

Freeport RRYK-RESX-YBJG
Sandwell Family Information Service
Training & Development Centre
Popes Lane
OLDBURY
B69 4PJ

2



If you would like more information in your own language,
please contact us at the address shown in the bottom box.

Arabic إذا أردت معلومات إضافية بلغتك الأصلية الرجاء الاتصال بنا
في العنوان المدون ضمن الإطار أدناه.

Bengali আপনি যদি নিরাপদে বাবা-মা'র দায়িত্ব পালন বিষয়ে তথ্য চান,
তবে অনুগ্রহ করে নীচের বাক্সে দেওয়া ঠিকানায় আমাদের সঙ্গে
যোগাযোগ করুন।

Gujarati જો તમને તમારી પોતાની ભાષામાં વધારે માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો કૃપા કરીને
નીચે અંતમાં આપેલા ખાનામાં દર્શાવેલા સરનામે અમારો સંપર્ક કરો.

Hindi यदि आप अपनी भाषा में कुशल लालन-पालन हेतु और जानकारी चाहते हैं, तो कृपया नीचे बक्स में दिए गए पते पर हमसे संपर्क
करें।

Polish Jeśli chciałbyś uzyskać więcej informacji w Twoim języku, prosimy
o kontakt pod adresem podanym w ramce na dole.

Punjabi ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਵਿਚ ਹੋਰ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਲੈਣੀ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਹਿੱਠਾ ਵਰਕੇ
ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੇ ਖਾਨੇ ਵਿਚ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਪਤੇ 'ਤੇ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

Urdu اگر آپ اپنی زبان میں مزید معلومات حاصل کرنا چاہتے ہیں تو براہ کرم
ہم سے اس پتے پر رابطہ قائم کریں جو کہ نیچے کے بکس میں درج ہے۔

Somali Hadii aad u baahan tahay macluumaad dheerad ah oo ku saabsan
badbaadinta korinta-ubadka oo luqadaada lagu qorey fadlan nagala soo xiriir
cinwaanka sanduuqa hoose lagu muujiyay.

Sandwell Family Information Service
Training & Development Centre
Popes Lane
Oldbury B69 4PJ

Tel: 0121 569 4914

Email: childcare.information@sandwell.gov.uk

Web: www.familyinfo.sandwell.gov.uk

This booklet was given to you by

Who can be contacted on

Designed & marketed by Coles McConnell Design, Maidstone. © 2009 All Rights Reserved. Telephone: 01622 685959. www.coles-mcconnell.com V2 2009



Introduction

**Welcome to the Sandwell Parenting Handbook:
A guide to keeping children safe and well in Sandwell.**

This handbook is designed to offer advice and support to all families. Being a parent is one of the most rewarding, challenging and difficult jobs in the world and every parent experiences difficulties from time to time.

The handbook is arranged around the five "Every Child Matters" outcomes: Be Healthy, Stay Safe, Enjoy and Achieve, Make a Positive Contribution, and Achieve Economic Well-Being. All the topics chosen are designed to help you find your way through what can be a maze of issues.

You will find information, advice, helpful ideas and tips on how to tackle specific issues, warning signs that your child may have a problem, as well as helpful contacts, which you can follow up for advice and support if you need it.

I hope you find this handbook useful and worth keeping (and sharing) for future reference.

L. Beckett

L. Beckett - Strategic Manager Early Years & Childcare

Contents

	Page
Stay safe	
 Bullying The real story	4
 Domestic violence & abuse How does it affect children?	6
 Health & safety Making your home safe	8
 Safety outside the home Are your children safe?	10
 Worried about a child & child protection Should you mind your own business?	12
 Children left alone & babysitting Common sense and the law	14
Be healthy	
 Freedom from smoke Smoke free living	16
 Substance misuse How would I know?	18
 Feeling depressed Dealing with the uncertainties of life	20
 Teenage pregnancy Preventative parenting	22
 Stress & anxiety Helping them cope	24
Enjoy and achieve	
 Education A lifelong experience	26
 Truancy Are they at school?	28
 Children with disabilities You're not alone	30
 Developing speech & language Chatter matters	32
Make a positive contribution	
 Positive parenting & self-esteem Make them feel great!	34
 Young people in trouble How widespread is it?	36
 Extended services in & around school Meeting the needs of children and their families	38
Achieve economic well-being	
 Employment Bright future, bright prospects	40
 Living away from home Being prepared	42
 Young carers Who cares? you care, they care	44
 Helpful organisations	46

It happens most days they are in the same class and are always laughing at him. He sometimes dreads going to school. How can I help my son?

Bullying

THE REAL STORY

- Children have the right not to be hurt
- Bullying behaviour is unacceptable
- Bullying can happen to any child at any age
- Speak to your child's school immediately if you have any concerns
- 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
- Racial harassment is a form of bullying

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 too.

- 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. It is important that parents and schools work together in partnership to secure support and protection for the child for both the present and the future. It is essential that parents make contact with their child's school as soon as they become aware of any problems before they become huge.



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 occurring 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

Tell your child to refuse to put up with bullying, walk away, tell an adult or friend and avoid fighting. 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

- Sandwell Against Bullying
www.stopbullying.sandwell.gov.uk
- Bullying UK
www.bullying.co.uk
- ChildLine 0800 1111
www.childline.org.uk
- Kidscape 08451 205 204
www.kidscape.org.uk

He was standing over me shouting and I know the kids heard. I went upstairs and we stayed there until he went out. I'm worried how this will affect them?

Domestic violence & abuse

HOW DOES IT AFFECT CHILDREN?

- Domestic violence may teach children to use violence
- Violence can affect children in serious and long-lasting ways
- Where there is domestic violence there is often child abuse
- Children will often blame themselves for domestic violence
- When violence occurs in families, alcohol is often a cause
- Pregnant women are often victims of domestic violence

Children who see, get involved or hear violence are affected in many ways. What is certain is that 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 violence teaches children bad things about relationships and how to deal with people.

For instance:

- 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 violence happens after an argument about the children.

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 violence, even after a short time. These can include feeling frightened, becoming shy and quiet, bedwetting, running away, violence, behaving badly, problems with school, poor concentration and emotional upset.

Long-term effects

The longer children are around violence, 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 parent, loss of childhood, problems at school and running away.

If you are worried about domestic violence, discuss it with someone else such as your health visitor or the domestic violence helpline. If you are violent and have children, you can seek help to stop what is happening.

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

If you would like details of solicitors in your area who deal with family law, contact the Law Society on 020 7242 1222 or look in the Yellow Pages.



WARNING SIGNS

Any violence between adults will affect children badly. Get support and help as soon as possible. The longer it lasts the more damaging violence is.



ACTION

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



WHAT TO SAY

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



PREVENTION

A violent partner must seek help to stop their actions. Make sure that you offer a good role model for children so that they learn better ways of acting.



