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A guide for mums, dads and carers of young people
aged **12-18** years



Blackpool Safeguarding
Children Board



Welcome

Blackpool Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) seeks to support parents and carers of children in the challenging and demanding task of raising and nurturing children to attain their full potential. We are very aware of the many pressures facing children, their parents and carers in the modern world and the need for support and advice to be available when appropriate.

This handbook for mums, dads and carers of young people aged 12-18 years is a practical guide covering real issues that may be encountered by parents and carers. You will also find some useful contact numbers and website addresses where you can find further information. I hope that you find the contents both useful and informative.

Dennis Charlton
Chair
Blackpool Safeguarding Children Board

This handbook is one of two covering parenting issues from 4-18 years of age. These handbooks are available on the NHS Blackpool website at

www.blackpool.nhs.uk

or the Blackpool Safeguarding Children Board website at

www.blackpoolscb.org.uk



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Adolescence and puberty

Changing times

// My daughter spends a long time getting ready in the bathroom. I'd forgotten what it's like to be a teenager! //

- » Listening is the key to a good relationship
- » Your teenager wants independence - but still needs you!
- » Growing up can be frightening for teenagers
- » Hormones set off physical changes, mood swings and changes in feelings
- » Give your teenager the information they need

Adolescence is a time of change. It is the time in a young person's life when they develop from a child into an adult. At the start of puberty, hormones are triggering physical changes and emotional feelings that are not only hard to deal with, but hard to talk about.

Your teenager is also developing deeper and more complicated relationships. Any worries or arguments, such as pressure from their friends to do things they may not feel comfortable with, can affect their sense of wellbeing and confidence.

They will be having new sexual feelings that they may find difficult to cope with and they may have worries about their looks. They will also be trying to work out who they are. Your child is learning about their own views, opinions and beliefs that may not be the same as those they have grown up with.

Talking to your teenager about what's going on in their life will help you understand them and help build up

their confidence. Listen to their ideas and try to understand their thoughts and feelings.

Respect your teenagers' privacy - remember you were a teenager once!

Be open-minded and do not judge them, so that they feel they can trust you and turn to you when they need help and support. Don't forget when things go wrong, the person they'll often turn to for comfort is you.

The teenage years can be tough and your child needs to know they have your support. It's common for them to argue or even ignore you at times, because they know that, on the whole, you will take the bad moods with the good. If they upset you, don't forget a lot of it is just for show and that when things go wrong, the person they will often turn to for comfort is you.



WARNING SIGNS

Mood swings, arguments, talking back, an 'over-the-top' interest in hygiene, or a complete lack of it and untidiness are quite normal. These are all signs that your child has become a teenager.



ACTION

Listening and talking to your teenager will help you understand what they are going through emotionally and physically. One of the best things you can do for your child is to let them know that you are there for them.



WHAT TO SAY

Bring out the best in your teenager by talking things through rather than arguing. Don't be embarrassed to answer questions and be well prepared with simple facts.



PREVENTION

Being flexible and bargaining works better than making rules and demands. Talk together to stop any worries or problems getting out of control.



CONTACTS

- www.familylives.org.uk
0808 800 2222
- www.teenagehealthfreak.com
- www.gotateenager.org.uk



Anti-social behaviour

When every day is a difficult day

// I love my son, but I just don't understand why he's always getting into trouble. I need help to get him back on the right track. //

- » Positive parenting can help behaviour
- » Prevention is better than cure
- » Peer pressure and boredom are some reasons given by teenagers for offending
- » There are different sorts of anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour is a phrase used very regularly these days. Some of it might just be described as high spirits. Adults can often distrust young people and be very quick to form opinions. However, some young people do take part in wrongful behaviour that is very damaging and frightening. People have the right to live without fear, including young people affected by the behaviour of others.

There are many causes of disruptive behaviour. An unstable family life due to violence or divorce may not help. Living in an area with few things to do and few family activities could be another. Pressure from friends can also be a problem with mates encouraging them to join in. Problems at school or bullying may also be a factor.

Unacceptable behaviour can often be stopped by:

- A stable and loving family home.
- Positive parenting.
- Always attending school, training or work experience.

It is a parent's job to provide the best care they can for their child. This does not mean you have to cope

alone. There are organisations that can help families with problem teenagers to help stop their unacceptable behaviour.

The local authority, health and other agencies provide a variety of different services to help support families. They can help assist parents in addressing those factors which may be adversely influencing their child's behaviour as well as working directly with young people.

The Youth Offending Team works with children and young people who have committed offences to help prevent them re-offending.

For further information on the services available visit the Blackpool Council website www.blackpool.gov.uk or contact your school nurse or health visitor.

A good home life and taking an active interest in your child will help them in every area of their life.



WARNING SIGNS

Staying away from school or stealing, having unexplained amounts of money, mixing with a bad crowd, using drugs and/or alcohol, rudeness or violence towards you or others.



ACTION

Talk about their behaviour, why they are doing it and what action can be taken to stop it. Do not feel you are alone.



WHAT TO SAY

Try not to judge them, but explain that you want to help stop this behaviour and you need to work together, maybe with outside help. Explain where this behaviour could lead unless it stops.



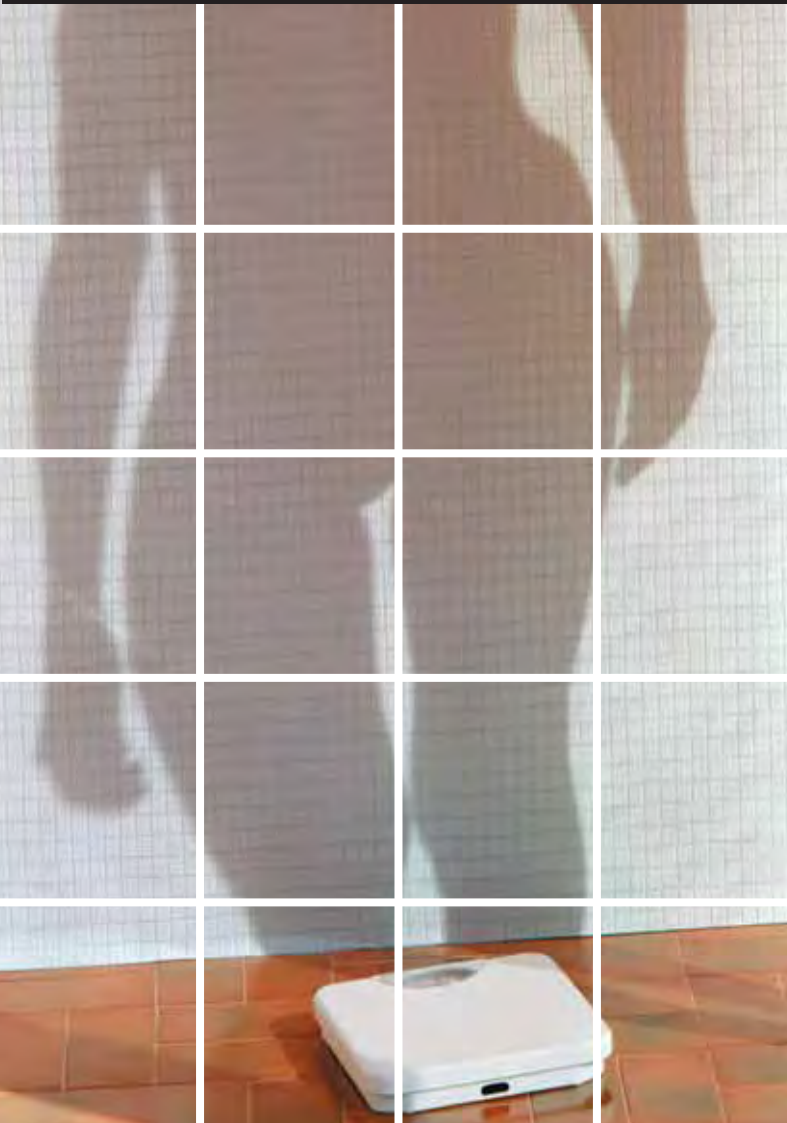
PREVENTION

Keeping an open relationship and talking will help. Positive parenting shows young people are less likely to offend. Take an active interest in schoolwork and encourage after-school activities.



CONTACTS

- Connexions Direct
01253 754840
080 800 13 2 19
www.connexionsdirect.com
- Youth Justice Board for England & Wales
020 7271 3033
www.yjb.gov.uk



Body image and eating disorders

The tell-tale signs

// I can't bear to see what my daughter is doing to herself. I wish I could turn back the clock and have helped her before anorexia took over her life. //

- Young people are more likely than adults to have eating disorders
- Controlling food is a way of controlling their lives
- Recognise the problems that set off eating disorders
- Get support - your teenager needs help

Food is an important part of our lives. Eating disorders develop when food is used as a way of dealing with personal problems. How much is eaten when, and where, can sometimes seem like the only thing they can control in their lives.

Recognising the signs

There are two main eating disorders: Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia Nervosa (see warning signs). People with Anorexia weigh at least 15% less than they should. Anorexia is a serious condition which can cause lifelong problems and in rare cases even death. People with Bulimia tend to maintain their body weight by binge eating in secret. The main warning signs for both disorders are listed.

Who is affected - and why?

Girls are more likely to have eating disorders than boys. If your teenager has a problem, you will need to try to understand what started it. For many, having control of what they eat is the only control they feel they have in their lives. Triggers may include:

- Abuse - physical, emotional or sexual.
- Bullying.
- Family problems.

- Parents or others (including the child themselves) pushing their child too hard at school - people with Anorexia are often high achievers.
- Not being able to express feelings.
- Lack of self-esteem, feelings of self-hatred or guilt.
- Wanting to look like people in magazines and on TV.
- Wanting to be popular - believing being slim will make them popular.

How to help

If you think your teenager is suffering from Anorexia or Bulimia, then they need your help. Try to get them to eat sensibly and try to find out what the real problems are.

If they don't feel they can talk to you, try to get them to talk to a friend, relative, teacher, school nurse, youth or social worker. You should also talk to their doctor to discuss any further treatment. Counselling, self-help groups and therapy are all helpful. In very serious cases, they may need to go into a hospital or clinic. Be mindful of them spending too much time on the internet looking at websites linked to eating disorders.



WARNING SIGNS

Anorexia: excessive weight loss, avoiding food, obsessing about food, hiding body shape, loss of periods, not growing, thinning hair.

Bulimia: binge-eating, sore throat, dental problems, missed periods, disappearing after meals, using laxatives.



ACTION

You can't make somebody eat. Talk to your teenager. Let them know you are there for them. Seek support for them and for yourself.



WHAT TO SAY

Try to get them to talk about any problems that may be setting off their eating disorder. If they feel they can't talk to you, encourage them to talk to a friend, relative, teacher or social worker.



PREVENTION

If your child knows they can talk to you about any worries, they are less likely to use food as a way of dealing with their problems.



