any reason, they can be picked on and bullied. Sadly, we still live in a society in which to be different in any way can mean ridicule and bullying (often copied from parents) and this ensures that prejudice will continue into the next generation. It is crucial to be alert to the possibility of bullying and make sure you know the tell-tale signs.

You may think that your child is unlikely to be bullied but the reality is that bullying can happen at any time and to any child.

Bullies who continually harm other children need support and help as well. They may have experienced difficulties of their own at home, which may have led to their actions. Reporting concerns may help them to get help as well.

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

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 and so it is important that parents and schools work together.



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 someone at the school for their support and action. If bullying is happening 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
Refuse to put up with bullying. Walk away, tell an adult or friend and avoid fighting. Parents - listen to your child, reassure and be there for them.



PREVENTION
Talk to your child about their school day. Teach your child to respect others from a young age. Teach your child that prejudice and bullying is not acceptable.



CONTACTS

- Stockport Children’s Social Care 0845 644 4313
- Stockport Education Welfare 0161 474 2195
- www.kooth.com
- Contact your child’s Headteacher
- Kidscape 08451 205 204
- Youth Access will put you in touch with local services that offer information, advice and counselling 020 8772 9900
- ChildLine 0800 1111

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Child exploitation

“ I used to blame myself. How could I be so stupid to get into this! Now I know better. I was thirteen; he was twenty. He said he loved me, but all along he knew exactly what he was doing. ”



WARNING SIGNS

Absence from home or truancy from school; unexplained money, clothes, jewellery or other gifts; new relationships with older men; evidence of drug or alcohol abuse; changes in mood or behaviour; loss of contact with former friends and new relationships with an older age group; lack of self-esteem.

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ACTION

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



WHAT TO SAY

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



PREVENTION

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



CONTACTS

- Stockport Children's Social Care 0845 644 4313
- Safe in the City 0161 274 0180
- Stockport Police 0161 872 5050 (in an emergency call 999)
- NSPCC 0808 800 5000
- Save the Children (National) 020 7703 5400
- Barnardos (National) 020 8550 8822
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222

- The prostitution of children is an extreme form of sexual exploitation and abuse
- Prostitution and other sexual exploitation may happen on the street
- Children can be drawn into sexual exploitation by manipulative adults who wish to make money
- Adults who abuse children should be held responsible, rather than blaming the children
- Children involved in sexual exploitation face devastating physical, emotional and psychological risks
- It's never too early or too late to get help

Drawn into sexual exploitation

How can it happen?

It may be hard to imagine how any child could be drawn into prostitution. The sad fact is that those who benefit from child exploitation use sophisticated methods to lure their victims in and keep them there. It can begin with an 'exciting' new relationship with an older boyfriend who may in fact be, or become a pimp. The child may receive expensive gifts and be introduced to alcohol and drugs. Before long the pimp creates a loyal and dependent relationship with the victim and can then persuade or force them to make money for him by providing sexual services to others. But this is not a business relationship - it is an illegal form of sexual abuse, which puts the child involved at risk from severe physical, emotional and psychological damage.

child is at risk from or is involved in sexual exploitation. If all or even some of them apply to your child, you should consider that they might be at risk.

How to stop it

Keeping or getting children out of child exploitation can require specialist help. A close and positive relationship with your child can reduce their vulnerability. Ensuring that they have high self-esteem and feel good about themselves can prevent them falling prey to abusive relationships. However, even with the best parents in the world, some children will find themselves vulnerable to this form of abuse. Parents can often feel powerless to intervene in what can be a complex and threatening situation.

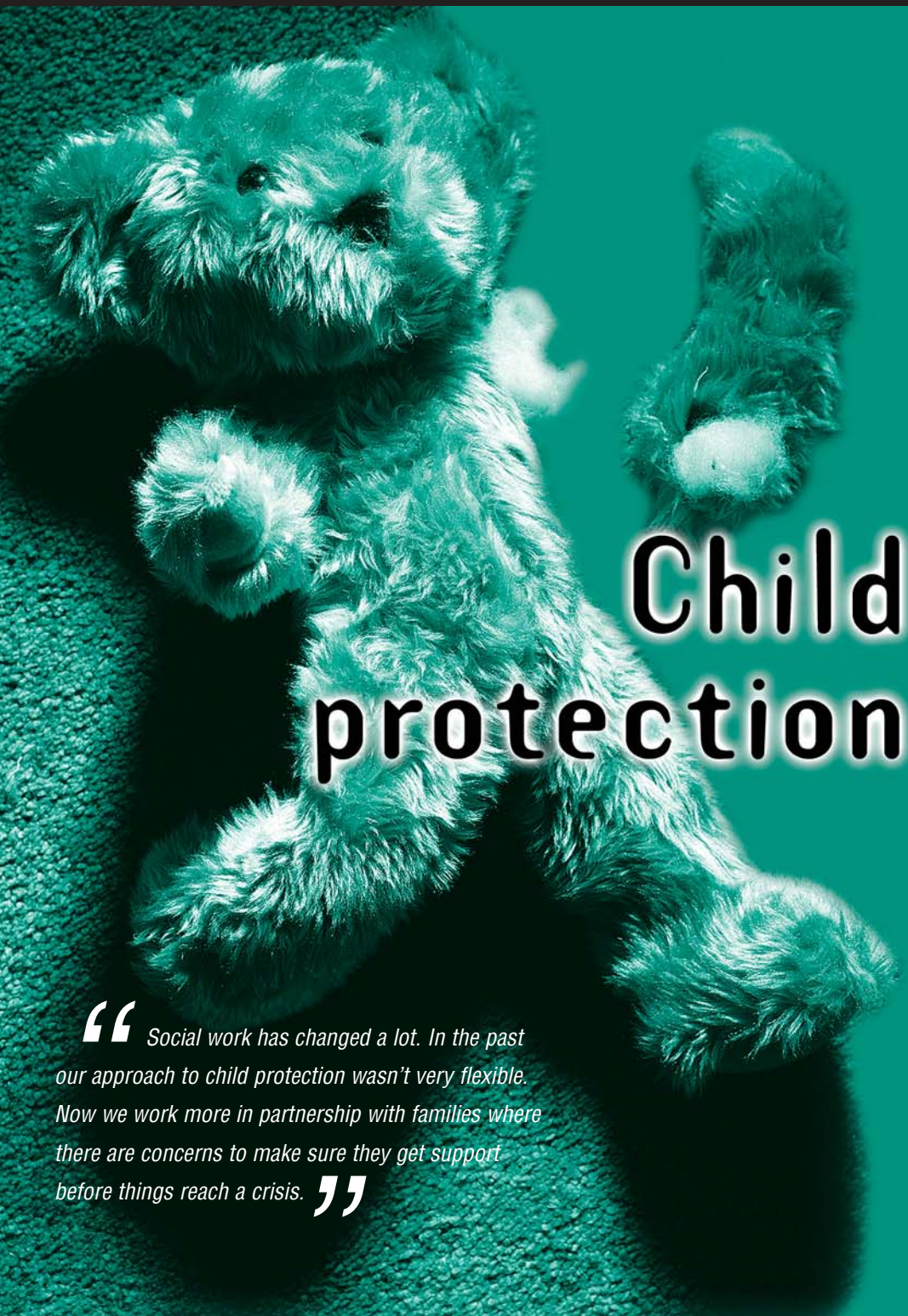
The damage

Children involved in sexual exploitation can become victims of serious physical and sexual attacks, which can sometimes be fatal. They can easily become addicted to drugs and alcohol and face a high risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections. The emotional and psychological damage can be devastating and can lead to self-harm, depression and suicide.

There are some agencies (some detailed on the opposite page) who work with families to combat child exploitation. If you feel your child is at risk they can provide information and support for you and your child to help avoid dangerous relationships. If your child is involved in sexual exploitation they will work with you and your child to form an individual plan and package of support to ensure that they are no longer left vulnerable to those who wish to exploit them. It is never too early or too late to get help.

How to spot it

There are some warning signs detailed on the opposite page that could indicate that your



Child protection

“ Social work has changed a lot. In the past our approach to child protection wasn't very flexible. Now we work more in partnership with families where there are concerns to make sure they get support before things reach a crisis. ”



WARNING SIGNS

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



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

- Stockport Children's Social Care 0845 644 4313
- Family Rights Group 0800 731 1696
- NSPCC 0808 800 5000
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222

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- Parents are responsible for their children's safety
- A social worker becomes involved once concern is shared
- Children are best cared for by their own families
- Professionals want to work in partnership with families
- Professionals want to work with families to reduce the risk of harm to children
- Very few children are removed from home following abuse

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.