CONTACTS

- Sandwell Organisation Against Domestic Abuse (SOADA) 0845 359 7525
- Sandwell Womens Aid Helpline 0121 552 6448 (24 hrs)
- National Domestic Violence Helpline 0808 2000 247 www.womensaid.org.uk www.refuge.org.uk

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.

Health & safety

MAKING YOUR HOME SAFE

- Children learn by exploring their surroundings
- 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

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. They need guidance from a young age about what danger is and how to keep safe.

Be aware of 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.
- Keep matches and lighters away from children.
- Certain rooms are necessarily full of danger, such as the kitchen, 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 be tested when children are around.
- Make sure that irons, saucepans and hot drinks are kept out of the reach of children. Scalding and burns are common and avoidable accidents.
- 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.
- Make a fire action plan and discuss this with everyone in the house so that you all know how to escape in the event of a fire.
- Keep all exits and stairways free from clutter and know where the keys are to all doors.
- Fit smoke alarms and make sure you check them regularly. There are special alarms for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Close all internal doors, prior to going to bed.



WARNING SIGNS

Spend some time exploring your house as if you were a young child. This will show you the many potential dangers that, if not removed, could harm your child. If there is a fire, a smoke alarm will warn you, giving you and your family time to get out safely.



ACTION

Make a list of potential dangers and remove them to safety or protect your child from them by using safety devices. Plan escape routes and make sure all the family know about them.



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 and household chemicals out of the reach of children. Get a free home fire safety check. Fit smoke alarms and make sure you check them regularly.



CONTACTS

- Talk to your health visitor or midwife
- The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)
0121 248 2000
www.rospa.co.uk
- Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT) 020 7608 3828
www.capt.org.uk
- www.firekills.gov.uk
- www.fire.gov.uk

I thought she was right behind me, but when I turned round, I couldn't see my toddler anywhere. I ran through the supermarket calling her name. When I found her I just burst into tears with relief.

Safety outside the home

ARE YOUR CHILDREN SAFE?

- Your child is your responsibility, so always keep a close eye on them
- Never ignore warning signs
- Most accidents are preventable with adequate care and attention
- Mobile phones are a good link to your child

Most accidents that happen to young children, such as injuries from falls or drowning, could be avoided with adequate supervision.

It's important to always be aware of where your child is when you are out. When shopping, always make sure your child stays close to you - it is easy for them to get lost. Supervise playground activities - ensure the playground equipment is suitable for your child's age group, to prevent injury.

Never let your children play in or near water on their own. Even a garden pond or a paddling pool presents a risk.

Parents should begin to teach their children the basic rules for crossing the road as soon as possible. Consider holding hands, with your child walking on the pavement furthest away from the road edge.

Children are unlikely to judge the speed and distance of travelling vehicles and should never attempt to cross the road by themselves. It is a parent's responsibility to decide when a child is old enough to cross roads safely. Make sure your child knows the Green Cross Code from an early age. This is a six-step guide on how to cross the road safely, and they're never too young to learn it.

In the car, make sure your child is in an age-appropriate car seat and is securely belted in. You should also check that the car seat is strapped in properly - many road accident injuries occur due to wrongly strapped seats, which do not restrain the child adequately on impact.

It can be difficult finding the balance between giving your child enough freedom to gain confidence and making sure they are safe. Children under eight should not be allowed out alone. Teach your child road safety from a young age, so it is habit for them to check for cars before crossing a road. Older children may be trusted to go out for short periods by themselves, but always agree a time for them to return or to phone you. Remind them never to go off with someone they don't know, whatever convincing story they may have.



WARNING SIGNS

When you are out and about, you may be more easily distracted and not see the signs that your child is at risk of injury. Your child is your responsibility, so always keep a close eye on them.



ACTION

When you are out, look out for danger areas, don't ignore warning notices, never let your children play in or near water on their own, always keep your child close to you especially when crossing the road.



WHAT TO SAY

Remind your child, whatever their age, to look before crossing a road. Ask them to take sensible precautions if they are old enough to be out by themselves.



PREVENTION

Most accidents involving children are preventable with adequate care and attention. Never leave a small child unsupervised and keep a close eye on them at all times.



CONTACTS

- NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000 www.nspcc.org.uk
- Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT) 020 7608 3828 www.capt.org.uk
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222 www.parentlineplus.org.uk
- The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) 0121 248 2000 www.rospace.co.uk
- THINK! Road Safety www.dft.gov.uk/think
- Arrive Alive www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk/arrivealive/greencross.htm

Everyday 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.

Worried about a child & child protection

SHOULD YOU MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS?

- 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

All parents have problems at times but can be helped by other family members or close friends.

If someone you know is having difficulties, you could:

- Listen to their problems.
- Help them cope.
- Encourage them to get more help.
- Support them by babysitting or doing shopping.

There may be times when a child is at risk of harm and you need to get help.

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 think, see or are told about a child that is being hurt we can react in many different ways. We may feel guilty, angry, or shocked. Some people's reactions can stop help getting to a family who need it.

Many people do not tell because they fear that:

- Children will get hurt more.
- 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 truth, 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 something is just a one off, other agencies may already have concerns about the child. Your information could be very important.

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.



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 that 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 not sure, you can speak to a helpline such as the NSPCC and your call will be kept private.



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 notice any changes in them.



CONTACTS

- Sandwell Children & Family Care 0845 351 0131
- Sandwell Child Abuse Investigation Team 0121 626 9101
- NSPCC 0808 800 5000 www.nspcc.org.uk
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222 www.parentlineplus.org.uk
- ChildLine 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk
- Family Rights Group (National) 0808 801 0366 www.frg.org.uk

When mum goes out, I lock the door from the inside and she calls through the letterbox to say goodbye. She usually comes home in the night when I am asleep.

Children left alone & babysitting

COMMON SENSE AND THE LAW

- Never leave a young child alone
- Children are not ready for this amount of responsibility
- Leaving a child alone places them at risk of harm
- Select your babysitter carefully
- Make sure your babysitter can contact you in an emergency

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

Also it is not possible to rely on a child to let you know how much care they need. They may say that they do not mind being left and may find it fun at first, but they cannot fully know the possible risks and how to handle them.

Even 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 things that a child would know how to deal with.

If they are told, the Police 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 does not meet children's basic needs of food, shelter, security, attention or protection from danger.

The NSPCC have issued guidelines advising that children under the age of 13 should not be left alone. While this is not the law, it is suggested as good practice. Children under this age cannot manage the responsibility of being left alone and this may be particularly so if they have a disability.

As parents the safety and well-being of your child is up to you. 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.

A babysitter can be used and will come to your home to take care of your child. Make sure you let them know what you expect and make sure they have your contact details in case of emergency.

Babysitters do not need qualifications or a certificate to look after children. As a result anyone can be a babysitter. The NSPCC advise that the minimum age of a babysitter should be 16 years of age. This is based on the idea that at 16 and above, a young person understands possible dangers and risks and could get help quickly if needed.