CONTACTS

- www.b-eat.co.uk
0845 634 7650
- www.youngminds.org.uk
0808 802 5544
- www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
0845 4647



Bullying

The real story

// *It got to the point where he was scared of going to school. I knew something was wrong and at first he didn't want to talk about it. It was as if he felt it would worry me. Now we've talked we've got a plan of action.*



- » Bullying behaviour is **never** acceptable
- » Bullying can take many forms
- » Talk to your child if you think they are being bullied or are bullying others
- » Speak to the school immediately if you have any concerns
- » Young people need ways to protect themselves and seek help
- » Encourage them to speak up



What is bullying?

Bullying is deliberate, is intended to cause hurt or harm, is repeated and involves an imbalance of power. It can be carried out physically, verbally or in cyberspace - that means by text or email. Bullying is a frightening experience and it can isolate people and damage their self-confidence. Ongoing bullying can have negative long-term effects, leading to depression and even suicidal thoughts and actions.

What you can do:

- Listen to your child and discuss ideas on how to sort the problem out.
- Plan what to do next together.
- Get them to write a bullying report and keep a bullying diary.
- If they are being bullied at school refer to the school Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Meet with the school to work out a plan of action.
- If you are unhappy with the meeting or the action taken by the school to support your child, follow the school complaints procedure.

Cyberbullying is a method of bullying and can be through text, instant messaging or email messages. It can be making insulting comments about someone on the internet through a website or through social networking sites. It can be through uploading embarrassing videos or photographs of them by people they trusted on the internet or distributing them by mobile phones.

If bullying is through text messages, instant messaging or email, advise them not to respond to messages. Save the messages or take screen print as evidence. There are 'report abuse' facilities on many websites.



WARNING SIGNS

Running away, staying away from school, unusual changes in behaviour, injuries with no feasible explanation and loss or damage to possessions.



ACTION

If they say they are being bullied - listen carefully and take this seriously. If bullying takes the form of texting or email save the messages as evidence.



WHAT TO SAY

Tell them to refuse to put up with bullying, walk away, tell someone and avoid fighting. Listen and be there for them. Make sure they know something will be done.



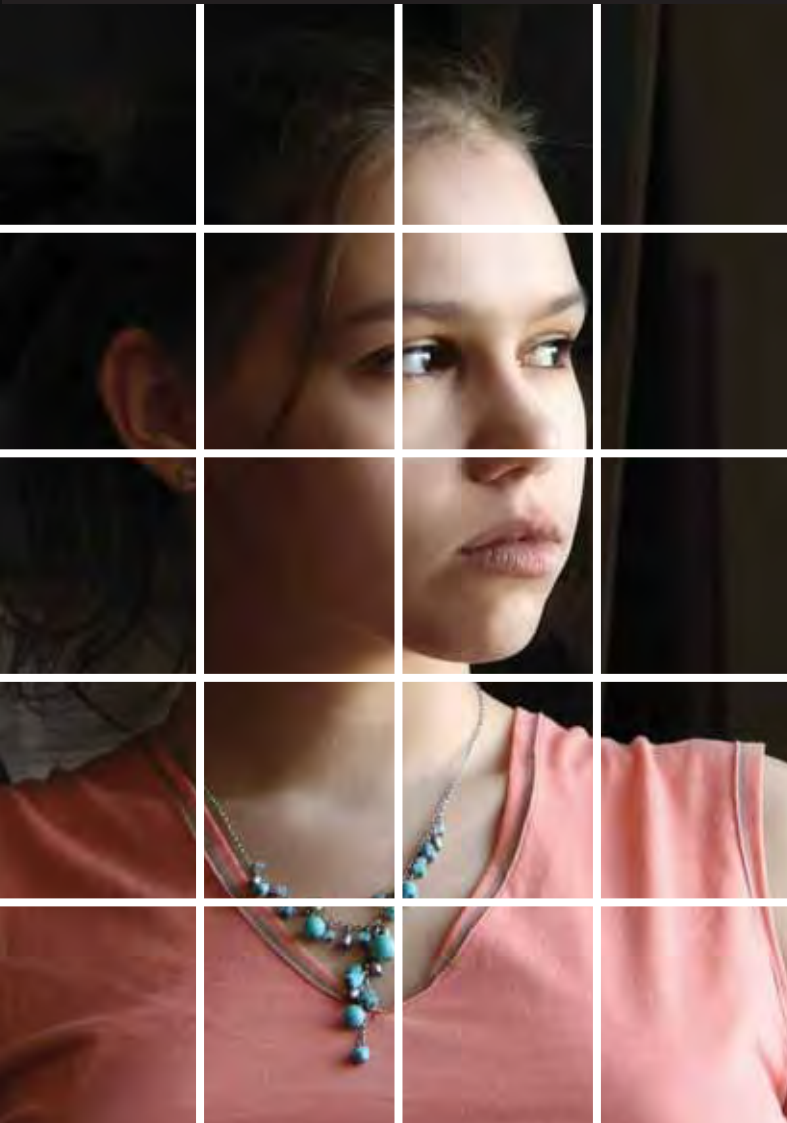
PREVENTION

Talk to them about their school day. Teach them to respect others and to be kind. Teach them that prejudice and bullying is unacceptable.



CONTACTS

- www.childline.org.uk
0800 1111
- www.nspcc.org.uk
0808 800 5000
- www.bullying.co.uk
- www.bullyfreezone.co.uk
- www.ceop.police.uk



Depression and mental ill-health

Dealing with the uncertainties of life

// At first I thought she was just being a moody teenager. But as time went on I realised something was wrong. She's getting counselling now and life is so much better for her. //

- » Many things can set off mental ill-health
- » Your teenager needs you to listen
- » Get professional help

During the teenage years young people have a lot to deal with physically, mentally and emotionally. Whilst every young person feels highs and lows, for some, this turns into depression.

Young people are more vulnerable and sensitive to what is happening to them and are less experienced at being able to deal with problems and anxieties. 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 or moving home, worries about their looks, sexuality, health, exams or abuse.

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

What are the signs?

While young people can sometimes seem unhappy and quiet, you may feel that this is more than just a phase. 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, finding it hard to do their schoolwork or not caring about what they look like are other things to look out for. They may talk about death or have suicidal thoughts.

To escape from their feelings or let them out in the only way they know, young people may start taking drugs or drinking, not going to school, becoming violent or shoplifting.

How to help

Don't ignore their worries and take any talk of suicide seriously. You need to listen. Try to understand what they are going through and get professional help if you need to. Get them to talk about their worries. 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.



WARNING SIGNS

Not sleeping, mood swings, eating disorders, not caring about their appearance, dropping friends and hobbies, staying in their room, crying, not doing so well at school, finding it hard to work or being self-critical.



ACTION

Talk to your teenager. Be patient and understanding. You could discuss concerns with your doctor. Is school aware of changes in your child?



WHAT TO SAY

Help and encourage your teenager to get their lives together. Depression can't just be switched off - try to get them to get help.



PREVENTION

Listen to your teenager. Encourage them to talk to you. Be supportive and understanding. Chat about their interests, hobbies, friends and schoolwork so they feel you understand their life.



CONTACTS

- www.connectyoungpeople.co.uk 01253 751047
- Your doctor
- www.youngminds.org.uk
- www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk 0845 4647



Domestic abuse

It could be happening at home

// I crept downstairs because I heard arguing. Dad was shouting at Mum. I made sure that my sister did not see, but we still heard. //

- » Many children witness domestic abuse every year
- » Children often blame themselves for domestic abuse
- » Domestic abuse can affect children in serious and long-lasting ways
- » Domestic abuse is rarely a one off, but it usually gets worse and more frequent over time
- » Pregnant women are more vulnerable to domestic abuse
- » Where domestic abuse occurs in families, alcohol is often a factor

Domestic abuse includes threatening behaviour, violence, psychological, sexual, financial or emotional abuse. It also includes forced marriage, female genital mutilation and so called honour killings. Domestic abuse is a crime and a major social problem affecting many families.

Children who see or hear violence can be affected in many different ways. Children do hear, they do see, and they are aware of violence in the family. Children will learn how to act from what their parents do. Domestic abuse teaches children negative things about relationships and how to deal with people.

For example:

- 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 violence, especially if it happens after an argument about them.

Many people find it difficult to understand why people stay in or return to violent 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 effects include feeling frightened, becoming shy and quiet, running away, becoming aggressive, poor behaviour, issues with school, poor concentration and emotional upset.

Long-term effects

The longer children are around domestic abuse, 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 the non-abusing parent, loss of childhood, problems at school and running away.

If you are worried about domestic abuse, talk to someone who understands such as your child's school nurse or the National Domestic Violence Helpline. If you are violent and have children, you need to seek help to stop what is happening.



WARNING SIGNS

Any abuse between adults can negatively affect children. Seek support and help as soon as possible. The longer it lasts the more damaging domestic abuse is.



ACTION

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



WHAT TO SAY

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



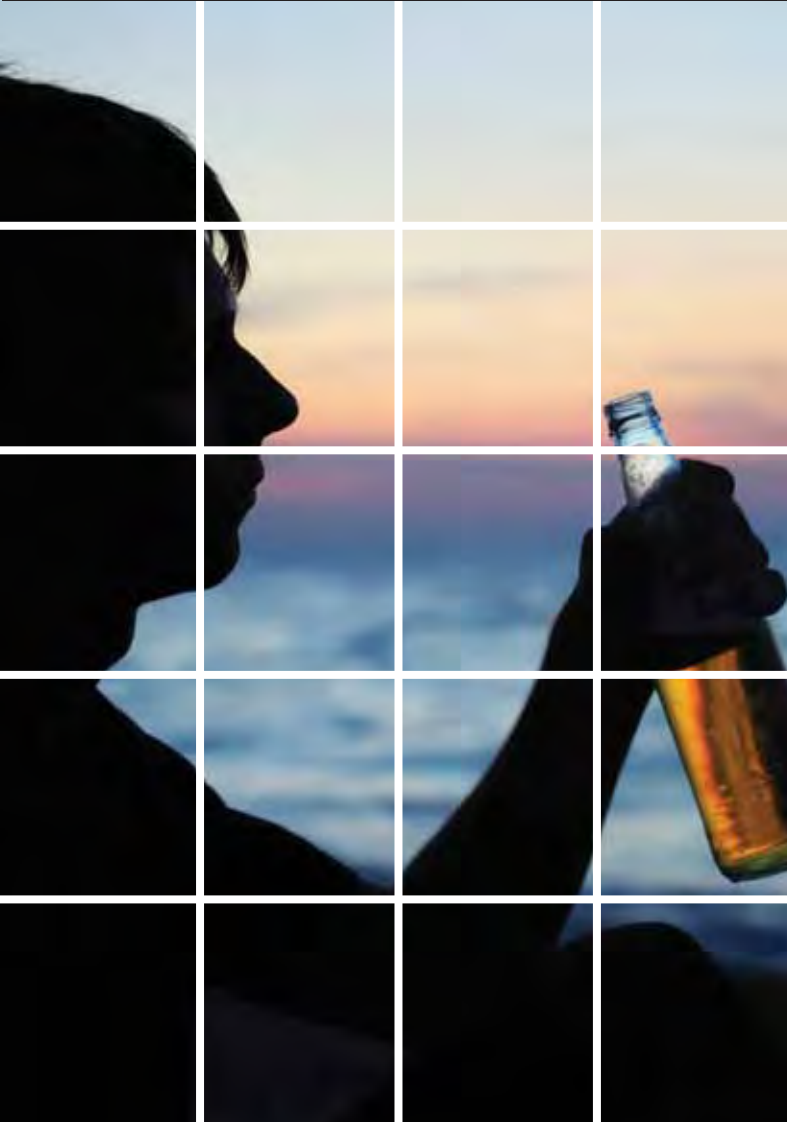
PREVENTION

An abusive partner can take responsibility for their actions by seeking help to stop. Make sure that you are a good role model for your children so that they learn better ways of behaving.



