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Arabic

আবকারে এই তথ্যটি পেতে নিচের নম্বরে ফোন করুন:

Bengali

假如您需要這份資料的中文摘要，請致電下面的號碼。

Chinese

यदि आप यह जानकारी का संक्षेप हिन्दी में चाहते हैं, तो कृपया निचे दिए हुए नम्बर में सम्पर्क करें।

Hindi

Jezeli potrzebujesz streszczenia tych informacji w jezyku polskim zadzwon prosze na ponizszy numer


Polish

ਜਾਂ ਝੁਮੀ ਟਿਹੁ ਖ਼ਬਰ ਦਾ ਨਿਚੇੜ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਥੱਲੇ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਹੋਏ ਨੰਬਰ ਤੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

Punjabi

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات اردو میں درکار ہیں تو اس نمبر پر کال کیجیے۔

Urdu

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# Parenting Handbook

A guide for mums, dads and carers  
of 11-18 year olds in County Durham



# Introduction

Welcome to our Parenting Handbook, a guide for mums, dads and carers of 11-18 year olds in County Durham.

There's no doubt that children enrich our lives, but raising them is hard work. The hours are lousy, there's no annual leave, and crucially you don't get training! While we all want to do our best and give our children a good start in life, it's often hard to know what we should be doing and where to get additional advice or support when we need to. It's important that as parents you know where to get the right information and feel happy to use any support or advice you need.

75% of parents tell us they require additional information and advice, sometime through their parenting career with the teenage years the most challenging.

The teenage years are a time of rapid physical and deep emotional change. Parents and teenagers may sometimes feel they are living on different planets. However most studies show that teenagers actually like their parents and feel they get on with them very well.

This guide aims to provide information about how to cope with the challenges of the teenage years as a parent and gives contacts for further information both locally and nationally.

Being a teenager can be tough, being a parent of a teenager can be equally tough. By understanding your child a little better and by giving them time to develop, you'll build a much closer and ultimately rewarding relationship.

We do hope you find this guide helpful.



# Contents

## Information for parents

<b>Parenting positively</b> - Help them feel great!	4
<b>Adolescence &amp; puberty</b> - Changing times	6
<b>Healthy lifestyles</b> - Looking after their health	8
<b>Importance of friendships &amp; peer influences</b> - The meaning of friendship	10
<b>Bullying</b> - The real story	12
<b>Equality &amp; diversity</b> - Different and equal	14
<b>My child has a disability</b> - You're not alone	16
<b>Divorce, separation &amp; bereavement</b> - Helping them through	18

## Education and work life

<b>Education</b> - Support your child's learning	20
<b>Training</b> - Bright future, bright prospects	22
<b>When things get difficult</b> - Helping you get the right support	24
<b>Absence from school</b> - Are they at school?	26

## Health issues

<b>Drug, alcohol &amp; substance misuse</b> - How would I know?	28
<b>Parental substance misuse</b> - Your behaviour counts	30
<b>Depression &amp; coping with stress</b> - Dealing with the uncertainties of life	32
<b>Body image &amp; eating disorders</b> - The tell-tale signs	34
<b>Self-harm</b> - Understanding and support	36
<b>Teenage pregnancy &amp; sexual health</b> - Preventative parenting	38

## Keeping safe

<b>E-safety</b> - New technology, old problem	40
<b>Domestic abuse</b> - How does it affect children?	42
<b>Keeping safe from crime</b> - Staying safe	44

<b>Helpful organisations</b>	46
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*“My mum’s great! She always finds time to talk to me and I know I can talk to her about anything.”*



#### WARNING SIGNS

If your child refuses to listen to you and never wants to share what is going on in their life, avoids spending any time with the family and refuses to do as you ask, you need to act now to re-build your relationship.



#### ACTION

Try to understand what they are going through. Accept that friendships, music, their own opinions and most other things seem more important than you right now! Let them know you are there for them.



#### WHAT TO SAY

Learn to listen, as well as talk to your child. Show that you are interested in what they have to say, even though you may not agree with it. Talk when you know your teenager has time to listen - you’ll get a better response.



#### PREVENTION

Teenagers don’t have to be moody and uncommunicative. A good relationship can be built up by talking about what’s going on in their life without asking too many questions. Always let your teenager know you are there for them, without judgement.



#### CONTACTS

- County Durham Families Information Service 0800 917 2917
- Parent Support Adviser via your child’s school
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222

#### WEBLINKS

[www.countydurhamfamilies.info](http://www.countydurhamfamilies.info) • [www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk) • [www.dadtalk.co.uk](http://www.dadtalk.co.uk) • [www.ukparentsounge.com](http://www.ukparentsounge.com) • [www.bbc.co.uk/health](http://www.bbc.co.uk/health) • [www.gotateenager.org.uk](http://www.gotateenager.org.uk) •

- Understand your child’s feelings
- Listen as well as talk
- Communication is the key to good family relationships
- Your child is developing their own identity
- Be realistic about what to expect from your child

## Parenting positively

Help them feel great!

Parenting positively 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. This starts from the earliest days of your relationship with your child.

### Talk and listen

Many parents worry about how they will cope with the ‘difficult teenage years’. Learning to listen and talk to your child can make all the difference to your relationship.

It is important to give your child some privacy, as they need space to think about their thoughts and feelings and the changes that are happening to them.

When they do talk to you, let them have their say without interruption and give them time to express themselves. Their way of seeing things and their views may be different to yours, but they are important to them. Choose your battles and let some go! Teenagers value being listened to,

and having their thoughts and feelings recognised.

All schools across County Durham have access to the services of a Parent Support Adviser who can provide additional support and advice on all parenting issues including providing opportunities for parents to access parenting courses. Parenting courses are not about telling parents what to do, but provide an opportunity to share parenting experiences and learn new skills to help build positive relationships within the family.

### Self-esteem

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, and being natural and affectionate.

You can contact the Families Information Service for free impartial advice or talk to the Parent Support Adviser at your child’s school.



*"I am very lucky as my daughter and I have a good relationship."*



#### WARNING SIGNS

Mood swings, arguments, talking back, change in sleep patterns, an 'over-the-top' interest in hygiene or a complete lack of it are quite normal! Coping with emotional changes brought on by hormones, and dealing with the physical changes.



#### ACTION

Listen and talk to your child so you understand what they are going through. Let them know that you are always there for them.



#### WHAT TO SAY

Teenagers can be clever, interesting and thoughtful as well as being sarcastic and sulky. Talk things through with them rather than arguing. Be prepared to answer lots of questions about puberty and don't be embarrassed to talk about it.



#### PREVENTION

Remember you are the adult and try not to have temper tantrums yourself! Being flexible and bargaining works better than making rules and demands. Talk together to stop any worries or problems getting out of control.



#### CONTACTS

- Your child's School Nurse
- County Durham Families Information Service 0800 917 2917
- NHS Direct 0845 4647
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222

#### WEBLINKS

[www.countydurhamfamilies.info](http://www.countydurhamfamilies.info) • [www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk) • [www.thesite.org](http://www.thesite.org) • [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk) • [www.ukparentslounge.com](http://www.ukparentslounge.com) • [www.teenagehealthfreak.com](http://www.teenagehealthfreak.com) • [www.likeitis.org.uk](http://www.likeitis.org.uk) • [www.bbc.co.uk/health](http://www.bbc.co.uk/health) • [www.parentchannel.tv](http://www.parentchannel.tv)

- Listening is the key to a good relationship
- Your teenager wants independence - but still needs you!
- Growing up can be frightening for teenagers, give them the information they need
- Hormones set off physical changes, mood swings and changes in feelings
- Children can go through puberty at different ages

## Adolescence & puberty

### Changing times

Adolescence is when a young person develops from a child into an adult. While teenagers may be excited about some changes, they may be less happy about others. It is a worrying time for teenagers who naturally compare themselves with friends.

The most likely cause for the mood swings of your teenager is hormones. At the start of puberty, hormones are triggering physical changes and emotional feelings that could be hard to deal with and hard to talk about.

Teenagers will be trying to cope with a lot of issues which can make them worried and stressed. They will be developing deeper and more complicated relationships and their confidence will be affected by worries and arguments, or peer pressure.

Trying to get a reply from your teenager as they are getting ready to go out or listening to music isn't going to work. Choose your time carefully when there are things you need to discuss. Be flexible and offer options. Try to talk in a calm and reasonable way, even if you don't feel like it. If you start by shouting,

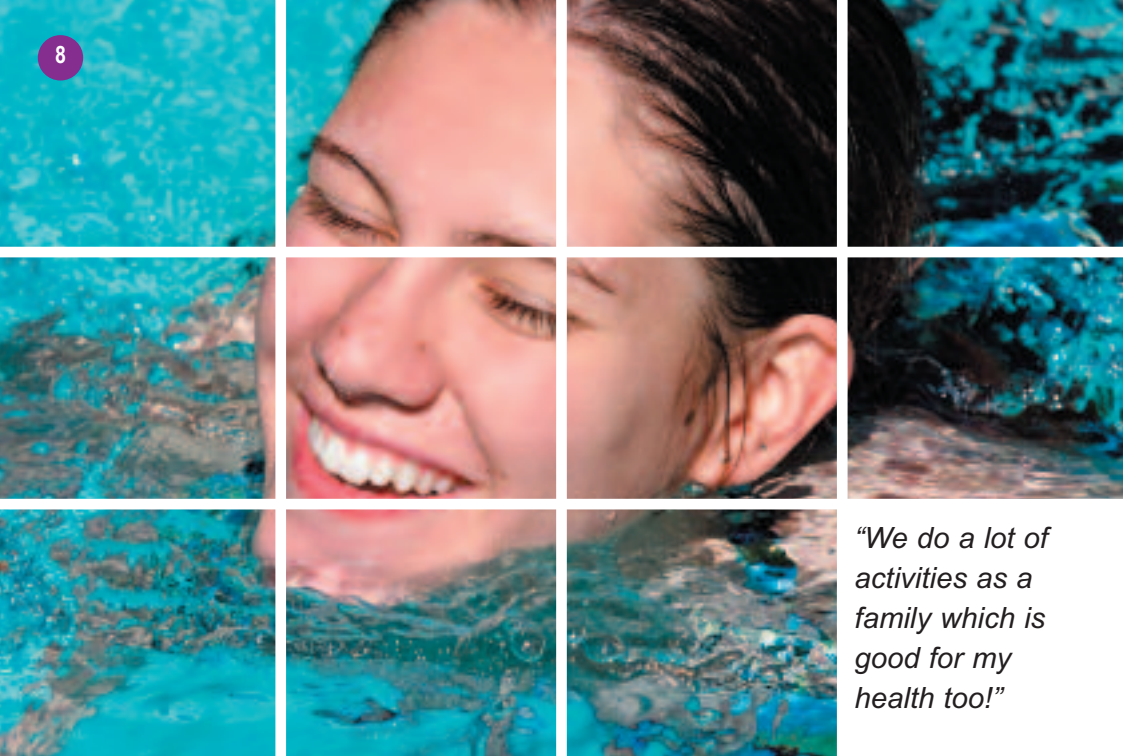
they are more likely to respond in the same way.