Do not leave your child with anyone you feel uncomfortable about, even if it means missing an evening out.



WARNING SIGNS

Parents who have little support. A child who is often seen outside and all alone for long periods of time. Childcare arrangements that keep going wrong. Children will not always be able to tell you if something is wrong, so note changes in their behaviour.



ACTION

If there is immediate risk of harm to a child, call the Police. Use people you trust to care for your child. Speak to other families who have used the babysitter you are thinking about.



WHAT TO SAY

If you are worried about a child being left alone, talk to the parent, a health visitor, teacher or social worker. Tell the babysitter about your rules, your child's routine and always leave a contact number in case of emergencies.



PREVENTION

Think about shared babysitting and chat to neighbours, friends or other parents. Find out about After School Clubs and Holiday Play Schemes. Make sure you feel comfortable with your babysitter before leaving your child in their care.



CONTACTS

- The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)
0121 248 2000
www.rospace.co.uk
- NSPCC 0808 800 5000
www.nspcc.org.uk
- Sure Start
0870 000 2288
www.surestart.gov.uk
- One Parent Families
0800 018 5026
www.oneparentfamilies.org.uk

*I know that smoking is bad for me,
but I didn't know, that second-hand
smoke was endangering the health
of my family.*

*Now I never smoke in the house
or around my children and I am
seeking help to give up.*

Freedom from smoke

SMOKE FREE LIVING

- Secondhand smoke can increase the risk of heart disease, lung cancer and breast cancer
- If you smoke near a child under two, they're more likely to die from cot death
- Many fires at home are accidentally started from a lit cigarette
- Smoking makes the whole house smell, from the curtains to the carpet to the walls

How to protect 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).

- Keep children's playing, sleeping and eating areas smoke free.
- Make your car a smoke free zone because smoke is more concentrated in such a small space.
- Ask other people not to smoke around your child.
- Avoid smoking anywhere around your children.
- If you choose to smoke - go outside.

Everyone has the right to breathe clean air. If you live with someone who smokes cigarettes inside, you will breathe in their smoke. Secondhand smoke might make you cough, feel sick, irritate your eyes or give you a sore throat. But in the long-term it can make you more likely to develop heart disease, lung cancer and breast cancer. It can also make asthma worse and harm your unborn baby if you're pregnant.

It's especially bad for children as their lungs are still developing. It increases their chance of developing asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia, and reduces heart and lung function. Most importantly, if you smoke around children under two they're more at risk of cot death.

Don't forget - smoking in the kitchen, 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. It's really important to keep an eye on lit cigarettes, pipes and cigars if you have to put them down. If you stub them out, make sure they really are out and can't catch fire again. Smoking at home also means that everything will smell of stale smoke. Nicotine, the chemical in cigarettes, leaves stains on walls, curtains and furniture which are unpleasant and hard to remove.

If you choose to smoke, you should try to protect your children from secondhand smoke and reduce the risk of them becoming ill or smokers themselves.

Seriously consider the many benefits of giving up smoking for you and your family's health.



WARNING SIGNS

A range of signs may indicate if a child is suffering from the effects of secondhand smoke including: wheezing; coughing; asthma; chest infections; glue ear (child has difficulty hearing and often speech/language difficulties); regularly suffer poor health.



ACTION

If you are worried about your child's health take him/her to your doctor. Consider the prevention and advice given on this page to 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. Ensure your children understand the health risks associated with smoking.



PREVENTION

The best thing you can do is to keep your child 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).



CONTACTS

- Sandwell Stop Smoking Service 0800 073 1388 www.stopsmokingsandwell.co.uk
- NHS Stop Smoking Service 0800 0224 332 <http://smokefree.nhs.uk>
- Contact your doctor, community midwife or health visitor.

Paul just wanted to be out all the time and at first I thought it was just a teenage thing. He started to come home late and storm off to his room. He was losing weight and looked terrible.

Substance misuse

HOW WOULD I KNOW?

- Many parents worry that their children may be smoking, drinking or using drugs
- Prevention is better than cure
- Talk to your child from a young age about the dangers and risks associated with drug misuse

It is very important that children know about the risks of using drugs, alcohol and volatile substances (e.g. solvents).

Some parents/carers worry that doing this makes their child want to try drugs. By not talking about drugs you will not protect them. Children will be aware of drugs in some way before they leave primary school. It is likely that at this early stage, children will take more in when being told about the risks of drug use. Make sure you tell your children about the risks. Clear information and support will help them decide what to do. You cannot be sure they will not try drugs but it will increase the chance of making an informed choice.

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

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

How would I know?

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

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

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

Drug, alcohol and substance misuse by parents

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



WARNING SIGNS

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



ACTION

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



WHAT TO SAY

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



PREVENTION

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



CONTACTS

- Addaction Sandwell (Alcohol and Drugs Advice) 0121 525 7575
- Aquarius (Alcohol Advice) 0121 525 9292
- FRANK 0800 77 66 00 www.talktofrank.com
- ADFAM 020 7553 7640 www.adfam.org.uk
- Drinkline 0800 917 8282
- Drinkaware www.drinkaware.co.uk
- DECCA (Alcohol and Drugs Advice) 0845 838 5317 www.ourguideto.co.uk

At first I thought she was just being a moody teenager. But as time went on I realised something was really wrong. She's getting counselling now - it's slow, but I'm hopeful she'll get out of this terrible black hole.

Feeling depressed

DEALING WITH THE UNCERTAINTIES OF LIFE

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

The teenage years are a difficult time and young people have a lot to deal with physically, mentally and emotionally. While 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 or 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, giving up interests and hobbies, crying, avoiding friends and family, finding it hard to do their schoolwork, not caring about what they look like, or may talk about death or have suicidal thoughts.

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

How to help

If your teenager is suffering from depression they need 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

If you think your child is depressed, talk to them and find out if there is any way you can help. Be patient and understanding - what may seem like small problems to you can be too much for a young person. Talk to your doctor and discuss what treatment (such as counselling) may be helpful. You could speak to your child's school to see if they have noticed any differences in your child.



WHAT TO SAY

Listen to and talk to your teenager. Help and encourage them to get their lives together. Depression can't just be switched off, it takes time and understanding to overcome it. Try to get them to contact useful organisations they can talk to in private.



PREVENTION

A supportive and understanding family means your child may feel more able to talk to you about any problems, rather than bottling them up. Chat about their interests, hobbies, friends and schoolwork so they feel you understand the different parts of their lives.



CONTACTS

- YoungMinds Parents' Information Service 0800 018 2138 www.youngminds.org.uk
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222 www.parentlineplus.org.uk
- Your doctor
- NHS Direct 0845 4647 www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Teenage pregnancy

PREVENTATIVE PARENTING

- Raise the issues about sex and relationships
- Explain that you do not have to have sex and that saying 'no' is an option
- Don't give the message that sex is a problem. Talk about sex even if it seems difficult
- Try not to judge, but don't be afraid to say if you think something 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

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.