Stockport 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 Stockport Police Child Protection Unit will investigate with social workers to help protect children and decide whether an offence has been committed against a child.

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

Many **myths** exist, so for the record:

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

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

effect on the child. All of these factors will help to decide what should happen next to support and protect the child and family.

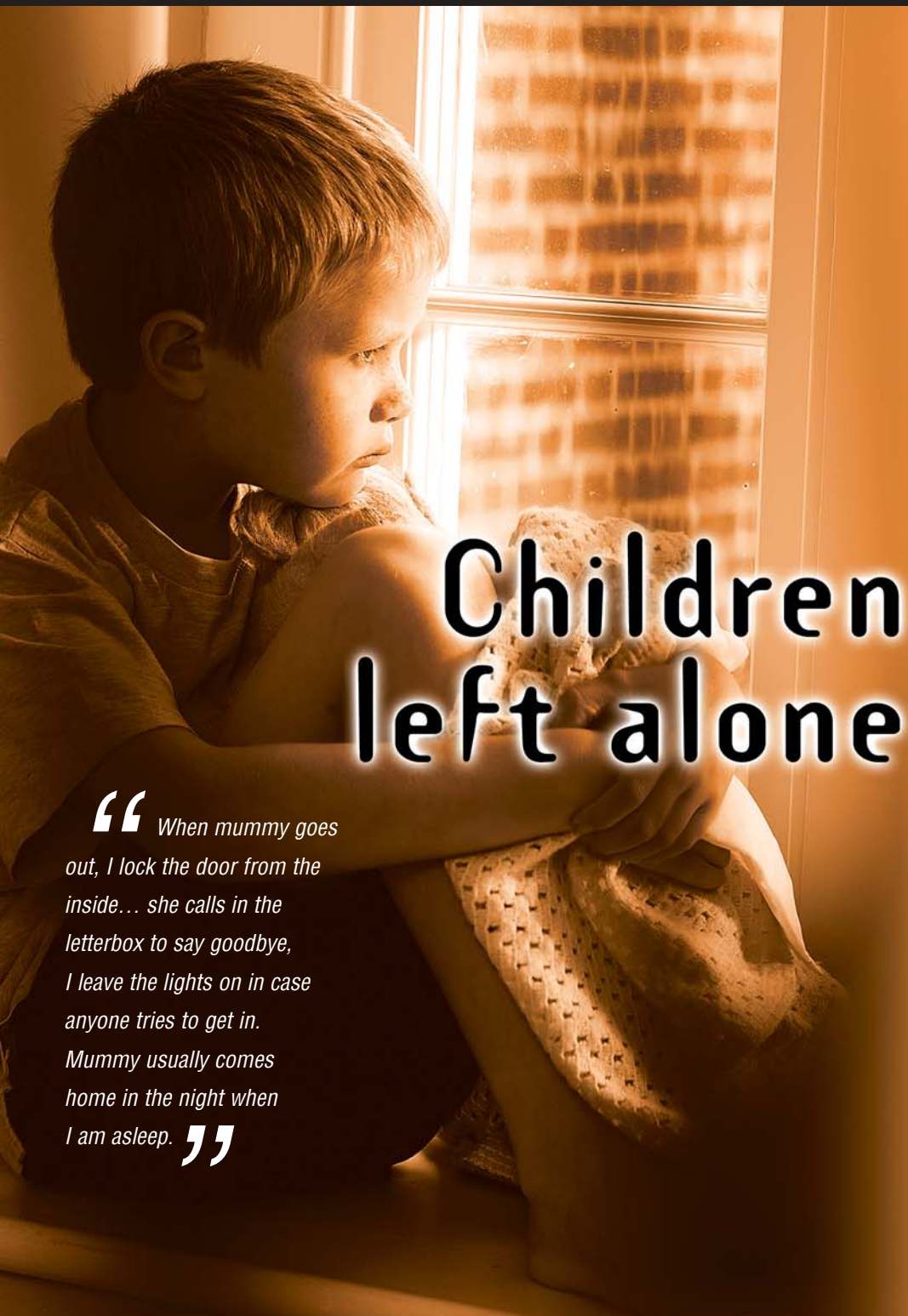
Social workers and the Police have a duty (they have no choice about this) under the Children Act 1989 to investigate concerns of child abuse.

2. Professionals are not solely responsible for protecting children.

Traditionally, social workers have been expected to make sure that children are safe. In order to do this well, they rely on information from parents, family, other professionals and the local community who all play an important part in identifying concerns about those close to them. This helps to ensure that they are offered support before the situation becomes far worse.

3. Reporting child abuse rarely results in the child being removed from home.

This is not the main aim of child protection investigations and rarely happens. Social workers can only remove children from home with a court order, having demonstrated that there is serious and immediate risk. In emergency situations the Police have power to remove a child for 72 hours.



Children left alone

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

- Never leave a young child alone
- Children under 13 years should not be left alone
- Children are not ready for this amount of responsibility
- Leaving a child alone places them at risk of harm
- It can be a lonely and frightening experience
- Plan who you could contact for emergency care

Common sense and the law

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

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

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

The NSPCC have issued guidelines advising that children under the age of 13 should not be left alone. While this recommendation does not have the force of law, it is suggested as good practice. Children under this age do not have the maturity to manage the responsibility of being left alone and this may be particularly so if they are physically or learning disabled.

As a young person reaches adolescence, leaving them alone after school, for an evening or during the day is less concerning as long as they are prepared and aware of what to do if they are worried or need anything. So preparation for this is necessary. If your child is 13 or over and you feel he or she has the maturity and ability to deal with this, it is important that they know where you are and who to contact in an emergency.

If they are alerted, the Police and/or Social Care may take action if they think that a child has been neglected by being left alone. Neglect happens when a parent or carer fails to meet children's basic needs of food, shelter, security, attention or protection from exposure to danger.



WARNING SIGNS

Parents who have limited support. A child who is frequently observed outside and alone for extended periods of time. Childcare arrangements that keep going wrong.



ACTION

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



WHAT TO SAY

If you are worried about a child being left alone, talk to the parent, a health visitor, teacher or a social worker.



