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

The partnership is made up of...
Dudley Council, Dudley Community Partnership,
Birmingham and the Black Country Strategic Health Authority Dudley PCT,
Dudley group of hospitals, Dudley Council for Voluntary Services,
West Midlands Police, West Midlands Probation, Learning and Skills Council,
Dudley Further Education Colleges, Black Country Connexions, NCH, Barnardos

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Welcome to the Dudley Parenting Handbook.

Your job as a parent is one of the most difficult there is - it can be both challenging and rewarding. It is a job where very little training is given to prepare parents for what lies ahead.

There is no such thing as the perfect parent. However, there are some ways that can make it a less stressful and more rewarding experience.

What is a family?

Every family is unique and every family experiences difficulties from time to time. There's no such thing as an 'average' family - they come in all shapes and sizes. Each different type of family has its own special challenges, so it's important to understand how your family make-up can affect your child, particularly when things change.

Caring for children and young people

Even children within the same family can be very different and have different needs. Therefore it's important to talk, to listen and to know your child.

What is the handbook about?

It is hoped this handbook can offer some ideas and information to help you find your way through what can be a maze of issues and advice. It gives contacts and further information you can follow up when you are deciding how to deal with your worries and difficulties. This handbook also lists some of the warning signs of particular difficulties and offers helpful tips.

Who will receive the handbook and how can parents use it?

This handbook will be available to all families in the Dudley Borough as well as to new parents via Dudley's Health Visiting Services and will be distributed during 2007. We are also aiming to produce a 'Teen Handbook' for young people.

The handbook has been produced with the support of a wide range of agencies working together with parents/carers.

We hope that you will find it helpful and worth keeping for future use.
• Listening is the key to a good relationship.
• Your teenager wants independence - but still needs you!
• Growing up can be frightening for teenagers.
• Hormones set off physical changes, mood swings, and changes in feelings.
• Give your teenager the information they need.

Check website for the latest telephone details • safeguardingchildren.dudley.gov.uk
Adolescence is a time of change. It is the time in a young person’s life when they develop from a child into an adult. While teenagers may be excited about some changes they may be less happy about others.

For many parents the teenage years can seem like a time of arguments and bad family relationships.

Puberty in both boys and girls is starting earlier. At the start of puberty, hormones are triggering physical changes and emotional feelings that are not only hard to deal with, but hard to talk about.

Hormones cause many changes in a teenager’s body, and your teenager is also developing deeper and more complicated relationships. All sorts of pressures - for example pressure from friends to do things they may not feel comfortable with, can affect their sense of well-being and confidence. They will be having new sexual feelings that are difficult to cope with, and may be worried about their looks.

They will also be trying to work out who they are. Your teenager is learning about views, opinions and beliefs that may not be the same as those they have grown up with. On top of all this, they also have to cope with school or college work that can make them worried and stressed.

And teenagers will take it out on those closest to them - you!

Supporting your teen

How you deal with your teenager can make the difference between a close relationship and a difficult one.

Unkindness, not doing homework, not letting you know where they are or not helping around the house can cause arguments. Bargaining with your teenager works better than making demands: ‘If you tidy your room, I’ll put this in the wash for you.’

Talking with your teenager about what’s going on in their life will help you understand them and help build up their confidence. Listen to their ideas and try to understand their thoughts and feelings. Respect your teenagers’ privacy - remember you were a teenager once! Be open-minded and do not judge your teenager, so they feel they can trust you and turn to you when they need help.

The teenage years can be tough and your child needs to know they have your support. It’s common for them to argue or even ignore you at times, because they know that, on the whole, you will take the bad moods with the good. If they upset you, don’t forget a lot of it is just for show and that when things go wrong, the person they’ll often turn to for comfort is you.
Children rely on their parents for their safety.
- Your child has the right to care, which is free from harm.
- Make sure your child gets the best quality care.
- Select your babysitter carefully.
- Avoid leaving your child with someone under 16.
- Ensure your babysitter can be contacted in an emergency.
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.

When you leave your child in the care of someone else you are taking a risk with his or her safety and well-being. When thinking about a temporary carer for your child it is important that you choose someone with the abilities and high standards that you would expect of yourself. This includes someone who will make sure they are fed, changed, kept safe, given room to play, feel secure and can deal with difficulties that may happen.

