

North Yorkshire

Safe Parenting

Handbook

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Introduction

Welcome to the North Yorkshire Safe Parenting Handbook.

Your job as a parent is the most difficult there is - it can be both rewarding and challenging. It is a job where very little training is given to parents for what lies ahead.

Every family experience difficulties from time to time and this can test the best of parents. There is not such thing as a perfect parent. However, there are some ways that can make it a less stressful and more rewarding experience.

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

The handbook has been produced by North Yorkshire Area Child Protection Committee - professional agencies working together to safeguard children.

We hope you find the handbook helpful and work keeping for future reference.

Babysitting

"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."

- 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

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. The Children's Legal Centre 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.

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

- North Yorkshire Social Services
01609 780780
- North Yorkshire Children's Information Service
0845 6011630
- RoSPA
0121 248 2000
- NSPCC
0808 800 5000
for guidelines
- North Yorkshire Early Years Helpline
0845 6011630

*Check the ACPC website for the latest phone numbers:
www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk*

Bullying

"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."

- 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 and damage a young person's self-confidence. Some ongoing bullying can have negative long-term effects on children, leading to depression and even suicidal thoughts and actions.

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

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

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

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

If your child tells you about a friend or any other child who is being bullied - listen carefully and take this seriously. That child may not be able to say for themselves what is happening.

Today all schools are required to have an Anti-Bullying Policy. However, school action alone cannot guarantee success 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 the headteacher 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 unacceptable.

CONTACTS

- Kidscape
08451 205 204
(parents bullying helpline)
- Anti Bullying Campaign
020 7378 1446
- Childline
0800 1111

*Check the ACPC website for the latest phone numbers:
www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk*

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."

- Parents are responsible for their children's safety
- Social Services become 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 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.

North Yorkshire 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 North Yorkshire's Police Family 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 solely responsible for protecting children?

The protection and welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. 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.

WARNING SIGNS

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

CONTACTS

- Customer Relation Units
 - Craven
01756 793700
 - Hamletton/
Richmondshire
01609 779999
 - Harrogate
01423 568099
 - Ripon
01765 608636
 - Scarborough/Ryedale
01845 950155
 - Selby
01757 213651
- North Yorkshire Police
01609 783131 or 999 in an emergency
- NSPCC 0800 800 5000
- Parentline Plus
0800 800 2222

Check the ACPC website for the latest phone numbers:
www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk

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
- 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.

In an inner city area it is rarely, if ever, possible to leave your children and assume that someone will look out for them if necessary, as may be the case in some communities and cultures.

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

The NSPCC have issued guidelines advising that children under the age of 13 should not be left alone. While this recommendation does not have the force of law, it is 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.

WARNING SIGNS

Parents who have limited support. A child who is frequently seen 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

- North Yorkshire Social Services 01609 780780
Out of Hours Team
01904 762314
- North Yorkshire Police
01609 783131 or
999 in an
emergency
- NSPCC
0808 800 5000
- National Council
for One Parent Families
0800 018 5020 or
020 7428 5400

*Check the ACPC website for the latest phone numbers:
www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk*

Disabled children

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

- Disability affects some 15% of people in the UK at some time in their lives
- Your child is protected by the Disability Discrimination Act
- The Government, your local council, Social Services, education and health authorities are there to help
- You may be able to receive financial help to assist with caring for your child
- There are many forms of extra services and support available to you and your child
- Support groups, parent groups and other organisations are out there to help you cope

you're not alone

If your child has a disability the future may seem like a daunting struggle, not just for them, but for you too. The word 'disabled' covers a very wide range of different conditions and it is estimated that some 15% of people in the UK experience some form of disability at some time in their lives. Remember you and your child are not alone.

The Government, local council, health and education authorities provide a wide range of benefits, facilities, support and advice for disabled children and their carers.

Legal protection

Your child is especially protected by law. The Disability Discrimination Act makes it unlawful for any service provider (including schools, businesses and organisations) to treat disabled people less favourably than other people because of their disability. It also requires them to make reasonable adjustments to make their services accessible to disabled people.