CONTACTS

- Police 999 in an emergency or Police Enquiries 0845 125 3545
- National Domestic Violence Helpline 0808 2000 247 www.womensaid.org.uk www.refuge.org.uk
- Your school nurse or doctor



Drug, substance and alcohol misuse

How would I know?

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

- » Make sure you know about drugs and their possible effects
- » Stopping something from happening is better than trying to sort it out once it has already happened
- » Parents who take drugs can seriously increase the chances of their children taking them
- » Peer pressure from friends can make young people feel they should drink alcohol or try drugs

Drugs are dangerous but some parents worry that talking about drugs and alcohol can encourage their use. Avoiding talking about drugs will not protect your child. Young people will be aware of drugs in some way before they leave primary school. Make sure you discuss the risks. Accurate information and support will help them decide what to do. It does not guarantee non-use but will increase the chance of an informed choice.

If you find out that your child has or may have taken drugs, it can be worrying. This can be due to your lack of knowledge about drugs and not feeling confident talking about them, which is why it is vitally important that young people are aware of the risks of using drugs, alcohol and volatile substances (e.g. solvents).

How would I know?

There are many tell-tale signs, like panic, being tense or drowsy, low concentration, lack of energy, depression, skin problems or aggression. There may be a change

in relationships with family and friends, a change in behavior, a change in performance in school, changes in a financial situation and personal possessions 'disappearing'.

Why do young people use drugs?

Because they are curious about them, they want to break the rules, to cope with difficult situations or feelings and because their friends do it. At this time in their lives there are so many changes going on physically and emotionally as well as added pressure through school, homework and exams. Young people can also turn to drugs and alcohol if they are unhappy, being abused or bullied.

Drug and alcohol misuse by parents

Drug, alcohol and substance misuse by adults in the home can seriously affect the care and well-being of children. It can encourage young people to take it up themselves and feel it is normal. If you are concerned contact one of the helplines listed.



WARNING SIGNS

If their appearance, behavior or financial situation changes dramatically you should include drug and alcohol use in your list of "I wonder if ..." questions.



ACTION

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



WHAT TO SAY

Discuss alcohol and drug misuse. Make sure you give accurate information regarding the risks.



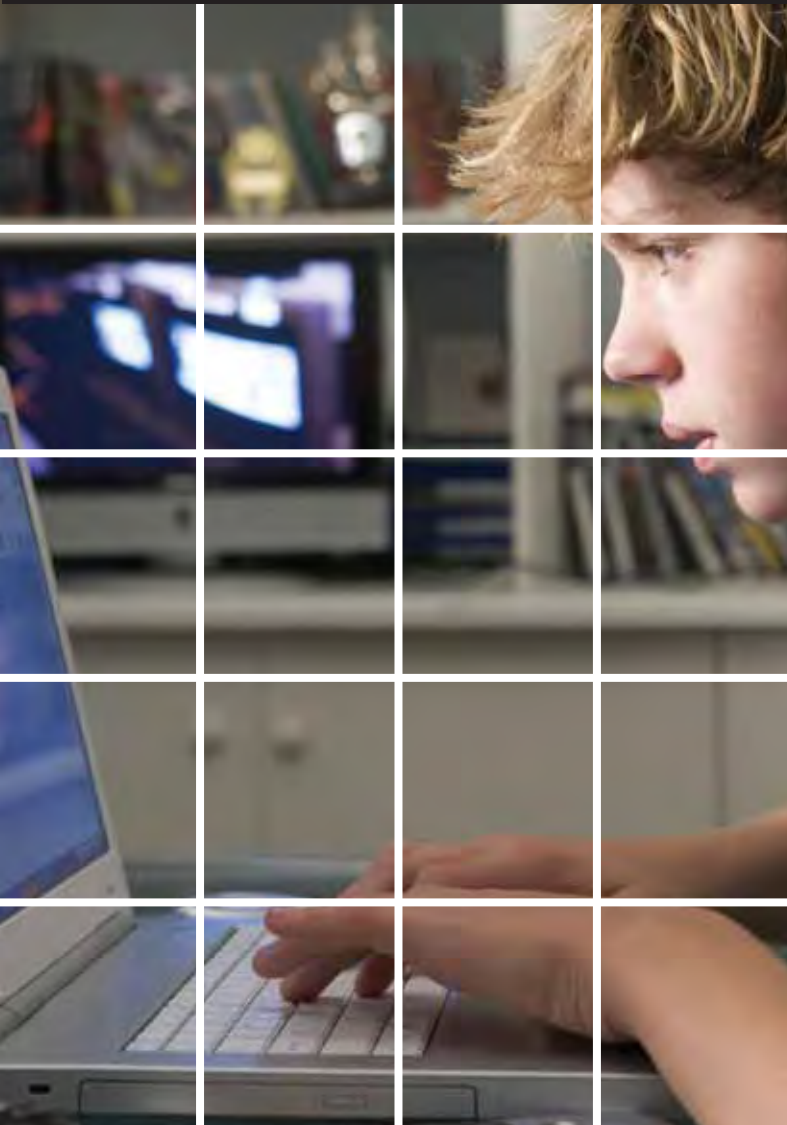
PREVENTION

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



CONTACTS

- The Hub (Substance misuse service for young people and their families) 01253 476010
- www.talktofrank.com
- 0800 77 66 00



E-safety

New technology, old problem

// He asked me to meet him and not to tell anyone. He said it would be our secret. Something just didn't feel right, so I reported him. //

- The internet can be fun and is useful
- Have family internet rules to encourage safer use
- It is important that parents understand the internet
- Young people can be bullied online and by text
- Chatrooms can be used to host bullying campaigns against a person
- Sexual or embarrassing photos can end up on the internet



The internet is a fantastic source of information which can help young people to study or keep in contact with friends.

The internet is also an easy tool for abuse. Adults can use chatrooms and social networking sites to exploit young people, often by pretending to be of the same age.

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. Check out which sites they are visiting to see if they are acceptable. Ensure they save chat logs/emails. Look for sites that have child-friendly advice and how to report concerns. You can buy software filters which block access to websites with a sexual content. These still don't make internet use totally safe.

Set ground rules:

- Limit the amount of time your child spends on the internet.
- 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.
- Ensure social networking profiles are set to private so only friends can view.

Cyberbullying is a method of bullying and can be through text, instant messaging or email messages. It can be making insulting comments about someone on the internet through a website or through social networking. It can be through uploading embarrassing videos or photographs on the internet or distributing them by mobile phones or email. This can be devastating for both the young person and their family.

If they are being bullied through text messages, instant messaging or email, advise them not to respond to the message. Save the messages or take a screen print as evidence. They can 'block' or remove people from 'buddies lists'.



WARNING SIGNS

Secrecy when using the internet, changes in their behaviour and unusual sexual questions, leaving clues that they are having chats with others which you are not comfortable with, and meeting people secretly.



ACTION

Set up and stick to your internet use ground rules. Learn about the internet and how to use it so you can understand what they are viewing and whether it is suitable.



WHAT TO SAY

Discuss the dangers of using the internet and unsuitable websites. Make sure personal information is not passed on to anyone else. If they are worried they must tell you.



PREVENTION

Keep the computer in a family room with the monitor facing outwards. Discuss which websites they are visiting and then make them aware of the dangers. Use parental locks to block over-18 sites.



CONTACTS

- Child Exploitation & Online Protection Centre (CEOP) 0870 000 3344 www.ceop.police.uk
- www.chatdanger.com
- www.kidsmart.org.uk



Fear of crime

Staying safe when out and about

// When my daughter's friend had her phone stolen, she was worried it would happen to her, too. I have taught her how to stay safe, to act confidently when she's out and to trust her instincts - that definitely helps. //

- » Explain to your teenager how to stay safe
- » Tell them to keep valuable things out of sight
- » Encourage your child to go round with a group of friends
- » Acting confidently will mean your teenager is less likely to be attacked
- » Teenagers are more likely to be mugged than their parents

Your child may know someone their age who has been a victim of crime. Maybe they've had their phone stolen or been made to hand over money - this is called being mugged. Perhaps they've been attacked because of their religion or skin colour.

Young people today carry around more valuable items than ever, such as mobile phones and MP3 players. It's easy to think that every time you step outside you'll be attacked or mugged.

It might be tempting to protect your teenager by stopping them going out anywhere, but this is likely to make them over-anxious about crime. It's better that they know how to stay safe and feel more confident than you won't worry as much.

Keeping safe

There's lots of advice you can give your child to make sure they know how to stay safe:

- Keep their mobile phone, MP3 player and wallet or purse out of sight, as most things are stolen when they're being used or can be seen.
- Strap their bag across their chest and put one hand on the strap.

- Carry a personal attack alarm to use if they feel in danger.
- Try to be with a friend or group of friends all the time, especially if they are going somewhere new.
- Act confidently, even if they don't feel it - look alert and walk proudly and quickly.
- Stick to footpaths and well-lit areas. Never take a short-cut through a dark alleyway just to get home quicker.
- If they think someone is following them, cross to the other side of the road, keep walking, and head for a well-lit area with lots of people. Always ask for help if they need it.
- If they are attacked, tell them to scream and shout but hand over what they're asked for. It's better to run off and be safe than fight and end up hurt.

Keeping their mobile phone safe

- Don't show it off or use it where there are lots of other people.
- Type *#06# into it to get their IMEI number and write it down. If their phone gets stolen they can stop anyone else using it.
- Have their own PIN number and keep the phone locked with the PIN.



WARNING SIGNS

Watch out for signs that your teenager is at risk of being a victim of crime such as when their mobile phone, wallet and other valuable possessions are easily seen, or if they walk around by themselves, especially at night.



ACTION

Make sure your teenager knows how to say safe when they're out. Always know where your child is and when to expect them home.



WHAT TO SAY

Talk to your child calmly about the risks and dangers when they're out and how they can minimise them. Remember: if you appear very anxious about being a victim of crime, chances are they will too.



PREVENTION

Teenagers need to know how to stay safe. This includes keeping valuables out of sight, staying with a trusted group of friends when out at night and keeping to well-lit places.



