

‘Together, we can tackle child abuse’ - new national campaign

The County Council is supporting a national campaign launched on 3 March by the Department for Education to encourage members of the public to report child abuse.

The campaign’s main message is that if you’re worried about a child or think their safety might be at risk, then it is important to tell someone. You don’t have to be absolutely certain about whether a child is being abused; if you have a feeling that something’s not right, talk to your local children’s social care team who can look into it.

Everyone has a role to play in helping to protect children. All children have a right to be safe and should be protected from all forms of abuse and neglect. It is not just up to social services, doctors and the police to spot the signs of abuse and neglect. It is important that we all look out for children and young people within our community who may be experiencing abuse or neglect. Members of the public, and particularly other parents, are in a unique position to spot concerns among children with whom they have contact - which may not be apparent to professionals.

Some of the signs of abuse or neglect include changes in:

- **Appearance** – such as frequent unexplained injuries, consistently poor hygiene, matted hair, unexplained gifts, or a parent regularly collecting children from school when drunk
- **Behaviour** - such as demanding or aggressive behaviour, frequent lateness or absence from school, avoiding their own family, misusing drugs or alcohol, or being constantly tired
- **Communication** – such as sexual or aggressive language, self-harming, becoming secretive and reluctant to share information or being overly obedient

A third of people, who suspect child abuse, do nothing. Some people don’t act on their suspicions because they’re worried about being wrong. It is better to help children as early as possible so that action can be taken to help the child and support the family concerned.

In 2014/15 more than 400,000 children in England were supported because someone noticed they needed help.

If you suspect child abuse or neglect, visit www.gov.uk/reportchildabuse to get the number for your local authority. For Buckinghamshire, call the First Response Team on 0845 460 0001 or email: secure-cypfirstresponse@buckscc.gcsx.gov.uk