If your teenager finds what you have to say dull, don't be offended. It's natural at this age to be more interested in their friends' lives than yours. You probably acted in the same way when you were a teenager!

The way they look may also worry them and they will be having new sexual feelings, which they may find difficult to cope with.

The teenage years can be tough and your teenager needs to know they have your support. If they upset you, don't forget a lot of it is just for 'show' and when things go wrong they'll often turn to you for comfort.

Listening and talking to your teenager will help you understand what they are going through emotionally and physically. One of the best things you can do for your child is to let them know that you are there for them. Be open-minded and try not to be judgemental, so they feel they can trust you and turn to you when they need help.



*"We do a lot of activities as a family which is good for my health too!"*



#### WARNING SIGNS

If your child eats a lot of unhealthy foods like crisps, chocolate, sweets and pastries and spends most of their free time in front of the TV or games console, they're more likely to become obese.



#### ACTION

Make simple long-term changes as a family. Limit unhealthy foods and encourage them to do more exercise. If you are worried, talk to your GP, they will be able to refer you and your child to a nutritionist.



#### WHAT TO SAY

Make sure your child knows that good food is fuel for a healthy body. Get the balance right between what they eat and how much they move around.



#### PREVENTION

Teach your child that healthy eating and exercise can be fun. Experts recommend that we should be doing one hour of physical activity a day to stay healthy.



#### CONTACTS

- Your child's School Nurse
- Extended Services Coordinators via your child's school
- British Heart Foundation 0300 330 3311
- British Nutrition Foundation 020 7404 6504
- Beating Eating Disorders 0845 634 7650
- Food Standards Agency 020 7276 8829

#### EMAIL

[lifecheck@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:lifecheck@dh.gsi.gov.uk)

#### WEBLINKS

[www.getoutthere.info](http://www.getoutthere.info) • [www.bhf.org.uk](http://www.bhf.org.uk) • [www.nutrition.org.uk](http://www.nutrition.org.uk) • [www.b-eat.co.uk](http://www.b-eat.co.uk) • [www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk) • [www.dh.gov.uk/lifecheck](http://www.dh.gov.uk/lifecheck) • [www.nhs.uk/change4life](http://www.nhs.uk/change4life) • [www.parentchannel.tv](http://www.parentchannel.tv)

- More people are becoming overweight
- Being very overweight is called obese
- Obese people are more likely to suffer from health problems
- An unhealthy diet and not enough exercise are contributing factors

## Healthy lifestyles

### Looking after their health

As a parent, you have a vital role to play in your child's health, and there are lots of things you can do to help keep them healthy. They look up to you, so be a good role model. If they see you eating healthily and keeping fit and active, they're more likely to do the same.

More young people are becoming obese. The two main reasons for this are an unhealthy diet and not taking enough exercise. Encourage the whole family to eat a balanced diet and make sure your child knows that good food is fuel for a healthy body.

Encourage your child to be as active as possible. Even walking to school counts! Team sports will help them make friends and gain confidence.

Teach your child that healthy eating and exercise can be fun. Experts recommend that children and young people should try to do at least one hour of activity a day to stay healthy.

Extended Services are one of the key ways schools can promote well-being. One of the main elements of Extended Services is that schools provide a varied menu of activities for young people to get involved in, such as play and sport opportunities.

A wide range of positive activities can be accessed by young people in County Durham via the Getoutthere website. Activities such as different sports, leisure, arts and social activities are listed by activity type, location or date. For more information visit [www.getoutthere.info](http://www.getoutthere.info)

NHS LifeCheck is an online health service that guides people through a series of questions about their own or their child's health or well-being. This does not replace contact with your GP or other health professionals but gives additional information and current advice on how and where to find the best help for individual's concerns.



*“Every time my daughter’s best friend has her hair cut, she gets hers cut in exactly the same way.”*



#### WARNING SIGNS

If your child is unusually quiet or seems unhappy, there may be friendship problems. Signs that they may be getting into trouble include, suddenly having money or new clothes, and unusual behaviour that may be caused by drink or drugs.



#### ACTION

Find out if your child is having any problems at school or with friends. Ask if there is anything you can do to help and let them know you are always there for them. If you are worried talk to your child’s school.



#### WHAT TO SAY

Talk to your child calmly and try not to judge them, as this will only make it less likely that they open up to you. Problems or friendship break-ups that may seem small to you are very important to your child.



#### PREVENTION

Even though you may not be the first person your child turns to when in trouble, your support is still important. To help stop your child from keeping problems in, let them know you are always there for them when they need you.



#### CONTACTS

- County Durham Anti-Bullying Service, Copelaw Education, 9 Orchard Lane, Newton Aycliffe, Co Durham DL5 6UT 01325 372812
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222

- Friendships help your teenager to develop in many ways
- Most young people like to look the same as everyone else and be part of the crowd
- Pressure from peers to act in a certain way can be powerful
- Family support is important but be prepared, your teenager could turn to their friends first

## Importance of friendships & peer influences

### The meaning of friendship

Friendships are very important to young people. Having a close friend or group of friends and belonging to a group helps them feel good about themselves, learn to deal with people and develop their own identity. This helps them learn about the values and ideas of others.

Fitting in with a group and sharing secrets is very important. Children may be interested in image, friends and relationships.

Belonging to a group is very important to young people and they may be part of a group because their friends are, even if they don’t really like what everyone else does.

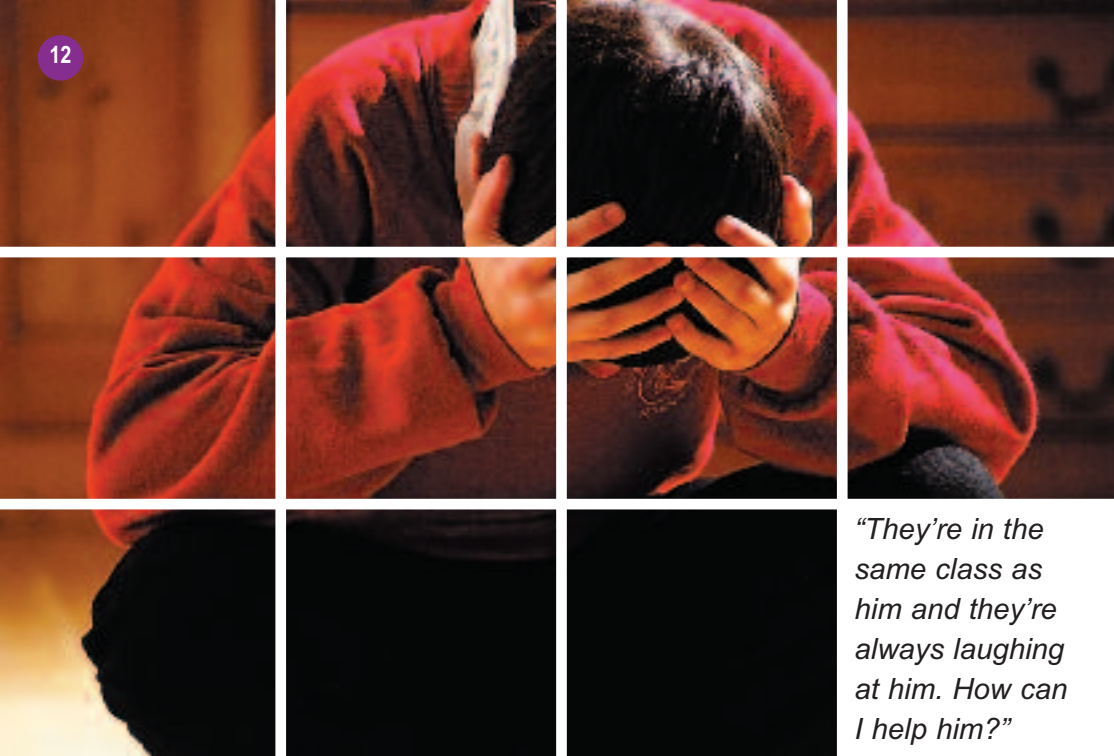
Many teenagers also feel under pressure to do things they are not happy about because they don’t want

to stick out from the crowd. This might mean wearing certain clothes, or on a more serious level, trying alcohol, drugs or having sex.

You may feel worried about the effect certain friends are having on your teenager, or they may be worried and don’t know how to talk to you about it.

Talk calmly and try not to judge them, as this will only make it less likely that they will open up to you and feel they can trust you. Problems or friendship breakups are very important to them.