PREVENTION

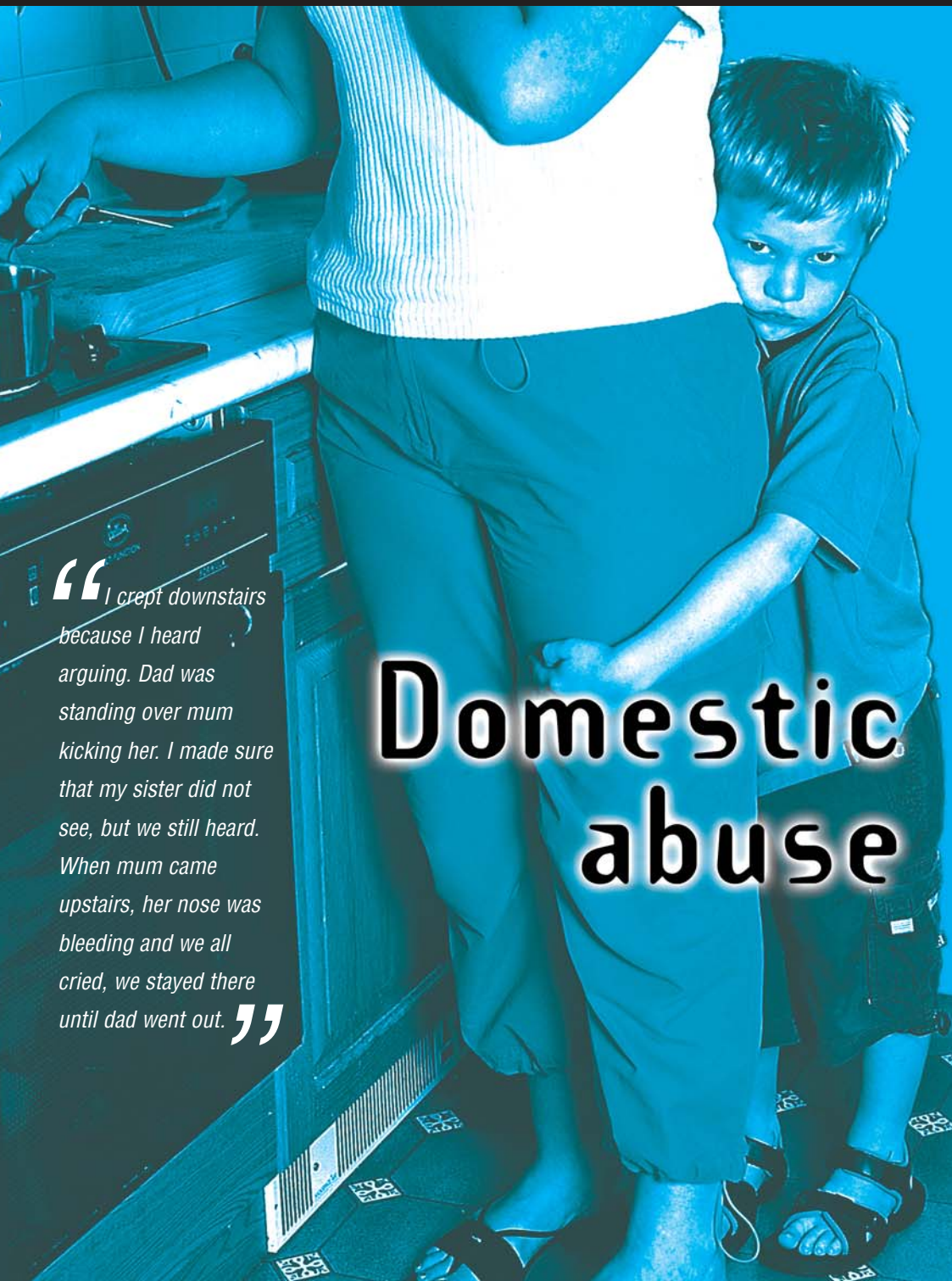
Think about shared babysitting and discuss this with neighbours, friends or other parents you have contact with. Find out about After School Clubs and Holiday Play Schemes.



CONTACTS

- Stockport Children's Social Care 0845 644 4313
- Stockport Police 0161 872 5050 (in an emergency call 999)
- ChildLine 0800 1111
- NSPCC 0808 800 5000
- Family Info Link 0808 800 0606

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“ I crept downstairs because I heard arguing. Dad was standing over mum kicking her. I made sure that my sister did not see, but we still heard. When mum came upstairs, her nose was bleeding and we all cried, we stayed there until dad went out. ”

Domestic abuse

- Domestic violence teaches children to use violence
- Violence can affect children in serious and long-lasting ways
- Where there is domestic violence there is often child abuse
- Children will often blame themselves for domestic violence
- Alcohol misuse is very common when violence occurs in families
- Pregnant women are more vulnerable to domestic violence

How does it affect children?

Domestic violence is a crime and a major social problem affecting many families. In 90% of reported domestic violence incidents, children have either been present in the same or a nearby room.

bedwetting, running away, aggressiveness, behavioural difficulties, problems with school, poor concentration and emotional turmoil.

Children who witness, intervene or hear incidents are affected in many ways. What can be guaranteed is that children do hear, they do see and they are aware of violence in the family.

Long-term effects

The effects on children are more severe the longer they are exposed to violence. These can include:

- A lack of respect for the non-violent parent.
- Loss of self-confidence, which will affect their ability to form relationships in the future.
- Being over-protective of parent.
- Loss of childhood.
- Problems at school.
- Running away.
- Becoming violent.

Children will learn how to behave from examples parents set for them. Domestic violence teaches children negative things about relationships and how to deal with people. For instance:

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

If you are worried about domestic violence, discuss it with someone else.

If you are violent and have children, you can seek help to stop what is happening.

Many people find it difficult to understand why people remain in or return to violent situations. A combination of fear, love, the risk of homelessness and financial issues can make it very difficult for partners with children to leave and some may not want to.

If you are a victim you can apply, without the need for a solicitor, for a Non-Molestation Order in the Family Proceedings Court. Contact the duty clerk at your local magistrates court.

If you would like details of solicitors in your area who deal with family law, contact the Law Society or look in the Yellow Pages.

Short-term effects

Children are affected in many ways by violence, even after a short time. These effects include: feeling frightened, becoming withdrawn,



WARNING SIGNS
Any violence between adults will negatively affect children. Seek support and help as soon as possible. The longer it lasts the more damaging violence is.



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



WHAT TO SAY
Children need time to discuss the feelings they have about violence. Children need to know that it is not their fault and that this is not the way relationships should be.



PREVENTION
A violent partner can take responsibility for violence by seeking help to stop. Make sure that you offer a positive role model for children so that they learn other ways of behaving. You can leave a violent relationship if you wish - seek advice.



CONTACTS

- Stockport Children's Social Care 0845 644 4313
- Out-of-hours Team 0161 718 2118
- Stockport Police 0161 872 5050 (in an emergency call 999)
- Stockport Women's Aid 0161 477 4271 (Mon-Fri 09.00-22.00 Sat-Sun 10.00-14.00)
- National Domestic Violence Helpline (24hour) 0808 2000 247

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Drug, alcohol & substance misuse

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

- Many parents worry that their children may be smoking, drinking or using drugs
- Stopping something from happening in the first place is better than trying to sort it out once it has already happened. Don't let your children see you smoke, drink to excess or take drugs - your example is crucial
- More young people are drinking, smoking and taking drugs than ever before
- One in twelve, twelve-year-olds and one in three fourteen-year-olds have tried drugs
- 1,000 children under the age of 15 have to go to hospital each year with severe alcoholic poisoning
- Deaths associated with butane lighter refills accounted for 56% of all 'sniffing' deaths in 1998 (Department of Health)

How would I know?

If you find out that your child has or may have taken drugs, it can be frightening because of the possible effects. This can be due to you not knowing about drugs and not feeling confident about talking about them. Most young people who try drugs do not go on to use them all the time. Addiction, crime and death are not as usual as the stories in the newspapers or on TV can lead us to believe.

when being told about the risk of drug use. Make sure you tell your children about the risks. Clear information and support will help them decide what to do. You cannot be sure they will not try drugs but it will increase the chance of making an informed choice.

It is very important that children know about the risks of using drugs, alcohol and volatile substances (for example solvents). More young people have problems through drinking too much than through drug use.

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

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

How would I know?

There are many signs, which include: a young person who is panicky, tense or sleepy; complaining of sickness; cannot concentrate; lacks energy; is depressed; has skin problems or is aggressive.

There may be a change in relationships with family and friends, a change in the way they act, or a change in how they do at school.

Other signs can be a change in how much money they have and personal things 'disappearing' or being sold.

Drug, alcohol and substance misuse by adults in the home can seriously affect the care and well-being of children.

If you are worried about substance misuse in your household seek help or advice from the contacts opposite.

Drug use among young people - how widespread is it?

Drugs are more common among children and young people than ever before. Research shows that about one in twelve, twelve-year-olds and one in three fourteen-year-olds have tried drugs. By the time they reach 16 years of age, two in every five young people will have tried one type of drug or a mixture of drugs. These figures apply across all ethnic groups, whilst drug use is going up amongst girls.