CONTACTS

- www.childline.org.uk 0800 1111
- www.crimestoppers-uk.org 0800 555 111
- Police 999 in an emergency



Healthy lifestyles

Looking after their health

// 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 you eat more calories than your body burns, you will put on weight
- » Obesity (being very overweight) is becoming more common in children
- » Do not smoke around your children. Even better, quit and improve your health and theirs
- » Make sure your child gets plenty of sleep and exercise
- » Healthy teeth give you something to smile about

What they eat

Make sure your child eats a good variety of foods in sensible amounts - balance is the key! Make meal times fun and make time to sit down to eat and to enjoy the food together as a family. To get the best possible start to the day, it is important that children have a good healthy breakfast. Setting a good example is one of the best ways of encouraging healthy eating habits early in life.

Exercise

Food is used in our bodies to create energy. If we don't use it we put on weight. Encourage your children to be as active as possible. You and your child can get plenty of exercise just by walking to the shops or to school. Playing sport with your child is another great way to keep fit.

Sleep

As a parent you know that lack of sleep can affect your mood and ability to function at work or as a parent. The same is true of your children. Lack of sleep can impact on their behavior and achievement at school.

Teeth

Look after your children's teeth and take them to visit the dentist regularly. Make sure your child brushes their teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste. Children are especially at risk from tooth decay because of the sugary things they eat. If your child has problems with their teeth, take them to the dentist. For assistance in registering with a dentist, phone the Dental Access Service on 01253 655200.

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.



WARNING SIGNS

An unhealthy diet can lead to health problems for all the family. Your child 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 diet. Ask your health visitor, school nurse or doctor for diet, exercise and general advice on a healthy lifestyle. Go to the dentist regularly. Give up smoking.



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

Too much saturated fat, salt and sugar are bad for the body. Make sure your child gets plenty of sleep and exercise.



CONTACTS

- Blackpool Healthy Schools Programme 01253 476714
- Blackpool Stop Smoking Service 0845 601 2186 or 01253 651570
- Your doctor, health visitor or school nurse
- www.healthystart.nhs.uk



Loss and bereavement

It's not their fault

// *Since her father died, my daughter seems to have disappeared into her own little world. I desperately want to help her but I don't know what to do. She just doesn't want to talk to me about it.* //

- » Share your loss
- » Loss or death affects everyone differently
- » Talking helps ease the pain
- » Understanding the grieving process will help your child
- » Be there for each other

Loss, such as divorce, separation or death of a loved one is difficult for everyone. 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 very tough on young people.

Young people 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 what has happened.
- Anger at the person who left or died, at you, at others or themselves.
- Guilt, perhaps blaming themselves in some way for something they said or left unsaid.
- Fear for 'what will happen now' as life has changed forever.
- Sadness at never seeing that person again.

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 their friends more. Grief can take many different forms.

How you can help

It is easy for young people 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 ease the process. Talk to your child about what has happened as much as they want to, and 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.

If you too are suffering, then it is going to be especially hard for you to not only deal with your own emotions, 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.



WARNING SIGNS

Give your child as much time and patience as they need to cope with the loss. If you think they are having long-term difficulties, 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. Always let them know you are there for them too.



WHAT TO SAY

Let your child know it is okay to talk about the person who has died. Let them know it's alright to still laugh or have fun - it doesn't mean you're grieving any less.



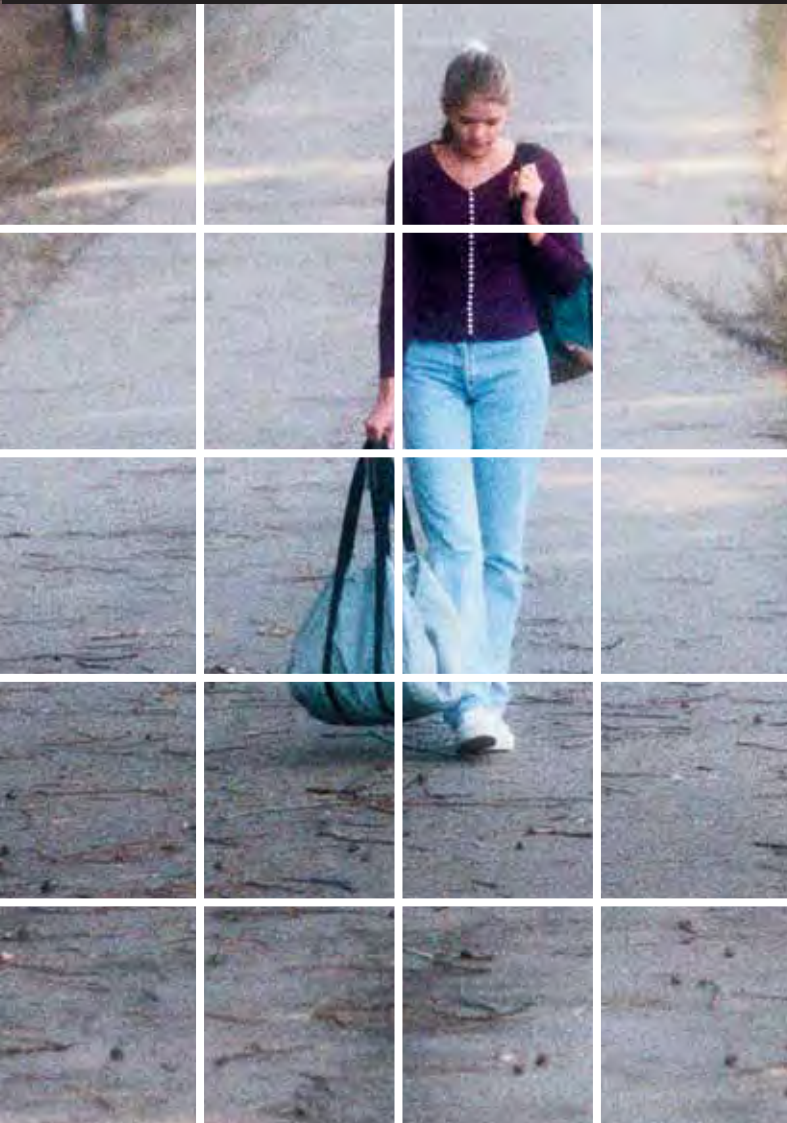
PREVENTION

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.



CONTACTS

- Snowdrop Centre 01253 401911
- Connect 01253 751047 www.connectyoungpeople.co.uk
- Linden Centre 01253 595552
- www.cruse.org.uk 0844 477 9400
- 0808 808 1677 (Youthline)
- 01772 686668 (Preston Branch)



Missing

From home and school

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

- » Make time for your child to talk about their worries
- » Let your child know that a good education is important
- » Be honest about things that might be happening in your family
- » Look for signs that your child might not be happy
- » Help is available - don't be afraid to ask

What the law says

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

If they are missing out on school and lessons, they are much more likely to come into contact with adults or other young people who might want to cause them harm.

Children who miss school regularly often do this because they are worried about something. Something might be happening on the way to or from school that is worrying to them. Perhaps someone is bullying them. They might be finding some lessons or subjects too hard (or too easy), or they might be having problems in finishing their homework. Sometimes

children will not want to leave home if they are worried that their parent might come to some harm while they are away.

Reasons for going missing

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 or thought that nobody cared about us. We might have thought we had been treated unfairly. If a child goes missing from home, it is usually for a very short period, generally until they think that their parents have noticed they are not there. 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 your child goes missing and you don't know where they have gone, contact the police.



WARNING SIGNS

There may be none. Does your child seem to be unhappy? Are they missing school or being bullied?



ACTION

Has anything happened in the family that you haven't talked to your child about? If you think your teenager is missing school, talk to the school. 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. 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 behaviour. Spend time with them. Be interested in their lives and worries. Know who their friends are. Be careful about their access to the internet.



CONTACTS

- Message Home (for young people to get a message to their parents) 0800 700 740 www.missingpeople.org.uk
- www.nspcc.org.uk 0808 800 5000
- Police 999 in an emergency or Police Enquiries 0845 125 3545



Private fostering

Every child matters

// My cousin's son has just moved in with us and his parents are overseas so he's really missing them. Hopefully he'll start to feel more at home soon.

- ▶ **Private fostering is different from public fostering. Public fostering means that the local authority chooses a foster carer to look after a young person, but private fostering is a private arrangement**
- ▶ **Over half of all private foster carers don't know that they have to tell their local authority that they're a private foster carer**

Private fostering is when a child or young person aged under 16 (under 18 if they have a disability) is cared for and provided with accommodation for 28 days or more by an adult who is not a close relative. A close relative is an aunt, uncle, step-parent, grandparent or sibling but not a cousin, great aunt/uncle or a family friend. Private fostering is different from public fostering where the local authority chooses the foster carer.

There are many private fostering arrangements. These can include children and young people:

- Sent to this country for education or health care from overseas.
- Living with a family friend as a result of parents separating or parents' ill health.
- Living with their partner's family.

Blackpool Council has a legal duty to ensure that any child or young person is in a suitable and safe private fostering arrangement. They make regular visits to the foster home to see the child and provide help and advice if necessary.

If you're a private foster carer, you must tell your local council. They would like to visit to check that the young person living with you is safe and well and also give you help and advice on how to look after your foster child if you need it.

If you're going to be a foster carer, you must notify Blackpool Council at least six weeks before your foster child comes to live with you. If you move home or the child moves out of your home to live elsewhere, you must also tell them.

What else should you remember?

Before a child or young person comes to live with you, find out about them from their birth parents - for example, whether they have any medical problems or whether they require a special diet. Remember to register the child with your own doctor when they come to live with you.

Keep in contact with your foster child's birth parents, so you know where they are living, and they know that their child is okay. Make sure you and the birth parents are clear about what you expect from each other.



WARNING SIGNS

Signs that a child is not being looked after properly include, they are always hungry or tired, look dirty, or are missing school.



ACTION

If you are a private foster carer, tell your local authority as soon as possible. If someone you know is a private foster carer or may become one, encourage them to tell their local authority.



WHAT TO SAY

If you know someone who is a private foster carer or the birth parent of a foster child, ensure they know to tell their local authority so that the child stays safe and well.



PREVENTION

If you're thinking about asking someone else to look after your child, contact your local authority. They may know things about them that you don't. That's why they can help protect your child.



CONTACTS

- Family Information Service 0800 092 2332
- Blackpool Social Care (Private Fostering) 01253 477910
- British Association for Adoption & Fostering (BAAF) 020 7421 2600 www.baaf.org.uk



Protecting young people from harm

Myths and realities

// *Social work has changed a lot. In the past our approach to child protection wasn't very flexible. Now we work together with families to make sure they get the support before things reach a crisis.* //

- » Parents are responsible for their children's safety
- » A social worker becomes involved once concern is shared
- » 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 adults harm children on purpose. Most often, when harm does happen, families need support rather than being punished or their children being taken away.

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.

Many myths exist about child abuse. Here are some facts:

1. Child abuse is not easy to recognise, prevent or stop. Sometimes it is difficult to be absolutely sure that a child has been abused or who did it. A careful assessment is needed 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. They will consider how serious the incident is, how often it has happened and the effect on the child. All these things 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 look into concerns of child abuse.

