

© Coles McConnell Ltd 2010



Permission granted to reproduce for personal use only.

Any commercial copying or distribution of this material will constitute an infringement of copyright and is prohibited. All rights reserved.

ENTER



A guide for **mums, dads** and **carers** of young people

from **11 to 19** years old

www.northsomersetpartnership.org.uk



Introduction

This guide is one of a set of three, covering parenting issues from birth up to 19 years. Read the right guide/s for your family.



Parents and carers of birth to 4 years old



Parents and carers of 4 to 11 years old

Welcome to the North Somerset guide for mums, dads and carers of young people from 11 to 19 years old.

We have produced this set of three guides for mums, dads and carers in response to requests for information and advice at different stages of a child's life. Inside, you will find practical advice and information as well as parenting tips. There are also contact details for national and local agencies. Please remember that the handbook is only a guide. Each young person is unique and different young people will develop at different rates.

In addition to the booklet, an online version may be found on the North Somerset Family Information Service's website www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk

Sheila Smith
Director of Children and Young People's Services

Throughout this booklet the term 'parents' has been used to mean mothers, fathers, carers and other adults with responsibility for caring for a child.

Contents

- » [North Somerset Services](#)
- » [All kinds of parents](#)
- » [Bullying](#)
- » [Child protection and safeguarding](#)
- » [Crime and anti-social behaviour](#)
- » [Depression and mental health](#)
- » [Domestic abuse](#)
- » [Drugs and alcohol](#)
- » [Education](#)
- » [Extended services](#)
- » [Family relationships](#)
- » [Fostering](#)
- » [Friendships and peer pressure](#)
- » [Growing up](#)
- » [Health](#)
- » [Internet safety](#)
- » [Keeping safe](#)
- » [Missing](#)
- » [Parenting and family support](#)
- » [Self-harm and eating disorders](#)
- » [Separation, divorce and bereavement](#)
- » [Sexual health](#)
- » [Stress and anxiety](#)
- » [Young carers](#)
- » [Young people with a learning or physical disability](#)
- » [Useful contacts](#)



North Somerset Services

Working together

In North Somerset we want children, young people and families to have the support they need when and where they need it. Practitioners work closely together in multi-agency teams to provide joined up services for children, young people and their families.

Within these teams there are people from a wide range of services who can help with health, education, early years and family issues. Young people can also get support from Connexions and the Youth Service.

Children's Social Services is now called Children's Social Care and social workers are part of these teams. Some of the staff from Social Care also offer more specialist services. There is a multi-agency team for children with complex additional needs (for example, children with learning and/or physical disabilities), one for children who are looked after and adoption and fostering teams.

There are other specialist services for children and young people in North Somerset, for example, the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and the Youth Offending Service and there are also lots of voluntary organisations. We try to work together (and with Adult Services) to provide the best possible service to families in North Somerset.

Assessments

An assessment often needs to be made of a family's needs. The person writing the assessment will ask the family what is going well, what they would like to change and what they think would help them. They will also ask permission to contact any other services involved with the family to get a better, all round view.

Wherever possible, we try and work with the whole family so that we can look at the family's needs at the same time as the individual's and because we know that family support is so important to children and young people.

Family Information Service (FIS)

The Family Information Service provides up-to-date information and guidance over the telephone or through its online directory of local childcare, support groups and organisations that work with children and young people. You can search by postcode and by keyword. All enquiries are treated in confidence.

Family Information Service
01275 888778 or 01934 426300
www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk

North Somerset Partnership

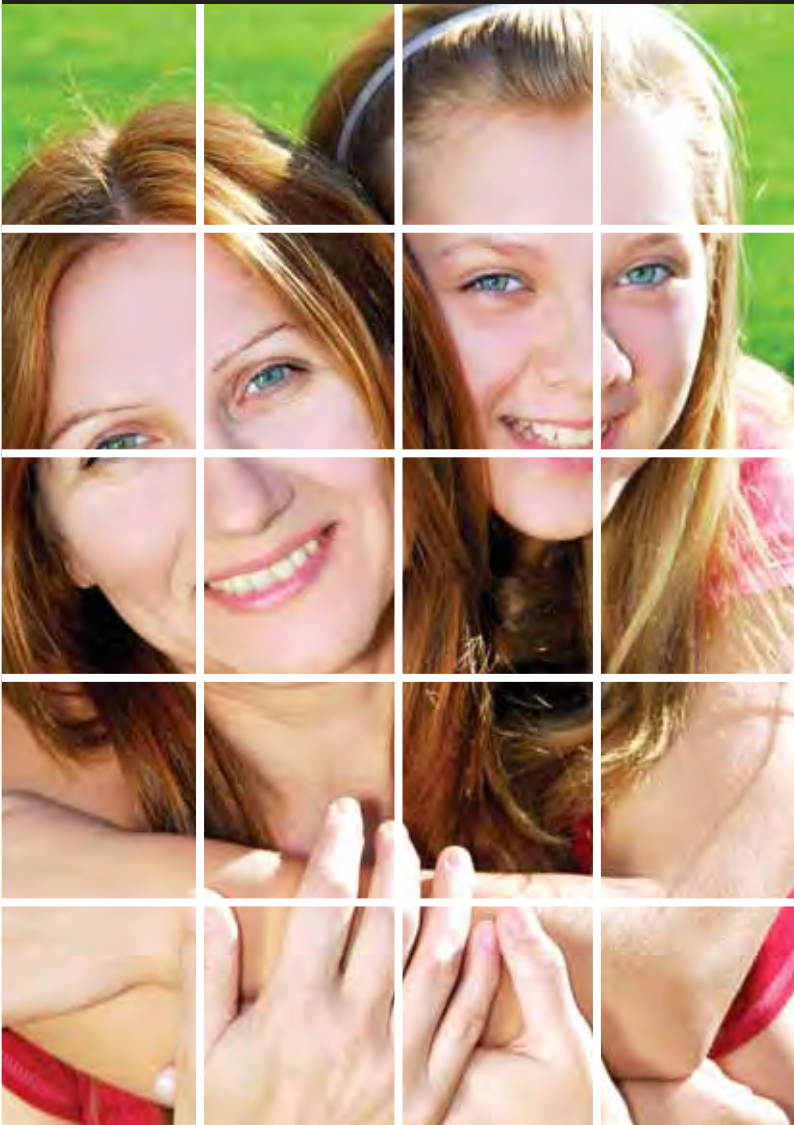
Organisations achieve more by working together in a coordinated way to tackle the most important issues in the community, for example, transport, education, crime, jobs and the environment. The North Somerset Partnership brings together representatives from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors for the benefit of everyone who lives in North Somerset.

For more information, please visit www.northsomersetpartnership.co.uk

North Somerset Council

Local councils, including North Somerset, provide services directly to the public or arrange for other organisations to provide them. Most of these services affect the daily lives of local people in a major way such as health, social care and education. North Somerset Council is part of the North Somerset Partnership. For more information, please visit www.n-somerset.gov.uk





All kinds of parents

What is a family?

“ She was 12 when we split up. We have made a real effort to keep as much contact with her dad as possible. ”

- » **Your family is unique! Who is in your family? How does it work?**
- » **Different people handle change in different ways**
- » **Young people need stability and change can make them feel especially vulnerable**
- » **Family change takes time to get used to**
- » **It's important to understand how your family make-up can affect young people**
- » **Whatever kind of family you have, you're not alone. If you need help, make contact**

There's no such thing as an 'average' family - every family is different.

Going it alone

Growing up with one parent can be a good thing, leading to a close relationship. Encourage them to spend time with their other parent if it's safe and possible. Let them know both of you will be part of their lives and that it's okay to love you both.

Coping with a death in the family

Every child will act differently, some will feel guilty about still living, others will think about who else could 'leave' them. Patience and support of family and friends is key at this time. Agencies such as Cruse and Winston's Wish have a helpline and useful advice on their websites.

Teenage parents

All new parents struggle at times, so don't be embarrassed to ask for help. There is support to continue your education and you can get help with childcare if you are under 19. Ask Connexions about this. Make sure that

you have good, reliable childcare if you leave your child at home.

New families

In a new relationship, everyone will need time to get used to things. Change can make us all feel unsafe, so it's important to make sure everyone feels secure. Take things slowly and carefully and try to see things through each other's eyes.

Grandparents

They can provide a welcome extra pair of helping hands and are an important link to family histories. They have lives of their own so don't ask them to do too much. In family breakdowns they may fear losing touch with much-loved grandchildren.

Private fostering

If you are caring for someone else's child and you are not a close family member this is known as 'private fostering'. You must inform Social Care of this arrangement, which also provides you with the opportunity to get support.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk



WARNING SIGNS

Changes in the way your child is acting. Watch out for feelings of blame or guilt if your relationship with your partner is not working.



ACTION

Talk through changes early - children are quick to pick up 'vibes' and may know if you're keeping something from them. Keep talking about the new things that are happening.



WHAT TO SAY

A stable family life is important to children, however unusual the make-up of your family. Remind them that they are loved, whatever is happening.