Health

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

Benefits

There are several specific benefits that you could receive to help you with the costs of caring for a disabled child. These include Disability Living Allowance, Carers Allowance, help with extra housing costs and Carers Blue Badge scheme. And don't forget free dental treatment and prescriptions, help with the cost of glasses, and in some circumstances travel to hospital, school meals, and even road tax exemption.

Education

Depending on their kind of disability, your child may benefit most by attending a special school - an environment specifically designed to match their educational needs. Alternatively your child may receive the extra support they require through special educational needs provision. Your education authority and health service providers will help you assess your child's special educational needs and recommend the most appropriate way forward for their education.

Extra support

Your council can provide extra support for you and your child. This can include special leisure facilities, holidays, short breaks and many additional services for particular needs. Also there are many local, national and international organisations and charities specially set up to provide further help, advice and support to people just like you.

Make contact

On the left you'll find a list of contacts that you may find useful. You're not alone, so make contact today and get the support you need.

WARNING SIGNS

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

ACTION

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

WHAT TO SAY

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

PREVENTION

You can't prevent your child's condition. But you can reduce/lessen the effects of their disability by ensuring that they have the best support available and by remembering that they have rights.

CONTACTS

- North Yorkshire Social Services
01609 780780
- Contact a family
0808 808355
www.cafamily.org.uk
- National Autistic Society
0870 6008585
www.nas.org.uk
- Disability Information Service
01423 501894
- NHS Direct
0845 4647
- Carers Helpline
0808 808 7777
- Network 81 (advice on statementing process)
01279 647415

*Check the ACPC website for the latest phone numbers:
www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk*

Domestic abuse

"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 violence teaches children to use violence
- Domestic abuse 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 domestic abuse occurs, as a contributing factor and as a survival mechanism
- Pregnant women are more vulnerable to domestic violence

How does it affect children?

Domestic abuse is a crime and a major social problem affecting many families. In 90% of reported domestic violence incidents, children have either been present in the same or a nearby room. It is overwhelmingly women and children who are affected by domestic abuse and men who are the perpetrators.

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

Children 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.

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.

Short term effects:

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

Long term effects:

The longer children are exposed to violence, the more severe the effects on them are.

These can include:

- A lack of respect for the non-violent parent
- 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.

WARNING SIGNS

Any violence or abuse between adults will negatively affect children. Seek support and help as soon as possible. The longer it lasts, the more damaging living with domestic abuse becomes.

ACTION

Report your concerns about yourself or someone else to the police.

If you are worried that your child might be affected, talk to them about what is happening.

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.

CONTACTS

- North Yorkshire Social Services
01609 780780
Out of Hours Team
01904 762314
- North Yorkshire Police
01609 783131 or
999 in an emergency
- National Domestic Violence Helpline
0808 2000 247
- Harrogate Women's Aid - Outreach Service
01423 858335
- Craven Domestic Violence Project
01756 794400
- Hambleton & Richmondshire Victim Support
01609 777771
- Scarborough Women's Aid Community Support
01723 381808

continued...

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

If you are violent or abusive, you can seek help to stop what is happening.

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

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

Don't shake the baby

"I thought I couldn't manage. She cried all the time, I was exhausted and nothing worked. I felt such a failure. I got so angry with her I felt like shaking her to stop her noise. I had no idea how much that could hurt her."

- Shaking is often a response to extreme frustration
- Shaking can cause damage that you cannot see
- Shaking can cause damage that is long lasting
- Never shake a child for any reason
- There are different ways to cope with a crying baby
- Do not suffer alone, seek support from others

Different ways to cope

Why do people shake babies?

Often, although not always, babies and young children are shaken when a parent or carer becomes very frustrated when they will not stop crying due to colic, illness or feeding difficulties. On average a baby will cry for at least two hours every day. If a baby has additional difficulties, they will cry more and this can be very stressful. One in ten babies cry much more than this average and many parents experience a great deal of difficulty managing this.

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

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

What damage can shaking cause?