2. Professionals are there to help the whole family.

Social workers have always been expected to make sure that children are safe. In order to do this well, they rely on information from parents, family and other professionals. The local community also play an important part in identifying and reporting concerns about child abuse. This helps to ensure that parents are offered support before things get worse.

3. Reporting child abuse hardly ever results in the child being taken away from home.

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



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. Contact the helplines listed below.



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 best to help.



WHAT TO SAY

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



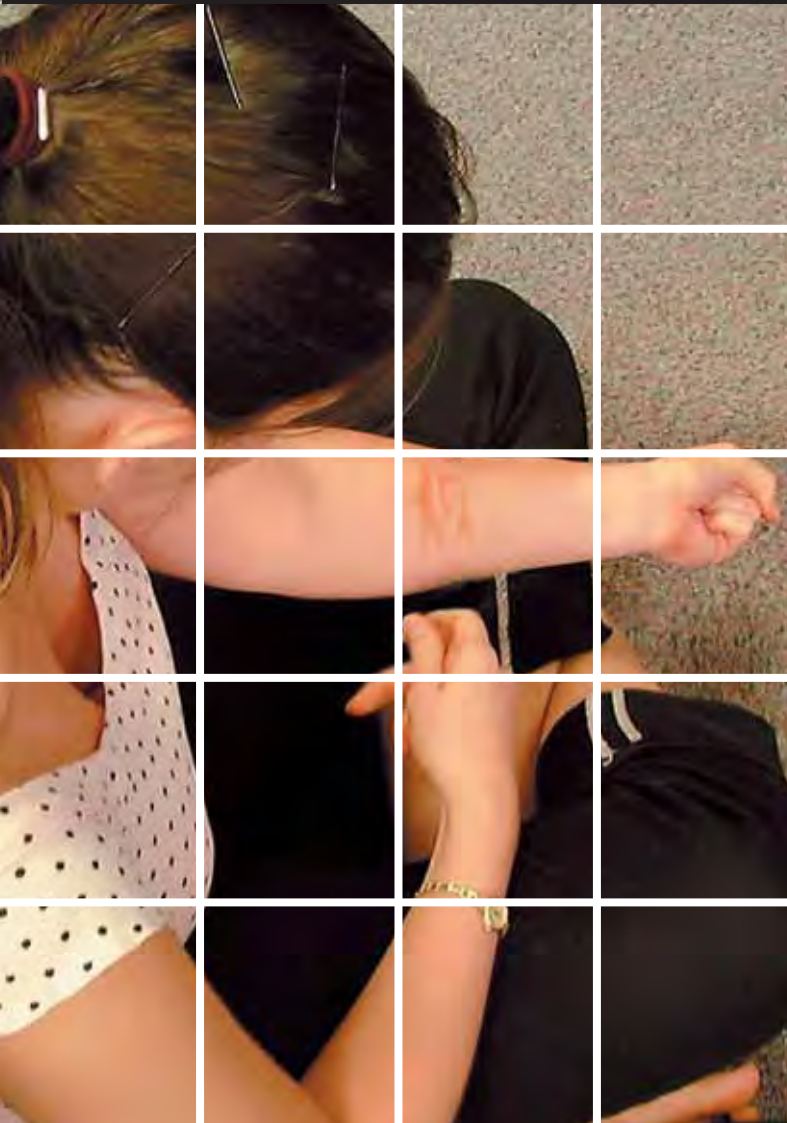
PREVENTION

It is important that children know what to do when they feel unsafe. Do they know who to talk to and how to get a safe place or person?



CONTACTS

- Blackpool Children's Social Care (see page 47 Useful contacts)
- NSPCC 0808 800 5000 www.nspcc.org.uk
- Family Lives 0808 800 2222 www.familylives.org.uk



Self-harm

Understanding and support

// I couldn't understand why my 15 year old daughter's arms were covered in cuts. When I found out what she was doing, I was shocked. She's just attention seeking isn't she? //

- » Self-harm can be a sign of deeper problems
- » Understand the reasons why your teenager self-harms
- » Find out how to help your teenager by contacting your doctor

Self-harming or hurting yourself can take many forms such as cutting, burning or scalding, hitting, picking skin, head banging against a wall or other object or taking an overdose.

People who self-harm often use it as a way of dealing with problems such as depression, bullying, abuse or feeling unloved. Young people who self-harm say it is a way of being in control and it helps them cope. The physical pain takes their mind off their problems.

Self-harming is not just about getting attention, as it is most often carried out in private and kept secret from family and friends. It is a sign that they need help. Those who self-harm usually think badly of themselves and need even more attention and support. They often do not get help for themselves because they may be worried about what you and others will think of them. Hurting yourself is a serious problem, even if the person only lightly cuts themselves. A person who self-harms needs help to get over their problem. Most cases of harming do not lead to death, but can be a sign that your teenager may be thinking about more serious harm or even suicide.

How you can help

Your teenager needs your understanding and support. Listen to what they say without judging them and try not to show you are angry or upset or try to force them to stop. If this is their way of handling problems then alternatives need to be found before they can stop harming themselves. Helping them learn to deal with stress and stopping the things that cause them to self-harm will be more useful.

If your teenager finds it difficult to tell you about their feelings try to get them to talk to another family member, friend, teacher, youth worker or social worker. They can also talk to their doctor who can tell them about other ways of dealing with stress and also where to get more help. One to one counselling, support groups and practical support can all help.

Make sure your child treats injuries to stop infection. If a wound looks serious or they have taken an overdose, however small, call 999 or go to the Accident and Emergency Department. Try to get your child to call you or the Emergency Services if they ever self-harm and hurt themselves seriously.



WARNING SIGNS

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



ACTION

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



WHAT TO SAY

Try not to judge them or to force them to stop. Make time to listen to them. Suggest they see their doctor (and offer to go with them) for help if needed.



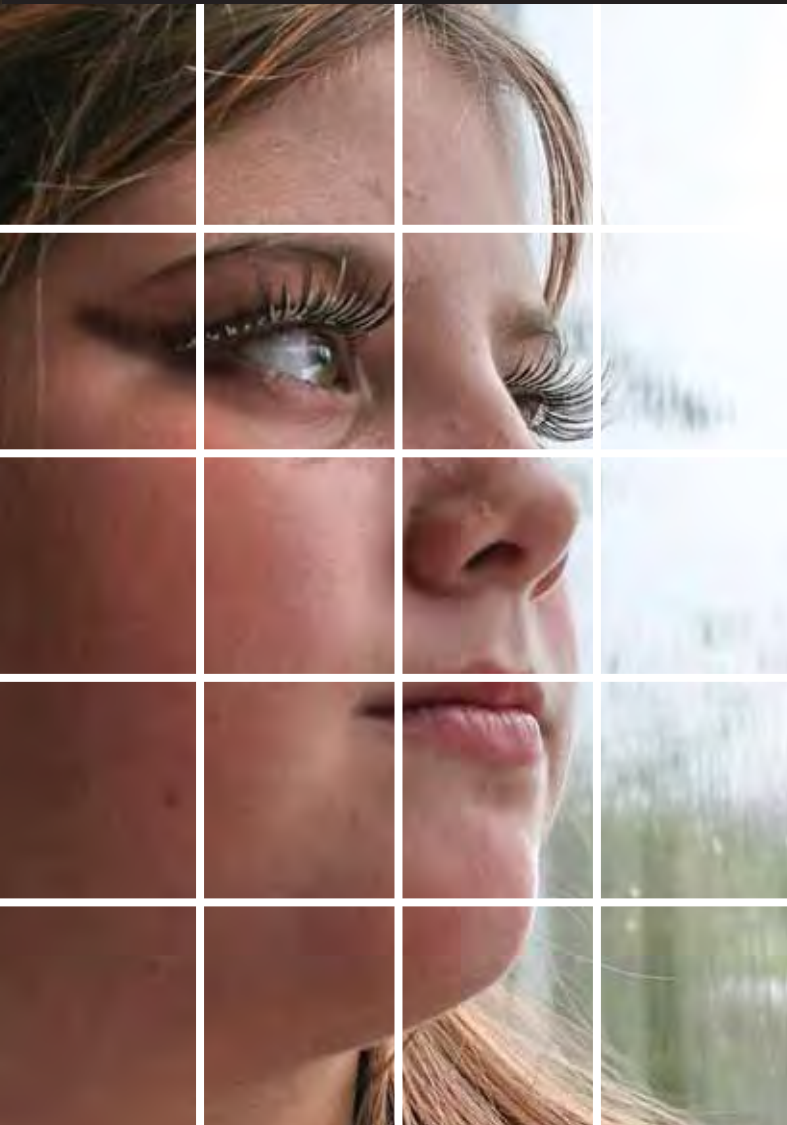
PREVENTION

People who self-harm feel lonely and unloved. Give your teenager time to talk about their problems and know you are there for them. Your support will make them feel better about themselves.



CONTACTS

- www.childline.org.uk
0800 1111
- www.samaritans.org
08457 90 90 90 (24 hour)
- www.nshn.co.uk
0800 622 6000
- www.actionforchildren.org.uk



Sexual exploitation

What is it?

// *I used to blame myself. How could I be so stupid? I was 13, he was 20. He said he loved me.* //

- » Sexual exploitation is a form of child abuse
- » Child sexual exploitation can occur by direct contact with the child or young person and/ or through technology such as mobile phones and the internet
- » Children who are exploited can face devastating, physical, emotional and psychological risks
- » It's never too late or too early to get help

Sexual exploitation is the involvement of children and young people in sexual activity by someone in exchange for gifts, money, clothes, attention, alcohol, drugs or even shelter.

Children can be sexually exploited by manipulative adults who wish to make money. Adults who abuse children should be held responsible, rather than blaming the children. It is never too early or too late to get help

Those adults who benefit from child exploitation use clever methods to groom their victims, and keep control of them. It can begin with an 'exciting' new friendship with an older boyfriend. They may buy the child gifts and they may be given alcohol or drugs. Before long they create a loyal and dependent relationship with the victim and can then get them to make money for them by giving sexual services. This is against the law and is a form of sexual abuse which puts the child at risk from severe physical, emotional and psychological damage.

The damage

Children involved in exploitation face enormous risks to their emotional health, which can sometimes lead to

death. They can easily become addicted to drugs and alcohol and face a high risk of catching sexually transmitted infections.

How to spot it

There are some warning signs that could show that your child is at risk from or is involved in exploitation. If all or even some of them apply to your child, you should seriously consider that they might be at risk.

How to stop it

Keeping or getting children out of sexual exploitation can need specialist help. A close and positive relationship with your child can reduce their vulnerability. Making sure that they have high self-esteem and feel good about themselves can stop them falling into abusive relationships. However, even with the best parents in the world, some children will find themselves open to this form of abuse. Parents can often feel powerless to stop what can be a difficult and dangerous situation.

If you feel your child is at risk, there are agencies who work with families to help stop child exploitation. They provide information and support for you and your child.