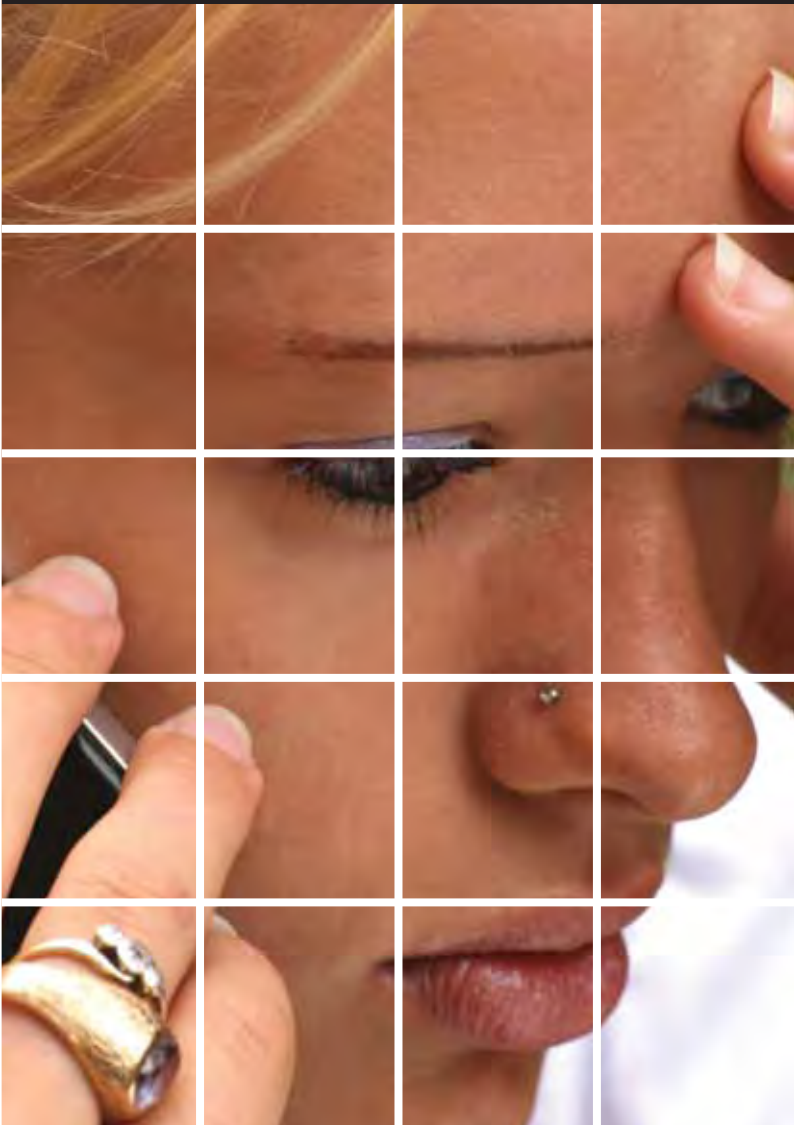
PREVENTION

Please keep your child's school informed of any changes.



CONTACTS

- One Space (lone parents) www.onespace.org.uk
- Winston's Wish (childhood bereavement) 08452 03 04 05 www.winstonswish.org.uk
- www.theparentconnection.org.uk
- Action for Prisoners' Families 0808 808 2003 www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk
- Families Need Fathers 0300 0300 363 www.fnf.org.uk



Bullying

The real story

“ She used to get horrible text messages from her so called friends. I am glad she talked to me - together we were able to put a stop to this. ”

- » **Bullying behaviour is never acceptable**
- » **Bullying can take many forms**
- » **Talk to them if you think they are being bullied**
- » **Speak to the school immediately if you have any concerns**
- » **Young people need ways to protect themselves and seek help**
- » **Encourage them to speak up**



What is bullying?

Bullying is deliberate, is intended to cause hurt or harm, is repeated and involves an imbalance of power. It can be carried out physically, verbally or in cyberspace - that means by text or email. Bullying is a frightening experience and it can isolate and damage self-confidence. Ongoing bullying can have negative long-term effects, leading to depression and even suicidal thoughts and actions.

What you can do if your child is being bullied at school:

- Listen to them and discuss ideas on how to sort the problem out.
- Plan what to do next together.
- Refer to the school Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Get them to write a bullying report listing all the incidents and take it to the school.
- Meet with their school to work out a plan of action.

- If you are unhappy with the meeting or the action taken by the school to support your child follow the school complaints procedure.

Cyberbullying is a method of bullying and can be through text, instant messaging or email messages. It can be making insulting comments about someone on the internet through a website or through social networking sites. It can be through uploading embarrassing videos or photographs of them by people they trusted on the internet or distributing them by mobile phones. This is called 'sexting'.

If bullying is through text messages, instant messaging or email, advise them not to respond to the messages. Save the messages or take a screen print as evidence. There are 'report abuse' facilities on many websites.



WARNING SIGNS

Running away, staying away from school, unusual changes in behaviour, injuries with no feasible explanation, loss or damage of their possessions.



ACTION

If they say they are being bullied - listen carefully and take this seriously. If bullying takes the form of texting or emails save the messages as evidence.



WHAT TO SAY

Tell them to refuse to put up with bullying, walk away, tell someone and avoid fighting. Listen and be there for them. Make sure they know something will be done.



PREVENTION

Talk to them about their school day. Teach them to respect others and to be kind. Teach them that prejudice and bullying is unacceptable.



CONTACTS

- www.beatbullying.org
- www.cybermentors.org.uk
- www.nspcc.org.uk
0808 800 5000
- www.bullying.co.uk
- www.bullyfreezone.co.uk
- www.kidscape.org.uk
08451 205 204 (parents anti-bullying helpline)

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk



Child protection and safeguarding

Myths and realities

“ Social work has changed a lot. We work more in partnership with families where there are concerns to make sure they get support before things reach a crisis. ”

- » **Parents are responsible for their children’s safety**
- » **Social Care become involved once a concern is shared**
- » **Young people are best cared for by their own families**
- » **Professionals want to work in partnership with families to reduce the risk of harm**

When harm happens to young people, families also need support. Social workers and other professionals become involved when parents may be unable to protect their child from harm and need some help. In some cases the police Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT) will investigate with social workers to help protect children and young people and decide whether an offence has been committed.

Child abuse can be recognised, prevented and stopped.

A young person cannot always clearly tell you what has happened. A careful assessment is needed and what support and protection will best help them. A social worker will ask questions about the family circumstances, consider the frequency and the seriousness of the incident and the possible effects. All of these factors will help to decide what should happen next. Social workers and the police have a duty to investigate concerns of child abuse.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk

Professionals are not solely responsible for protecting children and young people.

Traditionally, social workers have been expected to make sure that children and young people are safe. In order to do this well, they rely on information from parents, family, other professionals and the local community who all play an important part in identifying concerns. This helps to ensure support is offered before the situation becomes far worse.

Removing a child or young person from home is not the main aim of social work enquiries and rarely happens.

Social workers can only remove children and young people from home with a court order, having demonstrated that there is serious and immediate risk. In emergency situations the police have the power to remove a child for 72 hours.



WARNING SIGNS

Social workers will get involved when they believe that physical injury, neglect, sexual or emotional abuse has occurred or is likely to occur.



ACTION

Make sure you know what child abuse is and contact the police or Social Care if you think this is happening. A social worker will meet with you if abuse is reported.



WHAT TO SAY

If you are worried about your own or someone else’s child, seek advice about what practical and emotional support is available.



PREVENTION

It is important they know what to do when they feel unsafe. Do they know who to talk to and how to get to a safe place or person? If you are worried, seek help early.



CONTACTS

- Social Care Referral and Assessment Team
01275 888266
- NSPCC
0808 800 5000
www.nspcc.org.uk
- Parentline Plus
0808 800 2222
www.parentlineplus.org.uk



Crime and anti-social behaviour

How widespread is it?

“ Darren’s dropped all his old mates and started hanging out with an older crowd. Now he’s buying clothes, games and stuff, but he won’t tell me where he’s getting the money from. Should I be worried? ”

- » **The main reasons young people give for offending is boredom and peer group pressure**
- » **A stable and supportive family home and positive parenting help avoid young people getting into trouble**

We all want our children to be successful and stay away from crime. Young people are influenced by the people around them. As they become older, their friends become a much stronger influence but families are still very important.

The Youth Justice System

This is made up of all the institutions and public services that work with young people that offend including the Youth Offending Service, courts, police and the local council.

The Youth Offending Service

This is a multi-agency team, working with young people who have offended or who have been identified as at risk of offending. Because there are representatives from a wide range of services, it can respond to the specific issues which may lead to offending as well as measuring the risk young offenders may pose to others and to themselves. The Youth Offending Service (YOS) can identify suitable programmes to address the needs of the young person with the

intention of preventing further offending. Central to these programmes are the principles of restorative justice which stress the importance of taking responsibility, thinking about and engaging with the victims of crime, and encouraging young people to understand and make up for some of the harm they have caused.

Supporting parents

Support and guidance for parents and carers are available through individual and group programmes. Most of this involvement is voluntary although courts may order parents to attend a programme if they think this may help a young person stop offending. Parenting courses can provide parents with an opportunity to meet others in a similar situation and learn new skills in dealing with their child’s behaviour such as setting boundaries and improving communication. It is recognised that, even when young people are older, parents play a crucial role in their lives. There is also support available to the whole family if a parent is in prison.



WARNING SIGNS

They may come under the influence of a negative group of friends, stay out late, have new clothes or other unexplained items appear, they may use drugs or alcohol.



ACTION

Raise your concerns. Seek help and advice from the Youth Offending Service. Don't ignore the problem. Spending more time with them can help.



WHAT TO SAY

Try to stay calm, we all break the rules from time to time, some more than others. Be consistent in what you say and do. If you do impose a rule stick to it.