Let them know that you are there for them, and that you can help. You can show them how to trust their own feelings and values, which will build up an emotional strength that will help them in later life.



*“They’re in the same class as him and they’re always laughing at him. How can I help him?”*



#### 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.



#### WHAT TO SAY

Encourage your child to tell someone they trust, this may be an adult or a mini-bud, buddy or peer supporter in school. They can also email Ask Buddy (see Anti-Bullying Service website). 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 them that prejudice and bullying is unacceptable.



#### CONTACTS

- County Durham Anti-Bullying Service 01325 372812
- County Durham Families Information Service 0800 917 2917
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222
- ChildLine 0800 1111
- Kidscape 08451 205 204

#### WEBLINKS

[www.durhamlea.org.uk/abs/](http://www.durhamlea.org.uk/abs/) • [www.countydurhamfamilies.info](http://www.countydurhamfamilies.info) • [www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk) • [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) • [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk) • [www.bullying.co.uk](http://www.bullying.co.uk) • [www.parentchannel.tv](http://www.parentchannel.tv)

- Children have the right not to be hurt
- Bullying behaviour is never acceptable
- Bullying can happen to any child at any age
- Speak to your child’s school immediately if you have any concerns
- Children need ways to protect themselves and seek help
- Advise your child to run, yell and tell

## Bullying

### The real story

Bullying can happen at any time and to any child, although it most commonly happens in school. It can be carried out physically, verbally, emotionally or in cyberspace.

Bullying is a frightening experience, which can damage a young person’s self-confidence. It is crucial to be alert to the possibility of bullying and make sure you know the tell-tale signs.

All schools are required to have an Anti-Bullying Policy and it’s important that parents and schools work together to support and protect the child. Parents should make contact with their child’s school as soon as they become aware of any problems and you should make a note of what action they intend to take.

Many young people feel under pressure to do things they are not happy about, because they don’t want to stick out from the crowd by saying ‘no’. This might be wearing certain clothes or shopping in the right places, but on a more serious level,

this might involve missing school, experimenting with alcohol and/or drugs, shoplifting, joining a gang or going further with a boyfriend or girlfriend than they feel ready to.

Let your child know you are always there for them when needed.

#### What you can do

- Listen to your child and discuss ideas on how to sort the problem out for themselves.
- Refer to your child’s school Anti-Bullying Policy, by law, all schools should have one.
- Write a bullying report listing all the incidents of bullying and take it to the school.
- Get your child to keep a bullying diary or copies of messages.
- Meet with school to work out a plan of action.
- Teach your child coping strategies.
- If you remain unhappy with the school’s response you can always follow the school’s complaints procedure.



*"My son's learning fast but I do want him to understand that although everybody's different they are equal too."*



#### WARNING SIGNS

Children notice difference all the time in things, people and places. They need to know that we are all different but that we are all equal, and that difference should not be met with suspicion, envy or fear.



#### ACTION

You should expect every place your child is in to have made a visible commitment to equality and diversity. You should listen and act at once if discrimination happens or you have worries.



#### WHAT TO SAY

There are many organisations specially set up to give support and advice to parents, including parents of vulnerable children or children from overseas. Contact them. See organisations listed under Contacts.



#### PREVENTION

All parents have a right to expect a safe place and support for their child whatever their individual needs, experiences or background. Schools are becoming more inclusive with diversity and equality expected in all areas of school life.



#### CONTACTS

- County Durham Families Information Service 0800 917 2917
- Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS) 01740 656998
- Parent Partnership 0191 587 3541
- Access Service 0191 586 3522

- Your child is protected by the Human Rights Act, the Disability Discrimination Act, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, the Sex Discrimination Act
- Your local Council, Education and Health Authorities are there to help, contact County Durham Children and Young People's Services
- Ask your child's school how they deal with racism and other forms of harassment, and ask them to talk through their policies with you
- Support groups, parent groups and other organisations are out there to help you and your child

## Equality & diversity

### Different and equal

Diversity is all about differences. We are all different and diversity helps contribute to our rich and vibrant culture.

Although we're all different we all have the right to equal respect, opportunity and justice. If you feel you or your child has experienced discrimination, your local authority and the legal system are there to help.

Public bodies have a clear duty to stop unlawful racial discrimination and to promote equal opportunity and good relations between 'racial groups'. This includes schools, so the

curriculum and teaching in our schools should reflect racial diversity.

Sex and relationship education in schools also helps young children understand and respect sexual orientation and sex discrimination.

It is not acceptable that anyone is targeted for abuse or discrimination because of their race, sex, sexuality or because they have a disability.

You and your child have the right to be different and equal, so make contact today and get the support you need.

#### WEBLINKS

[www.countydurhamfamilies.info](http://www.countydurhamfamilies.info) • [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com) • [www.parentchannel.tv](http://www.parentchannel.tv)



*"She brings our whole family so much joy - I'm lucky to have her."*



#### WARNING SIGNS

Your child might start to feel more self-conscious about what they look like. They may also feel left out if their friends are becoming more independent and they can't.



#### ACTION

Try to build up their confidence - encourage them to find hobbies they enjoy and things they're good at. Also, get them to do as much as they can for themselves.



#### WHAT TO SAY

Reassure your child that you love them and are proud of them. Focus on the things they can do, not the things they can't.



#### PREVENTION

Make sure that they get the best support and advice available.



#### CONTACTS

- Children's Network  
0191 383 3785
- Parent Partnership  
0191 587 3541
- County Durham Families Information Service  
0800 917 2917
- Contact a Family  
0808 808 3555
- YoungMinds Parents Helpline  
0808 802 5544

EMAIL

[childrensnetwork@durham.gov.uk](mailto:childrensnetwork@durham.gov.uk)

WEBLINKS

[www.countydurhamfamilies.info](http://www.countydurhamfamilies.info) • [www.cafamily.org.uk](http://www.cafamily.org.uk) • [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk) • [www.parentchannel.tv](http://www.parentchannel.tv)

- There is help available
- Meet your child's educational needs
- There is the opportunity to receive help from benefits
- Your child is protected by the Disability Discrimination Act

## My child has a disability

### You're not alone

If your child has a learning, emotional or physical disability, becoming a teenager can be tough for them and for you. It's important to know there is support available to make things easier.

Help them find out about the laws that protect the rights of people with disabilities - the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Disability Rights Commission Act 1999 mean that disabled people have the same rights as everyone else in important areas like education, transport and work.

Young people worry about what they look like, and want people their age to accept them. This might be hard for your child and they may feel left out if they can't do things their other friends are doing.

This means your child will need extra support and understanding from you. You can help them grow into a confident adult by encouraging them to do as much as they can for themselves, wherever possible and

making sure they get a good education to improve their chances in later life.

Living with a child with a disability affects the whole family and parents tend to give the child with the disability lots of time and attention. Try to set aside time to spend with all your children, and reassure them that you love them all the same.

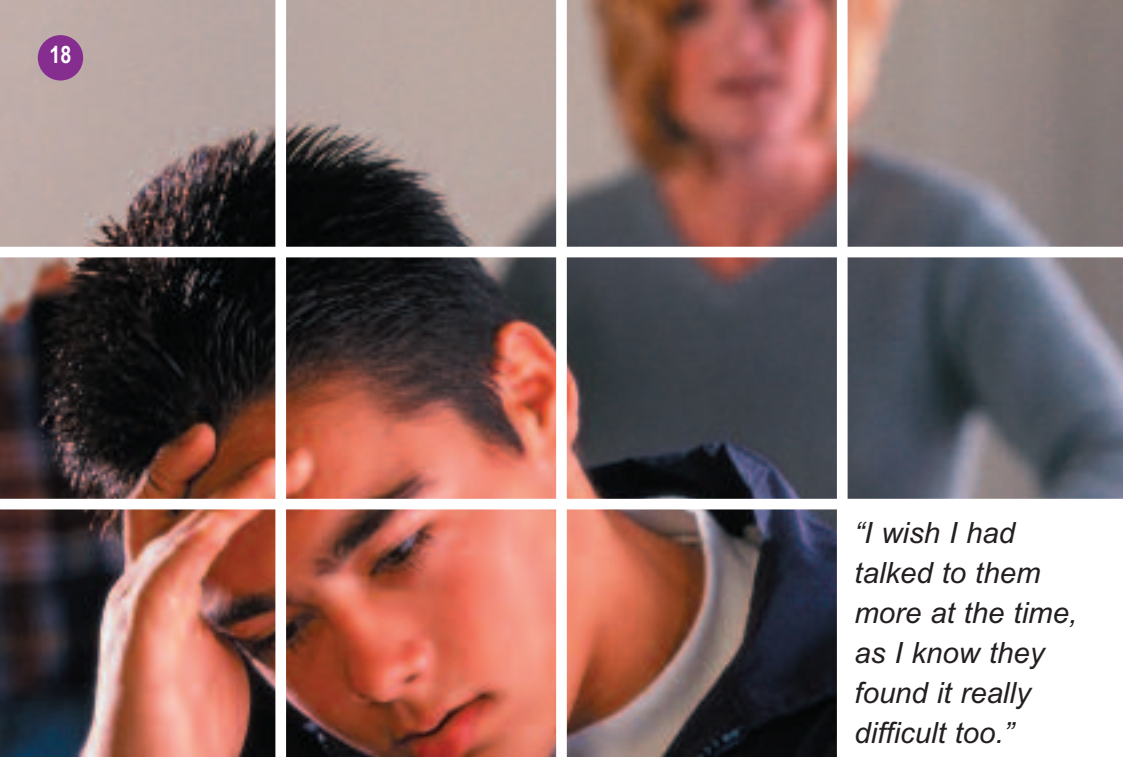
There are benefits available, such as Disability Living Allowance, which can pay for things like help at home, travel and meals.

#### Children's Network

Durham County Council keeps a register of information for children and young people with disabilities, which is called the Children's Network. The network provides information on leisure activities, transport, helplines, financial information etc.