WARNING SIGNS

Older boyfriend, not going to school, unexplained new clothes, jewellery, mobile phone etc, going missing from home, changes in mood, drug or alcohol abuse, loss of contact with former friends.



ACTION

Try to get your child to tell you about what's happening. Make sure they know they are not to blame. Get in touch with agencies that can help you and your child.



WHAT TO SAY

Be patient. Let them know you are there to help, that you understand it may be difficult to talk about these things and that they should not feel ashamed.



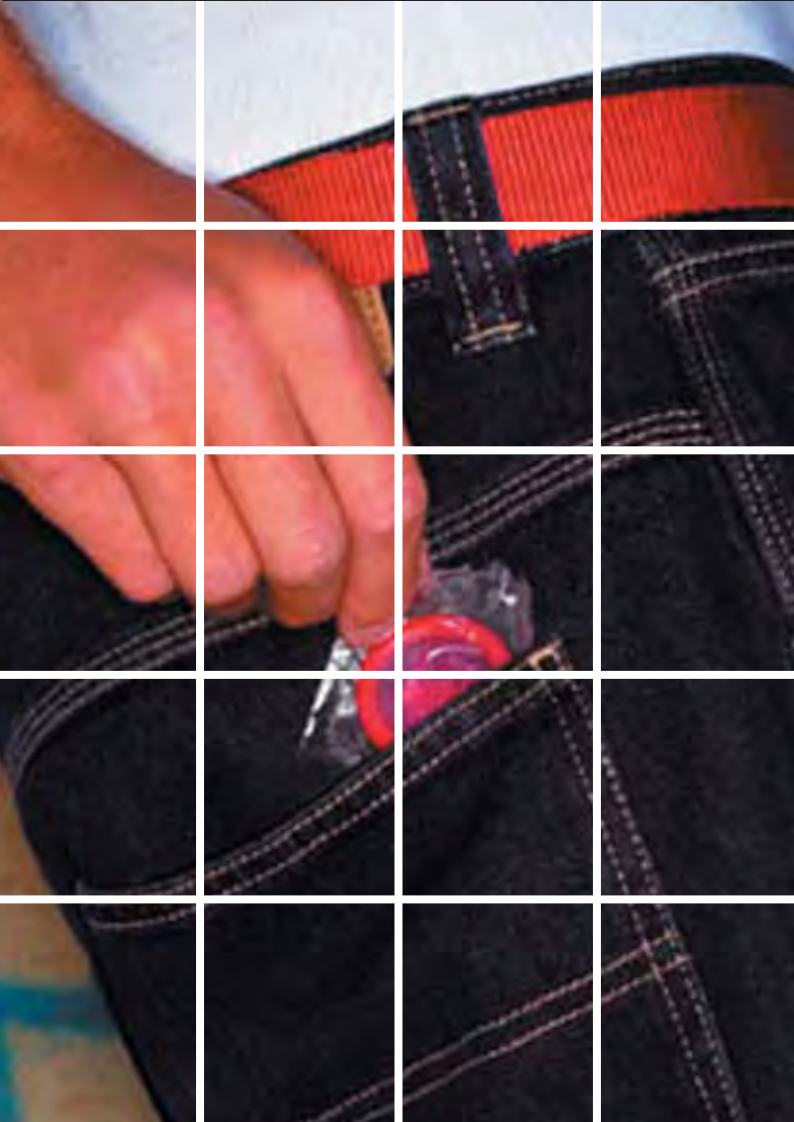
PREVENTION

Try to have good communication with your child. Watch out for low self-esteem and other warning signs. Contact an agency if you feel your child is at risk.



CONTACTS

- Awaken Team (Dedicated to tackling sexual exploitation) 01253 607063
- www.connectyoungpeople.co.uk 01253 751047
- Barnardo's 01253 626480 www.barnardos.org.uk
- NSPCC 0800 800 5000 www.nspcc.org.uk



Sexual health

Sex. Worth talking about

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



- » Talking to young people about sex can help delay the age at which they first have sex and make them more likely to use contraception
- » Many Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) do not have any symptoms
- » If left untreated, some STIs can cause problems with fertility
- » Condoms can help to protect against STIs and pregnancy

Talking about sex and relationships with your children as they grow up can help them to look after their sexual health when they start having sex. It won't make them want to start having sex. Many parents of a faith background may wish to discuss these issues within a family context. Below are some good reasons to be open about sex with your child.

Your child wants the facts

Some teenagers may feel confused, worried or even scared about sex and relationships. Teenagers see images of sex in films, magazines, newspapers, adverts and on television and the internet, but this doesn't mean that they know the facts. They may be receiving confused and inaccurate messages. Help them by teaching them what's true and what's not.

It helps them make decisions about sex

By ensuring that your child knows about contraception (the methods, how they work and where to get them) and safer sex, you're helping them to make choices when they

decide to have sex. You'll help them to avoid taking risks that could lead to unplanned pregnancy or Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). Every teenager should know about contraception, emergency contraception and safer sex.

Chlamydia is a real risk

Chlamydia is the most commonly diagnosed STI. If left untreated, Chlamydia can cause complications, including infertility. Your teenager needs to know that condoms can help to protect against infections such as Chlamydia and other STIs.

You can be the person whom they trust

Once in secondary school, your child will be going through puberty and hearing half-truths and myths from other young people. They might think that everyone else is having sex, but the truth is that most teenagers don't have sex until they're at least 16. This is a great opportunity to be the person that your child can go to for information, help and advice.



WARNING SIGNS

Drinking too much alcohol can lead to risky sexual behaviour. Being drunk stops people making sensible decisions and can make people vulnerable to sexual assault.



ACTION

For more advice and information on relationships and sex visit www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Talkingaboutsex



WHAT TO SAY

Don't have one big talk about sex. Make it an open, ongoing topic. Have lots of little talks whenever the subject comes up and start before your child is a teenager. Let your child know that they can talk to you about anything that's on their mind.



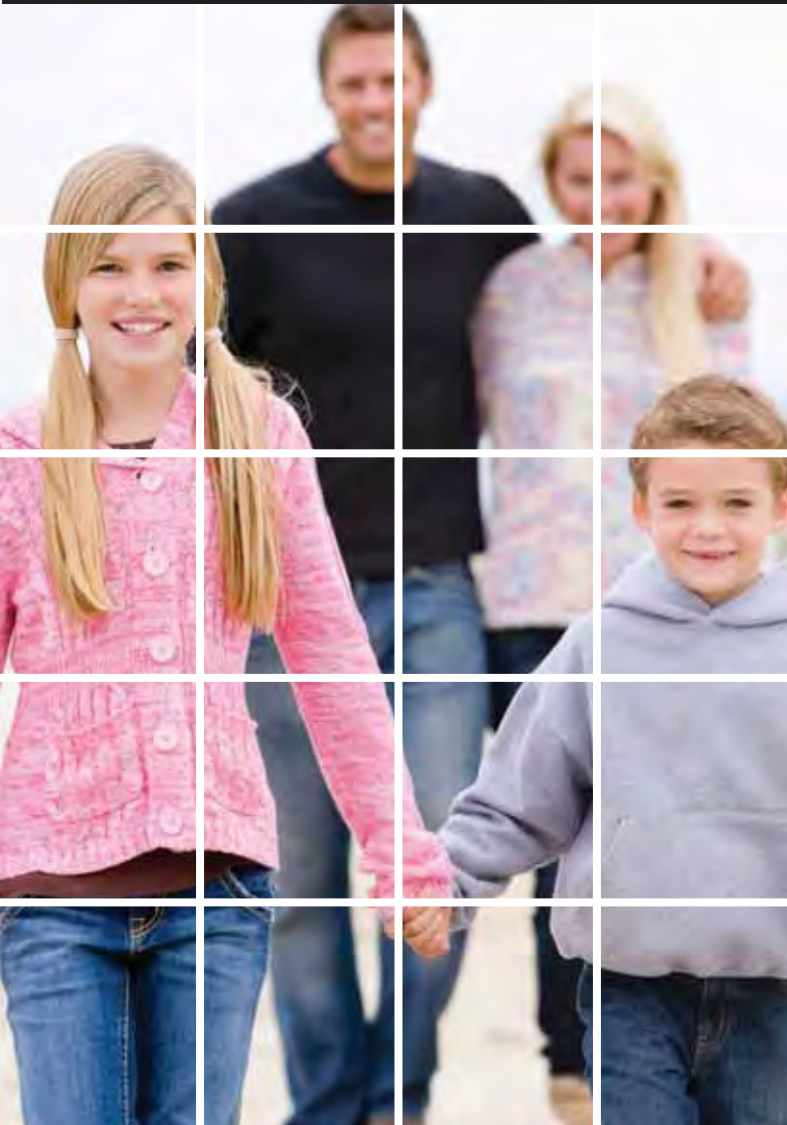
PREVENTION

The more your teenager knows about sex, the longer they are likely to wait for their first time and to use contraception. Make sure you have the information to help them.



CONTACTS

- www.connectyoungpeople.co.uk 01253 751047
- Wish Team 01253 476648
- British Pregnancy Advisory Service 08457 30 40 30 www.bpas.org
- www.nhs.uk/worhtalkingabout
- www.gotateenager.org.uk



Smoking

Secondhand smoke is dangerous for everyone

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

- ▶ **Teach your children about the risks associated with smoking**
- ▶ **Avoid smoking anywhere around your children and consider getting help to give up (see Contacts)**

Secondhand smoke is dangerous for everyone, especially children. Secondhand smoke is made up of two types of smoke: mainstream (breathed in and out by smokers) and sidestream (smoke from the burning tip of a cigarette).

Breathing in other people's secondhand smoke can damage almost every organ in the human body.

Secondhand smoke is especially dangerous for children as they are growing up because:

- Smoking near children is a cause of serious respiratory illnesses, such as bronchitis and pneumonia.
- Exposure to secondhand smoke increases the risk of children developing asthma and can cause asthma attacks.
- Younger children who are exposed to secondhand smoke are much more likely to contract a serious respiratory infection that requires hospitalisation.
- There is an increased risk of meningitis for children who are exposed to secondhand smoke.
- Children exposed to secondhand smoke are more likely to get coughs and colds, as well as middle ear disease, which can cause deafness.

Action
Keep your home and car smoke free at all times. Designate them both smoke free areas. Make sure everyone who comes into your home is aware of your smoke free home rules and explain it is to protect children and non-smokers. Protect children BEFORE they suffer.

Protecting your child
The best thing you can do is to keep them away from all cigarettes and smoky places (a smoky place is not just where you can see smoke hanging in the air, it is any room where even one person is smoking). Remember that smoking in the house, even with the door or a window open is still not ventilated enough to stop smoke drifting into other rooms and lingering for a long time.

- Keep children's playing, sleeping and eating areas smoke free.
- Make your car a smoke free zone.
- Ask other people not to smoke around your child.
- Choose smoke free places when out and about with your family.
- Avoid smoking anywhere around your children.
- If you smoke - go outside to do so.



WARNING SIGNS

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



ACTION

If you are worried about your child's health, take them to see your doctor. Consider the prevention and advice given and create a clean air environment for your child.