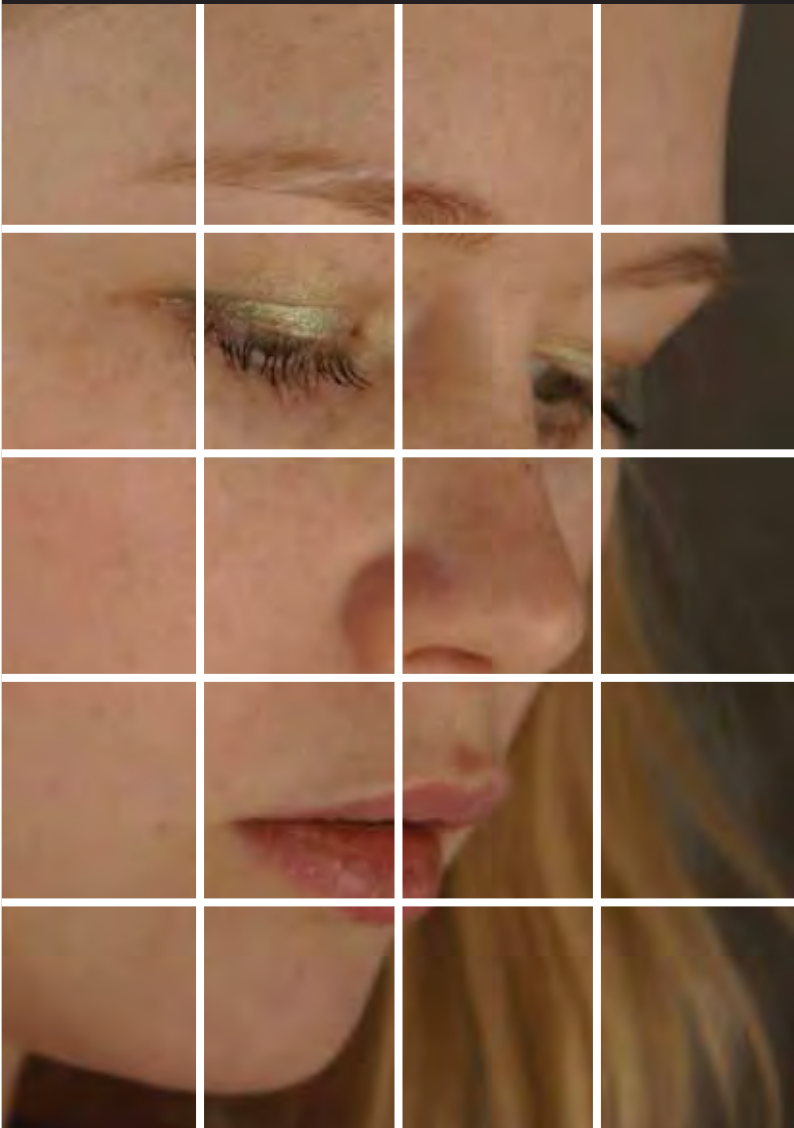
PREVENTION

Take an active interest. Get to know who their friends are and how they are doing at school. If you suspect something is wrong do something sooner rather than later.



CONTACTS

- Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk
- Youth Offending Service (YOS) 01275 888360
- Action for Prisoners' Families 0808 808 2003 www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk



Depression and mental health

Dealing with the uncertainties of life

“ At first I thought she was just being a moody teenager. But as time went on I realised something was really wrong. She’s getting counselling now - and things are so much better. ”

- » Many things can set off mental ill health
- » Your child needs you to listen
- » Get professional help
- » Depression can’t just be switched off, it takes time and understanding to overcome

While every young person feels highs and lows, for some it can turn into depression. Young people are more vulnerable and sensitive to what is happening to them and less experienced at dealing with problems and anxieties.

Depression can be started by a number of things, which include: parents splitting up, feeling ignored and unloved, not being listened to, losing friends, changing school or moving home, worries about their looks, sexuality, health, exams or abuse.

What seem like small problems to you can seem like much bigger problems to a young person.

What are the signs?

Depression is more than just a phase. Signs may include being unable to sleep, eating too much or too little, mood swings, staying in their bedroom all day, or giving up interests and hobbies. Crying, avoiding friends and family, finding it hard to do their

schoolwork, or not caring about what they look like are other things to look out for. They may talk about death or have suicidal thoughts.

To escape these feelings, young people may start taking drugs or drinking, staying away from school, becoming violent or involved in crime.

How to help

Don’t ignore their worries and take any talk of suicide seriously. Listen and talk, try to understand what they are going through and get professional help if you need to. If they can’t talk to you, there are a number of helplines and websites. If you are concerned, help them to see their doctor or school nurse. Whether you go with them or they go alone they will need your support.

1 in 4 adults suffer from mental illness at some time in their lives. Please seek help if you are feeling depressed. The signs are similar to those shown by teenagers.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk



WARNING SIGNS

Not sleeping, mood swings, eating problems, not caring about their appearance, dropping friends and hobbies, staying in their room, crying, not doing so well at school and being self-critical.



ACTION

Talk to them and find out how you can help. Be patient and understanding. Talk to your doctor. Speak to the school about changes in behaviour.



WHAT TO SAY

Listen to and talk to your teenager. Depression can’t just be switched off, it takes time and understanding to overcome. Contact organisations they can talk to.



PREVENTION

Chat about their interests, friends and schoolwork so they feel you understand the different parts of their lives.



CONTACTS

- Your child’s doctor and school
- www.papyrus-uk.org (if you are worried a young person might be at risk of suicide)
- www.youngminds.org.uk 0808 802 5544 (parents helpline)
- www.rcpsych.ac.uk
- www.getconnected.org.uk
- www.sane.org.uk



Domestic abuse

It could be happening at home

“ She made you feel like you weren't the only person going through it and just knowing she was there whenever I needed her and that she wanted to help gave me more confidence. ”

- **Domestic abuse can affect young people in serious and long-lasting ways**
- **Domestic abuse may be a one off, but it may get worse and more frequent over time**
- **Children often blame themselves for domestic abuse**

Domestic abuse includes threatening behaviour, violence, psychological, sexual, financial or emotional abuse.

Young people who see or hear abuse can be affected in many different ways. They do hear, they do see, and they are aware of violence in the family. Young people will learn how to act from what they see their parents do. Domestic abuse teaches children negative things about relationships and how to deal with people.

For example:

- It can teach them that violence is the way to sort out arguments.
- They learn how to keep secrets.
- They often do not trust those close to them and think that they are to blame, especially if it happens after an argument about them.

Many people find it difficult to understand why people stay in or return to violent situations. Fear, love, the risk of homelessness and financial issues can make it very difficult for partners with children to leave and some may just not want to.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk

Short-term effects

Children are affected in many ways by domestic abuse, even after a short time. These effects can include feeling frightened, becoming shy and quiet, running away, behaving badly, issues with school, poor concentration and emotional upset. Young people can show aggression towards parents too. This could be physical or in the form of blackmail or verbal abuse.

Long-term effects

The longer children are around domestic abuse, the worse the effects on them are. These can include a lack of respect for the non-violent parent, loss of self-confidence, which will affect how they form relationships in the future, being over-protective of the non-abusing parent, loss of childhood, problems at school and running away.

Talk to your doctor or a local service: NADA 01934 627841 or Gemini 0870 066 4233 or the police Domestic Abuse Investigation Team (DAIT) 0845 456 7000 (or 999 in an emergency).



WARNING SIGNS

Any abuse between adults will negatively affect children. Seek support and help as soon as possible. The longer it lasts the more damaging domestic abuse is.



ACTION

Report your concerns about yourself or someone else to the police. If you are worried that your child might be affected, talk to them about what is happening.



WHAT TO SAY

Young people need time to talk about the feelings they have about violence. They need to know that it is not their fault and that this is not the way it should be.



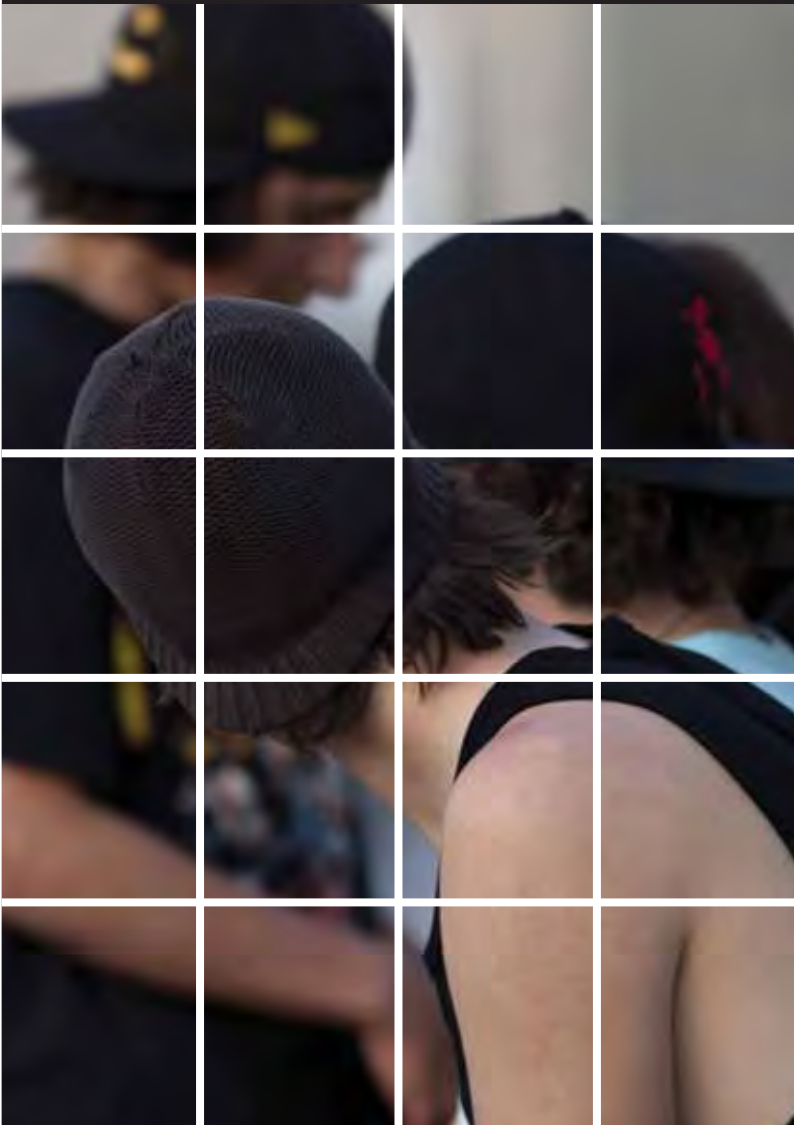
PREVENTION

Make sure that you are a good role model for your children so that they learn better ways of dealing with conflict.



CONTACTS

- www.thehideout.org.uk (for young people)
- www.womensaid.org.uk 0808 2000 247
- www.mankind.org.uk 01823 334244
- Victim Support and Domestic Abuse FreeFone Service (DAFFS) 0845 45 66 099 or 0800 6949 999 www.victimsupport.org.uk



Drugs and alcohol

How would I know?