Children will learn about sex whether you want them to or not.

Sex is everywhere around us - in magazines and newspapers, in adverts and soaps. Children and young people also learn about sex from each other and what gets passed on in the playground may not be correct information!

All these confusing messages may mean young people get into situations they don't know how to deal with. As a parent you have an important job to make sure your child has the right information and is able to cope.

You might feel worried that by talking about sex and relationships you will encourage your children to start having sex when they're very young. Research has proved that the opposite is true. Teenagers from families where parents talk openly about sex wait until they are older than others before they start having sex. When they do have sex for the first time, they are more likely to use protection.

Most teenagers are having sex before they finish college. It is shocking to know that some young people are having sex as young as 11 or 12, although the average age for first sex is 16. The fact is that you can't always stop your teenagers from having sex and many of them will do it anyway. What you can do is to tell them about sex, pregnancy, Sexually Transmitted Infections, HIV/Aids and how to use protection.

If you feel uncomfortable or unsure about talking about sex with your children, don't worry - this is common. Don't let it put you off. Sex education shouldn't be a one-off talk. If your children grow up knowing it's ok to talk about sex and their feelings with you they are much more likely to come to you for help when they need it.

The UK has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Europe and more young people than ever have Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). Giving your children support, information and help to feel good about themselves means that both of these are less likely.

Hospitals and a number of pharmacists can provide Emergency Hormonal Contraception (EHC) to girls 18 years and under free of charge. Ask the school about Young People's Advisory Services (YPAS) or school-based services.



WARNING SIGNS

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



ACTION

If you think that your child is having sex make sure that they know where to get the right information. If you think your daughter may be pregnant or if she has told you that she is, make sure she sees her doctor.



WHAT TO SAY

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



PREVENTION

Make sure that your teenagers know about, and practice, safe sex. Remember it's not just about preventing pregnancy but also to stop them getting Sexually Transmitted Infections.



CONTACTS

- Parentline Plus
0808 800 2222
www.parentlineplus.org.uk
- Ask Brook
0808 802 1234
www.brook.org.uk
- Family Planning Association
0845 122 8690
www.fpa.org.uk
- British Pregnancy Advisory Service
08457 30 40 30
www.bpas.org
- NHS Direct 0845 4647
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

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

Stress & anxiety

HELPING THEM COPE

- Exercise is a great way to reduce stress
- It's normal to feel stressed sometimes, but it's also good to know how to relax
- Children can feel stressed for many reasons, being bullied at school and parents divorcing are two of the most common
- Sometimes parents don't realise they're putting too much pressure on their child to do well at school
- Children can pick up on their parents worries and get stressed too

As a parent, you might think that childhood is always a happy and carefree time. Children don't have to pay bills or have jobs like adults, so what do they really have to worry about? But sometimes children do get stressed and feel anxious.

There are many reasons why this can happen:

- They're being bullied at school. Feeling in danger every day can greatly affect a child's state of mind.
- They're not getting on 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're anxious about moving house or school, or going back to school after the holidays.
- A family member, friend or even pet has died. Sometimes, children can blame themselves for these things, even if they had nothing to do with it.

Another reason 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 it can make them feel very alone and frightened. It's worse when divorced parents make their children choose sides or say hurtful comments about the other parent in front of the child.

Some children worry about school work, tests or exams. It's perfectly normal wanting your child to do their best, but some parents might not realise they're putting too much pressure on them to achieve.

If you send out the message that your child must do well in tests, it can create too much anxiety for them. It's also important to be realistic about your child's abilities - maybe you did well in exams when you were at school, but that doesn't mean that your child will, too.

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're having at work and they start to feel anxious about these things themselves.

You'll probably be able to help your child when they feel stressed. But 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 teachers or even ask your doctor for professional help.



WARNING SIGNS

Warning signs that your child is stressed include: mood swings; trouble sleeping; nightmares; bedwetting; trouble doing schoolwork; stomach aches; headaches; preferring to spend time alone; overreacting to minor problems.



ACTION

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and healthy food. Exercise can reduce stress, so encourage your child to be active. You could suggest activities you could do together like cycling.



WHAT TO SAY

Tell them it's normal to feel stressed now and again, but that too much stress is bad for your health. It's also good to know how to relax. Encourage your child to talk about how they are feeling.



PREVENTION

Make time for your child every day so they feel they can talk to you if anything's worrying them. Look ahead to times when your child might worry, like going back to school after the holidays for example, and talk about the events well in advance.



CONTACTS

- Parentline Plus
0808 800 2222
www.parentlineplus.org.uk

I didn't do well at school and I don't want that to happen to my kids. I talk to the teachers all the time and I'm learning to read as well.

Education

A LIFE-LONG EXPERIENCE

- All registered childcare in England must meet national standards set down by the Department for Education and Skills
- There are many provisions for young children under the age of five, childminders, day nurseries, pre-schools etc including funding for children aged 3-4 years to access 12.5 hours of education per week
- If your child, or a child that you are responsible for, is between five and 16 you will need to ensure that they attend school regularly
- Having a good education will help to give your child the best possible start in life
- Children learn all the time, not just at school, you can help
- Give children lots of praise and encouragement, read with them and encourage them to observe and talk about their surroundings

Which school should I send my child to?

Deciding which school you would like your child to go to, can be difficult. We recommend that you and your child visit all of the schools you are considering on open evenings where you can get information and have a general look around. You may want to consider the following:

- Does the school have a welcoming atmosphere?
- Does the school emphasise the importance of working with parents?
- Do staff have high expectations of the children and is there an emphasis on each child's achievements?
- Does the school provide good support to meet special needs?
- Is a wide range of out-of-school activities available for pupils of all ages and abilities?
- Is the school well led by the headteacher and governors?

Admissions

The local authority is responsible for admissions to infant, junior, primary and secondary schools. All parents can express a preference for any school. Admission to that school is subject to a place being available. There are legal processes to follow when a child is admitted to a school or moves from one school to another.

Exclusions

Only the headteacher has the power to exclude a pupil from school. There are two types of exclusion:

- Fixed period exclusion. These exclusions are usually for a short period and may include exclusions for the lunchtime period only. The law allows head teachers to exclude a pupil for up to 45 school days in any school year.
- Permanent exclusion. This means the pupil cannot return to the school unless reinstated by the governing body or by an independent appeal panel.

Attendance

Regular attendance at school is important to help children achieve and reach their potential. You are responsible for making sure your child goes to school. If your child cannot attend school for any reason then contact the school straight away giving the reason for absence. The Education Support Team is there to monitor attendance and to support you with any problem you may have with your child's attendance.

Education otherwise

Parents may choose to educate their children at home instead of school if they wish. The Local Authority will need to be satisfied that a child is receiving suitable education at home, and will ask to talk to the parent, and to look at examples of work.