Shaking a baby can cause death or serious and long-lasting brain damage. Shaken Baby Syndrome is an injury that results when a baby is shaken so that his or her head wobbles rapidly back and forth. The force of this can tear the blood vessels that connect the brain and skull. This happens because a young child's neck muscles are not strong enough to hold their head firmly. The action of shaking can cause serious damage, even though the parent does not perceive it as fierce. Never ever shake a baby for any reason.

Ways to cope with a crying baby

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

Some of the ways to cope include:

- Count to ten before doing anything and allow yourself to calm down.
- Consider using a dummy.
- Hug and cuddle your child - perhaps with the use of a baby-carrier so that they are close to your body in order to help soothe them.
- Go for a walk or a drive to help them sleep.
- Make use of a helpline in times of crisis.
- If necessary walk out of the room for a short time, ensuring that you are nearby.
- Ask someone else you trust to take over for a while.

WARNING SIGNS

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

ACTION

If you are worried about your child, take him or her to see your Doctor, Health Visitor or to the Casualty department. Seek support, including the helplines listed under Contacts (see below).

WHAT TO SAY

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

PREVENTION

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

CONTACTS

- North Yorkshire Social Services 01609 780780
Out of Hours Team
01904 762314
- North Yorkshire Police
01609 783131 or
999 in an emergency
- CRY-SIS
08451 228 669
7 days per week support
and advice
- Parentline Plus
0808 800 2222
- NSPCC
0808 800 5000
www.nspcc.org.uk

*Check the ACPC website for the latest phone numbers:
www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk*

Drug & alcohol 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 child may use drugs
- Prevention is better than cure
- Drug use is increasing among young people
- Make sure you know about drugs and their possible effects
- Talk to your children about drugs from a young age
- North Yorkshire schools teach drug prevention in the curriculum

How would I know?

If you find out that your child has or may have taken drugs, it can be frightening because of the potential effects. This can be due to your lack of knowledge about drugs and not feeling confident about talking about them. Most young people who experiment with drugs do not go on to use them on a permanent basis. Therefore addiction, crime and death are not as usual as the stories in the media can lead us to believe.

It is vitally important, however, that children are aware of the risks of using drugs, alcohol and substances. More young people experience problems caused by too much drinking than through drug use.

Drug use among young people - how widespread is it?

Drugs are more widespread among children and young people than ever before.

Research shows that about one in twelve 12 year olds and one in three 14 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 increasing amongst girls.

It is important to discuss drugs use early. Some parents/carers worry that doing this encourages their child to use drugs. Avoiding talking about drugs 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 be more responsive to being told about the risks of drug use. Make sure you tell your children about 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.

Why do young people use drugs?

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

How would I know?

There are many tell-tale signs, which include a young person who is panicky, tense or drowsy, complaining of sickness, has impaired concentration, lack of energy, depression, skin problems or aggression.

There may be a change in relationships with family and friends, a change in behaviour, or a change in performance at school.

Other signs can involve changes in a financial situation and personal possessions 'disappearing' and being sold.

Drug and alcohol misuse by parents

Drug and alcohol misuse by the adults in a household can seriously affect the care and wellbeing of children. Advice can be obtained from the helplines listed opposite.

WARNING SIGNS

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

ACTION

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

WHAT TO SAY

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

PREVENTION

Ensure that you are informed about drug use and the effects of different types of drugs. There are many helpful guides available from the helplines listed below.

CONTACTS

- North Yorkshire Social Services 01609 780780. Out of Hours Team 01904 762314
- North Yorkshire Police 01609 783131 or 999 in an emergency
- Compass - Scarborough 01723 503920
- HADA 01423 525999
- Hambleton & Richmondshire Substance Misuse Service 01609 763267
- Selby DAS 01757 213944
- National Alcohol Helpline 0800 917 8282
- National Drugs Helpline (FRANK) 0800 77 66 00

Check the ACPC website for the latest phone numbers: www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk

Health & safety

"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."

