

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.

Everybody shares some responsibility for the welfare of children, as a parent or family member, as a concerned friend or neighbour, an employer, staff member or volunteer. Members of the community can help to safeguard children if they are mindful of the needs of the child, and willing and able to act if they have concerns about a child.

A wide range of services and professionals provide support to families bringing up children and if you report your concern to one of the services they will ask you some questions which will help to decide the best way to help the child and their family.

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

- Social Services Duty
01344 351582
Emergency Duty Team
01344 786 543
- Child Protection Sexual
Crimes Unit (CPSCU)
01753 835 495
- NSPCC
0808 800 5000
- Parentline Plus
0808 800 2222

*Check the Bracknell ACPC website for the latest phone numbers:
www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk*