

“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.”

Should you mind your own business?

All families 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.

However, there may be times when a child is at risk of harm and you need to seek 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 reaching a family who needs 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 from 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.

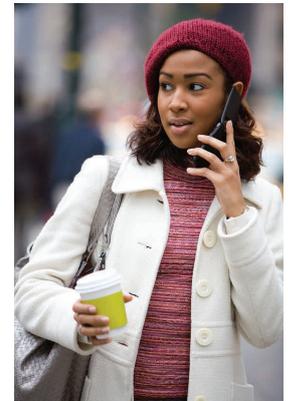
If you report your concerns to Social Services, you will be asked for your details and details of the worries you have. You should write down what you want to say before you speak to them, so that you can remember everything.

Reporting child abuse hardly ever results in the child being taken away from home. This is not the main aim of Child Protection Investigations and rarely happens. Social Workers can only remove children from their home with a court order, having shown that there is a serious risk. In emergency situations, the Police have the power to remove a child from home for 72 hours.



Safeguarding Children; not everyone’s occupation,
but everybody’s job.

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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 he or she is being hurt.



Action:

If you think a child is being harmed, contact the 1st Response Team, or in an emergency situation, dial 999.

If you are unsure, you can contact a helpline such as the NSPCC and your call will be kept private.



What to say:

Explain exactly what you have seen, or have 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:

Buckinghamshire County Council First Response Team: 0845 4600001

Out of Hours Emergency Social Work Team: 0800 999 7677

In an emergency, contact the Police on 999

NSPCC: 0808 800 5000 www.nspcc.org.uk

Family Lives: www.familylives.org.uk

Childline: 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk

Family Rights Group: 0808 801 0366 www.frg.org.uk