“ At first I thought it was just a teenage thing - Paul just wanted to be out all the time. He started to come home late, he was losing weight and looked terrible. He is getting some help now and things are much better. ”

- » **Make sure you know about drugs and their possible effects**
- » **Prevention is better than cure**
- » **Parents who take drugs can seriously increase the chances of their children taking drugs**
- » **Peer pressure from their friends can make them feel they should drink alcohol or try drugs**

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).

Talk to your child

Some parents worry that talking about drugs and alcohol can encourage their use. Avoiding talking about drugs will not protect them. Make sure you discuss the risks. Accurate information and support will help them decide what to do. It does not guarantee non-use but will increase the chance of an informed choice.

How would I know?

There are many tell-tale signs, like being tense or drowsy, low concentration, lack of energy, depression, skin problems or aggression. There may be a change in relationships with family and

friends, a change in behaviour, a change in performance at school, increasing requests for money and personal possessions 'disappearing'.

Why do young people use drugs?

Because they are curious about them, they want to break the rules, to relax if they are feeling stressed, to cope with difficult situations or feelings and because their friends do it. At this time in their lives there are so many changes going on physically and emotionally as well as added pressure through school, homework and exams. Young people can also turn to drugs and alcohol if they are unhappy, being abused or bullied.

Drug and alcohol misuse by parents

Drug and alcohol misuse by the adults in a household can seriously affect the care and well-being of children. It can encourage young people to take it up themselves and feel it is a normal and acceptable way to solve problems. If you are concerned contact one of the helplines listed.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk



WARNING SIGNS

In general terms if your child changes in appearance, the way they act or if they have extra money that you did not know about, consider the possibility of drug and alcohol misuse.



ACTION

Keep an eye on and talk to your child if you are worried. In an emergency contact an ambulance. Try to talk with them about their drug use. Ask for help if you have a problem.



WHAT TO SAY

Discuss drug use as much as you can, for example, when drugs are mentioned on TV. You can give information regarding the risks of drug use at an early age.



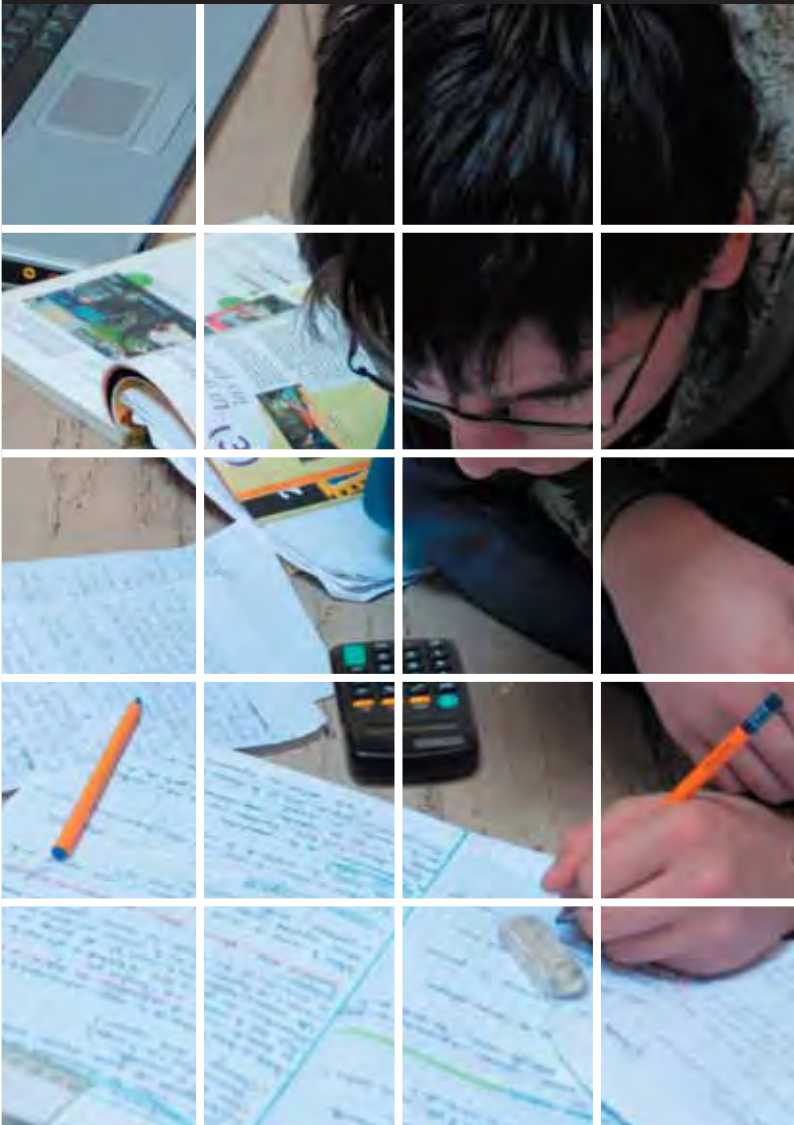
PREVENTION

Make sure that you are informed about drug use and what can happen. Contact one of the helplines listed below.



CONTACTS

- Specialist Drug and Alcohol Service 01934 412273
- COSMIC (Children of Substance Misusing Carers) 01934 426444
- Substance Advice Service for young people 01934 888360 sas@n-somerset.gov.uk
- www.talktofrank.com 0800 77 66 00



Education

Supporting your child's learning

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

- » **Getting a good education makes it easier for your child to find a job they enjoy**
- » **Show an active 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**
- » **Work in partnership with your child's school to overcome any problems**

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 engaged in their education 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 involved again in their education. If they still misbehave 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 sessions for parents at key educational transition points such as moving up to secondary school and from Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9) to Key Stage 4 (Years 10-11). Schools want to work in partnership with parents to make their

child's experience at school as productive as possible. They provide information and advice on a wide range of school and other issues. It's important to keep in touch with the school, attending parents' evenings and letting the school know of any changes in your circumstances which may affect your child.

Each secondary school in North Somerset has a Parent Support Adviser (PSA) who is a useful first point of contact. They can tell you about other agencies.

Supportive Parents provides information and support to parents of children with Special Educational Needs.

Connexions provide information, advice, guidance and support from the age of 13-19 (up to 25 for some young people) on a whole range of issues such as careers, educational choices and different learning routes, progression opportunities, personal development activities etc.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk



WARNING SIGNS

If your child is not attending school regularly or getting into trouble at school.



ACTION

Work in partnership with the school. Talk to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) or PSA if attendance is an issue.



WHAT TO SAY

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



PREVENTION

Children and young people with parents who take an interest in their education and future career tend to stay longer in education and do better.



CONTACTS

- PSA or EWO via your child's school
- www.supportiveparents.org.uk 0117 989 7725
- www.connexionswest.org.uk 01934 644443
- www.education.gov.uk
- Special Educational Needs (SEN) Team 01275 888294
- Community and Adult Learning 01275 888461



Extended services

Activities and support

“ For building confidence, growing friendships and learning new skills, what happens outside the classroom is as important as what happens during the school day. ”

- » **Putting schools at the heart of the community**
- » **A range of services in and around school providing activities and support for pupils and families, often beyond the school day**
- » **Extended services may include before and after school clubs, arts and sports activities, family learning groups and adult education**
- » **Lots of services are available for families as well as young people**

Extended Services is about making it easy for families to access the advice, activities and support they need. Extended services are offered outside the normal school hours and may be delivered by the school or by the local community.

Activities for children, young people and families

These may include homework clubs and study support, sport, music tuition, dance and drama, arts and crafts, special interest clubs such as chess and first aid courses. Also family visits to museums and galleries, volunteering, business and enterprise activities.

Activities for the community

If schools have the facilities they may open their doors to offer clubs and classes for the community including ICT, sports, arts and adult learning courses.

Support for parents

There is a Parent Support Adviser (PSA) in each of North Somerset's secondary schools. PSAs can support you when your child moves to secondary school. They help organise adult and family learning, deliver parenting courses and can signpost you to other services. If you have any concerns about your child or you would like to take part in adult or family learning, contact your PSA.

Each group of schools also has an extended services Partnership Manager who can be contacted through your child's school or the Family Information Service. Partnership Managers can tell you about the activities that are available outside school hours.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk



WARNING SIGNS

If you think that your child is bored or lacking in self-confidence or you worry about what they are up to while you are at work, contact your school to see what is on offer.



ACTION

Get involved with activities in your school and community. If there is something you would like to see talk to your local school.



WHAT TO SAY

Ask what services are available. Schools have changed a lot and are there for you and your community.