It is important to discuss drug use early

Some parents/carers worry that doing this makes their child want to try drugs. By not talking about drugs you will not protect them. Children will be aware of drugs in some way before they leave primary school. It is likely that at this early stage, children will take more in



WARNING SIGNS

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



ACTION

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



WHAT TO SAY

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



PREVENTION

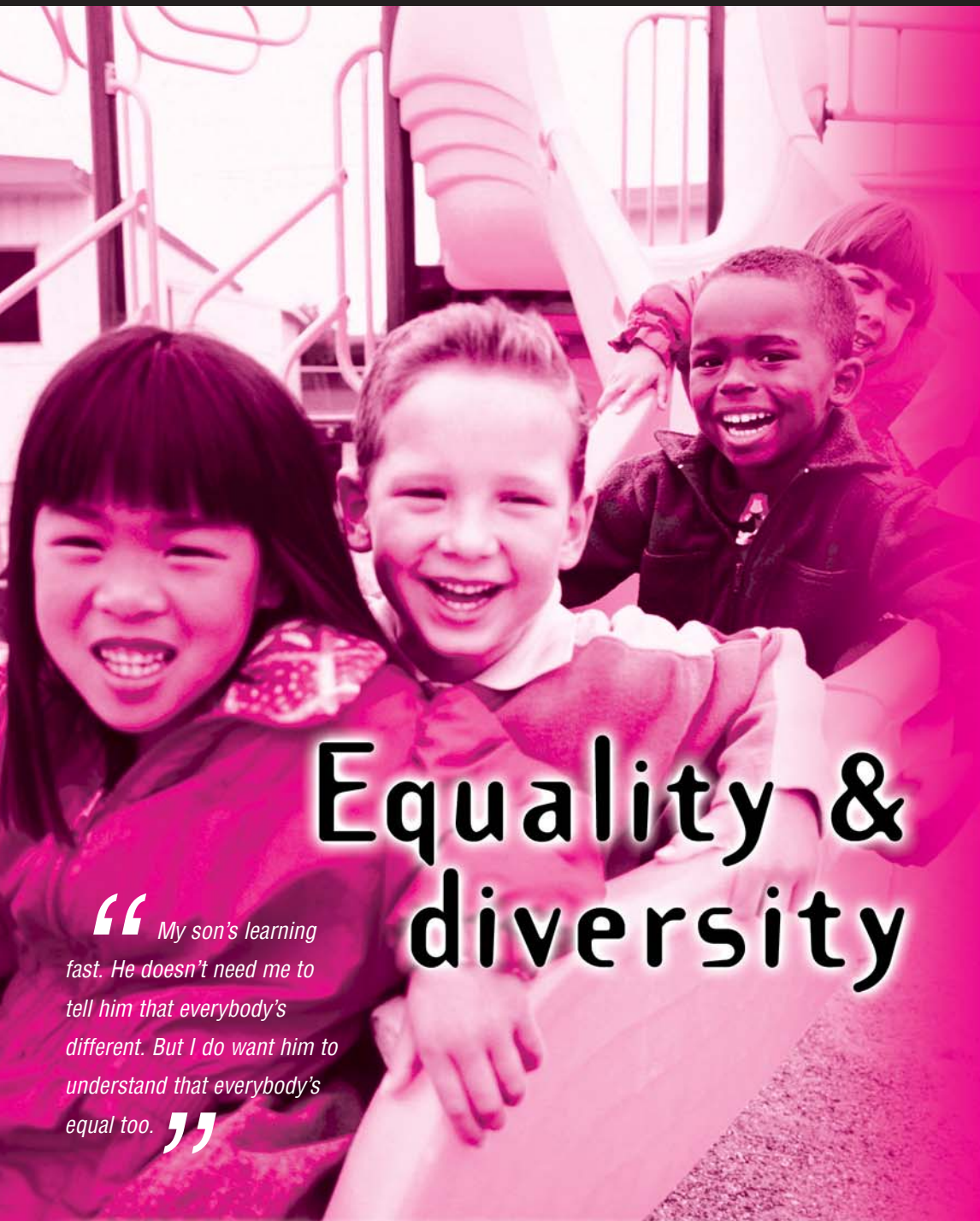
Make sure that you are informed about drug use and what can happen. There are many helpful guides available from the helplines listed under Contacts.



CONTACTS

- Stockport Children's Social Care 0845 644 4313
- MOSAIC Stockport Young Peoples' Drug and Alcohol Project 0161 480 5939
- National Alcohol Helpline 0800 917 8282
- National Drugs Helpline 0800 776600 www.talktofrank.com
- Re-Solv 01785 810762 www.re-solv.org

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Equality & diversity

“ 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, but should be positive, advantageous and valued.



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. It is important that we are proactive in our actions and consider effects too.



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. If there are language or communication issues these can be supported with the help of The Ethnic Diversity Service (please see Contacts).



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 even more inclusive with diversity and equality expected in all areas of school life and encouraging citizenship issues throughout the curriculum.



CONTACTS

- Stockport Children and Young People’s Disability Partnership 0161 426 5514
- Stockport Council Diversity & Equality Policy Manager 0161 474 3125
- Lesbian & Gay Foundation 0161 235 8000
- The Base Youth Project 0161 477 4096
- The Ethnic Diversity Service 0161 477 9000

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- Your child is protected by the Human Rights Act, the Disability Discrimination Act, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act and 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 discrimination or abuse, and ask them to talk through their policies with you
- Support groups, parent groups and other organisations (Voluntary and Statutory) are out there to help you

Different and equal

Diversity is all about differences. We are all different - visibly, physically, socially, culturally and sexually. Diversity means variety, it means a rich and vibrant culture. But not everyone values and respects the differences in society. Discrimination is when you are or have perceived that you have been treated unfairly 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, access, 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 legislation are there to help you.

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, bi-sexual 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.

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. This act looks closely at the effect of action and not the intent.

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

Make contact

On the opposite page you’ll find a list of contacts that you may find useful. You and your child have the right to be different and equal, so make contact today and get the support you need.

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

Internet safety

- **Child exploitation has devastating effects on children, both physical and mental**
- **Exploitative adults have been quick to use the Internet as a tool; they are very sophisticated and well practiced in how they approach children**
- **Children are fascinated by the 'adult' world, but there are measures you can take to protect your child from online risks and help them make the most of the Internet safely**
- **Be sensitive to changes in your child's behaviour. It is up to attentive adults to recognise the signs of sexual exploitation**
- **Recent research from the NSPCC revealed that one in five 9 to 16 year-olds use Internet chat rooms**

New technology, old problem

Risks from the Internet

The Internet has proven a useful tool for people wishing to exploit children. Recent high profile cases in the news have revealed that Internet chat rooms can be used by paedophiles to establish deceptive relationships with children. They then 'groom' children to become victims, either psychologically on the Internet itself, or by arranging to actually meet with them. Often victims believe that they are chatting to other children online.

about the dangers from strangers, warn your child about dangers on the Internet and lay down some ground rules regarding the time they spend online. If possible avoid your child going online in private, or at least ensure you have access to their computer. Make sure that they know they should never pass on personal information or arrange to meet a new friend made on the Internet without a trusted adult present.

Internet pornography can cause psychological damage to children who are exposed to it. But worse still, the Internet is a major method by which pornographic images of children are obtained and exchanged by exploitative adults. Sadly such images are in high demand, so pornographers will go to extreme lengths to entice and coerce children into getting involved against their will.

Watch out for possible signs of exploitation or abuse. Some of these signs are often completely innocent, but look out for changes in your child's mood or behaviour, sleep disturbances or bedwetting, unexplained marks, problems at school, going missing or self-harm, asking about sexual experiences and terminology or evidence of pornographic material. Be especially aware of any new friendships between your child and older people, whether male or female.

Making it safe to surf

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

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

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

Make contact

Local Police and child protection units have teams who are specially trained to counter these forms of exploitation and offer support to children and parents.

Learn all you can about the Internet. In the same way that you would teach your child



WARNING SIGNS

Prolonged, secretive periods on the Internet, changes in behaviour or mood, inappropriate sexual behaviour, asking questions about sexual experiences or terminology or leaving pornographic material, diaries or letters where they can be found.



ACTION

If you think your child has been exposed to any form of exploitation encourage them to confide in you, assuring them that they've done nothing wrong and that you will support them. Contact the numbers below for further advice and support.



WHAT TO SAY

Assure your child that you believe what they are telling you; create a positive sense of confidence between you. Explain in your own way why these things happen and avoid making them feel ashamed or foolish about what they have experienced. Let them know that you will protect them from further harm.



PREVENTION

Know where your child is; be familiar with their friends and daily activities. Teach your child to trust their own feelings and assure them that they have a right to say NO to what they sense is wrong. Listen carefully to your child's fears and be supportive.