#### Parent Partnership

Offers advice and support to parents of children with Special Educational Needs.



*"I wish I had talked to them more at the time, as I know they found it really difficult too."*



#### WARNING SIGNS

Avoid arguing with your partner in front of your children. Try to keep calm, and talk to them about what is happening. People react to loss in different ways - give your child as much time and patience as they need.



#### ACTION

Tell your children what is happening and how you and your partner's separation will affect their lives. Show that you care about them by listening to their feelings and wishes.



#### WHAT TO SAY

Explain why you are breaking up and that it has nothing to do with them. Let them talk about their feelings and worries. Talk about someone who has died. It's okay to still laugh and have fun.



#### PREVENTION

If you separate or divorce, try to stop your children feeling hurt, guilty or unloved. Keep lines of communication open.



#### CONTACTS

- Stepping Stones Mediation  
0191 383 7440
- Relate  
0845 456 1310
- Relate Direct Counselling Service  
08451 30 40 16
- Gingerbread/ Single Parent Helpline  
0808 802 0925
- Cruse Bereavement Care  
0844 477 9400

EMAIL

[steppingstones.mediation@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:steppingstones.mediation@yahoo.co.uk)

WEBLINKS

[www.relate.org.uk](http://www.relate.org.uk) • [www.onespace.org.uk](http://www.onespace.org.uk) • [www.gingerbread.org.uk](http://www.gingerbread.org.uk) • [www.dadtalk.co.uk](http://www.dadtalk.co.uk) • [http://thecoupleconnection.net](http://http://thecoupleconnection.net) • [www.oneplusone.org.uk](http://www.oneplusone.org.uk) • [www.dads-space.com](http://www.dads-space.com) • [www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk](http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk) • [www.parentchannel.tv](http://www.parentchannel.tv)

- You may feel upset, but remember your child may be suffering too
- Try to keep talking to each other and listen to your child's worries and feelings
- Your child's behaviour may change as they deal with their emotions and the changes in their life
- You can help by talking to your child about what has happened. If they find this hard, encourage friends or a teacher to be there for them too

## Divorce, separation & bereavement

### Helping them through

#### Separation and divorce

While you might think it is kinder to protect your child from the details, they will find it easier to cope if they understand what's going on.

Children often think that their parent's break-up is somehow their fault and they can feel hurt, confused and unloved.

Explain what is going to happen and try not to argue in front of the children or encourage them to take sides. Explain that you will both be there for them whenever they need you.

Take time to listen to their worries and talk them through the changes, as they may be worried about the future.

#### Loss and bereavement

Loss or death is difficult for everyone. The death of a loved one, a pet or a close friend moving away can all be really tough on young people.

People handle grief in different ways, and your child may find it hard to

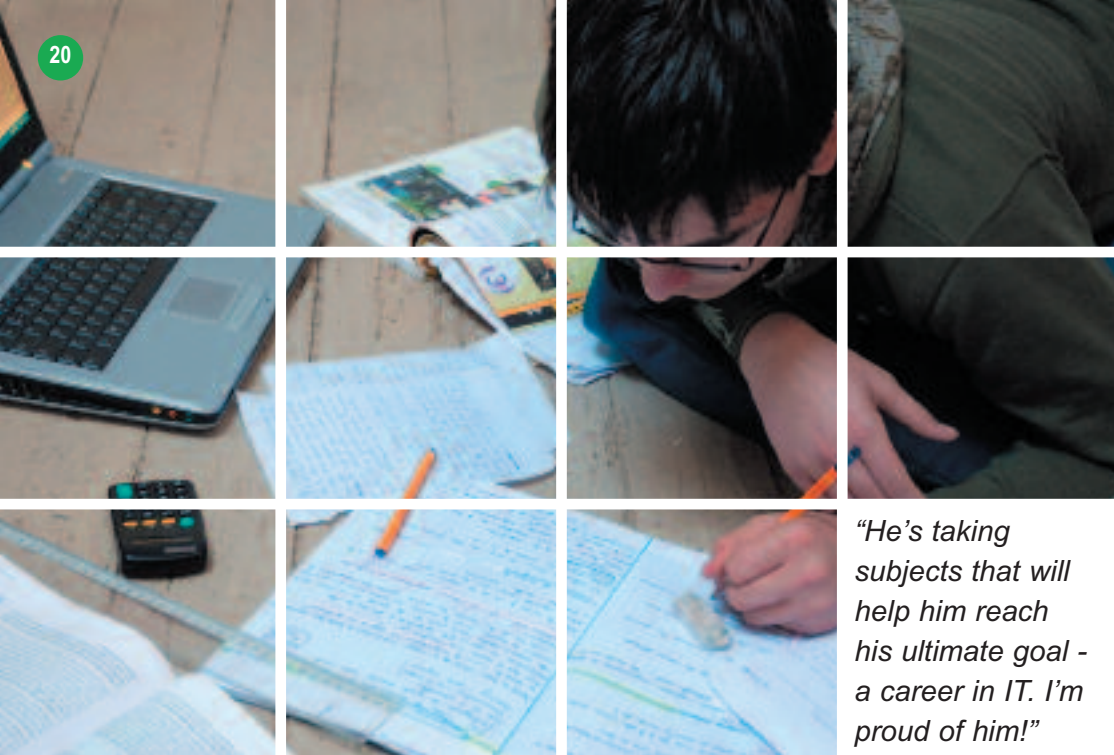
cope with day-to-day life. Give them as much time and patience as they need - some people take longer than others to come to terms with a loss.

Keep the lines of communication open as the more you talk, the easier the healing process will be. As a parent you can help your child through this difficult time. You can tell them if someone you know has died, and how you felt.

Young people need a lot of support and understanding to help them work through their grief.

Make sure the school knows of their loss and that they will need time and understanding as they work through their feelings. The organisation, Cruse which has a website aimed at young people (see Contacts) helps explain how to deal with feelings and gives support and advice to your child.

If you think they are having long-term difficulties, you may want to think about talking to a bereavement counsellor.



*"He's taking subjects that will help him reach his ultimate goal - a career in IT. I'm proud of him!"*



#### WARNING SIGNS

If your child is getting into trouble at school, discuss ways of getting them interested again in their education. If they still behave badly they could be excluded, so make sure they know the results their actions will have on their future.



#### ACTION

Find out about the subjects your child has chosen and take an active interest in their school and homework. Use course material and educational websites to help you. Try to get them to think for themselves and let them express their own ideas.



#### WHAT TO SAY

Support your child's education at every chance you have. Talk to the school about their education and career choices and how you can best help your child.



#### PREVENTION

Children who have a stable home life with parents who take an interest in their education and future career tend to stay longer in education and do better. Get them to talk about any problems to stop them becoming too worried and stressed.



#### CONTACTS

- Parent Support Adviser via your child's school
- Connexions 0191 383 1777
- Family Learning 0191 374 0539 01207 230521 0191 374 0507 01833 690281 0191 586 2402 margaret.richards@durham.gov.uk
- Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) 0808 800 5793

EMAIL

[info@connexions-durham.org](mailto:info@connexions-durham.org) • [enquiries@ace-ed.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ace-ed.org.uk)

WEBLINKS

[www.family-learning.org.uk](http://www.family-learning.org.uk) • [www.help4teens.co.uk](http://www.help4teens.co.uk) • [www.ace-ed.org.uk](http://www.ace-ed.org.uk) • <http://ema.direct.gov.uk>

- Getting a good education makes it easier for your child to find a job they enjoy
- Show an interest in their studies and encourage your child to keep learning
- Help with homework when possible
- Whatever decision your child reaches, support and encourage them

## Education

### Support your child's learning

As a parent, you probably have high hopes for your child's future and naturally want the best for them. If they receive a good education and get qualifications, this will make it easier for them to find an interesting job, which they enjoy later on.

You can help to make your child more interested in their education, too, by taking an active interest in the subjects they have chosen and helping with homework when you can.

If your child is getting into trouble at school, discuss ways of getting them interested again in their education. If they still behave badly they could be excluded, so make sure they know the results their actions will have on their future education and job prospects.

All schools now provide Transition Information Sessions for parents at key educational phases such as moving up to secondary school. The Moving Up Programme aims to provide an introduction to the school, engage parents and provide information and advice on a wide range of parenting issues. It's important to your child that you attend parent's evenings.

Schools now have a role as a hub of services for children, parents and families'. Extended Services are one of the key ways schools can promote well-being and standards and ensure that each child and young person achieves their full potential. Extended Services include parenting support, access to more specialist services, family and adult learning opportunities.

Connexions County Durham provide information, advice, guidance and support from the age of 13-19 (up to 25 for some clients) on a whole range of issues such as careers, educational choices, progression opportunities, personal development activities etc. They have some statutory duties including attending the year 9 transition review and supporting the post 16 transition of students with Special Educational Needs.

If your child stays in learning after 16, Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) could give them up to £30 a week to help with their costs. It won't affect any of the benefits you get (unless your child leaves education). Visit <http://ema.direct.gov.uk> for more information.



*"She's proved to me that she's serious about getting training on the job while also earning some money."*



#### 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 child 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 an apprenticeship 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

- Your child's School
- Connexions County Durham 0191 383 1777
- Connexions Direct 080 800 13 2 19

#### EMAIL

[info@connexions-durham.org](mailto:info@connexions-durham.org)

#### WEBLINKS

<http://jobseekers.direct.gov.uk> • [www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk) • [www.direct.gov.uk/en/parents/index.htm](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/parents/index.htm) • [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk) • [www.dofe.org](http://www.dofe.org) • [www.help4teens.co.uk](http://www.help4teens.co.uk) • [www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com) • <http://ema.direct.gov.uk> • [www.princes-trust.org.uk](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk) • [www.parentchannel.tv](http://www.parentchannel.tv)

- 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

## Training

### Bright future, bright prospects

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

If they make this choice, try to get them to apply for a job that gives them the chance to train. Apprenticeships offer work-based training for young people so that they can learn while on the job as well as earning money.