Generally a babysitter will come to your home to take care of your child. Make sure you talk to your babysitter before you leave. Let them know when to expect you back and make sure they have contact details in case of emergencies.

Babysitters do not need qualifications or a certificate to look after children. As a result anyone can be a babysitter. The Children’s Legal Centre and the NSPCC advise that the minimum age of a babysitter should be 16. 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.

This age limit is also linked with the possible action which could be taken by the police if anything were to go wrong and an injury resulted. It is most likely that you as a parent would be held responsible if anything goes wrong if your babysitter is under 16 years of age.

Often a good babysitter will be well thought of locally and can be recommended by a friend or neighbour. However it is very important that you meet them first before you decide to leave your child in their care.
I felt myself getting panicked every time I put him to bed. Maybe it was a lack of proper routine, but all the time I felt so tired and had no more patience. I never punished him for going all night without wetting his bed. I just got closer when I had to change the sheets even when it didn’t really help at all.

- Children do not wet or soil deliberately.
- Try to establish a sleep routine as early as possible (three-six months).
- Bedwetting may be a sign of a physical problem, but more often your child will learn bladder control at their own pace.
- Each child’s sleep pattern is different.
- Take time to establish a bedtime routine, including a time for your child to relax and unwind before going to bed.
- If your child often wakes in the night try to find out why he or she has woken, for example a bad dream or hunger.
- If you are worried that your child is developing sleeping difficulties, ask for support at an early stage.

Check website for the latest telephone details safeguardingchildren.dudley.gov.uk
Potty training

Your child is more likely to learn to control their bladder if you are relaxed and calm about it. Remember your child will learn at their own pace and praise rather than punishment will help. Between the ages of three and four years your child is likely to be dry during the day, with the occasional accident. Remember, this is often not an instant change but a gradual process where more and more nights will be dry nights.

Bedwetting

It is not easy to know why some children take longer to be dry at night than others. However, bedwetting is not due to laziness or lack of will power. Some children, in fact up to 1 in 6 seven-year-olds, bed wet. Although this may be stressful for both you and your child, try not to lose patience; it is rare for a child to wet or soil deliberately. If, after the age of seven, your child continually wets his bed, the problem may be caused by a number of factors. Talk to your child about it and reassure them that other older children experience this too. Discuss any concerns about your child with your GP, health visitor or school health adviser.

Sleeping difficulties

There are many different reasons why babies and young children do not sleep through the night.

- Try to establish a sleep routine as early as possible (three-six months).
- Feel confident in yourself to know whether your child is really distressed or just restless.
- If your sleep is frequently disrupted by your child's restlessness, arrange for a trusted relative or friend to care for your baby or child so that you can get some sleep.

Establishing a routine

It is important to establish a regular bedtime routine by putting your child to bed at a regular time each night and by following the same set of events. This may include bath time, putting on nightwear, having a drink, brushing teeth and reading a story to create a feeling of well-being. You must encourage your child to go to sleep where you want them to sleep for the night, not downstairs, on your lap or the armchair. Sleeping habits need to be learned and can take time. Be firm, calm and consistent. If you are concerned about sleeping difficulties discuss your concerns with your GP, health visitor or school health adviser.
• Is sullying takes many different forms.
• Seing bullied can have long-lasting bad effects.
• Be able to see the signs that your child is being bullied.
• Know how to help your child.

Bullying
THE REAL STORY

Bullying has turned my son from a happy young person who loved school
and meeting up with his friends, into a scared, introverted child who has to
force himself to walk through the school gates and refuses to go out.

Check website for the latest telephone details: safeguardingchildren.dudley.gov.uk
Bullying happens when someone hurts or frightens another person on purpose.

Bullying can include teasing or name calling as well as hitting and kicking or stealing and damaging another person’s things. Spreading rumours; ignoring someone, cruel text or email messages; being isolated because of race, religion, sexuality, disability or just seeming different.

Being bullied breaks down a person’s self-confidence, leaving them feeling alone, scared and powerless. Schools can be seen as places to fear rather than places to enjoy. Being bullied affects schoolwork due to stress, missed lessons, not being able to focus and time off school for illness caused by worry or through injuries from being hurt. For a small number it may lead to thoughts or attempts of suicide.