CONTACTS

- Stockport Children's Social Care 0845 644 4313
- Stockport Police 0161 872 5050
- If you feel your child is in danger telephone 999
- ChildLine 0800 1111
- Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre www.ceop.gov.uk
- Internet Watch Hotline 0845 600 8844

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

Keeping children & young people safe from accidents

- Babies and children learn by exploring their surroundings
- Babies do not automatically know what is dangerous
- Babies need guidance to keep safe at home
- Remove all potential dangers in your home
- Watch your child and remove him or her from danger
- Explain about safety to your child from an early age but don't expect young children to remember your warnings

Making your home safe

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

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

- Crawling and exploring are an essential part of their development - keep an eye on your young children, especially near wires and sockets.
- Beware of pets around young children. Even trained and good-natured animals can turn on them.
- Make sure that irons, saucepans and hot drinks are kept out of the reach of children. Scalding and burns are common and avoidable accidents.
- The home you live in is full of dust and this can trigger or make worse any allergy your child has such as asthma. Keep your home as dust free as you can.

Some dangers around the home:

- Make sure that all medicines and drugs are locked away well out of reach and your use of them is private to avoid your child copying you.
- Inhaling cigarette smoke is bad for children's health. Children will be affected by passive smoking and your smoking may encourage them to smoke when they are older.
- Check toys for safety marks. Ensure that your child does not play with toys that are not suitable for his or her age, especially if the pieces are small enough to choke on. Unsafe toys can be very dangerous.
- Certain rooms are necessarily full of danger, such as the kitchen, and should remain out of bounds or made safe by the use of safety devices.
- Are your children safely contained within the house? Is the safety chain high enough on the front door even for a very active toddler?



WARNING SIGNS

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



ACTION

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



WHAT TO SAY

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



PREVENTION

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



CONTACTS

- Stockport Children's Social Care 0845 644 4313
- Talk to your health visitor or midwife
- Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service 0161 906 0603
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) 0121 248 2000
- Child Accident Prevention Trust 020 7608 2828

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Missing

“ I was shocked when she ran away although, looking back, she was more of a loner than her brother. I now know that she had been missing school quite a bit. We stopped talking when my partner moved in but had been really close before that. ”



WARNING SIGNS

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



ACTION

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



WHAT TO SAY

Make sure that your child knows how important they are to you. When you have to tell your child off, tell them that it's their behaviour that's the problem - not them. If something has gone wrong in the family, don't let your child think that it's their fault.



PREVENTION

Be alert to any unexplained changes in your child's behaviour. Spend time with them and be interested in their lives and worries. Do you know who your child's friends are? Be very careful about their access to the Internet and 'chat rooms'. Make sure they know of safe people they can talk to.



CONTACTS

- Stockport Children's Social Care 0845 644 4313
- Stockport Police 0161 872 5050 (in an emergency call 999)
- Speak to your child's school or an Education Welfare Officer 0161 474 2195
- Missing Persons Helpline (24hrs) 0500 700 700
- Message Home (for young people to get a message to their parents) 0800 700 740
- Parents Network 020 7735 1214

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

From home and school

The law says that parents must ensure that their children receive a proper, full time education and they can be prosecuted if their child does not attend school regularly and on time. Children who miss school are much more likely to have problems with their learning and getting the job or college place that they would like. They will often find it harder to make and keep friends and they are at much greater risk of getting into trouble in and out of school. If they are skipping school or lessons, they are more likely to come across adults or other young people who might want to cause them harm.

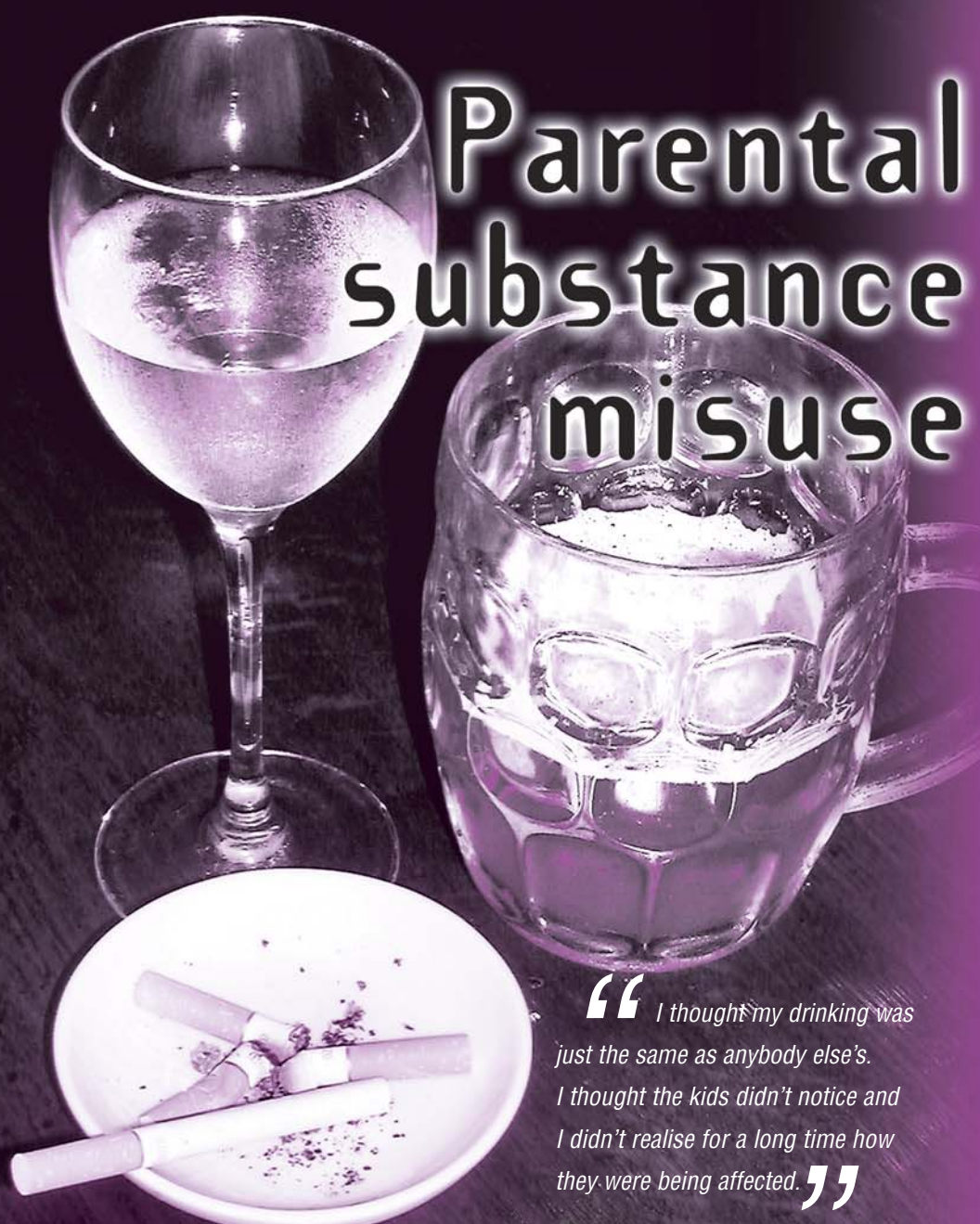
When children miss school without their parents knowing, this is called truancy. Children who truant regularly often do this because they are worried about something. There might be something happening on the way to or from school that is causing them concern. They might be being bullied. They might be finding some lessons or subjects too hard (or too easy) or they might be having problems in completing their homework. Sometimes, children will be reluctant to leave home because they are worried that their parent

might come to some harm whilst they are at school. Something about their home life may be worrying or upsetting them. Children from all sorts of backgrounds run away from home for a variety of reasons. Many of us will remember planning to run away when we were younger because we felt unable to cope with our problems, that nobody cared about us or because we had been treated unfairly. Usually, if a child does go missing from home, it will be for a very short period - usually until the child thinks that the parents have noticed. Often, they will turn up at the home of a friend or relative.

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

If children go missing regularly they are likely to be at risk of becoming involved with people who may cause them harm including sexual exploitation, violence and drug and alcohol use plus getting them involved in crime. Don't worry in silence, seek advice.

Parental substance misuse



“ I thought my drinking was just the same as anybody else’s. I thought the kids didn’t notice and I didn’t realise for a long time how they were being affected.”



WARNING SIGNS

Your use of alcohol or drugs might result in changes to your child’s behaviour. They may act out or have changes to their appearance or stop seeing friends. Often children may become withdrawn and ‘disappear’ in order not to draw attention to their family.



ACTION

Think about your actions - what does your use of alcohol or drugs teach your children? Are you sure that your children are not aware of what you do? If you think your use of substances is affecting your children, talk to someone.