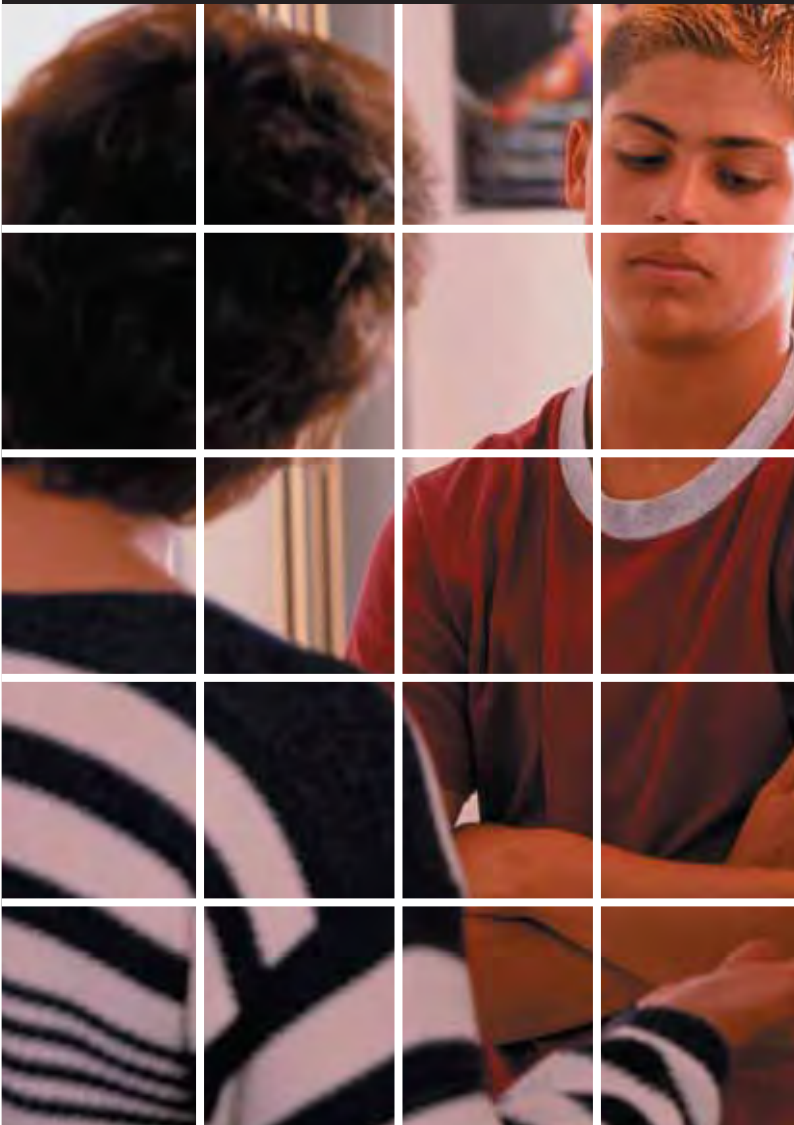
PREVENTION

Find out what's on offer in your area and get involved. There are many benefits for your whole family.



CONTACTS

- Parent Support Adviser at your child's school
- Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk
- Partnership Manager at your child's school



Family relationships

Your teenager is just growing up

“ I was used to him telling me everything that was going on in his life. I felt he didn't need me anymore. ”

- » Listen as well as talk
- » Communication is the key to good family relationships
- » Your teenager is developing their own identity
- » Young people value being listened to, having their opinions asked and their thoughts and feelings recognised

Learning to listen and talk to your child can make all the difference to your relationship. The teenage years can be challenging for you both. As well as more schoolwork, they are dealing with peer pressure, hormones, first relationships and sexual feelings. They are also trying to work out their own identity and developing their own opinions and views.

Privacy and space to think through their thoughts and feelings is important. They may find it hard to say what they are thinking. This may be difficult for you when you have been used to sitting and chatting and walking into their room whenever you feel like it.

How to listen

Let them have their own say without interruption. Give them time to express themselves. Their way of seeing things and their views may be different from yours and that's okay. Young people value being listened to, having their opinions asked and their thoughts and feelings recognised.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk

How to talk

Choose your time carefully when there are things you need to discuss. Be flexible and offer options. Tell them they can talk to you about anything. 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. Lots of parents say it can be easier to have a conversation with their teenager in the car or while you are doing something together, side by side rather than face to face.

How to start letting go:

- In order to start letting go, you need to be able to trust them.
- Giving them responsibilities is a way to build up trust.
- Show respect for their decisions, even if you don't agree.
- Set ground rules.
- Make sure that they have their mobile phone with them and call if they are going to be late.
- Your teenager is more likely to turn to you if they feel they can trust you.



WARNING SIGNS

They refuse to listen to you and never want to share what is going on in their life. Being secretive.



ACTION

Try to understand what they are going through. Accept that other things are more important than you right now! Let them know you are there for them. Ground rules remind you both what is acceptable.



WHAT TO SAY

Learn to listen as well as talk. Show that you are interested in what they have to say, even though you don't have to agree with it. Value their opinions.



PREVENTION

Talk about what's going on in their life without asking too many personal questions. Let them know you are there for them, without judgement and they will be more likely to turn to you when they need to.



CONTACTS

- www.parentlineplus.org.uk
0808 800 2222
- www.gotateenager.org.uk



Fostering

Could you make a difference?

“ All children and young people need someone to care and guide them. As a foster parent you can make a real difference to a child or young person’s life. ”

- » **Foster carers and adopters come from all walks of life**
- » **There are many different ways that you can make a difference to a child or young person’s life**
- » **You’ll receive excellent support and training**

We need more foster carers to help children and young people who are unable to live with their own families.

Children and young people need to be looked after for all sorts of reasons. Many have been through difficult and distressing experiences and will need your time and support.

Foster carers come from all walks of life. We need ordinary people who can play an extraordinary role. You need to enjoy being with children or young people, to be patient with plenty of energy and to have a sense of humour.

You don’t need to be married, have children or any direct previous experience but you will need room in your home for a child or young person. We need carers who reflect a child or young person’s ethnicity and cultural heritage. We try to keep brothers and sisters together.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk

Types of foster care

Some children or young people need to stay for a few days, others a few months and some need to be with a family until they become adults. Foster carers can also offer breaks to children and young people with disabilities and their families.

What support is available?

The Fostering Team can give help and support. You will have your own social worker and be given training. Foster carers receive an age-related allowance and some are paid a fee.

Adoption

If you would like more information on adoption, please contact our Adoption Team.



WARNING SIGNS

Research tells us that children and young people who are unable to live with their own families are generally happier and do better at school, if they are in family-type placements, rather than children’s homes. That’s why we need more foster carers.



ACTION

Contact our Fostering Team and find out more about how you can make a difference to the lives of children and young people.



Discuss fostering and adoption with your friends and family. Could you make a difference?

WHAT TO SAY



PREVENTION

Prevent children and young people from falling behind, by providing a safe, supportive and nurturing home environment.



CONTACTS

- 01275 888999
fostering@n-somerset.gov.uk
www.n-somerset.gov.uk/fostering
- adoption@n-somerset.gov.uk
www.n-somerset.gov.uk/adoption
- British Association for Adoption and Fostering
www.baaf.org.uk



Friendships and peer pressure

Coping with demands

“ Every time my daughter’s best friend has her hair cut, she gets hers cut in exactly the same way. Why doesn’t she try to be more individual? ”

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

Friendship groups become more important as your child grows older. Fitting in, sharing the same likes and dislikes, can give a sense of belonging and identity. They will probably take a greater interest in how they look, what they wear, what music they listen to and relationships. They may experiment with different ways of behaving.

Even though they may appear to be growing away from you as they become more independent, they still need your love and reassurance as well as boundaries. They may appear confident but be full of doubts which they can find it difficult to talk about.

Peer groups

Groups of young people of the same age often form in school or at after-school clubs. Belonging to a group is very important. Young people may want to be part of a group because their friends are, even if they don’t really like what everyone else does. As they get into their later teens, they will

probably make up their own minds rather than going along with the crowd.

Putting on the pressure

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. This might mean wearing certain clothes or shopping in the ‘right’ places. On a more serious level, this might mean being absent from school, trying alcohol or drugs, shoplifting or going further with a boyfriend or girlfriend than they feel ready to.

Worried about friends

You may feel worried about the effect certain friends are having on your teenager. They may be worried about what they are doing and do not know how to talk to you about it. Support your teenager by letting them know they can talk to you and that you will help. You can show your teenager how to trust their own feelings and values, building up an emotional strength that will help them as they get older.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk



WARNING SIGNS

Unusual behaviour or being unusually quiet may be signs that your teenager needs your help and may be getting into trouble.



ACTION

If your teenager is having any problems at school or with friends, ask if you can help. If the problem carries on, talk to their school.



WHAT TO SAY

Talk to your teenager and try not to judge them. Problems or friendship break-ups that may seem small to you can be very important to them.



PREVENTION

Your support is still important. To help stop them from keeping problems in, let them know you are always there for them.



CONTACTS

- www.parentlineplus.org.uk 0808 800 2222
- www.bbc.co.uk/parenting
- www.gotateenager.org.uk
- www.getconnected.org.uk (free confidential help for under 25s)



Growing up

Changing times

“ My daughter is a typical teenager. She spends most of her time with her friends and is very untidy! ”

- » **Listening is the key to a good relationship**
- » **Growing up can be frightening for young people so make sure they have the information they need**
- » **Puberty generally happens earlier for girls than boys. It can happen gradually or over a short space of time**
- » **Hormones set off physical changes, mood swings and changes in feelings**
- » **Pressure from other friends to act in a certain way can be powerful**

As your child begins to grow up and develop into a young adult you have an important role in helping them understand the changes that they will be going through. Growing up can be a challenging time for all and a bit of love and understanding goes a long way. Let them know you are there to support them. Sometimes it can come as a bit of a shock when your child starts to develop and change into a young adult and it can be difficult to 'let go'. Of course, you are still their parent and they still need you.

Boys' bodies can start to change from around the age of ten with sexual development soon after. Your son will be developing into a young man.

Puberty in girls can begin from around nine years old. Your daughter will probably be going through puberty and developing into a young woman.

Children need information before they start to experience bodily changes. If they don't have it, they may become anxious about what is happening.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk

They will need your support and trust but they will also need some privacy, respect and encouragement

Discussing matters such as friendships, relationships and love are important. This way, you know the information they receive will be fact and not based on what they have picked up from their friends. Be open-minded and do not judge them, so they feel they can trust you and turn to you when they need help and support.

You might feel that if you discuss sex you'll encourage your children to start having sex but research shows that teenagers from families where parents talk frankly about sex don't start having sex until they're older, and, when they do have sex for the first time, they're more likely to use contraceptives.

You can show them how to trust their own feelings and values, building up an emotional strength that will help them as they get older.



WARNING SIGNS

Signs can include mood swings, arguments, talking back, an 'over-the-top' interest in hygiene or lack of it are all quite normal. As well as coping with emotional changes they will also have to deal with physical changes.



ACTION

Listening and talking to them will help you understand what they are going through.



WHAT TO SAY

Talk things through rather than arguing. If they ask you questions you don't know the answer to find out together. Don't be embarrassed, let them know they can ask you anything.



PREVENTION

The more information your child has the better they will be able to cope with the changes that come with growing up.