Help your child to apply for an opportunity that's right for them. All local opportunities in education and training are included on the County Durham Area Wide Prospectus available on the Connexions County Durham website. For more information visit [www.help4teens.co.uk](http://www.help4teens.co.uk)

Work experience can be gained in Year 10 or 11, or by getting a part-time job. It gives young people a chance to be treated as an adult and learn what is expected of them.

Young people in education and under the age of 16 are required to have a work permit. Once a young person has passed the school leaving date this is not required, however there are still some restrictions on the type of work they can do.

If your child stays in learning after 16, Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) could give them up to £30 a week to help with their costs. It won't affect any of the benefits you get (unless your child leaves education). Visit <http://ema.direct.gov.uk> for more information.

Volunteering can be a great way for your child to give something back to the community and learn something new too. It's also a good way for your child to gain experience in a particular area before committing to it as a career.

A new law passed at the end of 2009 means that teenagers will have to stay in education or training until they are 18. This new act raises the education leaving age to 17 in 2013 and to 18 from 2015.



*"I was upset when I was given a Parenting Order, but it's helped me see where I was going wrong."*



#### WARNING SIGNS

Missing school and exclusion, defying parents requests, letters from Police and/or Anti-Social Behaviour Units etc. can all be part of signs that children are getting into trouble.



#### ACTION

If you find that you are having problems getting your child to school or problems with their behaviour seek advice and support before it gets to the Parenting Order stage!



#### WHAT TO SAY

Talk to your child about their behaviour, and find out why it's happening. If your child has been asked to take part in a scheme to improve their behaviour, encourage them to do this.



#### PREVENTION

Remember that you can have a strong influence over your child's behaviour in the future. Make sure they know how important it is to go to school, and point out that if they have a criminal record they'll find it harder to get a job they want later on.



#### CONTACTS

- School Nurse
- Parent Support Adviser via your child's school
- Community Safety Team 0191 370 8739
- Missing Persons Helpline 0500 700 700
- Social Care Direct 0845 850 5010

- If you are finding things difficult or your teenager gets into trouble there is help at hand
- If you feel you or your child needs additional help, support can be offered to you both
- Seeking additional advice or support is not a sign you are unable to cope

## When things get difficult

### Helping you get the right support

As a parent you need to teach your children right from wrong. If you are finding things difficult or your teenager gets into trouble there is help at hand.

All schools across County Durham have access to the services of a Parent Support Adviser who can provide additional support and advice on all parenting issues including providing opportunities for parents to access parenting courses.

Parenting courses are not about telling parents what to do but provide an opportunity to share parenting experiences and learn new skills to help build positive relationships within their family. To access a parenting programme such as Family Nurturing Programme or the Strengthening Families Programme contact your school's Parent Support Adviser or Parent Support Adviser Coordinator for your area.

If you or a professional feel your child needs additional support a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) can

be used to help identify the best available support. The CAF is a new way of working with children, young people and families. It involves listening to you and your child to find out your child's needs and what is working well in your child's life.

An action plan, agreed with you and your child, is also put in place to make sure your child gets the right sort of help. The CAF is voluntary - you and your child can choose to be involved. If you and your child agree, a worker will ask you both some questions to find out what help and support your child might need.

Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders may be used if your child has been excluded or misbehaves in school, if your child commits a criminal offence or receives an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO). Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders are not punishments but a way of receiving additional support to help you as a parent deal with your child.

#### WEBLINKS

[www.countydurhamfamilies.info](http://www.countydurhamfamilies.info) • [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) • [www.missingpeople.org.uk](http://www.missingpeople.org.uk) • [www.parentchannel.tv](http://www.parentchannel.tv)



*"I was shocked when she ran away. We had been really close until my partner moved in."*



#### WARNING SIGNS

There may be none but does your child seem to be unhappy? Are you sure that they are not missing from school? Has anything happened in the family that you haven't talked to your child about?



#### ACTION

If you think your child might be missing school, talk to your child's school or an Education Welfare Officer. Contact the Police if your child goes missing and you don't know where they have gone.



#### WHAT TO SAY

Make sure that your child knows how important they are to you. When you have to tell your child off, tell them that it's the way they are acting that's the problem - not them. If something has gone wrong in the family, don't let your child think that it's their fault.



#### PREVENTION

Keep an eye out for changes in the way they act. Spend time with them and be interested in them. Do you know who your child's friends are? Be very careful about their access to the Internet and 'chatrooms'.



#### CONTACTS

- Your child's school
- County Durham Education Welfare Service: North Durham 01207 232891 Central Durham 0191 383 9179 East Durham 0191 587 2608 South West 01325 318410
- Missing Persons Helpline 0500 700 700

- Make time for your child to talk to you about their worries - even when you have to tell them off
- You know how important a good education is - let your child know this
- Only keep them off school if they are too ill to attend and not for days out or shopping trips
- Be honest about things that might be happening in the family
- Look for early signs that your child might not be happy and talk to their school about these
- Help is out there please don't be too embarrassed or afraid to ask

## Absence from school

### Are they at school?

It is against the law if your child does not go to school regularly and on time. Children who miss school are much more likely to have problems with their learning and getting the job or college place that they want. They are also at much greater risk of falling behind in their school work and of getting into trouble in and out of 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.

Children who miss school regularly often do this because they are worried about something. They may be being bullied or finding some lessons too

hard. It's important to contact the school quickly and agree together how best to support your child.

Children run away from home for lots of reasons. Usually, if a child does go missing from home, it will be for a very short period and they will often turn up at the home of a friend or relative.

If your child misses school they are more likely to come across situations where there are drugs or alcohol and are more exposed to possible sexual abuse.

When children run away, they are trying to tell us that they are unhappy or trying to find out just how much we do care about them. If your child goes missing and you don't know where they have gone, contact the Police.



*"I thought it was just a teenage thing - he started to come home late and a row always started."*



#### WARNING SIGNS

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



#### ACTION

Talk to your child if you are worried. In an emergency call an ambulance immediately. If your child is not in immediate danger talk with them about their drug use at another time.



#### WHAT TO SAY

Use every opportunity to discuss alcohol and drug use, for example, when they are mentioned on a TV programme. You can give accurate information regarding the risks of drug use at an early age.



#### PREVENTION

Ensure that you are informed about drug use and the effects of different types of drugs. There are many helpful guides available from the helplines listed.



#### CONTACTS

- 4Real County Durham Young People's Drug and Alcohol Service 01325 375 703
- County Durham Families Information Service 0800 917 2917
- Liberty from Addiction 0191 387 1111
- Drinkline 0800 917 8282
- FRANK 0800 77 66 00

#### WEBLINKS

[www.4realcountydurham.co.uk](http://www.4realcountydurham.co.uk) •  
[www.countydurhamfamilies.info](http://www.countydurhamfamilies.info) • [www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com) •  
[www.al-anonuk.org.uk](http://www.al-anonuk.org.uk) • [www.adfam.org.uk](http://www.adfam.org.uk) •  
[www.parentchannel.tv](http://www.parentchannel.tv)

- Make sure you know about drugs and their possible effects
- Prevention is better than cure
- Talk to your children about drugs from a young age

## Drug, alcohol & substance misuse

### How would I know?

Signs to look out for can include anxiousness, complaining of sickness, lack of energy, depression, aggression, new friends, change in behaviour. But don't panic - mood swings, lethargy, bursts of energy etc. are normal parts of adolescence and may not indicate anything more.

### Why do young people use drugs?

Because they are curious about them; they want to break the rules, to relax if they are feeling very stressed, to escape reality, to cope with difficult situations or feelings, because their friends do it.

If you find out that your child has or may have taken drugs, it can be worrying. This can be due to your lack of knowledge about drugs and not feeling confident about talking about them. That is why it is vitally important that children are aware of the potential risks of using drugs, alcohol and volatile substances (e.g. solvents).

### It is important to discuss drug misuse early

It is vitally important that your child is aware of and given accurate information about the potential risks of using drugs and volatile substances (e.g. solvents like glue or lighter fuel). It does not guarantee non-use but will increase the chance of an informed choice. Tell them it's okay to say 'no'. If you are worried about your child or young person's drug or alcohol use, contact 4Real, County Durham Young People's Drug and Alcohol Service for additional information, support and advice.

### Drug and alcohol misuse by parents

Drug and alcohol misuse by adults in a household can seriously affect the care and well-being of children. If you are concerned contact one of the helplines listed and see section on parental substance misuse for further advice and information.



*"I didn't think my drinking was a problem. I never realised how it was affecting the children."*



#### WARNING SIGNS

Your use of alcohol or drugs might result in changes to your child's behaviour. They may change their appearance or stop seeing friends. Children may become withdrawn and 'disappear' in order not to draw attention to their family.



#### ACTION

Think about your actions - what does your use of alcohol or drugs teach your children? Are you sure that your children are not aware of what you do? If you think your use of substances is affecting your children, talk to someone.



#### WHAT TO SAY

Your child may be reluctant to talk to you or be fearful of what your reaction may be. Encourage them to talk to someone who can help them - there is support available to them.



#### PREVENTION

Be conscious about your use of alcohol or drugs. If you think they may be causing problems for you or your child get more information and seek help for yourself and your child. Don't smoke around your children and seek help to give up.



