

Worried about a child?

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

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

Should you mind your own business?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Many people do not tell because they fear the following:

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

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

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

- Wiltshire County Council
Children's Services:
Main Switchboard
01225 713000
Area Offices:
North Wiltshire
01249 444321
West Wiltshire
01225 773500
South Wiltshire
01722 327551
Emergency Duty Service
(out of hours)
0845 60 70 888
- NSPCC
0808 800 5000
- Wiltshire Police Child
Protection Units
01380 735735

*Check the Wiltshire ACPC website for the latest phone numbers:
www.wiltshire.gov.uk*