CONTACTS

- www.parentlineplus.org.uk 0808 800 2222
- www.need2know.co.uk
- www.gotateenager.org.uk
- No Worries Teenage Health Service 01934 425718
- www.nhs.uk/livewell/sexualhealthtopics
- www.nhs.uk/livewell/puberty
- www.getconnected.org.uk



Health

Looking after their well-being

“ At the weekend we go swimming or out on our bikes. ”

- » **Balance is the key to a healthy lifestyle**
- » **If you eat more calories than your body burns, you will put on weight**
- » **It is easy not to notice weight gain when you see someone every day**
- » **Act now, don't let them smoke and protect them from secondhand smoke**
- » **Try to make sure they get plenty of sleep and exercise**

What they eat

Make sure your family eats a good variety of foods in sensible amounts - balance is the key. Meal times can be a really good time to sit down to eat, enjoy food and socialise together as a family. Setting a good example is one of the best ways of encouraging healthy eating habits.

Exercise

Food is used in our bodies to create energy. If we don't use it we put on weight. Encourage them to be as active as possible. Getting fit need not be expensive and it could be something you could do together. North Somerset has a Young Person's Key giving discounts on leisure activities.

Sleep

We all need a good night sleep to be at our best. Lack of sleep can impact on behaviour and achievement at school or college. Try to agree on a set time for bed, especially on a school night.

Hygiene

During the teenage years hygiene becomes more important. Encourage

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk

them to use deodorant and shower regularly as body odour becomes more of a problem. Leave shower gel and mouthwash in the bathroom for them to use and make sure they visit the dentist regularly.

Smoking

If you smoke it is more likely your child will smoke. If you smoke at home you are exposing them to your secondhand smoke. This is called 'passive smoking'. North Somerset NHS Stop Smoking Service is for anyone who would like free help to stop smoking. You're up to four times more likely to stop with the help of trained advisors at doctors surgeries, pharmacies and drop-in centres. Get help to protect your family from the harmful effects of tobacco smoke by making your home smoke free.

Alcohol

Most young people will want to try alcohol, so try to get them to do this in a controlled environment. Make sure you know where they are and what they are doing.



WARNING
SIGNS

A healthy person should eat a balanced diet, be active, sleep well, have sufficient energy and generally feel that they enjoy life. If this isn't you and your family, some basic improvements could make a difference.



ACTION

Ask your child's school nurse or doctor for diet, exercise and general advice on a healthy lifestyle. Make sure your family eats a healthy balanced diet. Go to the dentist regularly. Give up smoking.



WHAT TO SAY

Remind yourself that you can change your general state of health. Ask your family and friends for support in your decisions to change.



PREVENTION

Too much saturated fat, salt and sugar are bad for the body. Do not smoke.



CONTACTS

- Your doctor or dentist
- North Somerset Stop Smoking Service 01275 546744 www.northsomerset.nhs.uk/publichealth/smoking
- www.n-somerset.gov.uk/Leisure/ypk
- No Worries Teenage Health Service 01934 425718



Internet safety

New technology, old problem

“ My son uses the computer a lot but I have taught him about using the internet safely. If he is worried he knows he can talk to me. ”

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



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

The internet is also an easy tool for abuse. Paedophiles can use chatrooms to become friendly with young people, often by pretending to be the same age. Using the internet too much can lead to an unhealthy lifestyle and can be addictive.

Keep it safe

Keep an eye on what's going on by keeping the computer in a family room, rather than in a bedroom. Learn how to use a computer, access internet sites and try out a chatroom for yourself so you understand what can happen. Check out which sites they are visiting to see if they are acceptable and appropriate. Look for sites that check messages in chatrooms and those which include clear guidelines for use, child-friendly advice, warnings and how to report concerns. On social networking sites make sure the privacy

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk

settings are set to 'private'.

Some young people think it's fun to post sexual images of themselves or others on the internet. What seemed like a good idea at the time can turn into an embarrassing nightmare for them and their family.

Set ground rules:

- Try to limit the amount of time they spend on the internet.
- Discuss the kinds of websites they are visiting.
- Make it clear that they must never give out their 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.

The people they chat to on the internet may not be who they seem. Remind them that strangers on the internet can be just as dangerous as strangers on the street. Young people should never agree to meet anybody they only know through the internet.



WARNING SIGNS

Secretly using the internet. Unusual sexual questions. Leaving clues (such as emails) that they are having chats with others which seem sexual or you are not comfortable with. Not telling you where they are going.



ACTION

Set up and stick to internet use ground rules. Learn all you can about the internet and how to use it so you can understand the possible dangers.



WHAT TO SAY

Discuss the dangers of chatrooms and unsuitable websites. Make sure they know that no personal information or photos should be passed on to anyone else.



PREVENTION

Keep the computer in a family room, or keep an eye on what they are viewing. Discuss which websites they visit and take a look for yourself. Make sure they know the dangers.



CONTACTS

- Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) 0870 000 3344 www.ceop.police.uk



Keeping safe

Are they safe?

“ My daughter is really good at letting me know where she is going, so I don't worry so much when she is out and about. ”

- **Let your teenager know you are there if they need you**
- **Agree on a time for them to get home or when you will collect them**
- **Teach them to trust their instincts - if they feel uncomfortable about a place or person tell them to walk away**
- **Remind them to protect their valuables and keep mobiles and iPods out of sight**
- **Remind them never to walk around alone at night or in isolated places**
- **If they can drive remind them never to drink and drive**

It can be difficult finding the balance between giving your teenager enough freedom to gain confidence and making sure they are safe. It might be tempting to protect them by stopping them going out anywhere, but this won't help. It's better that they know how to stay safe. That way, they'll feel more confident and you won't have to worry as much. It's important you talk.

Out and about with friends

Always agree a time for them to return home or to phone you. Remind them never to go off with someone they don't know, however convincing they seem.

It can be hard to keep track when they are out, but giving them a mobile phone or helping them with top-up payments means they can call you if they are in trouble, and you can at least check that they are okay. Remind them that it is safer to stay together and only to use registered taxis. If they go missing and you don't know where they have gone, contact the police.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk

Victims of crime

Tell them to keep valuable items (i.e. iPods or mobile phones) out of sight, as most things are stolen when they're being used or can be seen. Remind them never to walk around alone at night or in isolated places and to trust their instincts if they feel uncomfortable about a situation.

Road safety

It's easy to get distracted - if they are listening to music or chatting to friends, they may not be paying attention to what they are doing or where they are going.

In the car

Tell them to be sensible. If they drive they have a responsibility to keep passengers, pedestrians and themselves safe. When in the car they must always wear a seatbelt.

Cycling

If they ride a bike on the road, it's vital they always wear a helmet (that meets safety standards) and that they adhere to the rules of the road.



WARNING SIGNS

Watch out for signs that they are at risk such as if they walk around by themselves, especially at night.



ACTION

Make sure they know how to say safe when they're out. Always know where they are and when to expect them home.



WHAT TO SAY

Ask them to take sensible precautions if they are out by themselves. Talk about the risks and dangers when they're out and how they can minimise them.



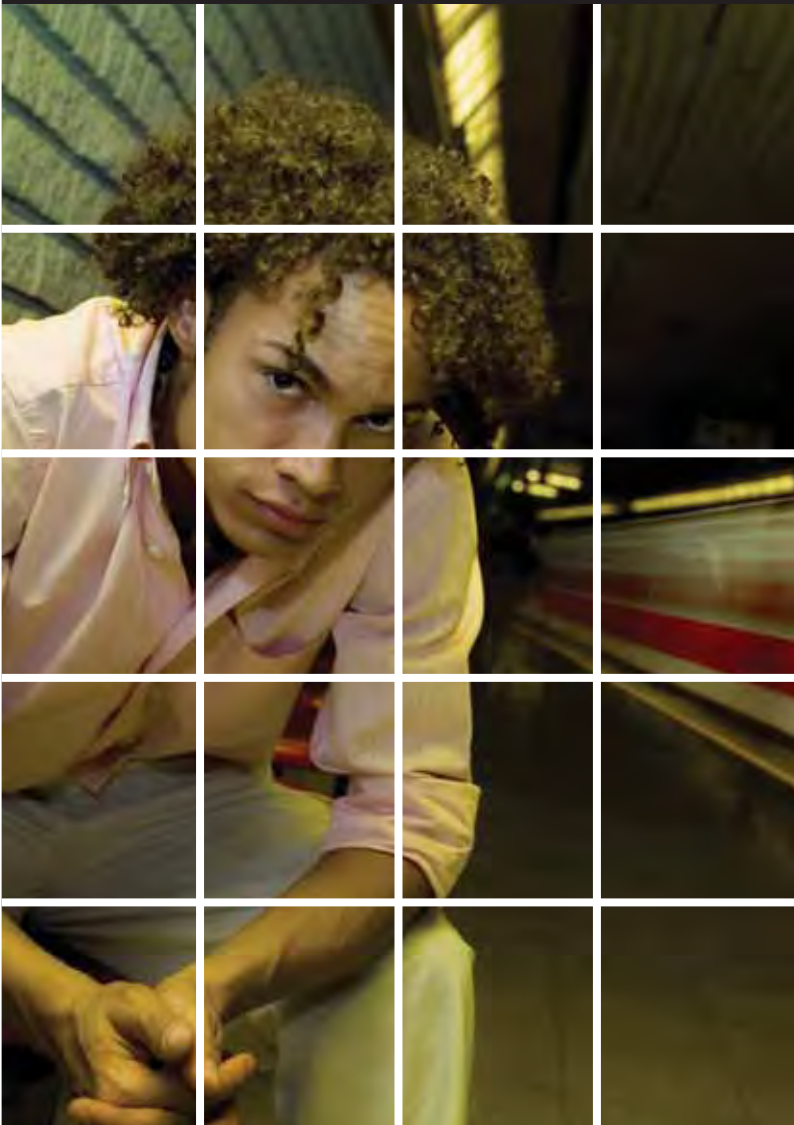
PREVENTION

Teenagers need to know how to stay safe. This includes keeping valuables out of sight, staying with a trusted group of friends when out at night and keeping to well-lit places.