#### CONTACTS

- Your GP
- County Durham Community Alcohol Service 0191 375 6620
- County Durham Drugs and Alcohol Action Team 0191 333 3251
- FRANK 0800 77 66 00
- Drinkline 0800 917 8282

#### WEBLINKS

[www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com) • [www.turning-point.co.uk](http://www.turning-point.co.uk) • [www.youngcarers.net](http://www.youngcarers.net) • [www.drinkaware.co.uk](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk) • [www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk) • <http://units.nhs.uk> • <http://smokefree.nhs.uk>

- There are strong links between parental drinking or drug use and the emotional development and well-being of a child or young person
- Parental drug or alcohol use is linked to problems including damage to relationships, impacts on family finances and the ability to provide a safe and stable environment for children
- Drug or alcohol use does not automatically lead to harm but it does lead to an increased risk of harm

## Parental substance misuse

### Your behaviour counts

Drinking, drug use or smoking might just be something you do when the kids are not around, but it can begin to take over. Think about what your behaviour says to children. They learn from what they see and will think that alcohol or drugs are a solution to problems. No matter how careful you think you are, children and young people are often very aware of their parents' behaviour. Alcohol and drugs can then have serious effects on them as they grow up.

On family outings e.g. meals out, adults might occasionally consider not drinking alcohol, thereby normalising social occasions without drink.

Children may be reluctant to talk to adults because of the stigma around alcohol or drugs or fear about the consequences. There is support available for children to meet with others in similar circumstances. It is important that children and young people have a routine and the chance to do normal things like homework, and socialise with friends. This is especially true if they have to

take on the role of caring for or being responsible for an adult.

If you think you or some other adult in your household has a problem seek advice and support. Things are beginning to become a problem if your use of alcohol or other drugs is affecting the following:

- Relationships - has someone spoken to you about their concerns for you?
- Your work - have you been late, missed work or performed poorly as a result of substance use?
- Your health - are you having difficulty sleeping, feeling unwell or needing to use something to make you feel better?
- You have come into conflict with the law - have you been drinking and driving, or arrested for possessing drugs?

All of these things will affect your ability to look after your children and are all signs that you should seek help. Don't be afraid it will mean losing your children, every effort will be made to help and support you and your family get through this.



*“At first I thought she was just being a moody teenager, but as the time went on I realised something was wrong.”*



#### WARNING SIGNS

Bullying, death of someone close to them, family breakup, trouble at home, trouble at school, friendships going wrong, persistent sadness, loss of interests, low mood, fatigue or low energy and poor concentration.



#### 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. If you are worried talk to your GP.



#### WHAT TO SAY

Listen to and talk to your child. 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.



#### PREVENTION

Help and encourage them to get their lives together. Depression can't just be switched off - it takes time, understanding and support to overcome it.



#### CONTACTS

- Your GP
- School Nurse
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) - see page 47 for details
- Advisory and Specialist Teaching Service 01740 656998
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222
- YoungMinds Parents Helpline 0808 802 5544

#### WEBLINKS

[www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk) • [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk) • [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk) • [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) • [www.parentchannel.tv](http://www.parentchannel.tv)

- Many things can set off mental ill health
- Young people are more vulnerable and sensitive
- Your child needs you to listen
- Get professional help for them

## Depression & coping with stress

### Dealing with the uncertainties of life

The teenage years are a difficult time and young people have a lot to deal with. 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 and what may seem like a small problem or worry to an older person can seem like a much bigger problem to a young person.

#### What are the signs?

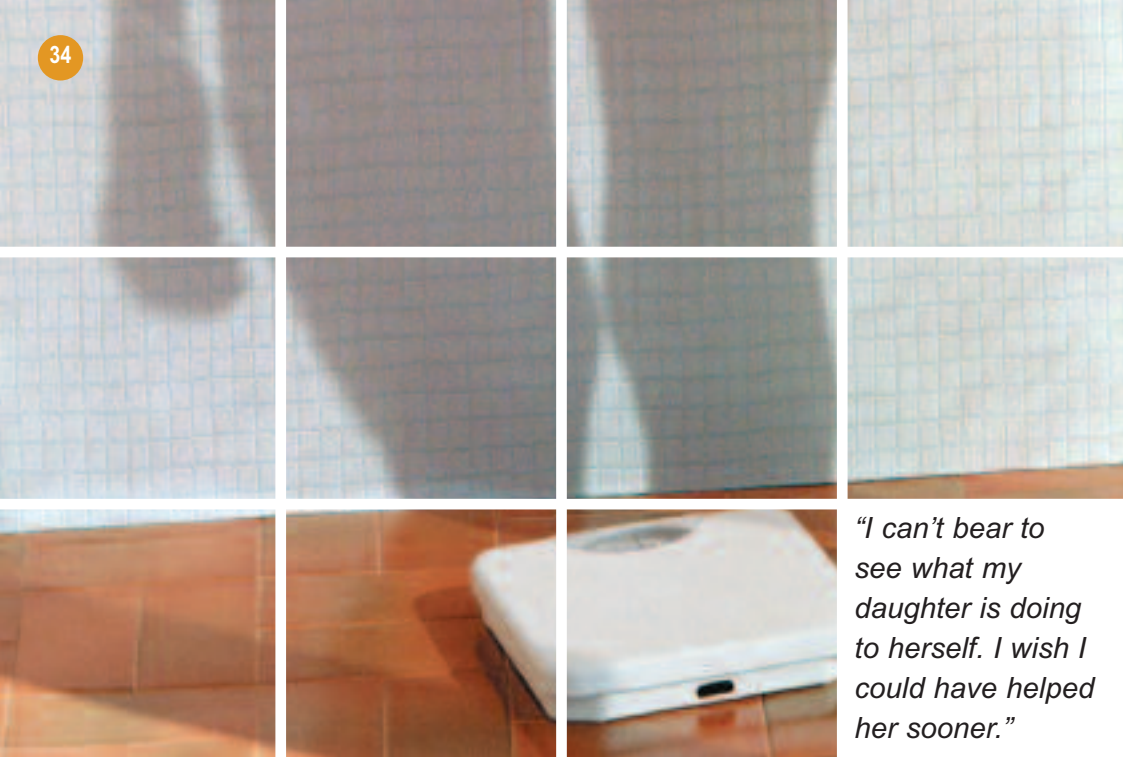
Signs may include persistent sadness or low mood, mood swings, loss of interests, fatigue or low energy, poor concentration, being unable to sleep, eating too much or too little or start taking drugs or drinking. They may talk about death or have suicidal thoughts.

#### Why some young people get depressed

Bullying, death of a parent, relative or someone close to them, family break up, friendships going wrong, moving to a different area, school problems e.g. moving schools, isolation, exam/course work stress, trouble at home, having other illnesses, physical, sexual or emotional abuse, persistent sadness or low mood, loss of interests, fatigue or low energy and poor concentration.

#### How to help

If your child is suffering from depression they need help. Don't ignore their worries and take any talk of suicide seriously. Try to understand what they are going through and get professional help. Talk to your GP if you need to.



*"I can't bear to see what my daughter is doing to herself. I wish I could have helped her sooner."*



#### WARNING SIGNS

See the warning signs for Anorexia and Bulimia on the opposite page.



#### ACTION

You can't make somebody eat, but you can give your child the chance to talk about their problems. Let them know that you are there to help them, no matter what.



#### WHAT TO SAY

Try to get them to talk about any problems that may be setting off the eating disorder. If they feel they can't talk to you, encourage them to talk to a friend, relative, teacher or social worker.



#### PREVENTION

Girls are more likely to develop eating disorders during their teenage years. If your child knows she can talk to you about any worries, she is less likely to use food as a way of dealing with her problems.



#### CONTACTS

- Your GP
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in County Durham: Durham Dales 01388 605811 Derwentside 01207 216400 Durham and Chester-le-Street 0191 382 6810 Easington 0191 554 4507 Sedgefield 01325 743076

#### WEBLINKS

[www.countydurhamfamilies.info](http://www.countydurhamfamilies.info) • [www.b-eat.co.uk](http://www.b-eat.co.uk) • [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk) • [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk) • [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) • [www.parentchannel.tv](http://www.parentchannel.tv)

- Young people are more likely than adults to have eating disorders
- Controlling food is a way of controlling their lives
- Recognise the problems that set off eating disorders
- Get support - your child needs help

## Body image & eating disorders

### The tell-tale signs

Food is an important part of our lives. For some, how much or how little food they eat becomes the most important thing in their lives.

Eating disorders develop when food is used as a way of dealing with personal problems. How much is eaten, when and where can sometimes seem like the only thing they can control in their lives and have a say about. Eating disorders can cause lifelong problems and in rare cases even death.

#### Warning signs

People with Anorexia experience excessive weight loss, avoid food while obsessing about it, pretend to have eaten already, hide body shape, have loss of periods, feel cold, have sleep problems, are moody, stop growing, have thinning hair and have dental problems due to being sick.

People with Bulimia binge-eat, have sore throats and related infections, have dental problems from vomiting, miss periods, disappear after meals, have puffy skin, don't drink enough and use laxatives.

#### Who is affected and why?

Most of those who experience eating disorders are women but there is a rise in the number of men being affected. Triggers may include abuse, bullying, family problems or wanting to look like people in magazines and on TV.

People with an eating disorder are usually the last ones to recognise that they have a problem. If you think your child is suffering from Anorexia or Bulimia, then they need your help. If they don't feel they can talk to you, try to get them to talk to someone else as there is lots of help and support available.



*"I was shocked when I found out what she was doing."*



#### WARNING SIGNS

Look out for injuries such as cuts, burns, scalds or bruises. Your child may try to hide them from you.



#### ACTION

Try to find out if your child is self-harming. Think of reasons why they might be doing this so that you can talk through problems and find out ways of dealing with them.



#### WHAT TO SAY

Try not to judge them, show them you are angry or try to force them to stop. Make time to really listen to your child and try to get them to talk about their problems. Suggest they see their GP who can get them more help if needed.



#### PREVENTION

People, who self-harm feel lonely and unloved. Giving your child time to talk to you, discussing difficulties they have and letting them know you are there for them will help. Your support will make them feel better about themselves.