WHAT TO SAY

Ensure that all people who come into your home are aware of your own 'No Smoking in the Home' rules that you have decided to put in place.



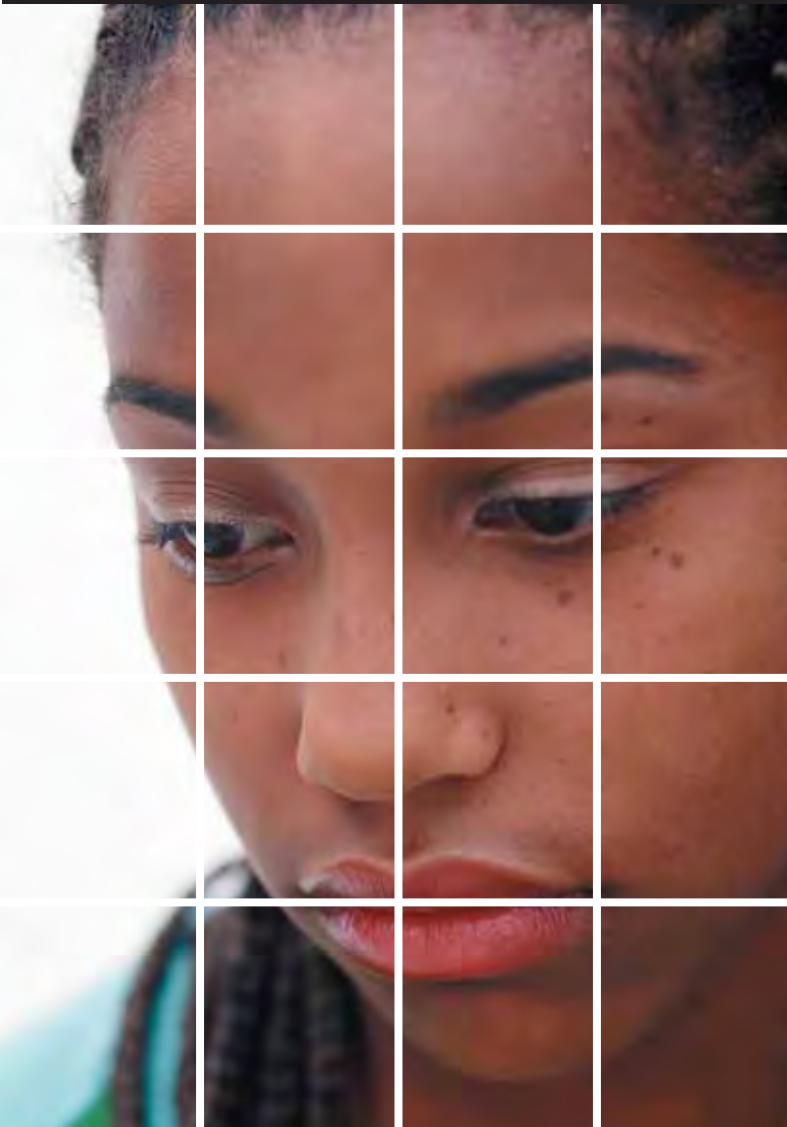
PREVENTION

Follow the prevention steps outlined on this page.



CONTACTS

- Blackpool Stop Smoking Service 0845 601 2186 or 01253 651570
- NHS Smoking Helpline 0800 022 4 332 www.smokefree.nhs.uk
- Your doctor, practice nurse, community midwife, health visitor, dentist and pharmacist will all be able to help



Stress and anxiety

Helping them cope

// When my daughter fell out with her friends at school recently she got very upset and anxious. At first, I wondered what all the fuss was about, but then I realised how important friends can be at her age.

- » Children can feel stressed for many reasons, including being bullied, their parents divorcing or feeling under excessive pressure to do well at school
- » Exercise is a great way to reduce stress
- » It is normal to feel stressed sometimes
- » Children can pick up on their parents' stress

Sometimes children get stressed and anxious, and there are many reasons why this can happen:

- They are being bullied at school. Feeling in danger every day can greatly affect a child's state of mind.
- They are not getting on well with their friends. It's natural to want to fit in and falling out with friends can seem like a really important thing to a child.
- They are anxious about moving house or going back to school after the holidays.
- A family member, friend or pet has died. Sometimes children can blame themselves for these things even if they have nothing to do with it.

Another reason that children feel anxious is if their parents divorce or even just fight. When they see their parents arguing it can hurt a child's sense of security and can make them feel very alone and frightened. It is worse when parents make their children choose sides or say hurtful comments about the other parent in front of the child.

Some children worry about schoolwork, tests or exams. It's normal to want to see your child do well, but some parents may not realise that they are putting too much pressure on their child to succeed. Remember to be realistic about your child's abilities and encourage them to do their best.

As a parent be careful what you say, even when you don't think your child is listening to you. Sometimes, children overhear parents talking about money worries or problems they are having at work and they start to feel anxious about these things themselves.

You will probably be able to help your child when they feel stressed. If their anxiety goes on for longer than a month, or if it greatly affects how they are at home or their behaviour at school, you might want to speak to their teacher or ask your health visitor, school nurse or doctor for help and advice.



WARNING SIGNS

Mood swings, trouble sleeping, nightmares, trouble doing schoolwork, stomach aches, headaches, preferring to spend time alone or overreacting to minor problems.



ACTION

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and a healthy diet. Exercise can greatly reduce stress, so encourage your child to be active. Teach your child how to relax.



WHAT TO SAY

Talk to your child about what is causing their stress. Tell them it is normal to feel stressed now and again, but it is also good to know how to relax.



PREVENTION

Make time for your child every day so they know they can talk to you if they are worried. Look ahead to when your child may be stressed e.g. before tests, and talk about it.



CONTACTS

- www.connectyoungpeople.co.uk
01253 751047
- www.familylives.org.uk
0808 800 2222
- www.gotateenager.org.uk
- www.yourteenager.co.uk



Worried about a child or young person

Should you mind your own business?

// Every day I hear the child next door crying. Her parents are always shouting at her. Yesterday, in the street, I saw her mother hit her hard across the side of the head. This is probably none of my business but I am worried and not sure what to do. //

- » **Protecting children and young people is everybody's business**
- » **Adults have a responsibility to report abuse. Abuse can be physical, emotional, sexual or involve neglect**
- » **If in doubt share your concerns about children with your local social work team**
- » **Reporting concerns rarely leads to a young person being removed from their family**

When we suspect, witness or are told that a child or young person has been harmed we can react in many different ways. We may feel guilt, anger, disbelief or denial. Some of these reactions can prevent help from getting to a family who need it.

Supporting families

All parents experience difficulties at times, but can be helped by other family members or close friends.

If someone you know is having difficulties at times, but can be helped, you could offer:

- A listening ear.
- Ideas to help with problems.
- Encouragement to get more help.
- Practical support for example childcare or shopping.

Many people do not report their concerns because they may:

- Fear that the child or young person will be at further risk of harm.
- Believe that nothing will be done.
- Believe that the child or young person will be taken away from their family.

- Worry that the family may find out who reported them.
- Ruin family relationships.

However there may be times when a child or young person may be at risk of significant harm and professional support is needed. 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 or young person as they get older. Even if you think an incident is just a one off, other professional agencies may already have concerns. So your information could be very important.

Reporting concerns

If you report your concerns to social services, you will be asked for your details and details of the worries you have. You should write down what you want to say before you speak to them so that you can remember everything. Remember, protecting children is everybody's business.



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 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 confidential helpline such as the NSPCC.



WHAT TO SAY

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



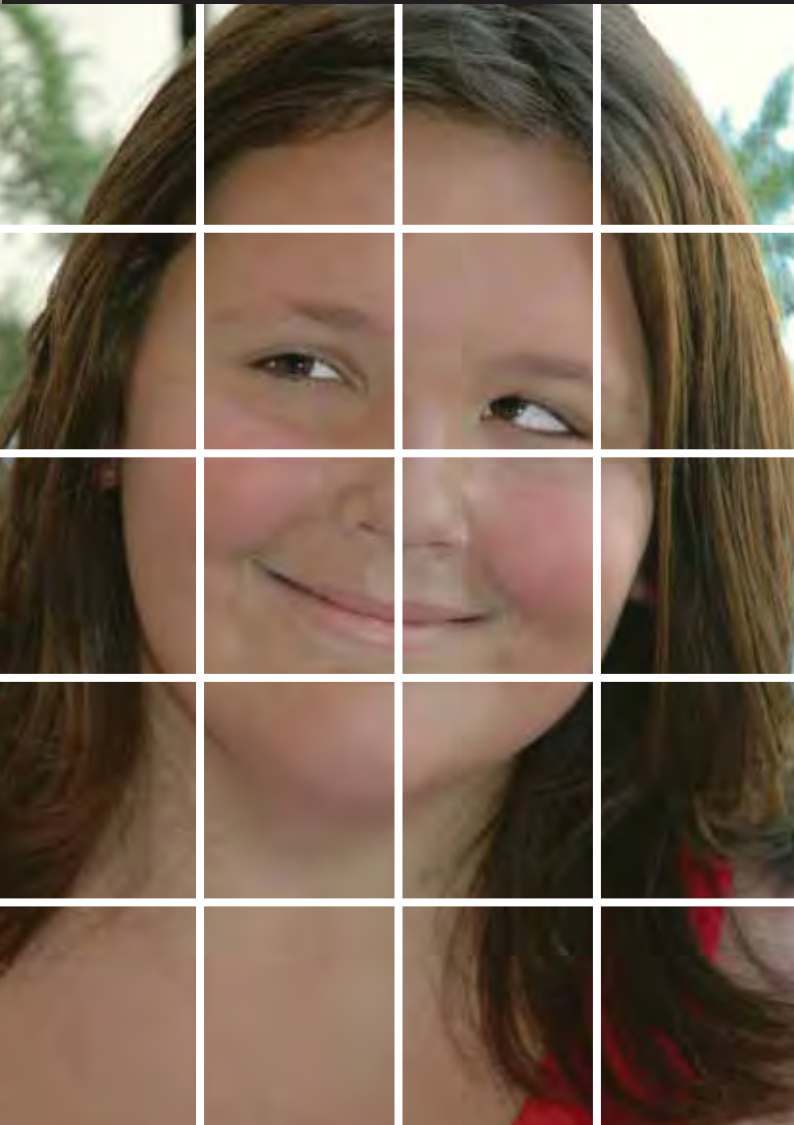
PREVENTION

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



CONTACTS

- Blackpool Children's Social Care (see page 47 Useful contacts)
- www.nspcc.org.uk 0808 800 5000
- www.childline.org.uk 0800 1111



Young people with a disability

You're not alone

// My daughter is disabled which can be challenging at times, but with the right kind of advice and support I know we can get the help we need. //

- » Young people experience the same feelings and emotions, whether they have a disability or not
- » Encourage them to meet people
- » Find out about local activities and groups
- » Support their educational needs
- » Check what benefits and allowances you are both entitled to

Young people experience the same feelings and emotions, whether they have a disability or not, and you will have similar concerns to any other parent.