WARNING SIGNS

There may be none; sometimes children are not always able to tell you they are having difficulties at school. Are you sure they are not truanting or spending too much time at home feeling ill with no obvious symptoms?



ACTION

If you have any worries or concerns about your child and their education you need to discuss this with your child's teacher or the headteacher.



WHAT TO SAY

Support your child with their education and let them know how important education is for them to succeed as far as they can at school. There are many people who are able to offer support to you and your child if they are experiencing any difficulties.



PREVENTION

The most important thing you can do is to make sure your child goes to school regularly, arrives on time and keeps to the school's rules of attending all lessons. Keep talking to your child and their teacher, show your child that you have a good relationship with their teacher and let them know who they can talk to at school if they are having difficulties.



CONTACTS

- Sandwell Schools Admissions Team
0121 569 8244
- Sandwell Special Educational Needs Service 0121 569 8240
- Sandwell Parent Partnership
0121 553 7087
- Sandwell Schools and Colleges
0121 569 8100
- Connexions Black Country
080 800 13 2 19
- www.raisingkids.co.uk
- www.qca.org.uk
- www.dcsf.gov.uk
- www.bbc.co.uk/schools
- The Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)
0808 800 5793
www.ace-ed.org.uk

Truancy

ARE THEY AT SCHOOL?

- Young people not going to school is a big problem
- Try to understand why they are not going to school
- Missing school affects the chances of getting a good job
- It is your job to make sure your child goes to school

I had no idea my daughter was skipping school on a regular basis, until they called me about her attendance levels. Now I'm making more effort to be interested in her schoolwork and she feels more supported.

Truancy is a national problem. If your child regularly misses school it can have a big effect not only on your child but also on you, the school and even the community.

The results of missing school are serious for your child. The more schoolwork they miss, the harder it is to catch up and the more likely they are to skip days or even want to drop out. They are missing out on building and keeping friends who are often a real support during the teenage years.

Truancy also reaches into the community, as there is a knock-on effect of higher levels of anti-social behaviour and crime. If your teen misses school they are more likely to come across situations where there are drugs or alcohol and are more exposed to possible sexual abuse.

It is a problem when parents allow their child to miss school

Some parents need their child's support at home more than others, perhaps they have an illness or other younger children at home. Any time away from school, even for a short family holiday can affect their education. Please consider the unspoken message you might give your child if you let them think it is acceptable to miss school.

How to stop truancy

If truancy is a problem, you need to find out why they want to miss school. They may find school frightening, lack self-confidence, feel they are failing or maybe they are being bullied. If you are struggling to get your child to attend school, please let the school know. The school provides a range of support for parents on tackling attendance problems.

Once you understand the causes, it may be easier to get your child to return to school.

Make sure your child understands the importance that education and going to school everyday has on their future. Take an interest in what happens during their school day and with homework. Praise them when they do well and listen to any concerns they may have. Talk to teachers about how they are getting on.

Attendance and the law

Parents of school age children must provide education for their children either by attendance at school or by other means. Where a child fails to attend, without reasonable excuse, the local authority has the power to refer the child to the children's panel.



WARNING SIGNS

Notice what times your child is around, if they should be in school and check up if they say school has allowed them out. You may not even know until you are told by the school or Police.



ACTION

Find out why your child is missing school and talk about any problems such as bullying or fear of failure. Discuss what your child wants for their future and how to reach short-term goals.



WHAT TO SAY

Talk to your child about any school problems and listen to their worries. Take an active interest in schoolwork or activities such as arts or sports clubs.



PREVENTION

It is your job to make sure that your child gets an education. Always take an interest in their school life and what they are doing, so your child knows they can talk to you about any problems before they get out of control.



CONTACTS

- Sandwell Education Welfare Service 0121 569 8147
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222 www.parentlineplus.org.uk
- www.parentscentre.gov.uk
- www.ukparentslounge.com

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.

Children with disabilities

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

- Your child is protected by the Disability Discrimination Act
- The Government, your local council, 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

If your child has a disability the future may seem like a real struggle, not just for them, but for you too.

Remember you and your child are not alone. The Government, local Council, Health and Education Authorities give a wide range of benefits, facilities, support and advice for children with disabilities and their carers.

Legal protection

Your child is protected by law. The Disability Discrimination Act says it is against the law for any service provider (including schools, businesses and organisations) to treat disabled people less fairly than other people because of their disability. It also asks them to make reasonable adjustments to their services like ramps or disabled toilets so that disabled people can use them too.

Health

From the start, your doctor and local health service are there for you. They'll give 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 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. Don't forget free dental treatment and prescriptions, help with the cost of glasses and sometimes help with travel to hospital, school meals, and even not having to pay road tax.

Education

Depending on their kind of disability, your child may get better results by going to a special school which is a place specifically designed to match their educational needs or your child may get the extra support they need through the special needs provisions in a mainstream school. Your Education Authority and Health Service Providers will help you assess your child's special educational needs and help you find the best way forward for their education.

Extra support

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



WARNING SIGNS

Some children's disabilities are spotted 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 doctor 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 children with a disability. Contact them and tell your story. There will be others out there just like you.



PREVENTION

You can't stop your child's condition. But you can help with the disability they experience by making sure that they get the best support available, and by remembering that they have rights.



CONTACTS

- Sandwell Special Educational Needs Service
0121 569 8240
- Sandwell Integrated Support Service 0845 352 8570
- NHS Direct 0845 4647
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
- Carers UK 0808 808 7777
www.carersuk.org
- Contact a Family 0808 808 3555
www.cafamily.org.uk

The first year or so of my son's life were the most special for bonding with him. Even before he could talk, I knew that his smiles and gurgles were him trying to communicate with me.

Developing speech & language

CHATTER MATTERS

- Communicating with your child can begin from birth
- Their brain develops most in the first two years of their life
- Before they can speak, they communicate with you through eye contact, smiling and gurgling
- Crying is another important way for them to get their point across
- Communication isn't just about words, but your tone of voice and your facial expressions too

Communicating with your child helps you form a strong bond.

Even before your child can talk, they interact with you through eye contact, smiling, gurgling and even crying. Their brain develops the most between birth and two years so their early days are really important.

Your baby learns by hearing and doing. So if you say words and make sounds from the start they'll copy them later on. They might smile without meaning to at first, but if you smile back they'll learn to do it again.

If you talk and interact with your baby it'll be easier for them to learn to talk later on, even if you don't think they understand now. But it's not just about words. Your child will also notice your tone of voice, how you stand and how you use your hands - even your facial expressions.

Remember that children develop at different rates, so don't worry if other children their age seem to be talking more.

How your child's speech and language develops

In the first six months, most children learn to make eye contact, smile when an adult sees them and use different cries for different needs. Give your baby lots of eye contact.

From six months to a year, your baby will try out sounds for themselves, like 'ma-ma' and 'da-da'. Give them big smiles, copy them and encourage them to repeat. Describe everything you do when you're with your child - even if it's just opening or closing the door.