Look out for signs, as your child may not be able to or want to tell you what is happening to them, because they are scared that you may just make things even worse.

Warning signs
• Things like headaches or stomachaches, caused by stress and worry.
• Not sleeping well.
• Being more bad tempered than usual or over-reacting and taking it out on brothers and sisters.
• Missing or damaged belongings.
• Bad results at school.
• Worrying about going to school in the morning, or a change in routine with friends.

What you can do
If your child tells you that they are being bullied, don’t ignore them. Listen to what they are saying and try to discuss ideas to help them sort the problem out for themselves.

If this doesn’t work, suggest your child keeps a diary of things that happen and that they talk to their teacher or headteacher. You should write to the school about your worries. By law, every school must have an Anti-Bullying Policy. If you feel the school is not doing anything about the problem, write to the Board of Governors and the Local Education Authority or contact the school’s education welfare officer.

Make your child feel better about themselves by inviting friends they can rely on and suggest activities or clubs where they can meet new people. Let them know they can talk to you and make them feel loved and secure.

If your child is a bully
Some bullies may feel unwanted or uncared for. Bullying makes them feel powerful or popular. It can be upsetting to know your child is a bully but you need to understand why they want to do it. Problems at home, divorce, pressure from friends or being bullied themselves may all be causes. Without judging them, let them know that what they are doing is hurtful and wrong. Discuss ways they can change their actions and ask the school for help if you need to.

Changes such as becoming more of a loner or more violent, regular headaches or stomach aches, worrying a change of routine (such as the route to school) or not wanting to go out with friends, poor results at school, damaged belongings, missing money, injuries and your sleep patterns.

Try to get your child to talk to you, a teacher or to contact help groups. Talk about bullying with the school and find out how they handle situations. Don’t ignore any signs of bullying.

Talk about ways that they can deal with bullying themselves to help build up their self-confidence. If this doesn’t work, talk to the teacher or headteacher about what can be done. Encourage your child to always tell someone if they are being bullied. Back up concerns to the school in writing.

Help your child by spending time with them and listening to any worries they have, showing an interest in their activities, supporting them with schoolwork and encouraging friends. This will help them to build up the self-confidence to deal with what is thrown at them.

• ParentLine Plus 0800 80 2222 www.parentlineplus.org.uk
• Childline 0800 11 111 11 www.childline.org.uk
• Kidscape 0800 125 2051 www.kidscape.com
• www.parentlineplus.org.uk
• www.parentlineplus.org.uk
• Balance in and out project 03004 24 24 24.
Childcare & early education

HOW DO I MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE?

• All registered childcare in England must meet national standards set out by the Government.
• Dudley Children’s Information Service (CIS) hold lists of all registered out-of-school clubs, day nurseries and sessional playgroups and children’s leisure activities and can offer you advice about finding and choosing childcare.
• Talk to other parents. Personal recommendations are helpful, but you should take up at least two references and check with the CIS that the provision is registered.
• Make a list of questions and take it with you when you visit, the CIS should be able to give you a booklet of ideas for questions.
• Make sure the carer knows how to contact you in an emergency and who you will allow to collect your child.
• If you are thinking about a private foster carer, you must contact your local children’s services office.
As a parent you are often the best judge of whether a childcare service will suit your child. When you leave your child in the care of others, you might want to check that:

- Their needs are being met.
- Their cultural background is seen and understood.
- They will be happy there.
- It ‘feels right’.
- There is a setting in arrangement.
- The same group of children often attend so your child can make friends.
- Mealtimes are relaxed and fun.
- The outside area is well planned and there is plenty of space.
- There is lots to do and it is carefully planned.

Make sure that your child is left in a safe place and that well trained and experienced staff are caring for your child.

The main types of childcare available are:

Childminders are registered to care for other people's children from birth to eight years in their own home, offering flexible hours to meet the needs of parents. They are registered with Ofsted and inspected regularly. Some childminders are part of a network; these childminders have agreed to meet specific quality standards and some may be accredited to offer early years education.

Crèches provide care for children from birth to eight years, throughout the year and are linked to specific activities such as training or leisure. Creches are also available in some shopping centres.