WHAT TO SAY

Your child may be reluctant to talk to you or be fearful of what your reaction may be. Encourage them to talk to someone who can help them - there is support available at school, in youth groups, on the Internet, or from special projects. Help them to do normal things like go out or socialise with friends.



PREVENTION

Be conscious about your use of alcohol or drugs. If you think they may be causing problems for you or your child get more information and seek help for yourself and your child.



CONTACTS

- MOSAIC Young People’s Drug and Alcohol Services 0161 480 5939 mosaic@stockport.gov.uk
- Community Alcohol Team 0161 249 4070
- Community Drugs Team 0161 249 4000
- Turning Point www.turning-point.co.uk/bottlingitup
- Drinkline 0800 917 8282
- Cool2Talk www.cool2talk.org
- National Drugs Helpline (24hours) 0800 776 600 www.talktofrank.com

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- There are strong links between parental drinking or drug use and the emotional development and well-being of a child or young person
- 1.3 million children in the UK are affected by parental alcohol misuse
- Parental drug or alcohol use is linked to problems including damage to relationships; impact on family finances and the ability to provide a safe and stable environment for children
- Drug or alcohol use does not automatically lead to harm but it does lead to an increased risk of harm for children and young people

Your behaviour counts

Drinking or drug use might just be something you do when the kids are away or in bed. But it can begin to take over your life. Firstly your children will be influenced by your behaviour - whether your answer to a problem or a crisis is to take a drink or some drugs. Things can progress to the stage that you are not taking the proper care of your children or protecting them.

Think about what your behaviour says to children - do you come in from a difficult or stressful day and reach for a drink or head to the medicine cabinet? Children learn what they see and may begin to think that alcohol or drugs are a solution to problems. Often people start using drugs in a similar way to relieve stress or tension. No matter how careful you think you are, children and young people are often very aware of their parents’ behaviour. Both alcohol and drugs can affect your ability to look after your children and have serious effects on them as they grow up.

It is important that you talk to your partner or some other relative who could offer support to you and your children. Children may be reluctant to talk to adults because of stigma around alcohol or drugs or fear about the consequences. There is support available for

children to meet with others in similar circumstances. It is important that children and young people have a routine and the chance to do normal things like homework and socialise with friends. This is especially true if children or young people have to take on the role of caring for or being responsible for an adult.

If you think you or some other adult in your household has a problem seek advice or support. Things are beginning to become a problem if your use of alcohol or other drugs is affecting the following:

- Relationships - has someone spoken to you about their concerns for you?
- Your work - have you been late, missed work or performed poorly as a result of substance use?
- Your health - are you having difficulty sleeping, feeling unwell or needing to use something to make you feel better?
- You have come into conflict with the law - have you been drinking and driving, or arrested for possessing drugs?

These are all signs that you should seek help. All of these things will affect your ability to look after your child.



Play & Learning

- Play is a vital part of a child's life
- Play is the way children learn and develop
- Parents and carers need to be involved in their children's play
- Play can be fun, but play can be challenging!

Parents have a key role in play and learning

“ I try to make time to play but I get so busy. He seems happy enough and he has his computer games. Sometimes I just need time on my own. ”



WARNING SIGNS

If children are deprived of opportunities to play, it can effect their behaviour, their physical and their social development.



ACTION

Make time and space for your children to play in your life. If you are stuck as to how to do this, think about what your children enjoy. Think about what you enjoyed as a child. Make it happen!



WHAT TO SAY

Children's need to play comes from within, so listening and watching your child, letting them take the lead is key.



PREVENTION

Get involved in your child's play and make sure there is a choice and variety of opportunities for their play and free time.



CONTACTS

- Stockport Children's Social Care 0845 644 4313
- Play Development Team 0161 474 4471
- ChildLine 0800 1111
- Libraries Information Service 0845 644 4307
- Family Info Link 0808 800 0606

Play is the way children learn and develop, so the way children play (and their need for play) changes at each step of their development. Older children may not see themselves as 'playing' at all, and see play as just being with friends or hanging out. No matter what the age of the child, play lets children explore the world, and the relationships they have with the people around them. Play can be challenging and risky, as children can test their physical limits or behaviour boundaries. Play can be intense, as children can create their own imaginary world which is personal to them. Most of all, play can be huge fun!

Play isn't only about toys

Play can be as much about thoughts, feeling and imagination. Everyday objects can be transformed through the child (and your) imagination. Play can come about through a suggestion or by setting a scene (e.g. lets pretend...) as much as having toys or materials.

Play has to be challenging

Help your child safely test their limits. You are responsible for the safety of your child when they are in your care, but this needs to be balanced against the need for challenging play that helps their physical and emotional development. Participating and allowing this kind of play also helps you build a trusting relationship with your child, as you are supporting them in the development of new skills and having new experiences.

Have fun together

Play is time for you and your child to be close. Laughing and having fun is a great way of developing a bond between you and your child.

Communicate

Playing with a child is like having a conversation. Play is often the way children communicate what they think and feel, rather than using words. Use eye contact and listen and respond to the child. Give praise when a new skill is being tried out. Play is a chance for children to take the lead (which is a skill they'll need in later life) but you as an adult need to set the boundaries on their behaviour and ensure these are clearly communicated.

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Positive parenting & self-esteem

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

- Children need to feel secure, loved and valued - this is the basis of self-esteem and confidence
- Noticing and rewarding good behaviour is the best way of influencing your child’s behaviour
- Be realistic about what you expect from your child
- Parents and carers need to work together and be consistent
- Listen to and talk to your child - it’s good to talk!
- Do things together with your child that you both enjoy - have fun!

Make them feel great!

Positive parenting is about bringing out the best in your child, by listening and understanding, praising and encouraging their efforts, noticing and rewarding good behaviour and doing things together that you both enjoy.

might not always agree with yours. That is why tension is normal. Choose your battles and let some go! Be friendly and supportive and let them know you have been through it and that you are always willing to talk. The main concern for adolescents is whether what they are going through is normal. Remember to give them the practical information they need about the physical changes and reassure them that their physical development is perfectly normal.

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 unwittingly giving your child lots of attention for negative unwanted behaviour, rather than for the good behaviour you would prefer them to develop. It can also undermine your relationship with your child. Parental attention and praise is one of the biggest motivators for children so you need to use it in the right direction! Not only will this influence your child’s behaviour in a positive way, it will also make your child feel happy, loved, wanted and secure and this is the basis of life-long confidence and self-esteem.

Promoting the health of your child is a task that most parents do without thinking. Whether it involves encouraging 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 an influential role model for your child.

A sense of self-esteem is your child’s best protection from peer pressure. You can help to foster this in many ways, for example by being a positive role model, giving positive accurate feedback, identifying and redirecting your child’s inaccurate beliefs and by being spontaneous and affectionate. Make them feel great!

Eating is an important part of everyone’s life. Encouraging your child to eat healthily does not mean denying them food they enjoy. Healthy eating is about having a varied, balanced diet and enjoying lots of different foods. Younger children often refuse to eat certain foods and teenagers may go through food fads. These differences are normal. But some eating problems are more serious and if you are recognising signs of difficulties, contact a health professional for advice and support.

Teenagers have to learn to make their own decisions and establish their independence from their parents. Unfortunately their decisions



WARNING SIGNS

There may be none. Is your child eating well? Getting enough exercise? Any changes in their behaviour? Is your child trying to tell you something?



ACTION

Be involved and develop a good relationship with your child before they reach their teens. Adopt a healthy lifestyle. Share activities together.



WHAT TO SAY

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



PREVENTION

Be a little crazy! Have fun with your child. Encourage good friendship and outside interests. Listen carefully to your child’s point of view. Help them think through choices.



CONTACTS

- Stockport Children’s Social Care 0845 644 4313
- Talk to your GP, health visitor or school nurse
- Adswood & Bridgehall Sure Start 0161 426 5160
- Stockport Parenting Team 0161 426 5554
- ChildLine 0800 1111
- Beating Eating Disorders 0845 634 7650
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222

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Sexual health & relationships

“ I know my boyfriend loves me really... it's just that he's at school too, so it's a bit difficult at the moment. I never knew you could get pregnant the first time you have sex... mum never told me - I thought it would be alright but it's not, I just don't know what to do. ”



WARNING SIGNS

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



ACTION

If you think that your child is sexually active, ensure that they know where to get the right information about contraception and safer sex. If you think your daughter may be pregnant or if she has told you that she is, ensure she sees her GP and/or the Specialist Teenage Pregnancy Midwives.