#### CONTACTS

- School Nurse
- Your GP
- County Durham Families Information Service 0800 917 2917
- ChildLine 0800 1111
- The Samaritans 08457 90 90 90

- Self-harm is a sign of deeper problems
- Understand the reasons why your child self-harms
- Try not to judge them
- Find out how to help your child

## Self-harm

### Understanding and support

Self-harming or hurting yourself can take many forms. This may include cutting, burning or scalding or taking an overdose.

Girls are more likely to self-harm than boys and while the aim is to hurt, it is not usually to kill themselves.

People who self-harm often use it as a way of dealing with problems, such as depression, bullying, abuse or feeling lonely and unloved.

Self-harm is not just about getting attention, as it is most often carried out in private and kept secret from family and friends. What they are doing is a sign that they need help.

### How you can help

If you know that your child is hurting themselves on purpose then they need your understanding and support. Listen to what they are telling you and try not to show you are angry or upset, or try to force them to stop.

If your child finds it difficult to tell you about their feelings try to get them to talk to another family member, friend, teacher, youth worker or social worker.

#### WEBLINKS

[www.countydurhamfamilies.info](http://www.countydurhamfamilies.info) • [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) • [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org) • [www.actionforchildren.org.uk](http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk) • [www.nshn.co.uk](http://www.nshn.co.uk) • [www.thesite.org.uk](http://www.thesite.org.uk) •



#### WARNING SIGNS

Talk to your teenager about the effects of alcohol in lowering sensible decision making and taking risks. Although some young people are starting to have sex at a earlier age the average age for first sexual experience in the UK is 16.7.



#### ACTION

Drink sensibly in their company and try to use triggers such as story lines in soap operas or magazines to instigate conversations about relationships and sex. Point them in the right direction for where they can get help.



#### WHAT TO SAY

Talk to your children about relationships, sex and birth control. Nobody should feel pressurised to begin a sexual relationship. Talk to them about delaying sexual behaviour until they feel ready. If they are having doubts they most likely aren't ready.



#### PREVENTION

Make sure that your child knows about and practices safer sex. Remember it's not just about preventing pregnancy but also to stop them getting Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). Speak to your School Nurse or Parent Support Adviser at your child's school.



#### CONTACTS

- School Nurse
- Parent Support Adviser via your child's school
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222
- Ask Brook 0808 802 1234
- Family Planning Association 0845 122 8690
- NHS Direct 0845 4647

#### WEBLINKS

[www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk) • [www.brook.org.uk](http://www.brook.org.uk) • [www.fpa.org.uk](http://www.fpa.org.uk) • [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk) • [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

- Explain that you do not have to have sex and that saying 'no' is an option
- Your child will learn by example - they will learn your family's way of doing things based on your values, culture, faith and beliefs
- If a young person is sexually active, condoms help protect against Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and pregnancy

## Teenage pregnancy & sexual health

### Preventative parenting

Children and young people want their parents to talk to them about relationships and sex. They may get information from TV, magazines, friends and PSHE Ed (Personal, Social, Health and Economic well-being Education).

Children will learn about relationships and sex whether you want them to or not. We live in a sexualised society and some of the messages children receive may be mixed and confusing. As parents we need to help them make sense of it all.

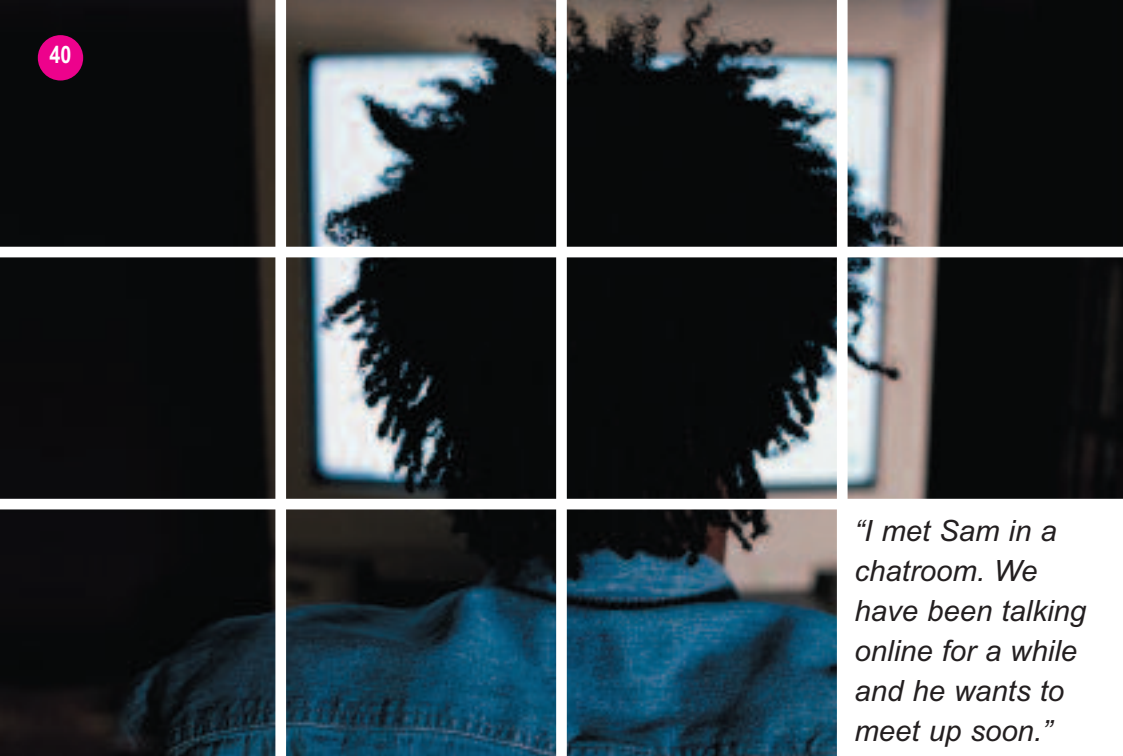
As a parent you have an important job to make sure your child has the right information and is able to cope. You might feel worried that by talking about sex you will encourage your child to start having sex earlier. However research has proved that the opposite is true.

It's important that your child learns about forming good relationships and about the risks and facts before they consider having sex. They should also have information on where to go for advice, support and for testing and treatment.

Remember there are plenty of resources available for both parents and teenagers that can help when talking about sex. Speak to the School Nurse at your child's school or Parent Support Adviser about attending a Speakeasy course - this will help you discuss these issues with your child.

Finding out that your child is going to have a baby can be a big surprise to everyone, if it wasn't planned. They may not be sure what to do so make sure they seek professional help early. It's important they see a GP as soon as possible.

Immunisations are provided through the Childhood Immunisation Programme. There is now a HPV vaccine available that can protect girls from getting this virus which can be sexually transmitted and has been linked to the development of cervical cancer. When your daughter is in year 8 they will be asked if they want to have the vaccine. You should decide together if they should have it.



#### WARNING SIGNS

Keeping it secret when using the Internet, changes in how they act, unusual sexual questions, leaving clues such as emails, problems at school and not telling you where they are going or who they are meeting.



#### ACTION

Set up rules about internet use and stick to them. Learn all you can about the Internet and how to use it yourself so you can understand what your child is viewing and whether it is suitable.



#### WHAT TO SAY

Make sure they know that any personal information, including their real name, should not be passed on to anyone else. Let them know that if they are worried about anything they see or read on the Internet they can ask you about it.



#### PREVENTION

Keep the computer in a family room, with the monitor facing outwards, so you can always see what's on screen. Discuss which websites your child is looking at and take a look for yourself. Make sure your child is aware of the dangers.



#### CONTACTS

- County Durham Families Information Service 0800 917 2917
- Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) 0870 000 3344

#### WEBLINKS

[www.countydurhamfamilies.info](http://www.countydurhamfamilies.info) • [www.ceop.gov.uk](http://www.ceop.gov.uk) • [www.kidsmart.org.uk](http://www.kidsmart.org.uk) • [www.chatdanger.com](http://www.chatdanger.com) • [www.direct.gov.uk/en/parents/index.htm](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/parents/index.htm)

- The Internet can be fun and is useful
- Have family Internet rules to encourage safer use
- Paedophiles can use the Internet to contact children
- It is important that parents understand the Internet

## E-safety

### New technology, old problem

The Internet is a wonderful and quick way for young people to find information, help them study and keep in contact with friends or meet new ones.

Unfortunately, the Internet is also an easy tool for abuse. The chances of your child coming into contact with paedophiles is rare but there is still a chance it could happen.

Here are some ways to help your child stay safe on the Internet:

- Check what's going on by keeping the computer in a family room, rather than in a bedroom.
- Try out a chatroom for yourself so you understand what can happen, and check out the sites your children are visiting to see if they are acceptable.
- Encourage your child to talk openly about what they do on the Internet rather than keep checking up on them in other ways.

- Make it clear to your child that they must never give out personal details or post photos of themselves on the Internet.
- They should always let you know if someone is asking questions or wanting details they don't feel happy about giving.
- Remind your child that strangers on the Internet can be just as dangerous as strangers on the street.
- Speak to your child's school or Parent Support Adviser about E-safety information sessions.



#### WARNING SIGNS

Any abuse or violence between adults may affect children badly. Get support and help as soon as possible.



#### ACTION

Report your concerns about yourself or someone else to the Police or a local support agency. In an emergency always contact the Police. If you are worried that your child maybe affected, talk to them about what is happening.



#### WHAT TO SAY

Children need time to talk about the feelings they have about domestic abuse. Children need to know that it is not their fault and that it is wrong.



#### PREVENTION

An abusive partner must seek help to stop their abusive behaviour. Make sure that you are a good role model for your children.