- 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

Making your home safe

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

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

Some dangers around the home:

- Make sure that all medicines and drugs are locked away well out of reach and your use of them is private to avoid your child copying you.
- Certain rooms are necessarily full of danger, such as the kitchen, and should remain out of bounds or made safe by the use of safety devices.
- Are your children contained within the house? Is the safety chain high enough on the front door even for a very active toddler?
- Crawling and exploring are an essential part of their development - keep an eye on your young children, especially near wires and sockets.
- Small children should never be left alone with pets. Even trained and good natured animals can 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.
- 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.

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

- Talk to your health visitor or midwife
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)
0121 248 2000
- Child Accident Prevention Trust
020 7608 3828

*Check the ACPC website for the latest phone numbers:
www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk*

Internet safety

"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.."

- 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 proved 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.

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.

Making it safe to surf

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

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

Learn all you can about the Internet. In the same way that you would teach your child about 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 arrange to meet a new friend made on the Internet without a trusted adult present.

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 bed wetting, 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.

WARNING SIGNS

Prolonged, secretive periods on the Internet, changes in behaviour or mood, inappropriate sexual behaviour, asking questions about sexual experiences or terminology, 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 child protection, youth services, child abuse or other appropriate organisations 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.

continued...

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.

Make Contact

Local police and social services have specialist teams who are specially trained to counter these forms of exploitation and offer support to children and parents.

CONTACTS

- *North Yorkshire Police*
01609 783131 or
999 in an emergency
- *NSPCC*
0808 800 5000
- *Internet Watch*
Hotline
0845 600 8844

*Check the ACPC website for
the latest phone numbers:
www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk*

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."

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

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.

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.

However, if a child goes missing from home repeatedly, receives unexplained gifts, and possibly has an older 'friend', there is a possibility they could be being sexually exploited.

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'.

CONTACTS

- North Yorkshire Police
01609 783131 or 999 in an emergency
- Missing Persons Helpline (24hrs) 0500 700 700
- Message Home (for young people to get a message to their parents) 0800 700 740
- Education Social Work Service:
 - Northallerton, Bedale Easingwold & Stokesley 01609 780860
 - Richmond Catterick 01748 832351
 - Craven & Skipton 01756 792427
 - Harrogate 01423 700100
 - Selby 01757 213366
 - Scarborough, Whitby & Ryedale 01723 508437

*Check the ACPC website for the latest phone numbers:
www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk*

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.

This starts from the earliest days of your relationship with your child.

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.

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!

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.

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, keep fit by sport and regular physical exercise, and 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.

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

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

- North Yorkshire Social Services
01609 780780
Out of Hours Team
01904 762314
- Parentline Plus
0808 800 2222
- Eating Disorders Association
- Adult Helpline
(over 18yrs)
0845 634 1414
- Youthline
(up to and including 18 yrs of age)
0845 634 7650
- Young Minds
020 7336 8445
- NSPCC
0808 800 5000

*Check the ACPC website for the latest phone numbers:
www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk*

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.

Teaching children from a young age by setting limits and explaining reasons for these limits helps to instil discipline. Discipline is more about rewarding good behaviour than punishing bad behaviour.

Have you ever smacked your child? The answer from many parents reading this will be yes. It's not so surprising as smacking may look to have the desired effect – it may stop the behaviour in its tracks, maybe your child cries or seems apologetic, it may even release tension or frustration for parents. But it can have a down side, and some undesirable long term consequences.

There is a lot of research now which shows that smacking children can increase a child's level of aggression, can have a negative effect on a child's mental health and can damage the relationship between the parent and the child.

It is much more helpful and safer to notice and reward your child's positive behaviour, to encourage the behaviour you want. In fact, many people say that smacking is actually a lesson in bad behaviour.

There is lots of advice available about tried and tested methods that help children to behave well, without having to resort to smacking them.

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.

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 below). 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 (perhaps use a star chart).

CONTACTS

- Talk to your Health Visitor
- Barnardo's
020 8550 8822
- NSPCC
0808 800 5000
- Parentline Plus
0808 800 2222
- North Yorkshire Police
01609 783131 or
999 in an emergency

*Check the ACPC website for the latest phone numbers:
www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk*

Teenage pregnancy & sexual health

"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."