WHAT TO SAY

Talk to your children about birth control. Make your sons and daughters aware that pregnancy is not just a girl's problem.



PREVENTION

Make sure that your teenagers know about, and practice, safe sex. Remember it's not just about avoiding unplanned pregnancy but also to avoid sexually transmitted infections.



CONTACTS

- Stockport Children's Social Care 0845 644 4313
- Contact your local GP or health visitor or school nurse
- Central Youth 0161 480 9600
- Family Planning Association 0845 310 1334
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222
- Specialist Teenage Pregnancy Midwives 07876 230 822 or 07876 320818

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- The UK has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Europe
- Be proactive in your approach by taking the initiative in raising the issues about sex and relationships
- Explain that sex is not compulsory and that saying no is an option
- Try not to give the message that sex is necessarily a problem. Be prepared to talk about sexuality, even if it seems difficult
- Try not to be judgmental, but don't be afraid to say if you think an activity may be unhealthy or could put your son or daughter at risk
- Your child will learn by example - they will learn your family's way of doing things based on your values, culture, faith and beliefs

Preventative parenting

Children will learn about sex whether you want them to or not. Sex is everywhere around us - in magazines and newspapers, in advertisements and soap operas. Children and young people also learn about sex from each other - and what gets passed on in the playground may not be accurate or what parents want them to hear!

All these confusing messages may lead young people into situations they don't know how to deal with. As a parent you have an important role in making sure your child has the right information and skills to cope with these pressures.

You might feel concerned that by discussing sex and relationships, particularly at an early age, you will encourage your children to start having sex when they're very young. But research has proved that the opposite is true. In fact, teenagers from families where parents talk frankly about sex wait until they are older than others before they start having sex. And when they do have sex for the first time, they are more likely to use contraceptives.

It is shocking to know that some young people are sexually active as young as 11 or 12, although the average age for first sex is 17. The fact is that you can't always stop your teenagers from having sex and many of them will do it anyway. What you can do is to educate them about sex, pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/Aids and contraception.

If you feel uncomfortable or unsure about talking about sex with your children, don't worry - this is a common reaction. But don't let it put you off. Sex education shouldn't be a one-off talk but a gradual process of communication. If your children grow up knowing it's okay to discuss sex and the feelings they have with you, then they're much more likely to come to you for support when they need it.

The UK has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Europe and sexually transmitted infections are increasing among young people. Giving your children support, information and help to feel good about themselves can lessen the chances of both.

Younger teenagers may not yet be aware of their sexuality. Older teens may feel confused about their feelings for their own sex and try to deny them and their behaviour may change as they try to come to terms with their sexuality. Others may try to give you signs that they are lesbian or gay without having to tell you outright.

If you believe your child is gay and having difficulty either coming to terms with this or telling you, start up conversations that will give them an opportunity to broach the subject naturally.

It may be hard to accept your child is lesbian or gay, but their sexual preferences don't change the person you have brought up and loved. Let them know you will be there for them and support them as they find their way.



Smacking

“ Smacking is the only thing that works... I get so angry with him sometimes. Besides, I was smacked when I was a child and it never did me any harm. ”

- Smacking does not teach children self-discipline
- Smacking gives attention to a child's bad behaviour
- Children learn best by attention to things they do well
- There are many positive alternatives to smacking
- Smacking teaches children to hurt others
- When self-discipline is taught, smacking becomes unnecessary

The great debate

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

good behaviour. Those who say smacking is acceptable have argued that it is not harmful in the long term and is the most immediate form of discipline. It is much more helpful and safer to notice and reward your child's positive behaviour, to encourage the behaviour you want, for example use a star chart.

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

The number of parents who smack their children is decreasing and lots of those who continue often do so because they are not sure what other methods work.

If you are interested in Positive Parenting Classes contact your health visitor or Children's Social Care for information.

Have you ever smacked your child? The answer from many parents reading this will be yes. Every parent experiences frustration with his or her child at various times. It is at these times that a parent may smack in the heat of the moment, but this is an outlet for the parent's frustration, rather than a helpful way of influencing the child's behaviour.

In this society parents are not allowed to physically harm their children regardless of any individual, cultural or religious justification. As a result, child protection professionals will assess incidents of physical ill treatment of children, in order that they can understand, prevent and explain the consequences of further incidents.

However, simply because lots of people may have smacked their children does not mean it is the best way to punish your child or ensure



WARNING SIGNS

A child who flinches when they fear they will be hit. Smacking a child in frustration with a force, which in hindsight was unnecessary. Leaving bruising and other marks on a child.



ACTION

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



WHAT TO SAY

Tell your child they have crossed boundaries or broken family rules. Use your tone of voice and facial expressions to help them understand. Explain your reasons why.



PREVENTION

Make it a general rule not to smack your child. Use other ways to discipline; set clear limits and explain them, be firm and consistent, ignore trivial bad behaviour and reward good behaviour.



CONTACTS

- Stockport Children's Social Care 0845 644 4313
- Talk to your GP or health worker
- NSPCC 0808 800 5000
- Barnardos 020 8550 8822
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222

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

Worried about a child?

- Social Care may become involved once concern is shared or may suggest other support
- Decisions about abuse need careful assessment
- Children are best cared for by their own families
- Professionals want to work in partnership with families
- Very few children are removed from home following abuse

Parents are responsible for their children's safety

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. There have been lots of negative reports in the media about social workers and what happens when concerns about child abuse are reported. Many myths exist, so for the record:

2. Professionals are not solely responsible for protecting children. Traditionally, social workers have been expected to make sure that children are safe. In truth, keeping children safe is everybody's business. Social Workers will rely on information from parents, family, other professionals and the local community who all play an important part in identifying concerns about those close to them. This also helps to ensure that they are offered support before the situation becomes far worse.

1. 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. However, child abuse is not easy to recognise, prevent or stop. It is rarely possible to definitely say that a child has been abused or by whom. A careful assessment is needed in order to find out what has happened and what support and protection will best help the family. As a result it can be difficult to avoid some intrusion into family life. A social worker will ask questions about the family circumstances, consider the frequency and the seriousness of the incident and the effect on the child. All of these factors will help to decide what should happen next to support and protect the child and family.

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



WARNING SIGNS

Children being abused will suffer physical injury, neglect, sexual or emotional abuse, or maybe all of these. Make sure you know what child abuse is - contact the helplines in the Contacts column for more information.



ACTION

If you're concerned that a child is being abused, call the appropriate number in the Contacts column. 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

It's important to act if you are worried about your own or someone else's treatment of a child. You can also 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?



CONTACTS

- Stockport Children's Social Care 0845 644 4313
- Out-of-hours Team 0161 718 2118
- Stockport Police 0161 872 5050 (dial 999 in emergency)
- NSPCC 0808 800 5000
- ChildLine 0800 1111

Check website for any recent changes in telephone details • www.stockport.gov.uk

“ She didn't say anything, but I could tell that having to look after me was having an affect on Jessie. But how could I care for my daughter, when she was caring for me and her baby brother? I made a few phone calls and found out that even with my illness, I can still be a good parent. ”



Young carers

- 3% of carers are young carers
- One out of five young carers miss school because of their caring responsibilities
- Young carers are protected by the Children Act 1989; Carers (Recognition and Services Act) 1995 and Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000
- The Government, your local council, and education and health authorities are there to help and will help, once concern is raised
- There are many forms of support to help you and your child cope with their caring responsibilities
- You care about your young carer! So make contact with the support groups and organisations that are out there to help

Who cares? You care. They care

Many people need special care provided in their homes. They may be ill, disabled or elderly, or they may be experiencing drug or alcohol problems. Receiving care from a member of the family can be one solution. However, when the carer is a child or a young adult, it is especially important to make sure that their needs are properly cared for too.

Health

Sometimes young carers can be so busy looking after others, that they forget to look after themselves, and can become ill, stressed or depressed. The best way to avoid this is to get help from your GP and local health workers. Let them know all about your individual situation so that they can provide the help and advice that both you and your child need.

If your child carries out any caring role, either for yourself or another member of their immediate family, it is essential that their well-being does not suffer as a result of their responsibilities. Most importantly tell your local health workers about your situation. You don't have to cope alone; they can help you and your child get the support and advice you both need.