Day nurseries provide education and care for children from birth to five years including free part-time nursery education funded places for eligible three and four-year-olds. Children are cared for in age related groups and supported by named key workers. Children can attend full or part-time. They are registered and inspected by Ofsted.

Out-of-school clubs provide sessional play and care for school-aged children. Before and after-school clubs run term-time and provide holiday playschemes for school-aged children. They are inspected by Ofsted regularly.

Pre-school playgroups provide sessional care during term-time for children aged two to five, including free part-time nursery education funded places for eligible three and four-year-olds. Children will have an opportunity to develop their social skills and access a wide range of play-based learning activities.

If your child is between three and four years old, they will be entitled to free part-time nursery provision. For up-to-date details on entitlement contact the Children’s Information Service.

Private fostering is very different from the care given by local councils through approved foster carers. This happens when a child under 16 is looked after for more than 28 days by an adult who is not a parent or close relative, by private arrangement between the parent and the care. If you are thinking about placing your child with a private foster carer, or becoming a foster care, the first thing you must do is contact your local Children’s Services area office.
• Never leave a young child alone.
• Children under 13 years should not be left.
• Children are not ready for this amount of responsibility.
• Leaving a child alone places them at risk of harm.
• It can be a lonely and frightening experience.
• Plan who you could contact for emergency care.

Check website for the latest telephone details • safeguardingchildren.dudley.gov.uk
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 negative way.

In addition the level of responsibility which is given to the child to look after themselves to some degree may happen is impossible for a younger child. 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.

Whatever kind of neighbourhood you live in it is rarely if ever possible to leave your children and assume that someone will look out for them as necessary as may be the case in some communities and cultures.

If they are told, the police or children's 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 exposure to 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.

As a young person reaches adolescence, leaving them alone after school, for an evening or during the day is less worrying as long as they are prepared and know what to do if they are worried or need anything. So preparation for this is vital. If your child is 13 or over and you feel he or she has the maturity and ability to deal with this, it is important that they know where you are and who to contact in an emergency. Clearly, not all children 13 and over are ready to be left alone, particularly for lengthy periods of time.

Make careful considerations about your child's wishes and feelings as well as their ability to be alone.
• Disability affects some 15% of people in the UK at some time in their lives.
• 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.
The Register of Disabled Children helps to identify service need and brings together useful information in meeting the needs of children with a disability.

If your child has a disability the future may seem like a real struggle, not just for them, but for you too. The word 'disabled' covers a very wide range of different conditions and it is thought that 15% of people in the UK have some form of disability at some time in their lives. 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 GP 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
Your child will probably attend the local mainstream school with appropriate support. Some children with complex learning needs may attend a special school. Children’s Specialist Services can offer you educational and assessment advice.

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.

Make contact
On the right you'll find a list of contacts that you may find useful. You're not alone, so make contact today and get the support you need.
At first I thought she was just being a moody teenager. But as we went on I realised something was really wrong. She’s getting counselling now - it’s a relief, but I’m fearful she’ll relapse into this terrible black hole.

Depression & mental ill health

DEALING WITH THE UNCERTAINTIES OF LIFE

• Four in one hundred young people suffer from depression.
• Many things can set off mental ill health.
• Your teenager needs you to listen.
• Get professional help.

Check website for the latest telephone details: safeguardingchildren.dudley.gov.uk
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 - about four or five in every hundred - this turns into depression.

Young people are less likely to be able to cope with problems and worries. 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, even worries about their looks, sexual health, exams or because of abuse can all lead to depression. What may seem like small problems or worries to an older person, can seem like a much bigger problem to a young person.

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, or giving up interests and hobbies. Crying, avoiding friends and family, finding it hard to do their schoolwork, or not caring about what they look like are other things to look out for. They 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. Talk to your GP who can tell you about treatment, such as counselling, or if medication may help.

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 GP 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 son or daughter.

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.

**Young Minds**  
Parents Information Service  
0800 096 0868  
www.youngminds.org.uk  
**Parentline Plus**  
0800 861 1111  
www.parentline.org.uk  
**GP**  
0800 000 000  
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
Domestic abuse

HOW DOES IT AFFECT CHILDREN?

