

SEE IT... HEAR IT... SHARE YOUR CONCERN



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It may not seem critical to you ... but it may be the final and most important piece in the jigsaw for us!

It's a sad reality that some children in 21st century Britain still experience abuse and harm - often from family members and sometimes from strangers. Public agencies are alert to this risk, and have a responsibility to act to protect children.

But public agencies are often dependent on members of the community who have concerns about the safety of children, and who pass these on. This might only be a small piece of information. In itself, it may only be a relatively minor concern - but when we put it together with the other things that we know, it may be the important piece that confirms the full picture.

Agencies do not jump to conclusions. We carefully assess the facts, and try and talk issues through with children, their parents, and other people who are important in children's lives. On very rare occasions, that means taking immediate action to protect children, or even to remove them into care. But usually, it means working with a family to reduce risk, and help them work through their problems - while ensuring the children are safe.

So, if you **see** something, or if you **hear** something and that raises a **concern** for you - we ask you to '**share your concern**'. There will be many times when we can check out your concern, and can then reassure you that a child is not at risk. But sometimes there will be very good reason for your concern - and a child will be safer because you have shared it.

If you have a concern about the safety of a child:

- Speak to a childcare professional, a social worker, police officer, teacher or health worker.
- Call the local contact number: **01463 703488** or email: **CPAdmin@highland.gov.uk**
- Or call the national contact number: **0800 022 3222**



Alistair Dodds: Chair - Highland Child Protection Committee

CHILD PROTECTION FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS

To book a talk for your community group, contact Pene Rowe on **01463 703421**

FOR HIGHLAND'S CHILDREN

Highland's public agencies are committed to giving every child and young person in Highland the best possible start in life. This vision unites The Highland Council, NHS Highland, Northern Constabulary, the Scottish Children's Reporters Administration, H.M Forces and our other partners, including voluntary sector organisations.

Helping our children to realise their potential is the key to giving them a sense of self-fulfilment and equipping them well for their future. All of the services that support children, families and young people, play a vital part in unlocking the potential of the next generation.

We recognise that the foundation of future Highland prosperity depends on investment in our communities, in our families, and in our children and young people. We aim to ensure that Highland is widely recognised as the best place in Scotland to be young; the best place in Scotland for families - to live, to grow, to play, to be educated, to be fulfilled - and given a helping hand as and when required, to realise their full potential.

Across all public services for children, we strive to ensure that all children are kept safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected and responsible, and included. This means:

SAFE

- Protected from violence and abuse
- Protected from any form of exploitation

HEALTHY

- Adequately nourished
- Encouraged to have fit minds and bodies
- In receipt of appropriate treatment or support

ACTIVE

- Provided with opportunities to play, take part in sport and be creative

NURTURED

- Lovingly parented
- Adequately clothed
- Adequately sheltered in safe, hygienic and adequately heated surroundings

ACHIEVING

- Provided with opportunities to learn and develop, to fulfil their potential

RESPECTED/RESPONSIBLE

- Listened to and treated with dignity and respect
- Free from the burden of adult responsibilities

INCLUDED

- Included in family and community activities
- Encouraged to make appropriate friends
- Free from discriminatory attitudes and practices

TELEPHONE: 0800 022 3222



GETTING IT RIGHT FOR EVERY CHILD

'Getting it Right for Every Child' is an improved approach to identifying children and families in need of additional support. The earlier a child 'in need' of support or 'at risk' of harm is identified, the sooner something can be done to help – with better outcomes as a result.

Children's agencies in Highland are working with the Scottish Executive to introduce new practices in line with 'Getting it Right for Every Child' – leading the way for other authorities to follow. Any assessment of children's needs will use a shared model across professional groups, and will be recorded in a common format. This will be shared with appropriate professionals who work with the child and his or her family - for example the Health Visitor or (when the child is older) a teacher. This assessment will help agencies target their services, giving greater support to families where there is the greatest level of need.

As this initiative rolls out, children's needs will be reviewed as they move from nursery to primary school, and then from primary to secondary school. If a concern is expressed about a child at any other time, or about another child in the family, this will trigger a reassessment and, where needs are identified, a support plan will be put in place.

Early support can prevent children ending up in care. If you have a concern about a child please share it with a childcare professional, social worker, health visitor, teacher or police officer.

MISSING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The Scottish Executive has recognised the need for a national system to track children as they move between schools. This is designed to alert the authorities when a child goes missing from school for more than a few days without explanation.