Extra support

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

Education

Naturally you will want your child to do well at school. Whilst many young carers achieve good results, national research has shown that caring can have a negative effect on a child's education. To help prevent this, it is essential that your child's school be informed of their caring role. That way they can allow for the needs and pressures that your child may be under and offer sensitive advice and support.

Contact Children's Social Care if you need more information.



WARNING SIGNS

Late homework, absence from school, overtiredness and behavioural problems may be signs that your child is struggling with their caring role. It is vital that you talk, and listen to your child and take the action needed to help them cope.



ACTION

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



WHAT TO SAY

Make sure your local Children's Social Care and health workers and your GP know about your situation - keep them up to date if things change. Tell your child about support available.



PREVENTION

Being a young carer could have negative effects on your child's health, education and well-being. You can help prevent this by ensuring that they get the best support and advice available.



CONTACTS

- Stockport Children's Social Care 0845 644 4313
- Signpost Stockport 0161 456 2808 www.signpoststockportforcarers.co.uk
- Disability Stockport 0161 480 7248
- Family Info Link 0808 800 0606
- Carers UK 0808 808 7777

Check website for any recent changes in telephone details • www.stockport.gov.uk



Young people in trouble

“ Georgie dropped all her old mates and started hanging out with an older crowd. Now she’s buying clothes, games and stuff, but she won’t tell me where she’s getting the money from. Should I be worried? ”



WARNING SIGNS

There are many signs which might show something is wrong. Your child may be influenced by others, stay out late, have new clothes or other items which cannot be explained, or use drugs and alcohol.



ACTION

Talk to your child about your worries. You can get help and advice from the local Youth Offending Team. Don't ignore the problem. Spending more time with your child doing other things you both enjoy can help.



WHAT TO SAY

Try to stay calm; all children break the rules from time to time, some more than others. If you do make rules, stick to them.



PREVENTION

It is important that you take an interest in your children. Know who their friends are and how they are doing at school. If you think that something is wrong do something sooner rather than later.



CONTACTS

- Stockport Youth Offending Team 0161 476 2876
- Stockport Children's Social Care 0845 644 4313
- Youth Justice Board for England and Wales 020 7271 3033
- ChildLine 0800 1111

Check website for any recent changes in telephone details • www.stockport.gov.uk

- **Motoring offences, theft and handling stolen goods are the most common crimes carried out by young people**
- **Less than 2% of all offences committed by young people are robbery**
- **The main reasons young people give for carrying out crime are boredom and pressure from friends**
- **Young people from a supportive family home are less likely to offend**
- **If you think something is wrong, talk to your child sooner rather than later**

Youth Offending Teams

Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) are an important part of the strategy to deal with youth crime. YOTs include representatives from the police, social care, health, education and housing. Their job is to identify the needs of each young offender and identify the problems that make the young person offend, as well as measuring the risk they pose to others. This enables the YOT to identify suitable programmes to address the needs of the young person, so they can be rehabilitated, through:

- Education, training or employment.
- Drug rehabilitation.
- Mental health assessment and treatment.
- Provision of accommodation.

In Stockport the Youth Offending Team can advise and help if you suspect that your child is getting involved in crime. The YOT can also advise and help you with issues around some of the difficulties parents of teenagers in today's modern world often come up against.

How widespread is youth crime?

Most of the 'youth crime' in the media is about anti-social behaviour, street crime or violence. Offences committed by young people are usually property crimes with theft, handling stolen goods, burglary, fraud or forgery and criminal damage making up more than two thirds of all youth crime. Despite media attention on violent offending, few cautions or convictions relate to violence.

Is it getting worse?

No. Although some people disagree about the statistics, youth crime appears to have been falling for some years. Between 1992 and 2001, 10-17 year olds convicted or cautioned fell by 21%.

The peak age of offending is 18 for boys and 14 for girls, after which criminal activity usually declines. There is a particularly sharp decline for criminal damage crimes and violent offences. The positive effects of personal and social development, completing education, getting a job, leaving home, and settling down with a partner can all lead young people away from crime.

Stopping young people offending

The main reasons young people give for offending are boredom and pressure from friends. Young people also say that the two main things which stop them from carrying out crime are:

- Fear of being caught.
- Their parents' reaction.

Research into the lifestyles and experiences of young offenders tells us the following factors matter most in keeping young people out of trouble:

- A stable and supportive home.
- Good support from parents.
- Going to and making good progress at school, in training or at work.

Helpful national organisations

- Barnardos**
020 8550 8822
www.barnardos.org.uk
- Beating Eating Disorders**
Adult Helpline 0845 634 1414
Youth Helpline 0845 634 7650
www.b-eat.co.uk
- Brook Advisory Centres**
0800 018 5023
www.brook.org.uk
- Carers UK**
0808 808 7777
www.carersuk.org
- Child Accident Prevention Trust**
020 7608 2828
www.capt.org.uk
- ChildLine**
0800 1111
www.childline.org.uk
- Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (FFLAG)**
0845 652 0311
www.fflag.org.uk
- Family Planning Association**
0845 310 1334
www.fpa.org.uk
- Family Rights Group**
0800 731 1696
- Gingerbread**
0800 018 4318
www.gingerbread.org.uk
- Internet Watch Hotline**
0845 600 8844
- Kidscape**
08451 205 204
www.kidscape.org.uk
- Message Home**
0800 700 740
- Missing Person's Helpline (24hours)**
0500 700 700
- National Alcohol Helpline**
0800 917 8282
- National Domestic Violence Helpline (24hours)**
0808 2000 247
www.womensaid.org.uk and
www.refuge.org.uk
- National Drugs Helpline (24hours)**
0800 77 66 00
www.talktofrank.com
- NHS Direct**
0845 4647
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
- NSPCC**
0808 800 5000
www.nspcc.org.uk
(also available are language helplines)
- One Parent Families**
0800 018 5026 (helpline)
www.oneparentfamilies.org.uk
- Parentline Plus**
0808 800 2222
www.parentlineplus.org.uk
- Re-Solv**
01785 810762
www.re-solv.org
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)**
0121 248 2000
www.rospa.co.uk
- Samaritans**
08457 90 90 90
www.samaritans.org.uk
- Save the Children**
020 7703 5400
www.savethechildren.org.uk
- The Law Society**
0870 606 6575
www.lawsociety.org.uk
- Youth Justice Board for England & Wales**
020 7271 3033

Helpful local organisations

- Adswood & Bridgehall Sure Start**
0161 426 5160
- Central Youth**
0161 480 9600
- Children's Social Care**
0845 644 4313
Email: randaduty@stockport.gov.uk
- Community Alcohol Team**
0161 249 4070
- Disability Stockport**
0161 480 7248
- Family Info Link Stockport**
0808 800 0606
- Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service**
0161 906 0603
- Lesbian & Gay Foundation**
0161 235 8000
- MOSAIC Stockport Young People's Drug & Alcohol Services**
0161 480 5939
- Out-of-hours Team**
0161 718 2118
- Signpost Stockport**
0161 456 2808
- Specialist Teenage Pregnancy Midwives**
07876 230 822
07876 320818
- Stockport Children and Young People's Disability Partnership**
0161 426 5514
- Stockport Disability Database**
0161 426 5514
- Stockport Diversity and Equality Policy Manager**
0161 474 3125
- Stockport Drug Action Team**
0161 474 3009
- Stockport Education Welfare**
0161 474 2195
- Stockport Parenting Team**
0161 426 5554
www.stockport.gov.uk/parenting
- Stockport Police**
0161 872 5050
- Stockport Women's Aid**
0161 477 4271
(Mon-Fri 09.00-22.00
Sat & Sun 10.00-14.00)
- Stockport Youth Offending Team**
0161 476 2876
- The Base Youth Project**
0161 477 4096



STOCKPORT
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

UR SORTED!
INFO U NEED TO KNOW!

The directory of services for children and young people in Stockport

www.ursorted.com

Family info Link
Churchgate House, 96 Churchgate,
Stockport SK1 1YJ.
Tel: 0808 800 0606 (Freephone)
Email: info@familyinfolink.co.uk



**Safeguarding Children Unit
Sanderling Building
Birdhall Lane
Cheadle Heath
Stockport
SK3 0RF**

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