From 12-18 months, your child will probably try out their first words, or point and make a noise to say what they want. Repeat words as you say them - for example, if you offer them a biscuit, say 'biscuit'. If you recognise a word they say, repeat it to them, give them a smile and some praise.

From 18 months to two years, they'll be able to refer to themselves by name and understand the names of familiar toys and food etc. Try not to correct words that they get wrong - just repeat them back to them correctly.

From two to three years, your child will probably be asking 'why' a lot. Try to be patient and give simple answers to their questions. They'll also be able to join in with nursery rhymes and action songs and listen to simple stories.

From three to four years, your child should be talking more freely and clearly. Try to take it in turns to listen and speak so he'll learn two-way conversation.



WARNING SIGNS

Children develop at different rates but if you're worried about your child's speech and language, ask your health visitor or staff at nursery for advice. They may need to have a hearing test or to see a speech and language therapist.



ACTION

Talk and smile to your baby even if they can't talk back, and give them lots of smiles and praise. Looking at a picture book from your library will improve your baby's words, language and listening skills too. Singing nursery rhymes or making up songs is another fun way to learn - don't be embarrassed!



WHAT TO SAY

Remember that babies absorb lots of things, so try to use a calm, gentle voice whenever you're around them. Use actions and gestures with words, for example waving 'bye bye'. It's a good idea to copy what they say - even if it's just burbling - and repeat words they use.



PREVENTION

Dummies can help if your baby is tired. But aim to stop using one by the time they're a year old as they can affect how they learn to talk. When your baby cries, try to find out what's wrong first before putting a dummy in their mouth.



CONTACTS

- Sure Start Children's Centres Sandwell 0121 569 4914
- I Can 0845 225 4071 www.ican.org.uk
- Afasic 0845 3 55 55 77 www.afasic.org.uk

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.

Positive parenting & self-esteem

MAKE THEM FEEL GREAT!

- Children need to feel secure, loved and valued - this is the basis of self-esteem and confidence
- Noticing and praising good behaviour is the best way of having a good effect on how your child acts
- Be realistic about what you expect from your child
- Parents and carers need to work together and keep the same rules
- Listen to and talk to your child - it's good to talk!
- Do things together with your child that you both enjoy - have fun!

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.

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 giving your child lots of attention for the unacceptable things that they are doing, rather than for the good things you would prefer them to do. It can also undermine your relationship with your child. Parental attention and praise affects children so you need to use it in the right direction! Not only will this have an effect on 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.

Teenagers have to learn to make their own decisions and establish their independence from their parents. Unfortunately their decisions might not always fit 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 listen. The main concern for teens is whether what they are going through is normal. Remember to give them the practical information they need about the physical and emotional changes and reassure them that their development is perfectly normal. Keeping your child fit and healthy is something that most parents do without even thinking about it. Whether it involves getting your child to brush their teeth or reminding them to pay attention to personal hygiene, you are an important source of information and advice and a role model for your child.

A sense of self-esteem is your child's best protection from other difficulties. You can help to make them feel good about themselves in many ways, by being a good role model, giving good feedback, understanding and helping your child and being natural and affectionate.



WARNING SIGNS

There may be none. Is your child eating well? Getting enough exercise? Any changes in how they act? Is your child trying to tell you something? Are they constantly unhappy, with mood changes and temper tantrums?



ACTION

Be involved and develop a good relationship with your child before they reach their teens. Keep a healthy lifestyle. Do things together.



WHAT TO SAY

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



PREVENTION

Be a little crazy! Have fun with your child. Try to get them to make friends and have outside interests. Listen carefully to your child's point of view. Help them think through choices.



CONTACTS

- Sure Start Children's Centres
Sandwell 0121 569 4914
- Parentline Plus
0808 800 2222
www.parentlineplus.org.uk

Young people in trouble

HOW WIDSPREAD IS IT?

- The main reasons young people give for carrying out crime are boredom and pressure from friends
- Young people from a supportive family home are less likely to offend
- If you think something is wrong, talk to your child sooner rather than later

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?

Youth crime

Stopping young people offending

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

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

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

- A stable and supportive family home.
- Good parenting.
- Going to 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 places and services that work with young people that commit crime, this includes Courts, Police, Probation and Prison Services and Local Councils. The Government completely changed this system in 2000. Everyone in the system now has one overall aim, which is to stop young people carrying out crime. The new system delivers justice faster and makes sure young people are both punished for their behaviour and helped to start leading better lives, without committing crime.

Youth Offending Teams

Youth Offending Teams (YOT) are a one stop shop for all young offenders. Each young person who has carried out a crime will be looked at by the YOT and decisions will be made by the team as to what steps should be taken to make sure the young person keeps out of anymore trouble. 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 Housing Support Officers. Because the YOT is made up of all these people it can help young offenders with many different things. YOT's work directly with young people and families to:

- Try and stop them committing crime in the first place.
- Work with them if they have committed crime and are subject to a Court Order or Police Final Warning.
- Work directly to make sure that young people who have been sent to custody have the best chance of a good future after they are let out.

To help with this work the YOT works closely with volunteers who are trained to work with young people to help them stay out of trouble.



WARNING SIGNS

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



ACTION

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



WHAT TO SAY

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



PREVENTION

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



CONTACTS

- Sandwell Youth Offending Team 0121 557 8804
- Youth Justice Board for England and Wales 020 7271 3033 www.yjb.gov.uk

*Attending the parenting group
has made such a difference to my
family life - it is much calmer now.*

Extended services in & around school

MEETING THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

- Extended schools provide a range of services and activities, often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of children, their families and the wider community
- Extended services can include: childcare, adult education, parenting support programmes, community based health and social care services, multi-agency teams and after school activities
- By consulting with parents and involving them in the planning of services, schools will be able to develop the package of services which best meets the needs of their community
- The Government expects all secondary schools to open from 8am to 6pm all year round, offering a range of activities for young people by 2010

Core services

Extended Services is about making it easy for families to access advice, activities and the support they need, close to home, and when they need it. Extended services are usually offered outside the normal school hours and may include:

High quality childcare (if needed)

This is offered outside the school day from 8am-6pm. Often supporting working parents, breakfast and after school clubs can be offered on the school site or in the local community.

Activities for your children

These may include activities such as homework clubs and study support, sport, music tuition, dance and drama, arts and crafts, special interest clubs such as chess and first aid courses, visits to museums and galleries, learning a foreign language, volunteering, business and enterprise activities.

Additional support services

For families who may need extra support extended services offer additional support services such as speech therapy, child and adolescent mental health services, family support services, intensive behaviour support, and (for young people) sexual health services.

Activities for the community

If schools have the facilities they may open their doors to offer clubs and classes for the community including ICT, sports, arts and adult learning courses.