• Domestic abuse teaches children to use violence or abuse.
• Domestic abuse can affect children in serious and long-lasting ways.
• Where there is domestic abuse there is often child abuse.
• Children will often blame themselves for domestic abuse.
• Alcohol misuse is very common where domestic abuse occurs as a contributing factor and as a survival mechanism.
• Pregnant women are often victims of domestic abuse.

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Domestic abuse is a crime and a major social problem affecting many families. In 90% of reported domestic abuse cases, children have either been present in the same or a nearby room.

Children who see, get involved in 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 and other forms of abuse in the family.

Children will learn actions and behaviours from what their parents do. Domestic abuse teaches children bad things about relationships and how to treat people.

For instance:
- It can teach them that violence is the right way to sort out arguments or differences.
- They learn how to keep secrets.
- They learn to mistrust those close to them and think that they themselves are to blame for violence or abuse, especially if it happens after an argument about the children.

Many people find it difficult to understand why people stay in or return to abusive situations. Fear, love, the risk of homelessness and financial need can make it very difficult for partners with children to leave and some may just not want to. They may wish to get their abuser to leave or live in hope that the abuse will stop.

Short term effects

Children are affected in many ways by domestic abuse, even after a short time. These effects include: feeling frightened, becoming shy, quiet or withdrawn, bedwetting, running away, violent or aggressive behaviour, self-harm, behaving badly, problems with school, poor concentration and emotional upset.

Long term effects

The longer children are around abuse or violence, the worse they will be affected.

These effects 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 their parent.
- Loss of childhood.
- Problems at school.
- Running away.
- Drugs or alcohol misuse.
- Self-harm.

If you are worried about domestic abuse, discuss it with someone else.

If you are violent or abusive, you can seek help to stop what is happening.

If you are affected by domestic abuse, you are not alone - you can seek help from a range of specialist services in Dudley. You can also report incidents to the police. There are many ways in which you can use the law to protect yourself or your children from abuse.

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.

Contact one of the helpful organisations for advice on what to do next. Most offer 24 hour help. They will offer support as well as practical help (e.g. report concerns to the police. If you are worried about your child, talk to them.

Supposing nothing does not protect them it only makes them confused and alone. Children need to know that it is not their fault and that this is not the way family relationships should be.

You can help a partner from being violent but you can try to stop the damaging effects this will have on your children. Six sure how to cope alone, contact a help organisation or your council for advice.

- National Domestic Violence Helpline 0808 200 2472 (24 hr)
- Dudley Children’s Services
  - Boreley 161 Area 01384 810000
  - Dudley, Cranesley, Sedgley Areas 01384 812928
  - Wednesbury and Stourbridge Areas 01384 810900
  - Emergency Duty Team (out of hours) 01384 815823
- Police 0845 113 5000
- 101 in an emergency
- Parentline Plus 0800 800 2222
- Domestic Violence Unit (police):
  - North 01325 643897
  - South 0121 628 8209
- Health professionals, health visitor or GP
- Victim Support 01384 247511
Shaking is often caused by feeling out of control.
Shaking can cause damage that you cannot see.
Shaking can cause damage that is long-lasting.
Never shake a child for any reason.
There are different ways to cope with a crying baby.
Do not suffer alone, seek support from others.
Why do people shake babies?

Often babies and young children are shaken when a parent or carer feels very frustrated when they will not stop crying due to colic, illness or feeding difficulties. On average a baby will cry for at least two hours every day. One in ten babies cry much more than this and many parents find this too difficult to manage.

Many parents may not know how much damage a shake can do to a young child. Parents/carers who do not have much patience may become angry and more likely to give in and shake the baby. However there are many other things to try and people to talk to.

Some very rough play with a young child can also cause some similar injuries to never shake a young child or swing them by the arms or legs.

What damage can shaking cause?

Shaking a baby can cause death or serious and long-lasting brain damage. Shaken Baby Syndrome is an injury that results when a baby is shaken so that his or her head wobbles quickly backwards and forwards. The force of this can tear the blood vessels that connect the brain and skull. This happens because a baby’s neck muscles are not strong enough to hold their head firmly. The action of shaking can cause serious damage, even though the parent does not think it is forceful. Never ever shake a baby for any reason.

Ways to cope with a crying baby

Crying is the way all babies make sure that their basic needs are met - they may be hungry, thirsty, need a change of nappy or even company. Crying is neither your fault nor the fault of your baby.