- Britain has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Western 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 belief

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.

The average age when young people first have sex is 16, although some people can be as young as 11 or 12 and others are in their twenties. The fact is that you can't always stop your teenagers from having sex. What you can do is let them know that they can always come and talk to you if they have something on their mind. Make sure that they have the right information about puberty, contraception, emergency contraception, pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/Aids, and talk to them about the range of places that they can go for confidential help and advice.

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 ok 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 Western 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.

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 advice and information. If you think your daughter may be pregnant or if she has told you that she is, ensure she sees her GP.

WHAT TO SAY

When your sons and daughters are young, encourage them to ask questions and give them simple answers. As they grow older, use what's in magazines and on TV to have more in-depth conversations with them about friendships, relationships, puberty, sex, contraception and pregnancy.

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

- Sexwise - helpline
0800 282930
- York and North Yorkshire
Teen Pregnancy Team
01904 724117
- NHS Sexual Health Line
0800 567123
www.playingsafely.co.uk

*Check the ACPC website for the latest phone numbers:
www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk*

Temper tantrums

"Not only has he learned to walk and talk, but now he's learned to stamp his foot, argue, scream until he's bright red and embarrass me in public on a regular basis. What's happened to my baby?."

- 1 in 5 two-year-olds has a tantrum at least twice a day
- The "Terrible Twos" are a normal part of your child's development
- Getting angry is a natural reaction but it just makes the situation worse
- Be firm but find a positive way to deal with the problem
- Plan to avoid the causes of tantrums
- Remember, they won't last forever!

When every day is a difficult day

Why temper tantrums happen

Tantrums may start around 18 months, are common around two years old and become much less common at four. Very young children are often not able to express themselves as much as they want to and their frustration may come out as a tantrum.

Tantrums are especially likely to happen if a child is tired, hungry or uncomfortable. Tantrums also often happen in busy, public places, which can be highly embarrassing and add to the parents' stress.

If you are worried about your child's behaviour discuss your concerns with your Health Visitor or GP.

Dealing with temper tantrums

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

WARNING SIGNS

It could happen anywhere, but watch out for a tired or hungry child in any situation when he or she wants something that you have said "No" to, especially when out shopping, or during a social event or a day out.

ACTION

Keep calm, consider whether your child needs food or rest. Give your child attention and if possible, find a quiet place or some way of distracting his or her attention. Don't give-in, but do try to understand your child's feelings.

WHAT TO SAY

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

PREVENTION

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

CONTACTS

- North Yorkshire Social Services
01609 780780
Out of Hours Team
01904 762314
- Health visitor or GP
- Parentline Plus
0808 800 2222

continued...

Avoiding temper tantrums

You can reduce the likelihood of a tantrum by planning ahead.

- Try to avoid your child becoming hungry or overtired.
- Make sure your child is getting enough personal attention and affection.
- Make sure your time together is quality time together especially if you work for most of the day.
- Keep shopping trips and outings as short as possible.
- Try to plan a regular method that you'll use to deal with tantrums when they do happen.

Remember, temper tantrums are normal and do not usually lead to serious problems. As your child gets older they will learn to deal more calmly with the stresses of everyday life.

Worried about a child?

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

- Protecting children is everybody's business
- Adults have a responsibility to report abuse
- Consider offering some support if you are worried
- If in doubt share your concerns about children
- Reporting concerns rarely leads to a child being removed
- Act now - long-term abuse is damaging for children

Should you mind your own business?

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

If someone you know is having difficulties, you could offer the following:

- A listening ear
- Ideas to cope with problems
- Encouragement to get some help
- Practical support (childcare/shopping).

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

How would you want other people to act if your child was being harmed?

- Would you want them to mind their own business?
- To report their worry to a professional who could help?

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

Many people do not tell because they fear the following:

- Children will be at further risk of harm
- They believe that nothing will be done
- They believe that the child would be taken away
- They worry that the family may find out who reported them
- Telling may ruin family relationships.

