

What you can do to help if you are worried about a child or young person?

All children and young people have the right to be protected and kept safe from harm from others. We all have a responsibility to help protect children and young people – whether we work with children or families, are a parent, family member or a concerned member of the community. This leaflet tells you what to do if you have concerns about a child or young person.

Children and young people should get the help they need when they need it – and we all have a part to play in ensuring this.

Protecting Children and Young People – The Charter sets out what children and young people say they need to help them feel safe.

Why might you be concerned about a child?



Children rarely tell if they are being abused. However, there may be signs which make you concerned and may be an indication of a child being abused or neglected.

You may notice one, or a combination of the following; the child or young person may:

- have unexplained bruising or bruising in an unusual place;
- appear afraid, quiet or withdrawn;
- be afraid to go home;
- appear constantly hungry, tired or untidy;
- be left unattended or unsupervised;
- have too much responsibility for their age;
- be acting in a sexually inappropriate way;
- be misusing drugs or alcohol;
- tell you something that sounds as though they have been hurt by someone.

The behaviour of adults may cause you concern if they:

- are acting in an aggressive, violent or sexual manner towards a child or young person;
- are misusing drink or drugs while caring for a child;
- leave their child unattended or with unsuitable adults.

What to do if you have concerns

If you see behaviour that is of concern, or if a child or young person tells you something, you need to take them seriously, do something about it, and speak to someone. This could be a teacher, a doctor, a health visitor, a social worker, a police officer or nursery staff.

To ensure a child gets the best possible help:

- give as much information as you can about the child or young person and their family/carer;
- describe what it was that you saw or heard and what it was that concerned you;
- let the person know if there are other things they should be aware of, for example, immediate risks for the child or any other child.

Will you need to give your name?

Any information about you will be treated with care. Any details, including your name, will not be revealed unless the child's safety requires it.



Even if you do not give your name, enquiries can still be made into the child's care and welfare. Withholding your name may make it more difficult for those looking into these concerns.

Any information you give may need to be shared with other professionals to ensure appropriate action is taken to protect the child.

What will happen to the child or young person and their family?

When you contact a professional about your concern, unless the child is in immediate danger, they will make some initial enquiries before taking action. They will check whether the child is known and what information is held. All information will be treated seriously and acted upon. This may lead to immediate action or a more planned response.

Following enquiries professionals may, for example:

- take immediate action to secure the safety of the child;
- provide support, help or advice to the family;
- provide a service to the child or family (for example help with childcare) and, where necessary, referral to another agency may be provided;
- conduct criminal proceedings;
- record the concern but take no further action at this time.

List of contact numbers:

LOCAL

SOCIAL WORK

**Social Work Service Managers/
Senior Social Workers:**
Tel: 01595 744400

Duty Social Worker:
During Working Hours
Mon–Thurs 9am–5pm
Fri 9am–4pm
Tel: 01595 744421

Out of Hours:
Tel: 01595 695611

POLICE

Lerwick Police Station:
Tel: 01595 692110

Scottish Children's Reporter Administration:
Tel: 01595 692436

Your local Health Visitor who can be found through your local surgery or health centre.

NATIONAL

Childline: Tel: 0800 1111

Parentline: Tel: 0808 800 2222

ChildProtectionLine: Tel: 0800 022 3222

Shetland Child Protection Committee



With thanks to the West of Scotland Child Protection Committee Consortium who did much of the development work on this leaflet.

Astron B36119 11-04

w w w . s c o t l a n d . g o v . u k



Protecting Children and Young People:
What you can do to help if you are worried about a child or young person