#### CONTACTS

- Local Domestic Abuse Support Service - see page 47
- Women's Refuge: Durham 0191 386 5951 Peterlee 0191 586 8890 Consett 01207 582797
- National Domestic Violence Helpline 0808 2000 247
- Police 999 in an emergency

#### WEBLINKS

[www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk) • <http://refuge.org.uk> • [www.netmums.com/support](http://www.netmums.com/support) • [www.parentchannel.tv](http://www.parentchannel.tv)

- Domestic abuse teaches children to use violence
- Where there is domestic violence there is often child abuse
- Children will often blame themselves for domestic violence
- Victims of domestic abuse can be both men and women

## Domestic abuse

### How does it affect children?

Living with or witnessing domestic abuse can have a serious impact on children and young people.

Children and young people will often blame themselves for domestic abuse. When abuse and violence occurs in families, alcohol and drugs can make the abuse worse but do not cause it to happen. The use of violence is a choice made by the abuser.

Domestic abuse is a pattern of behaviour that includes emotional, physical, sexual and financial abuse. It happens between adults in a family or two people who are or have been in an intimate relationship with each other.

It is behaviour that is done on purpose to control and intimidate the other person.

Adults often think that children and young people are not affected by abuse or violence, however they have probably heard it or seen a parent upset or injured after an incident.

Domestic abuse can affect children in serious and long-lasting ways including feeling frightened, becoming shy and quiet, bedwetting, difficulty sleeping, nightmares, problems at school, poor concentration, temper tantrums, becoming aggressive and having low self-esteem.

If you are worried about what is going on in your relationship and the affect it may be having on your children there are people you can contact for help and advice, such as the National Domestic Violence Helpline or Local Domestic Abuse Outreach Support Services or Refuges.



*"I have taught my son how to stay safe and to act confidently when he's out."*



#### WARNING SIGNS

Watch out for signs that your child is at risk of being a victim of crime - e.g. if their mobile phone or other valuable possessions are easily seen, they wear lots of jewellery, or if they walk around by themselves, especially at night.



#### ACTION

Make sure your child knows the main ways to stay safe when they're out and about. It's better that they feel confident every day than a nervous wreck. Always make sure you know where your child is.



#### WHAT TO SAY

Talk to your child calmly about the risks and dangers when they're out and about. If you appear very anxious about being a victim of crime, chances are they will too.



#### PREVENTION

Young people are more likely to be mugged than their parents, so it's vital that they know how to stay safe.



#### CONTACTS

- County Durham Youth Offending Service 0191 383 4994
- Community Safety Team 0191 370 8739
- ChildLine 0800 1111
- Victim Supportline 0845 30 30 900
- Police 999 in an emergency

- Rather than stopping your child going out, explain how to stay safe
- Know where your child is, what time they are coming home and who they are with
- Tell your child to keep valuable things out of sight
- Encourage your child to go around with a group of friends
- Acting confidently will mean your teenager is less likely to be attacked

## Keeping safe from crime

### Staying safe

Crime in County Durham is low, however, as a young person in their teens or early 20s they are more likely to be a victim of certain crimes than at any other time. Incidents of people being attacked or mugged in County Durham are rare. Assaults are what young people are most likely to be a victim of - the majority of this is to do with consuming too much alcohol and making themselves vulnerable.

Children and young people face all sorts of pressures and it maybe that your child is feeling the pressure to follow friends who maybe in a gang. A gang is a group who see themselves and are seen by others as a gang, they have a shared identity and are often involved in violence and crime. However it is very rare that young people in County Durham carry weapons.

It might be tempting to protect your teenager by stopping them going out, but this will only make them more anxious about crime. It's better that they know how to stay safe, so they'll feel more confident and then you won't have to worry as much.

Tell your child to:

- If they have to take valuables with them i.e. iPod - they should keep them out of sight.
- Strap their bag across their chest and put one hand on the strap.
- Carry a personal attack alarm to use if they feel in danger.
- Try not to walk alone.
- Act confidently and walk quickly.
- Stick to footpaths and well-lit areas.
- If they think someone's following them, they should cross to the other side of the road and head for a well-lit area where there are lots of people.
- If they are attacked tell them to make some noise but hand over what they're asked for. It's better to run off and be safe than fight and end up hurt.

You may also be worried about your child becoming involved in crime. Talk to them about what they are doing and how you can help them to put an end to it. Youth Offending Teams are there to help you both and can offer you support too.

# Helpful organisations

## County Durham Families Information Service

0800 917 2917

The FIS provides a comprehensive database of information and service providers both locally and nationally based to help all families with children and young people from pre-birth to 19 years.

Email: [fis@durham.gov.uk](mailto:fis@durham.gov.uk)  
[www.countydurhamfamilies.info](http://www.countydurhamfamilies.info)

## Parent Support Adviser (via your child's school)

Parent Support Adviser Coordinators:  
 Durham and Chester-le-Street  
 07827 880925  
 Derwentside  
 07827 880924  
 Easington  
 07827 880921  
 Durham Dales  
 07827 880923  
 Sedgefield  
 07827 880922

## Extended Services Coordinators via your child's school

**School Nurses:**  
 Derwentside  
 01207 523610  
 Durham and Chester-le Street  
 0191 387 6361  
 Easington  
 0191 569 2938  
 Sedgefield  
 01740 626643  
 Durham Dales  
 01388 452296

**Social Care Direct** is a County Durham Council contact centre operating county wide and it is the first point of contact for anyone wishing to avail themselves of Social Care and Health.  
 0845 850 50 10

## Community Alcohol Service

0191 375 6620

## County Durham Drugs and Alcohol Action Team

0191 333 3251

## Substance Treatment Centres within County Durham:

**The Castlebridge Centre**  
 2nd floor,  
 42 Market Place,  
 Bishop Auckland,  
 Co Durham DL14 7PB.  
 01388 609221

**Chester-le-Street Health Centre**  
 1st floor, Newcastle Road,  
 Chester-le-Street,  
 Co Durham DH3 3UR.  
 0191 333 6028

**Claypath Project**  
 Suites 5 and 6, 2nd floor,  
 William Robson House,  
 Claypath,  
 Durham DH1 1SA.  
 0191 386 6555

**The Health Centre**  
 8 Dalton Way,  
 Newton Aycliffe,  
 Co Durham DL5 4PD.  
 01325 300427

**ESMI Peterlee**  
 3rd floor, Lee House,  
 Upper Yoden Way,  
 Peterlee,  
 Co Durham SR8 1BB.  
 0191 587 2194

**ESMI Seaham**  
 1st floor, 5-6 Adelaide Row,  
 Seaham Harbour,  
 Co Durham SR7 7EF.  
 0191 581 6833

**Fraser House**  
 Palmerston Street,  
 Consett,  
 Co Durham DH8 5RT  
 01207 581922

**4Real County Durham Young People's Drug and Alcohol Service**  
 01325 375 703  
[www.4realcountydurham.co.uk](http://www.4realcountydurham.co.uk)

**Family Learning**  
 0191 374 0539  
 01207 230521  
 0191 374 0507  
 01833 690281  
 0191 586 2402  
 Email: [margaret.richards@durham.gov.uk](mailto:margaret.richards@durham.gov.uk)

**Connexions**  
 Head Office 0191 383 1777  
 Consett 0800 783 3481  
 Durham and Chester-le-Street 0800 328 1197  
 Peterlee 0800 783 3570  
 South and West Durham 0800 783 3576  
 Email: [info@connexions-durham.org](mailto:info@connexions-durham.org)

**County Durham Education Welfare Service:**  
 North Durham  
 01207 232891  
 Central Durham  
 0191 383 9179  
 East Durham  
 0191 587 2608  
 South West  
 01325 318410

**County Durham Youth Offending Service**  
 0191 383 4994

## Community Safety Team

0191 370 8739

**For information on activities for young people in County Durham**  
[www.getoutthere.info](http://www.getoutthere.info)

**Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in County Durham (CAMHS):**  
 Durham Dales  
 01388 605811  
 Derwentside  
 01207 216400  
 Durham and Chester-le-Street  
 0191 382 6810  
 Easington  
 0191 554 4507  
 Sedgefield  
 01325 743076

**County Durham Anti-Bullying Service**  
 01325 372812

**Local Domestic Abuse Support Service:**  
 Derwentside  
 01207 232888

**Domestic Abuse Forum:**  
 East Durham  
 0191 5871 555  
 Sedgefield Area  
 01325 317903  
 Wear Valley  
 01388 742110

**Women's Refuge:**  
 Durham  
 0191 386 5951  
 Peterlee  
 0191 586 8890  
 Consett  
 01207 582797  
 Wear Valley's Women's Aid  
 01388 600094  
 Respect  
 0845 122 8609

**Parent Partnership**  
 0191 587 3541

**Access Service**  
 Aims to help reduce social exclusion.  
 0191 586 3522

**Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS)**  
 01740 656998

**Children's Network**  
 0191 383 3785  
 Email: [childrensnetwork@durham.gov.uk](mailto:childrensnetwork@durham.gov.uk)

**Stepping Stones Mediation**  
 0191 383 7440  
 Email: [steppingstones.mediation@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:steppingstones.mediation@yahoo.co.uk)

**County Durham Anti-Bullying Service**  
 Copelaw Education,  
 9 Orchard Lane,  
 Newton Aycliffe,  
 Co Durham DL5 6UT.  
 01325 372812

**For information on services for children and young people with special needs**  
[www.durham.gov.uk](http://www.durham.gov.uk)

**FRANK**  
 0800 77 66 00  
[www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)

**Advisory and Specialist Teaching Service**  
 01740 656998

**Parent Know How**  
 A range of free services developed to provide support and advice to parents. For everyone in a parenting role - mothers, fathers, carers and other adults with parental responsibility. The Parent Know How guide ensures access to expert advice through existing telephone helplines and new online services. Visit [www.dcsf.gov.uk/parentknowhow](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/parentknowhow) or [www.parentchannel.tv](http://www.parentchannel.tv)