Highland now has a process that records any child who goes missing. When notification is received from within Highland or from another area, a search is started. Staff will try to contact members of the child's family, close friends and neighbours to find out what may have happened to the child. If they are unable to find the child in Highland they will notify a central Scottish unit and trigger a wider hunt. In the last 2 years, 86 children have been reported missing from Highland – all have been located.

It takes a lot of time and effort to find a missing child. Parents and carers can help avoid this if they take the trouble to inform schools, health and other caring services when they are moving house. They should also make sure that the school or nursery is informed when a child is going to be absent, especially where this is likely to be for more than a couple of days.

Under the new system, the school will try to make contact with you if your child fails to attend without explanation from you. If you do not respond within 3 days (less if the child is considered to be at risk) the police may be informed that the child is missing.

Please help us by working with your child's school, and keeping the school informed about any absences.

NOT IN-FRONT OF THE CHILDREN

Not all abuse is physical. For many children simply living with a parent's behaviour can be emotionally damaging. It is estimated that over 100,000 children in Scotland live with domestic violence and a similar number live with parents who have serious drink or drug problems.

If you know that children are living in such circumstances and feel that they need support please share that information with someone who knows the child or its family for example, a health visitor, teacher, doctor, social worker or police officer.



THE IMPACT OF ABUSE ON CHILDREN

Experiencing abuse, or witnessing the abuse of others, is traumatic for most people – and especially for children. The stress of dealing with the thoughts and feelings that arise leads to many children suffering post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). When this happens at such an early age, it can have a physical impact on the development of the brain, with potential consequences for the child's ongoing development.

Children who have been abused or are subjected to seeing or hearing the abuse of others - for example, violence against their mother - can go on to develop problems bonding with others, especially adults. They may have problems controlling their emotions and behaviour, or difficulty empathising with other people. Their minds can become so full with anxiety and stress, that they have difficulty concentrating and are often misdiagnosed with ADHD.

The physical damage to the brain can result in difficulties processing written and verbal information and poor academic achievement outcomes. Communication difficulties can lead to acting out and aggression as a form of self-expression.

Older children might turn to alcohol or drugs to help them deal with their on-going stress. Many will develop major depression, in some cases leading to self-harm or suicide.

The good news is that the effects of childhood abuse are reversible if they are dealt with early enough.

The message is clear – we need to intervene early, to help survivors of abuse deal with the experiences they have had, and move on.

WWW.PROTECTINGHIGHLANDSCHILDREN.ORG



YOUNG WOMEN SHINE THROUGH

Young Women Shine Through (YWST) is a therapeutic abuse recovery service run by Children 1st. The project works specifically with young women aged 12 - 25 years who are self-harming and/or displaying risk-taking behaviour in response to experiences of abuse in their lives. This includes sexual, emotional, physical and/or domestic abuse.

The project is open to young women living in Inverness, Ross-shire, Nairn and Badenoch areas of Highland. Referrals are accepted from any agency and from young women themselves.

The project works flexibly and interventions are planned in response to individual need. Where intensive programmes of work are required, the project is able to offer residential accommodation on the Black Isle. This also enables a limited service to be offered to young women from the western Highlands.

A variety of therapies is on offer including art, drama, individual counselling and groupwork to help the victims of abuse to express their feelings and make sense of their experiences.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Killen Abuse Recovery Service

Phone: 01381 620757

Email: killen@children1st.org.uk

More information on self harm can be found at:
www.selfharm.org.uk

HOW BUILDING BLOCKS HELPS TO PROTECT CHILDREN

Parenting programmes like NCH 'Building Blocks' and 'The Incredible Years' can assist parents to increase their understanding of what children should be able to do at different ages and to improve their parenting skills so that they can prevent or deal with behaviour problems and help children achieve their full potential.

If you wish to learn more please contact Sally Amor on 01463 704819 or e-mail sally.amor@hnb.scot.nhs.uk

YOUNG CARERS

Young carers are under 18 and care or help to care for an adult or child who has a physical or mental illness, disability or substance misuse problem. Many young carers are **hidden** because they are concerned about interference from outside agencies or the **stigma** that the condition of the cared for person has. They may also be affected in ways which are not always obvious. Young carers are more likely to suffer from **stress and anxiety** and worrying about the cared for person can make it hard to sleep or concentrate on school work.

One of the biggest caring roles that young carers have is providing **emotional support**. This type of responsibility is often about keeping someone company, offering a listening ear, making sure that they are safe, accompanying them to appointments or to the shops and sometimes taking time off school to provide this support.

Other caring roles can include **intimate care** such as help with bathing and dressing; **looking after siblings**; **general caring** like overseeing medication and helping with mobility; **domestic chores** such as cooking, cleaning and shopping and **other tasks** like paying bills, dealing with forms and other paperwork.