CONTACTS

- www.suzylamplugh.org (parents handbook to download)
- www.victimsupport.org.uk 0845 30 30 900



Missing

From home and school

“ We stopped talking as much when my partner moved in but had been really close before that. So I was shocked when he ran away. ”

- » **Make time for your child to talk about their worries**
- » **Let your child know a good education is important**
- » **Take an active interest in their school day and their homework**
- » **Be honest about things that might be happening in your family**
- » **Look for signs that your child might not be happy**
- » **Help is available - don't be afraid to ask**
- » **If they go missing from home contact the police**

What the law says

The law says that parents must make sure that their children receive a proper full-time education. It is against the law if your child does not go to school regularly. It is better to take holidays and days out during school holidays rather than miss valuable days at school. Once your child is registered at school, you are legally responsible for making sure they attend regularly. Children who miss school are much more likely to have problems with their learning and getting the job or college place they would like. They will often find it harder to make friends and they are at much greater risk of getting into trouble in and out of school.

If they are missing out on school and lessons, they are much more likely to come into contact with adults or other young people who might want to cause them harm.

Children who miss school regularly often do this because they are

worried about something. Something might be happening on their way to or from school that is worrying them. They might be finding some lessons or subjects too hard (or too easy), or they might be having problems in finishing their homework.

Reasons for going missing

Children from all sorts of backgrounds run away from home for a variety of reasons. They might think they have been treated unfairly. If a child goes missing from home, it is usually for a very short period, generally until they think that their parents have noticed they are not there. Often, they will turn up at the home of a friend or relative

When children run away, they are not being naughty - 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.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk



WARNING SIGNS

There may be none. Does your child seem to be unhappy? Are they missing school or being bullied? Has anything happened in the family that you haven't talked to them about?



ACTION

If you think your teenager is missing school, talk to their school and 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. If something has gone wrong in the family, don't let your child think that it's their fault.



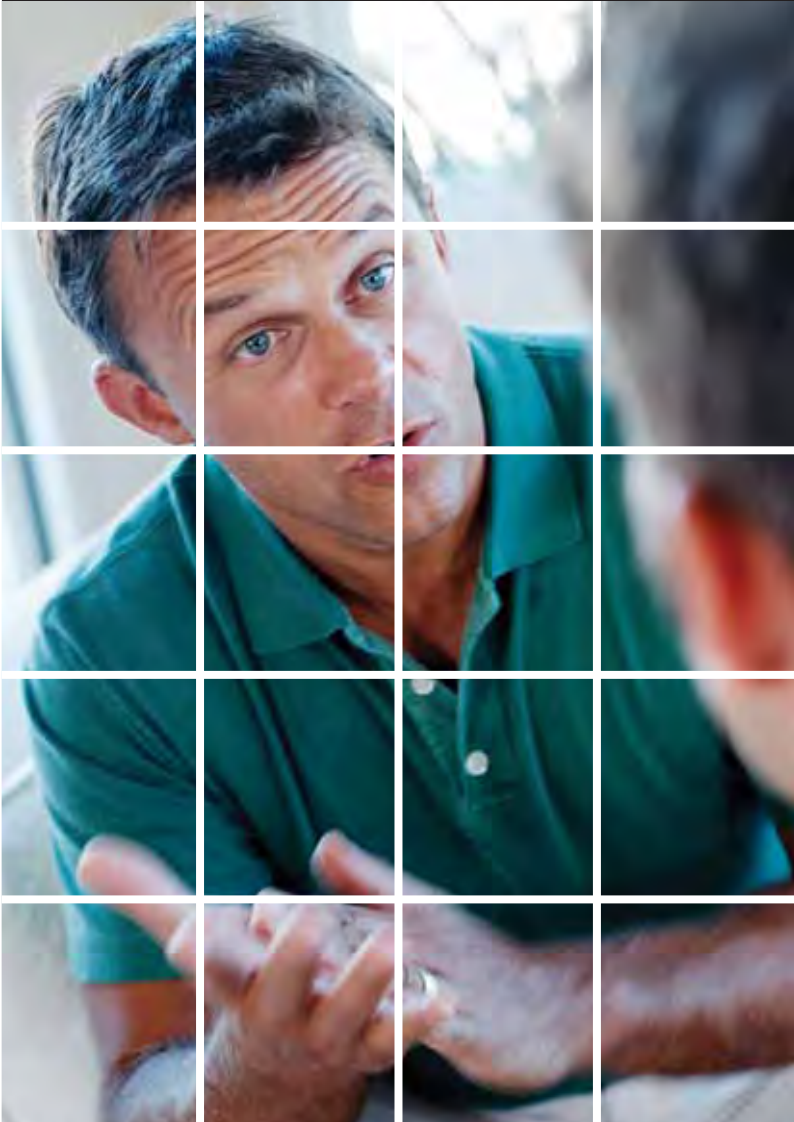
PREVENTION

Be alert to any unexplained changes in behaviour. Spend time with them. Be interested in their lives and worries. Know who their friends are. Be careful about their access to the internet.



CONTACTS

- Your child's school or college
- Avon and Somerset police 0845 456 7000 or 999 in an emergency



Parenting and family support

Supporting parents, supporting their children

“Attending the parenting course has increased my confidence and I have grown as a parent.”

- » **There is a wide range of family support in North Somerset**
- » **Individual support is available through your doctor, school, local multi-agency team and community groups**
- » **Parenting courses are offered in every geographical area, giving parents the opportunity to learn additional parenting skills, while meeting other mums and dads with children at a similar stage of development**

Parenting courses

North Somerset offers 'evidence based' parenting programmes which means that they have been well researched and shown to be effective. All of them explore child development, giving praise and positive discipline.

North Somerset offers: **Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities (SFSC)**

This is a 12 week course for parents of teenagers. It aims to improve parents' confidence and achieve positive change. SFSC focuses on reducing behavioural difficulties through promoting self-discipline and anger management techniques and helping to build positive parent-child relationships. Every parent needs to develop new strategies when their child becomes a teenager, moving towards a relationship where there is more negotiation and problem solving. SFSC also explores community resources for young people and for parents.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk

Family Links

The Family Links Nurturing Programme is a 10 week course and is offered in schools. It is suitable for parents of children up to about 12 but has been adapted to include issues about older children as well. It is designed to strengthen family relationships, promote positive parenting, explore new parenting skills, understand needs and emotions, reflecting on how children grow up physically, intellectually, socially and emotionally. There are four main themes, or building blocks: self-awareness and self-esteem; appropriate expectations; empathy; and positive discipline.

Other groups

There are other parenting groups which have a specific focus: parenting after domestic abuse (the Phoenix Group); parenting if your child has additional needs (for example, the ADHD support group and Supportive Parents groups); workshops and shorter programmes. Please contact the Family Information Service for more details.



WARNING SIGNS

You feel that you are becoming stressed, you are losing your self-confidence as a parent and you are unsure what to do next. You might be shouting or crying more.



ACTION

Discuss the parenting and family support options we have in North Somerset for parents of 11-19 year olds.



WHAT TO SAY

Talk to your partner about getting involved too.



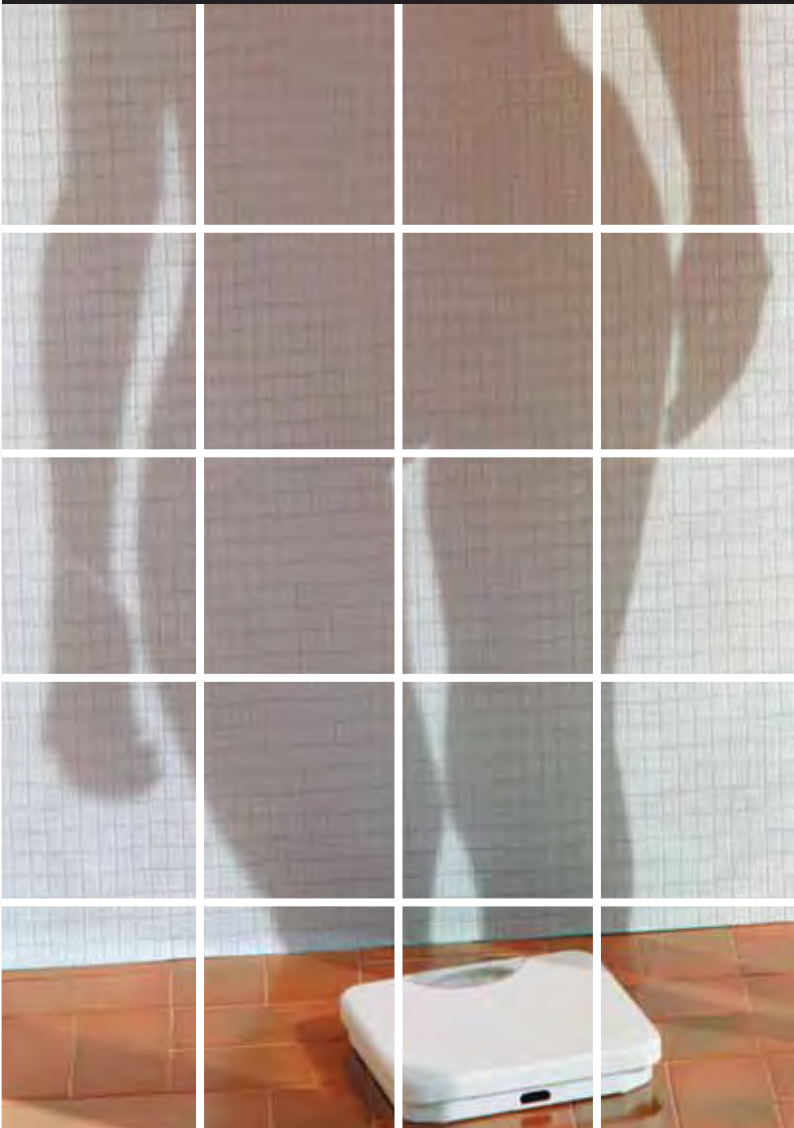
PREVENTION

By doing something at this stage you are helping yourself and helping your child in developing a great relationship.



