

IF YOU'RE WORRIED, ASK FOR HELP

You can call ParentLine Scotland Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9.00 am to 5.00 pm and Tuesday, Thursday 9.00 am to 9.00 pm on **0800 028 2233** or email our confidential service at: parentlinescotland@children1st.org.uk

At ParentLine Scotland we receive a number of calls from adults concerned for the welfare of a child. Some of the concerns expressed:

- I think my daughter has been sexually abused
- I hear the neighbours hitting their kids
- How do you know if a child has been abused?
- My son refuses to go to his Dad's, he said his step-mum has been touching him

ParentLine Scotland sets the highest standard for the management of calls regarding possible abuse or neglect. When callers contact the helpline with worries about a child, they are given an opportunity to clarify their concerns and to explore a possible course of action. In keeping with the commitment to making child protection everybody's business, ParentLine's principal aim is to encourage callers to take responsibility for acting on their concerns for a child's safety. Where a caller remains unwilling to do so, ParentLine will always pass on any details to the appropriate agency.

Some of the callers to the helpline want to know where they should go to report their concerns. Other callers have negative perceptions of social work and need to build up their confidence before approaching them or police.

On occasion callers may be reluctant to get involved, especially if the abuser is a family member. ParentLine is helping callers overcome this reluctance and is committed to encouraging members of the public to take an active role in the protection of children.

The majority of callers to the helpline want to take action to protect the children they are concerned about.

What is abuse?

There are four main types of abuse:

Physical Abuse

Physical Abuse is where children are hurt or injured. It includes hitting, kicking and beating. These can cause pain, cuts, bruising, broken bones and in extreme cases death.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional Abuse includes degrading punishment, sarcasm, threats and not giving love and attention. All of these can undermine a child or young person's confidence.

Neglect

Neglect occurs when children's basic needs such as food, warmth, medical care, clothing and hygiene are not met.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual Abuse occurs when children are forced or persuaded into sexual acts or situations.

Signs to look out for if you suspect a child is being abused:

- Change in personality: withdrawn, nervous, mood swings etc
- Covering up body with layers of clothing – hiding/not allowing you to see
- Sexually explicit language and behaviour
- Low self-esteem/confidence
- Changes in behaviour – bed wetting, self-harm etc



0800 028 2233 ...because being a parent isn't easy.

Abusers usually appear as ordinary people, living ordinary lives. Some abusers seek out positions of authority, which makes it even more difficult for young people to tell. The biggest power abusers have is the power of silence. Threats are often used and abusers can leave children feeling guilty and to blame for what is happening.

If a child tells you they have been abused:

- Let them know you believe them
- Praise them for telling
- Tell them it is not their fault
- Let them know the possible course of action for them to be safe in the future
- Keep them informed about what you do

It is very difficult for a child to tell someone what is happening to him or her. Often children feel ashamed and think what has happened is their fault. They may be frightened of what will happen if they tell. Some children do find the strength to tell about what is happening and are not believed.

Sexual abuse in particular is characterised by secrecy and people in the same household may be unaware that it is happening.

What are the effects of child abuse?

Child abuse can cause physical injury, but can also leave emotional scars. Abuse can lead to low self-esteem and feelings of guilt because children often blame themselves.

In later life, adults abused as children may find it difficult to form relationships because they are unable to trust people. All forms of abuse have a harmful effect on children and young people.

Protecting children is the responsibility of every adult – if you think a child is at risk or in danger call ParentLine Scotland free or contact your local social work department or the police.

We can help you take action to achieve change where it is needed.

For further information about CHILDREN 1ST and to order any of our publications, please contact:
CHILDREN 1ST, 83 Whitehouse Loan, Edinburgh EH9 1AT
t: 0131 446 2300
f: 0131 446 2339
e: info@children1st.org.uk

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www.children1st.org.uk



**WE LISTEN, WE SUPPORT,
WE TAKE ACTION**
for Scotland's vulnerable
children and families

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Registered Scottish Charity No. SC 016092