Many young carers feel **isolated** because they can't go out as often as they would like or may not be able to have friends home. They often feel different from their peers and do not realise that there are approximately 5000 young carers in Highland.

Young carers who are looking for confidential advice, information or support can use the text messaging support service on 07950 328 264 or email youngcarers@hccf.org.uk



NO MORE SECRETS:

- Are you 16 years of age or older? ● Were you sexually abused in childhood?
- Are you the partner of an adult who was abused as a child?

Whether you are male or female, 'Choose Life – No More Secrets' is there to support you. 'Choose Life – No More Secrets' is an independent, Voluntary organisation that provides services and individual support to survivors of childhood sexual abuse and their families in the Inverness-shire and Ross-shire areas. 'Choose Life – No More Secrets' is supported by the Choose Life Fund – NHS Highland.

The support services are organised by both professional and voluntary staff working in a voluntary and unpaid capacity and using group-work principles in the interest of survivors. Groupwork sessions take place in both Inverness and Dingwall. The groups are run by survivors for survivors. Confidentiality is of great importance and minimal records are kept, for statistical purposes only. Group members will keep in touch with each other during the week by texts and phone calls. In particular, if a group member is vulnerable and worried, we endeavour to support him/her throughout the week if necessary.

Individual support can also be arranged for people in the initial stages of recovery to discuss entry into the groups. Other services include advice and advocacy.

For more information contact Lynda, Babs and Bill any **Tuesday, between 7.00 pm and 10.00 pm** on 07758 728133.

DO YOU RUN PAID OR VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE?

If you do then The Protection of Children (Scotland) Act and other forthcoming legislation applies to you. To find out what this means for your activities contact Claire Collins at Keeping Children Safe for free advice, training and support: email highlandkcs@aol.com or visit our website www.kcs-highland.org.uk

PARENTLINE SCOTLAND - WWW.PARENTLINESCOTLAND.ORG.UK - TEL: 0808 800 2222
CHILDLINE - WWW.CHILDLINE.ORG.UK - TEL: 0800 1111

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SAFE STRONG AND FREE

Every child has the right to grow up safe, strong and free. Preventing sexual assault and exploitation of children is the responsibility of the whole community.

The Safe Strong and Free project has taken account of research findings and the experience of adults who were subjected to childhood bullying and sexual abuse to develop a preventative programme for parents, carers and young children. The aim is to reduce the vulnerability of young children to sexual abuse and assault. The workshops deal with bullying, stranger danger and sexual abuse by an adult the child knows. They are available to all children in their pre-school year and their parents.

For further information contact: **01463 712669**
Or visit: www.ssf-project.org.uk

HOME ALONE

Who will be looking after your children during the holidays? Most parents have to spend time away from their children. It can be difficult and expensive to find someone suitable to look after your child but parents are responsible for making sure that their children are happy and well looked after in their absence. Children 1st can provide advice on choosing a baby-sitter or child-minder.

There is no set age at which it is OK to leave children home alone. It depends on whether the child is mature enough to cope in an emergency and feels happy about being left. Every child is an individual, so how can parents tell if their child is mature enough?

Children 1st have produced advice to parents that can be found on their website:
www.children1st.org.uk/pdfs/home_alone.pdf

More advice can be obtained by phoning **ParentLine** Scotland on **0808 800 2222**.



FOSTER CARERS NEEDED

When children and teenagers cannot live at home safely, most of them stay with foster carers. This can be for a few days if there has been a crisis or for longer. Foster carers and their families are central to help children recover from abuse and neglect. By helping young children get into caring routines, they can reach their developmental milestones. By encouraging primary school children, they can help them learn. Teenagers benefit from patience, tolerance and understanding.

Foster carers are members of Highland's communities, who come forward to make an invaluable contribution to changing children's lives for the better. Foster carers come from all walks of life, some are married, some are single, some have children, others have children who have grown up. What they do have in common is kindness and understanding about how hard it can be for children to leave their families, and do their best to build on the positives that every child has. Carers are given good support and help with the tasks of caring for other people's children. We have a staff team of experienced and committed workers who value and support the work carers and their families do, and have staff who make sure that children's health and education are promoted.

If you are interested in fostering - whether for 3 days in an emergency, 3 weeks to give a hard pressed parent a break, 3 months to help parents make changes or 3 years to give a child security and stability when it is not safe for them to go home.

CONTACT US FOR AN INFORMATION PACK:
Telephone: 01463 703431 - Email: fostering@highland.gov.uk