Support for parents

This includes support for parents when their child starts school and moves onto secondary school, activities to involve parents in their child's learning, parenting courses and general advice, guidance and support in their role as a parent.

If you want to find out more about what is on offer through extended services in and around your school, you can do this by contacting your local school. Each school has a School Organiser who can be contacted through your child's school or the Extended Services Team.



WARNING SIGNS

If you are unhappy with any of the services contact the Extended Services Team.



ACTION

Get involved with activities in your school and community. If there is something you would like to see tell your child's school.



WHAT TO SAY

Ask at your child's school what services are available to you and your child. Schools have changed a lot and are there for you and your community!



PREVENTION

Find out what's on offer in your area and get involved! There are many benefits for you and your child.



CONTACTS

- Extended Services Team
0114 281 1881
- Ofsted
08456 404045

I don't agree with my son leaving school at 16, but he's proved to me that he's serious about getting training on the job while also earning money.

Employment

BRIGHT FUTURE, BRIGHT PROSPECTS

- Work-related training means the chance of a better job
- Jobs with training often offer work and qualifications
- Prepare your child for interviews
- Work experience while still at school can lead to a job offer

The longer your child spends in full-time education, the better their job chances are for the future.

Your teenager may want to leave school at 16 and get out into the adult world to earn money. They may leave school on the last Friday in June in the school year they're 16. It is the law that young people cannot leave school any earlier.

If they really want to make this choice, try to get them to apply for a job that also has the chance to train. Apprenticeships offer work-based training for young people so that they can learn while on the job, building up skills and qualifications as well as earning money.

Help prepare your child

There are many ways you can help your teenager to apply for a job that's right for them. Sit down and talk about their interests and hobbies and whether they would like to take these further through work. You, their school or local Job Centre can help them to prepare a CV. A CV gives the company some basic information about your child, their education and interests.

Before any job interview they should find out as much as they can about the company so they can ask sensible questions, plan what they would like to say about themselves, explain why they are interested in the job and find out what is expected of them. Make sure they have sensible clothes for the interview, that they know where they are going and who is to interview them and to leave plenty of time to get there. Try to make sure they are not late.

Work experience

Most schools encourage children in Year 10 or 11 to do up to two weeks work experience, usually in a job that is linked to their interests. Although often unpaid, it gives young people a chance to be treated as an adult, to learn what is expected of them, follow instructions and to use their key skills.

Another way of getting experience and earning money is to have a part time job.

Young people must have a Work Permit that allows them to work, applications can be made through the Education Welfare Service. It is against the law to employ someone without a Work Permit. This includes working for parents, whether the work is paid or not (maybe in a family owned shop).



WARNING SIGNS

If your child tells you they want to leave school at 16, make sure they know how much this is going to cut down their choice of jobs for the future. Employers prefer young people with skills.



ACTION

If your teenager is sure they want to leave school, get them to choose a job that offers training or options to train, that will improve their chance of a good job.



WHAT TO SAY

Try to get your child to stay on in further or higher education and ask their school for advice. Discuss different job ideas, such as apprenticeships or work-related education and training.



PREVENTION

There is lots you can do to make your child feel good about their education before they reach 16. By choosing the right subjects at 14, they are less likely to want to leave at the first chance and by staying in education they will gain useful skills.



CONTACTS

- Connexions Black Country
080 800 13 2 19
www.connexions-bc.co.uk
- www.worktrain.gov.uk
- www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk
- www.parentscentre.gov.uk
- www.apprenticeships.org.uk

I'm excited for my son now that he's leaving home, but I also worry about how he's going to cope with paying the rent and bills. He's never had to manage money before.

Living away from home

BEING PREPARED

- When they decide to leave home make sure your teenager is ready
- Teach your teenager about how much things cost
- Ask them to stay in touch
- Get support from family and friends when they leave



If your teenager leaves home to live away from you for the first time, it's a big step for both of you. They may be going because further education such as college or university is taking them to another city or because of training or work. This means your relationship is moving on to a different stage. The change may be exciting and difficult for both of you.

Some young people don't think twice about the fact that their meals are cooked, their clothes are washed and ironed, their phone calls are paid for and the house is clean. When they move out of home it can be a big shock to realise that they've got to do all these things themselves and they will probably not realise how much things cost.

There are many things your teenager needs to understand before setting out on their own and you can help them by chatting about:

- **Paying rent:** setting up standing orders or a direct debit, signing a contract, and rights as a tenant.
- **Paying bills:** putting money aside for Council Tax, bills such as gas, electricity, water and telephone, travel, as well as food and going out.
- **Eating healthily:** you can't expect miracles, but you can explain what makes up a balanced diet with a range of fruit and vegetables. Help them to cook a few simple meals before they go.
- **Living with others:** they will need to understand how to take into account others' wishes, share jobs around the home and share living expenses.

While your teenager will be enjoying their new freedom, try to get them to stay in touch and come home for visits.

Difficulties of being at home

It can be hard to live with someone who has bad moods and there can be lots of arguments. You may not like the fact that you are paying for their lifestyle and may wish your teenager no longer lived at home. However they would like to appear, a teenager is still young and needs you, so the longer they live at home, the more chance they have to build up the confidence to deal with the outside world on their own. Even as they are growing up and changing they will still need your love and support.

If your child wants to leave home against your wishes, put them in touch with the local council. If they are disabled, unemployed or homeless, the Social Housing department may be able to help them.



WARNING SIGNS

Problems at home can leave you both wishing they lived somewhere else. Try to discuss and solve problems - the longer your teenager lives at home, the more prepared they will be when they do move out. If your child is keen to leave home, make sure they know exactly what to expect when they have to look after themselves.



ACTION

Make sure your teenager is ready for living away from home. This means learning how to budget, how to cook healthy meals, learning about keeping themselves safe and learning to live with others.



WHAT TO SAY

Get your teenager to talk about any worries about living away from home. Remind them that if they get lonely they can always call you and return home for visits. They should also be able to talk to their college, university, training or workplace.



PREVENTION

Talk to your child about leaving home too soon or if you feel they are too young to deal with looking after themselves. Not paying their rent or bills could lead them to being fined or made homeless.



CONTACTS

- Connexions Black Country
080 800 13 2 19
www.connexions-bc.co.uk
- www.thesite.org
- Shelter 0808 800 4444
(24-hour advice line)
www.shelter.org.uk

He didn't say anything, but I could tell that having to look after me was having an affect on Jack. But how could I care for my son, when he was caring for me and his baby brother? I made a few phone calls and discovered that even with my illness, I can still be a good parent.

Young carers

WHO CARES? YOU CARE, THEY CARE

- Young carers are protected by the Children Act 1989, Carers (Recognition and Services Act) 1995 and Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000
- The Government, your local council, and Education and Health Authorities are there to help and will act once concern is raised
- There are many types of support to help you and your child cope with their caring
- You care about your young carer! So make contact with the support groups and organisations that are there to help

Many people need special care in their homes. They may be ill, disabled or elderly, or they may have drug or alcohol problems. Care from a member of the family can be a help. When the carer is a child or a young adult it is very important to make sure that they are getting everything they need too.