In reality, it is best that action is taken early to stop things getting worse. Long-term abuse is much more likely to cause problems for a child as they get older. Even if you think an incident is just a one off, other professional agencies may already have concerns about the child. So your information could be very important.

Should you have any concerns contact North Yorkshire Customer Relations Unit, who will provide advice and arrange for investigations to be undertaken, if appropriate.

If you wish, you will be given feedback in due course about what action has been taken in response to your concerns.

WARNING SIGNS

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

ACTION

If you think that a child has been harmed, contact the Duty Social Worker or the Police. If you are not sure, you can speak to a confidential helpline, namely the NSPCC.

WHAT TO SAY

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

PREVENTION

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

CONTACTS

- North Yorkshire Police
01609 783131 or 999 in an emergency
- NSPCC 0808 800 5000
- Customer Relation Units
 - Craven
01756 793700
 - Hamleton/
Richmondshire
01609 779999
 - Harrogate
01423 568099
 - Ripon
01765 608636
 - Scarborough/
Ryedale
01845 950155
 - Selby
01757 213651

*Check the ACPC website for the latest phone numbers:
www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk*

Young people in trouble

"Darren's dropped all his old mates and started hanging out with an older crowd. Now he's buying clothes, games and stuff, but he won't tell me where he's getting the money from. Should I be worried?"

- Motoring, theft and handling are the most common offences committed by young people.
- Robbery accounts for less than 2% of all offences committed by young people.
- The main reasons young people give for offending are boredom and peer group pressure.
- Young people from a stable and supportive family home are less likely to offend.
- If you suspect something is wrong, talk to your child sooner rather than later.

how widespread is it?

Youth crime

The Youth Justice System in England and Wales includes Courts, Police, Probation and Prison Services and Local Councils, etc. This system was reformed in 2000, to ensure that everyone works together to prevent young people offending. The new system now delivers justice faster, and ensures young people are both held to account for their behaviour and supported to take positive opportunities.

Preventing young people offending

The main reasons young people give for offending is boredom and peer group pressure. Young people also say that the two key deterrents to offending are:

- the fear of being caught
- their parents' reaction.

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

- a stable and supportive family home
- consistent parenting
- attending and making good progress at school, in training or at work.

The Youth Justice System

The Youth Justice System in England and Wales is made up of all the institutions and public services that work with young people that offend; this includes Courts, Police, Probation and Prison Services and Local Councils. The Government completely reformed this system in 2000.

Everyone working in a system now has one overall aim, which is to prevent young people offending. The new system now delivers justice faster and ensures young people are both held to account for their behaviour and supported to take the opportunities that will help them lead law abiding lives.

Youth Offending Teams

There is a YOT in every Local Authority in England and Wales, made up of Police Officers, Victim Liaison Officers, Probation Officers, Social Workers, Health and Drugs Advisors and other expert staff. Because YOT's are made

up of all these professionals, they can respond to the needs of young offenders in a comprehensive way.

YOT's work with young people who have offended and are subject to a Police Final Warning or a Court Order. They may also offer preventative support to young people who are at risk of getting into trouble.

Young offenders are individually assessed, and a Supervision Plan is then devised to protect the public and promote their rehabilitation. This may include providing information and support to the victims or to the young person's family.

WARNING SIGNS

There are many warning signs which might indicate something is wrong. Your child may come under the influence of negative group of friends; staying out late; new clothes or other items appear which cannot be explained; the use of drugs and alcohol.

ACTION

Don't ignore any worries you may have. Talk to your child, and find out what's happening in their life. Ask for help and advice if you're still worried. Spending more time with your child in constructive activity is the best way to help them stay out of trouble.

WHAT TO SAY

Try to stay calm, all children break the rules from time to time, some more than others. Be consistent in what you say and do. If you do impose a sanction stick to it.