Some of the ways to cope include:

• Count to ten before doing anything and allow yourself to calm down.
• Hug and cuddle your child - perhaps with the use of a baby-carrier so that they are close to your body in order to help soothe them.
• Take them for a walk or a drive to help them sleep.
• Make use of a helpline in times of crisis.
• If necessary walk out of the room for a short time, but make sure that you are still nearby.
• Ask someone else you trust to take over for a while.
• Seek advice from your health visitor or GP.

A range of signs can tell you if a child may have been shaken, including feeding difficulties, lack of energy, eye injuries, sickness, being moody, speech and learning difficulties, and not developing as expected.

If you are worried about your child, take him or her to see your GP, health visitor or to the casualty department. Get support, including the helplines listed under Contacts.

It is never safe to shake a child, not even in play. It is important for brothers and sisters, playing together or for the babysitter or any other carer to be told about the dangers.

• Dudley Hospitals
  01384 442176 or 01384 817220
• Dudley Children & Young People - Dudley & District
  01384 817220
• Dudley, Halesowen & Stourbridge
  01384 812323 - Halesowen & Stourbridge
  01384 817220 - Emergency Duty Team (out-of-hours)
  01384 832221
• Police 999, 113, 5000
• in an emergency
• NIFEC 0800 993 3300
• Worcestershire Plus 800 800 3322
• NHS Direct 24 hours 0845 4642
• Contact your health visitor or GP
• CHS 0845 122 869
• Worcestershire 01384 442078
She keeps hinting that she’s tried drugs once or twice. I’m trying to keep cool about it, but I am worried that she’ll end up trying something addictive.

Drugs, alcohol & smoking

SPOTTING THE SIGNS

• It’s natural for young people to experiment.
• Being informed leads to safer choices.
• Recognise the signs that there’s a problem.
• Be supportive not judgmental.

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If you find out that your child has or may have taken drugs, it can be frightening because of the potential effects. This can be due to your lack of knowledge about drugs and not feeling confident about talking about them. Most young people who experiment with drugs do not go on to use them on a permanent basis. Therefore, addiction, crime and death are not as usual as the stories in the media can lead us to believe.

It is vitally important, however, that children are aware of the risks of using drugs, alcohol, volatile substances (eg. solvents) and smoking. More young people experience problems caused by too much drinking than through drug use. It is a known fact that young people are more likely to have risky sex (eg. without contraception, with lots of different partners and unintended use) when under the influence of alcohol.

Parents, carers and families have been identified as having a key role in preventing problematic drug use among young people. Young people are more likely to delay or avoid drug taking when they talk openly with their parents. Research also shows that when young people do develop serious problems with drugs, the involvement and support of parents and families can contribute greatly to improved outcomes (Every Child Matters).

The 2006 Dudley Lifestyle Survey found that amongst 9-11 year-olds, 67% would like their parents to talk to them about drugs. It is important to keep well informed about drugs including alcohol, tobacco and volatile substances. In Dudley in 2004, 13% of 14-15 year-olds had tried an illicit drug within the last month and 40.5% were offered an illegal drug. 41% had drunk alcohol in the last week and 23% had used tobacco in the last week.

It is important to discuss drug use early. Some parents/carers worry that doing this encourages their sons or daughters to use drugs. Avoiding talking about drugs 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, they will be more responsive to being told about the risks of drug use. Accurate information and support will help them decide what to do. It does not guarantee non-use but will increase the chance of an informed choice. Keep talking to and with your children; statistics show they prefer discussing drugs issues with their parents.

It is also sensible to lead by example. If your son or daughter sees you getting drunk or using drugs, it increases the chances of them doing the same.

In general terms, if your child’s appearance, behaviour or financial situation changes dramatically you should consider drug and alcohol use in your list of ‘I wonder if…’ questions.

Encourage your child to talk to you about their activities, without probing. If you think there is a serious problem, discuss the issue without being judgmental, as they will need your help and understanding.

Research shows that being educated about drugs and alcohol and their dangers from an early age means it’s less likely experimenting will lead to a serious drug or alcohol problem.