If your child has any caring role, for yourself or another member of their family, it is most important that they do not suffer because of their caring. Most importantly, tell your local Department of Social Services, and your Local Education and Health Authorities about this. You don't have to cope alone; they can help you and your child get the support and advice you both need.

Education

You will want your child to do well at school. Many young carers achieve good results but research has shown that caring can have a bad effect on a child's education. To help stop this, it is important that your Local Education Authority and your child's school are told about their caring role. This way they can give your child extra help if needed and will understand and support them.

Health

Sometimes young carers can be so busy looking after others, that they forget to look after themselves, and can become ill, stressed or depressed. The best way to avoid this is to get help from your doctor and Local Health Authority. Let them know all about what is happening so that they can give the help and advice that both you and your child need.

Extra support

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



WARNING SIGNS

Late homework, missing school, feeling tired all the time and acting unusually may be signs that your child is struggling with their caring role. It is very important that you talk and listen to your child so you can take action to help them cope.



ACTION

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



WHAT TO SAY

Make sure your local Department of Social Services, your Local Education and Health Authorities, and your doctor know about what is happening and keep them up to date if things change.



PREVENTION

Being a young carer could have a bad effect on your child's health, education and well-being. You can help stop this by making sure that they get the best support and advice available.



CONTACTS

- Sandwell Young Carers
0121 525 8002
- Benefit Enquiry Line for People with Disabilities
0800 88 22 00
- Carers UK 0808 808 7777
www.carersuk.org

Helpful national organisations

- **ADFAM**
020 7553 7640
www.adfam.org.uk
- **Advisory Centre for Education**
0808 800 5793
www.ace-ed.org.uk
- **Ask Brook**
0800 862 1234
www.brook.org.uk
- **Barnardos**
020 8550 8822
www.barnardos.org.uk
- **Beating Eating Disorders**
0845 634 1414 (helpline)
0845 634 7650 (youthline)
www.b-eat.co.uk
- **British Pregnancy Advisory Service**
08457 30 40 30
www.bpas.org
- **Bullying UK**
www.bullying.co.uk
- **Carers UK**
0808 808 7777
www.carersuk.org
- **Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT)**
020 7608 3828
www.capt.org.uk
- **ChildLine**
0800 1111
www.childline.org.uk
- **Contact a Family**
0808 808 3555
www.cafamily.org.uk
- **Drinkaware**
www.drinkaware.co.uk
- **Drinkline**
0800 917 8282
- **Families and Friends of Lesbians & Gays (FFLAG)**
0845 652 0311
www.fflag.org.uk
- **Family Planning Association**
0845 122 8690
www.fpa.org.uk
- **Fathershood Institute**
0845 634 1328
www.fatherhoodinstitute.org
- **Food Standards Agency**
020 7276 8000
www.food.gov.uk
- **FRANK**
0800 77 66 00
www.talktofrank.com
- **Kidscape**
08451 205 204
www.kidscape.org.uk
- **Missing Persons Helpline**
0500 700 700 (24 hrs)
www.missingpeople.org.uk
- **National Debtline**
0808 808 4000
www.nationaldebtline.co.uk
- **National Domestic Violence Helpline**
0808 2000 247
www.womensaid.org.uk
www.refuge.org.uk
- **National Youth Agency**
0116 242 7350
www.nya.org.uk
- **NHS Direct**
0845 4647
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
- **NHS Stop Smoking Service**
0800 022 4 332
<http://smokefree.co.uk>
- **NSPCC**
0808 800 5000
www.nspcc.org.uk
- **One Parent Families/ Gingerbread**
0800 018 5026
www.oneparentfamilies.org.uk
www.gingerbread.org.uk
- **Parentline Plus**
0808 800 2222
www.parentlineplus.org.uk
- **Samaritans**
08457 90 90 90 (24 hr helpline)
www.samaritans.org
- **Sexwise**
(confidential advice about sex and relationships)
0800 28 29 30
www.ruthinking.co.uk
- **Victim Supportline**
0845 30 30 900
www.victimsupport.org
- **YoungMinds (Parents Information Service)**
0800 018 2138
www.youngminds.org.uk

Helpful local organisations

- **Addaction Sandwell (Alcohol & Drug Advice)**
0121 525 7575
- **Aquarius (Alcohol Advice)**
0121 525 9292
- **Ask Brook**
01384 239001
- **Connexions Black Country**
080 800 13 2 19
www.connexions-bc.co.uk
- **DECCA (Alcohol & Drug Advice)**
0845 838 5317
www.ourguideto.co.uk
- **Drug Concern**
0121 580 4338
- **Head 2 Head Young People's Counselling Service**
0121 612 1803
- **Race Equality Sandwell**
0121 541 1775
- **Sandwell Adult & Family Learning**
0121 557 0837
- **Sandwell Against Bullying**
www.stopbullying.sandwell.gov.uk
- **Sandwell Child Abuse Investigation Team**
0121 569 9101
- **Sandwell Children & Family Care**
0845 351 0131
- **Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations**
0121 558 7434
www.scvo.info
- **Sandwell Education Welfare Service**
0121 569 8147
- **Sandwell Extended Schools**
0121 553 7411
- **Sandwell Family Information Service**
0121 569 4914
www.familyinfo.sandwell.gov.uk
- **Sandwell Family Planning Service**
0121 612 2323
- **Sandwell Homes**
0845 359 7600
- **Sandwell Integrated Support Service**
0845 352 8570
- **Sandwell Leisure Trust**
0845 659 4815
- **Sandwell Organisation Against Domestic Abuse (SOADA)**
0845 359 7525
- **Sandwell Parent Partnership**
0121 553 7087
- **Sandwell Primary Care Trust**
0845 155 0500
- **Sandwell Rape Support**
0845 055 9597
- **Sandwell Schools Admissions Team**
0121 569 8244
- **Sandwell Schools & Colleges**
0121 569 8100
- **Sandwell Special Educational Needs Service**
0121 569 8240
- **Sandwell Stop Smoking Service**
0800 073 1388
www.stopsmokingsandwell.co.uk
- **Sandwell Trading Standards**
0845 359 7522
www.tradingstandards.sandwell.gov.uk
- **Sandwell Victim Support**
0121 569 7980
www.vswmsandwell.co.uk
- **Sandwell Women's Aid**
0121 552 6448 (24 hr)
- **Sandwell Young Carers**
0121 525 7667
- **Sandwell Youth Offending Team**
0121 557 8804
- **Sure Start Children's Centres Sandwell**
0121 569 4914
- **Welfare Rights Advice Line**
0121 569 3158

What do you think of the new Sandwell Parenting Handbook?

Excellent Good Average Poor

Other comments

Are there any improvements we could make?

Where were you given the Handbook?

What is your postcode?