All young people want to go out with their friends. They all face the same worries, such as what their friends think about them and how good they look. They are getting used to sexual feelings, like any other teenager. Like their friends, they are beginning to think about college or getting a job. During this time of change, they will need a lot of support.

Encourage or arrange for them to meet friends regularly as a group. You could contact your local council at Social Services Direct (Blackpool) on 01253 477592, email social.services@blackpool.gov.uk or visit the Blackpool Council website at www.blackpool.gov.uk

If your child has a good education it can improve their chances later in life, whatever their disabilities. There are good schools for people with special needs, but many students

with disabilities do well in mainstream schools and colleges, too. Young people with a learning disability have a right to education until they are 19. They may want to continue their education at a local Further Education College or similar institution. If not, ask your social worker about work opportunities.

Living with a teenager with disabilities affects the whole family. They may need additional time and attention, meaning brothers and sisters can feel ignored. Try to set aside time to spend time with each of your children and reassure them that you love them all the same.



WARNING SIGNS

Seeing their friends socialising more, going to parties and starting new relationships can mean they feel lonely and cut off.



ACTION

Try to build up their confidence - encourage them to find hobbies they enjoy and things they're good at. Encourage them to go out with friends and find local youth clubs and local organisations offering a chance to get out and meet people.



WHAT TO SAY

Reassure your teenager that you love them and are proud of them. Talk about their interests. Focus on the things they can do, not the things they can't.



PREVENTION

They are going through the same worries as other young people. Ask what clothes they like, how they like their hair or what activities they would like to do.



CONTACTS

- Blackpool Family Link 01253 477888 www.blackpool.gov.uk
- Learning Disability Helpline 0808 808 1111
- Mencap 020 7454 0454 or 01253 399484 www.mencap.org.uk
- www.carers.org

Useful national **Contacts**

Barnardo's
www.barnardos.org.uk

Beating Eating Disorders
 0845 634 7650 www.b-eat.co.uk

British Association for Adoption & Fostering (BAAF)
 020 7421 2600 www.baaf.org.uk

Chat Danger
www.chatdanger.com

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

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

ChildLine
 0800 1111
www.childline.org.uk

Connexions Direct
 Confidential advice, support & information for 13 to 19 year olds
 080 800 13 2 19
www.connexionsdirect.com

Cruse Bereavement Care
 0844 477 9400
 0808 808 1677 (Young Person's Helpline)
www.cruse.org.uk

Domestic Abuse Men's Advice Line
 0808 801 0327
www.mensadviceline.org.uk

Emergency
 Police, Ambulance, Fire & Rescue, Coast Guard, Mountain Rescue
 999

Forced Marriage Unit
 020 7008 0151
www.fco.gov.uk/forcedmarriage

FRANK
 0800 77 66 00
www.talktofrank.com

Got a Teenager
www.gotateenager.org.uk

Immunisations
www.nhs.uk/planners/vaccinations

Kidscape
 08451 205 204 (Parents Bullying Helpline) www.kidscape.org.uk

Learning Disability Helpline
 0808 808 1111

Message Home
 For young people to get a message to their parents 0800 700 740

Missing People
www.missingpeople.org.uk

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

NHS Direct
 0845 4647 www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

NHS Smoking Helpline
 0800 022 4 332
www.smokefree.nhs.uk

NSPCC
 0808 800 5000
www.nspcc.org.uk

Respect
 Helpline for Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse
 0845 122 8609 www.respect.uk.net

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)
 0121 248 2000 www.rospa.com

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

Stop it Now!
 Internet safety
 0808 1000 900
www.stopitnow.org.uk

Young Carers
www.youngcarers.net

Your Teenager
www.yourteenager.co.uk

Useful local **Contacts**

Awaken Team
 Vulnerable young people who may be sexually exploited
 01253 607063

Barnardo's
 Blackpool Family Support
 01253 626480
www.barnardos.org.uk

Blackpool Advocacy & Blackpool Advocacy Young Carers Project
 01253 405959
www.blackpooladvocacy.co.uk

Blackpool Council Services:
www.blackpool.gov.uk

Blackpool Family Information Service
 0800 092 2332

Blackpool Healthy Schools Programme
 01253 476714

Blackpool Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB)
 01253 477296
www.blackpoolscb.org.uk

Blackpool Stop Smoking Service
 0845 6012186
 01253 651570

Blackpool Young People Services/Connexions
 Confidential advice, support & information for 13 to 19 year olds
 01253 754840
www.connexionsdirect.com

Children & Young People Department
Children Social Care Teams:
 North 01253 477668
 South 01253 477664
 Central North 01253 477955
 Central South 01253 476811
 Emergency (after 5pm & weekends) 01253 477600

Connect
 Young people's sexual health & information centre 01253 751047
www.connectyoungpeople.co.uk

Fylde Coast Women's Aid
 01253 596699
www.womensaid.org.uk

GP Led Walk-In Centre
 Blackpool 01253 953953

Healthy Start
www.healthystart.nhs.uk

Linden Centre
 01253 595552
www.trinityhospice.co.uk/lindencentre.html

NSPCC
 Blackpool 01253 345001
www.nspcc.org.uk

Police
 Blackpool - Non Emergency
 0845 125 35 45
www.lancashire.police.uk
 Blackpool Family Protection Unit
 01253 604080

Private Fostering
 01253 477910

Snowdrop Centre
 Supporting bereaved families
 01253 401911

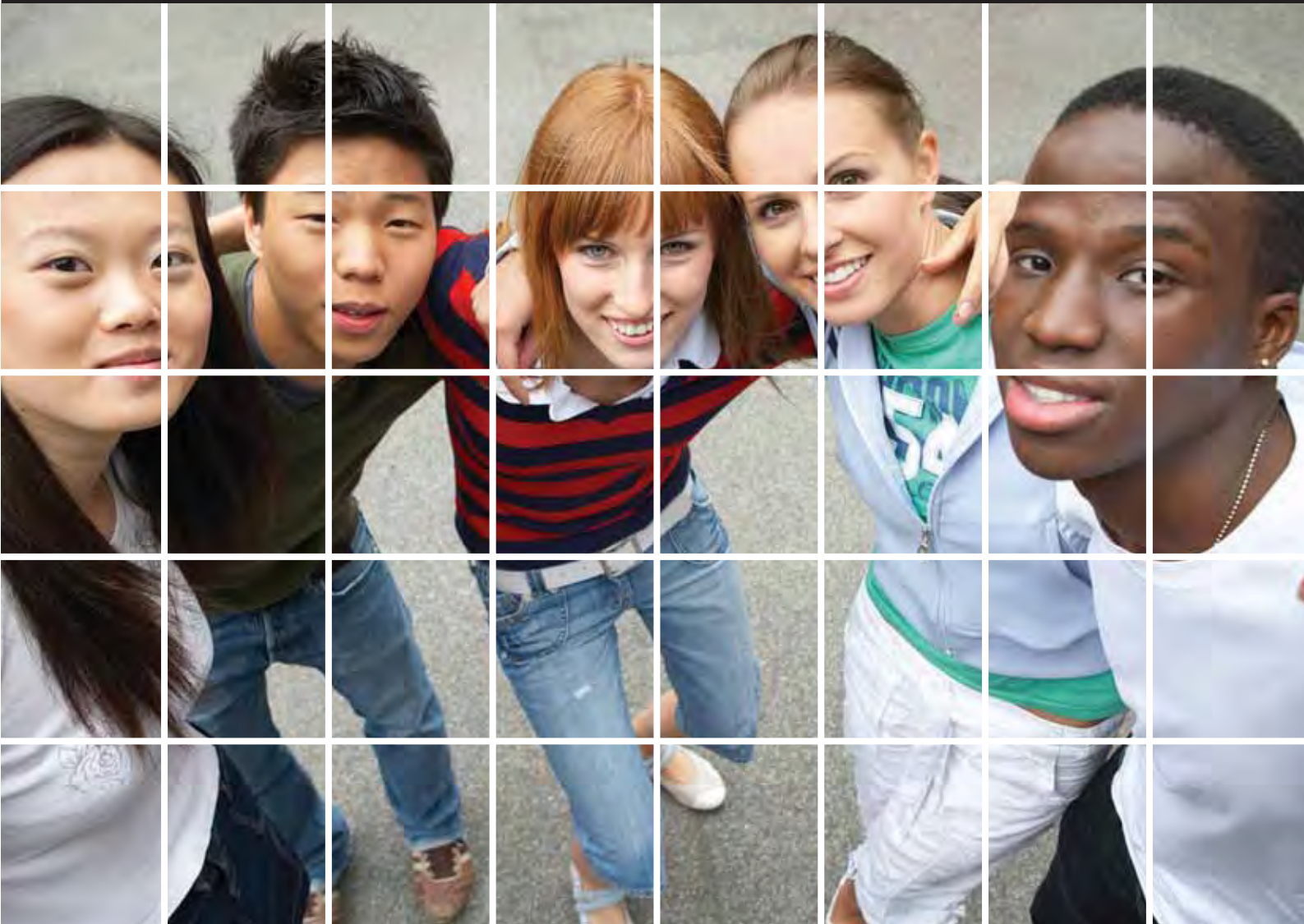
Social Services Direct/ Signposting Service
 Helps to put you in touch with services & organisations throughout Blackpool
 01253 477592
social.services@blackpool.gov.uk

The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme
 Regional Office 0151 231 6220
 Blackpool Council 01253 477401
www.dofe.org

The Hub
 Substance misuse service for young people & their families
 01253 476010

Wish Team
 Education & support for sexual health
 01253 476648

Young Lancashire
 Voluntary Youth Association
 01772 556127
www.younglancashire.org.uk



School nursing service

School nurses

School nurses are qualified nurses who have a specialist qualification in school nursing. Each school nurse is responsible for a secondary school and a number of primary schools. You can obtain your school nurse's contact details from your school office. The school nurse is available to advise and support children and their families with all aspects of health and along with their team supports the school in the delivery of classroom based health education. The school nurse plans, develops and delivers health input to the schools along with her team of staff as follows:

- School staff nurses are qualified nurses who work with the school nurse to deliver health education lessons, record height and weight measurements, give advice in "drop-ins" and give immunisations.
- Health mentors are qualified nurses who are based in secondary schools during the school day. They offer confidential advice to pupils through a 'drop-in' service. They are involved in health education both one-to-one and in the classroom. They offer immunisations and referral to appropriate agencies if help is required.

Blackpool Council Parenting Team

The Parenting Team provide support for parents with children aged five and above. Dependent upon need this support could be offered on a one-to-one basis within the family home or through evidence-based parenting courses which are delivered within schools and children's centres across the town.

Contact 01253 501631 for further details.



Health... at the heart of life in Blackpool

Every effort has been made to keep the information in this booklet up-to-date and accurate. However, we cannot guarantee that inaccuracies won't occur. NHS Blackpool, its employees and partner agencies won't be held responsible for any loss, damage or inconvenience caused as a result of reliance on such information.

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