- The Zone (01384 241 404) (under 18’s drop in and alcohol service including support for parents/carers)
- The Warehouse (01384 491 128) (under 18’s drop in and alcohol service)
- Kappaa 01384 263287 (alcohol - family support)
- Dudley Stop Smoking Service 0800 0850 052
- The What’ Centre 01384 370992 (drop in centre providing advice, information and counselling)
- Barnados, Live for the Project 01384 411722 (if you are concerned about the effects of drugs and alcohol on your children)
- National Alcohol Helpline 0800 917 8252
- Talk to FRANK: 0808 802 7766 (0-25)
- Smoking Cessation 0800 111 3333
- NYS Smoking Helpline 0800 100 0189
- Family Anonymous 012 7468 4800
• Help your teenager choose the right subjects.
• Try to get them to keep learning at school, in higher education or on the job training.
• Show an interest in their learning.
• Help with homework where you can.

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The world of work is changing: employers are looking for people with skills and qualifications. While it is true that the longer a young person stays in full-time education the better their job prospects are, there are options for carrying on learning and gaining new skills throughout a working life.

Your child will be encouraged to start to think about their future shortly after they start secondary school as careers lessons now start from the age of 11.

At age 14-15 teenagers choose subjects to study for GCSE or other qualifications.

At 16 they choose from options which include:
- Continuing full-time further education at school or college
- Leaving school but getting into work-based learning or training with an Apprenticeship, Entry to Employment (e2e) or Pre-AC
- Getting a job
- Your teenager can legally leave school after the last Friday in June in the academic year they reach 16.
- Volunteering

Whichever choice your teenager makes it is useful know a little more about the money facts:
- Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) may be paid for a further education or some training courses. EMA is based on household income.
- Apprentices are paid by their employer with a regular wage.
- There may be help available with travel, books and materials and with childcare costs if applicable.
- Almost all workers in the UK aged 16 or over are legally entitled to the National Minimum Wage.

By the age of 18, your child may be considering going to a university or college to take a higher education course.

Although A levels and other academic qualifications are frequently a route into higher education, they’re not the only way. Work-related qualifications and work experience may also count.

Going into higher education can also lead to a better paid job, a greater choice of job and higher future earning. Whatever your teenager's reasons for thinking about higher education, talk them over with them and encourage them to research their options.

Even if no one else in your family has gone into higher education it may be the right choice for your child.

The costs of being a student vary between different parts of the UK, and the length of the course. Financial support is available but amounts vary depending on your family situation and the type of course.
• Babies and children learn by exploring their surroundings.
• Babies and children do not automatically know what is dangerous.
• Babies and children need to be kept safe both inside and outside the home.
• Take away any potential dangers in your home that you can. The 'Home Safety Check Booklet' gives comprehensive information (see Contacts).
• Watch your child and keep them away from danger.
• Explain about safety to your child from an early age.
Babies and young children learn about their world by exploring it. This means that, as soon as they are able to, they will crawl, touch and grab at whatever they can see. They want to find out about things and need careful and gentle help from a young age about what danger is and what to stay away from. Shouting at or smacking children will not teach them about safety.

Most accidents happen in the home and this is why it is important to make sure that your home is safe for all your family especially for young children. There are many cases each year in which children have taken their parents’ drugs and medicines.

Some 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 stop your child copying you.
- Certain rooms are full of danger such as the kitchen and should stay out of bounds or be made safe by the use of safety devices.
- Are your children safely kept within the house? Is the safety chain high enough on the front door even for a very active toddler?
- Do you have a safety gate for the stairs? Parents can obtain a Home Safety Check Booklet and loan equipment from the Community Safety Team (see Contacts).
- 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 turn on them. Encourage your children to wash their hands after handling pets.
- Make sure that irons, saucepans and hot drinks are kept out of the reach of children. Scalding and burns are common and can be avoided.
- Inhaling cigarette smoke is bad for children’s health. Children will be affected by passive smoking and your smoking may encourage them to smoke when they are older.
- Check toys for safety labels. Make sure 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 or swallow. Unsafe toys can be very dangerous.
- Ask your health visitor or children’s centre for a safety checklist so you can check your home for potential dangers.
- Make sure that you have a smoke alarm and check it works regularly.
- Make sure that bath water is a safe temperature by testing with your elbow and always put cold water in first.