PREVENTION

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

CONTACTS

- North Yorkshire Police 01609 783131 or 999 in an emergency
- North Yorks YOT (West) 01423 522880 North Yorks YOT (East) 01723 341367 www.ny-yot.org.uk
- Youth Justice Board for England and Wales 020 7271 3033

Check the ACPC website for the latest phone numbers: www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk

Helpful national organisations

- **ADFAM**
020 7928 8898
- **Alcohol Counselling & Preventative Services (ACAPS)**
020 7737 3579
www.acaps.co.uk
- **Anti-bullying Campaign**
020 7378 1446
www.bullying.co.uk
- **Barnardo's**
01268 520224
www.barnardos.org.uk
- **Child Accident Prevention Trust**
020 7608 3828
www.capt.org.uk
- **Childline**
0800 1111
- **Childcare Link**
0800 096 0296
www.childcarelink.gov.uk
- **Contact a Family**
0808 808 355
www.cafamily.org.uk
- **CRY-SIS Helpline**
020 7404 5011
www.cry-sis.com
- **Eating Disorders Association**
0845 634 7650
www.edauk.com
- **Family Friends of Lesbians and Gays (FFLAG)**
01454 852418
(central helpline)
www.fflag.org.uk
- **Family Planning Association (FPA)**
0845 310 1334
www.fpa.org.uk
- **Family Rights Group**
0800 731 1696
www.frg.org.uk
- **Gingerbread**
020 7488 9300/0800 018 4318
www.gingerbread.co.uk
- **Kidscape**
020 7730 3300
www.kidscape.org.uk
- **Message Home**
for young people to get a message to their parents
0800 700 740
- **Missing Persons Helpline**
0500 700 700 (24 hours)
- **National Alcohol Helpline**
0800 917 8282
- **National Autistic Society**
0870 600 8585
www.nas.org.uk
- **National Council for One Parent Families**
0800 018 5026 and
020 7428 5400
www.oneparentfamilies.org.uk
- **National Domestic Violence Helpline**
0808 2000 247
- **National Drugs Helpline**
0800 77 66 00
24 hour free advice
- **NHS Direct**
0845 46 47
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
- **NSPCC**
0808 100 2524
www.nspcc.org.uk
- **Parentline Plus**
0808 800 2222
www.parentlineplus.org.uk
- **Police**
999
- **Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)**
0121 248 2000
www.rospace.co.uk
- **Sexwise Helpline**
0800 282930
- **SPINN (Anti Bullying Network)**
020 8470 9703
- **Vishvas Support for Asian Women**
020 7928 9889
- **Youth Justice Board for England & Wales**
020 7271 3033
www.youth-justice-board.gov.uk

*Check the ACPC website for the latest phone numbers:
www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk*

Helpful local organisations

■ **Army Welfare Service**
01748 872912

■ **Compass - Drug and Alcohol Agency Scarborough**
01723 503920

■ **Craven Domestic Violence Project**
01756 794400

■ **Disability Information Service**
01423 501894

■ **Education Social Work Service:**

- North Allerton, Bedale, Easingwold & Stokesley
01609 780860

- Richmond Catterick
01748 832351

- Craven & Skipton
01756 792427

- Harrogate
01423 700100

- Selby
01757 213366

- Scarborough, Whitby & Ryedale
01723 508437

■ **Harrogate Alcohol Drug Agency**
01423 525999

■ **Hambleton & Richmondshire Substance Misuse Service**
01609 763267

■ **Hambleton & Richmondshire Victim Support**
01609 777771

■ **Harrogate Women's Aid-Outreach Service**
01423 858335

■ **North Yorkshire Children's Information Service (CIS)**
0845 6011630

■ **North Yorkshire Early Years Helpline**
0845 6011630

■ **North Yorkshire Police**
01609 783131

■ **North Yorkshire Social Services**
01609 780780

■ **North Yorkshire Social Services Out of Hours Team**
01904 762314

■ **NSPCC Almond Tree Project**
01748 835704

■ **NSPCC North Yorkshire**
01904 720591

■ **Selby District Alcohol Services**
01757 213944

■ **Selby Family Support Project**
01757 290953

■ **Sure Start Scarborough**
01723 503677

■ **York and North Yorkshire Teen Pregnancy team**
01904 724117

■ **YOT**
(East) 01723 341367
(West) 01423 522880
www.ny-yot.org.uk