CONTACTS

- Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk
- Supportive Parents (children with Special Educational Needs) 0117 989 7725 www.supportiveparents.org.uk
- NADA (Phoenix Group) 01934 627841



Self-harm and eating disorders

Getting the balance right

“ *I couldn't bear to see what my daughter was doing to herself. It was like we had turned back the clock. So we got her some help before anorexia took over her life.* **”**

- » **Controlling food is a way of controlling their lives**
- » **Not eating is a form of self-harming**
- » **Recognise the problems that can cause eating disorders or self-harming**
- » **Find out who can help**

Food is an important part of our lives. For some, mostly young people, 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 in their lives that they can control and have a say about.

There are many reasons why girls and boys have eating disorders, some of which are psychological. Triggers may include abuse (physical, emotional or sexual abuse), bullying, family problems, parents pushing their child too hard at school (people with anorexia or bulimia are often high achievers), not being able to express feelings, lack of self-esteem, feelings of self-hatred or guilt, wanting to look like a celebrity and wanting to be popular.

Self-harming or hurting yourself can take many forms. These may include cutting, burning or scalding, hitting, picking skin, head banging against a wall or other object or taking an overdose.

People who self-harm often use it as a way of dealing with problems, such as depression, bullying, abuse or feeling unloved. Young people who self-harm say it is a way of being in control and use it to help them cope, as the physical pain takes their mind off their problems.

How to help
Try to find out what the real problems are. If they don't feel they can talk to you, try to get them to talk to a friend, relative, teacher, school nurse or youth or social worker. You should also talk to their doctor, to discuss any further treatment. Counselling, self-help groups and therapy are all helpful. In very serious cases, they may need to go into a hospital or a clinic.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk



WARNING SIGNS

Dramatic weight loss. Not eating or signs of being sick. Hiding behind long clothes to avoid showing cuts or injury. Lack of self confidence, being bullied or they appear depressed.



ACTION

Let them know that you are there to help them. Speak to other parents who have gone through similar experiences.



WHAT TO SAY

If they feel they can't talk to you, encourage them to talk to someone like a friend, relative or teacher.



PREVENTION

Give them the time to talk to you and try not to judge. Your support will make them feel better about themselves.



CONTACTS

- Your doctor or school nurse
- www.thesite.org
- www.b-eat.co.uk 0845 634 1414
- 0845 654 7650 (Youthline)
- www.youngminds.org.uk
- www.childline.org.uk 0800 1111
- No Worries Teenage Health Service 01934 425718
- www.getconnected.org.uk



Separation, divorce and bereavement

Coping with loss

“ Since her father died, my daughter seems to have disappeared into her own little world. I desperately want to help her but I don't know what to do, she just doesn't want to talk to me about it. ”

- » Loss or death affects everyone differently
- » Talking can help ease the pain
- » Understanding the grieving process will help your child
- » Let them know it takes time to manage a loss
- » Be there for each other

Loss, such as divorce, separation or death of a loved one is difficult for everyone. Young people can need a lot of time, support and understanding as they work through their feelings. There is no right or wrong way to react and everyone handles things in different ways.

There will be a range of feelings your child is likely to go through:

- Numbness as they try to understand that someone is not coming back.
- Anger at the person who left or died, at you, at others or themselves.
- Guilt, possibly blaming themselves in some way, or feeling guilty because they don't think they're grieving 'enough'.
- Fear that the world as they know it has changed forever.
- Sadness at never seeing that person again.
- Relief, if the person who died was in pain or suffering.
- Depression, feeling that life has lost all meaning.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk

Their behaviour may change as they deal with their emotions and try to manage their loss. They may find it hard to cope with day to day life. They may take their anger out on you, get into trouble at school, find it hard to do schoolwork or want to go out with friends more. Grief can take many different forms.

How you can help

Talk to your child about what has happened as much as they want to, and encourage friends or a teacher to be there for them too. Make sure the school knows of any changes in your child's life.

Grieving is normal and most children and young people will manage their loss over time when they are given permission to grieve. It can be hard to deal with your own emotions as well as your child's. Talking to other people can ease the process. If you or your child needs someone to talk to after the first few weeks or months, it may help to contact a bereavement counsellor.



WARNING SIGNS

Give your child as much time and patience as they need to cope with the loss. If you think they are having long-term difficulties, think about talking to a bereavement counsellor.



ACTION

Take your cue from your child. You may not be the person they find it easiest to talk to, so encourage others to be there for them. Always let them know you are there for them too.



WHAT TO SAY

Let your child know it is okay to talk about the person who has died. Let them know it's alright to still laugh or have fun - it doesn't mean they're grieving any less.



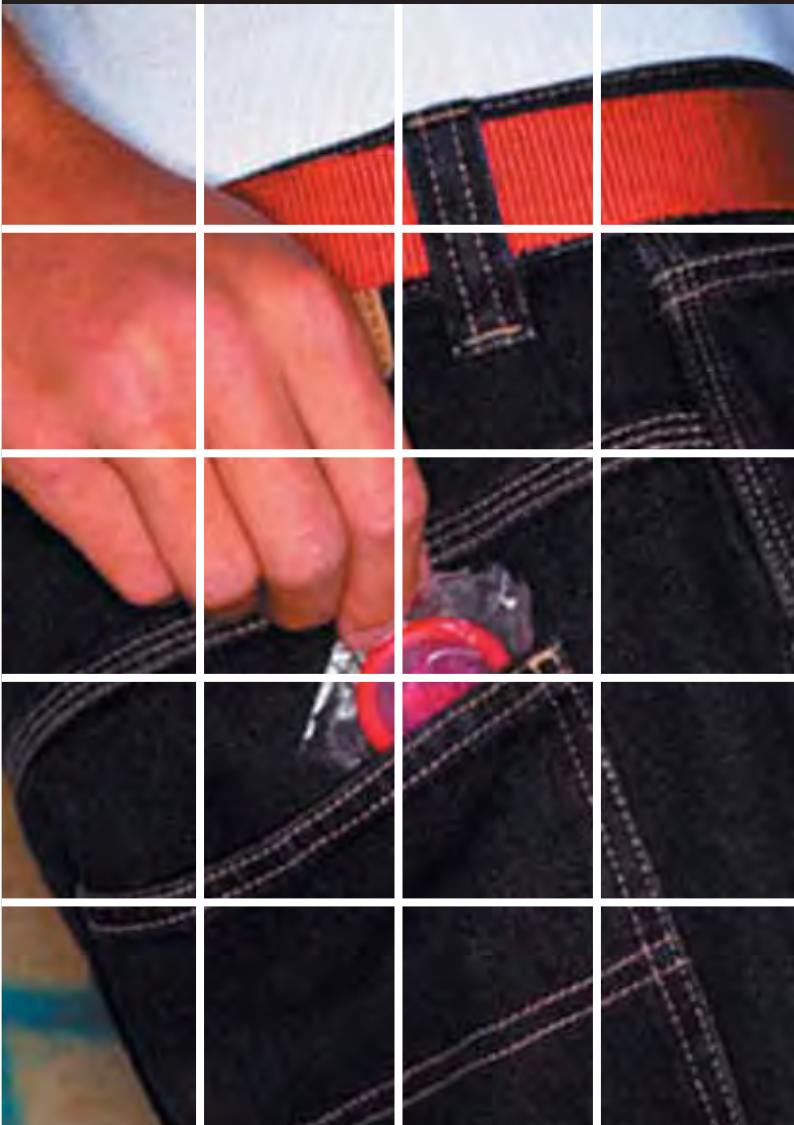
PREVENTION

If you separate or divorce, it is much better for your child if they can keep in contact with both of their parents unless it's unsafe to do so.



CONTACTS

- www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk 0844 477 9400 or 0117 926 4045 (local)
- www.rd4u.org.uk
- www.theparentconnection.org.uk (separation and divorce)
- www.winstonswish.org.uk
- www.itsnotyourfault.org



Sexual health

Know the facts

“ My parents explained so little to me about sex, I had to find out from friends - and half of what they said was wrong. I'm determined that my kids know exactly what to expect and learn about safer sex. ”

- » **Talk to young people openly about sex**
- » **Many sexually transmitted infections (STIs) do not have any symptoms. They may not know they have one unless they are tested**
- » **If left untreated some STIs can cause problems with fertility**
- » **Condoms help protect against STIs and pregnancy**
- » **Young people receive many different messages about relationships and sex**

Why should I talk to my child about sex?

They will get information from TV, magazines, friends and Sex and Relationship Education. Some of this information will be accurate, some will not. As a parent you have an important role in ensuring that your child learns about relationships and sex and that the information they get is accurate.

Even though it can be difficult to talk about sex with your child - it is important that you do. Not having accurate information about relationships and sex can result in negative outcomes for your child. Good parent-child communication about relationships and sex can help delay sexual activity and reduce these negative sexual health outcomes. Young people who talk to their parents openly about relationships and sex are more likely to choose not to have sex or to practice safer sex.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk

It's important that your child learns about relationships, love, sex, STIs and using contraception early on. Although the law says that both boys and girls can have sex at 16, some young people under this age may be already having sex. They should know that it is okay to say "no" to sex even if their friends say that they are doing it but they should also have information on where to go for advice, support, for testing and treatment.

How to tell them

Answer questions your child has with simple, clear, accurate answers. If you are not sure about something tell them you don't have the answer but that you are happy to try and find out or maybe suggest that you find out together. Use magazines and TV programmes to help bring up subjects and to use as examples. Remember there are plenty of useful books and leaflets, as well as websites for both parents and teenagers that can help you.



WARNING SIGNS

Some young people are starting to have sex younger. Don't think that this won't happen to your teenager. Make sure they learn about safer sex early on.



ACTION

There are many leaflets, books and websites that can give you advice on the sexual health of your teenager. The more you know, the more comfortable you will be talking to them.



WHAT TO SAY

It is often better to have regular chats with your teenager rather than having a one off talk about sex, relationships and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).



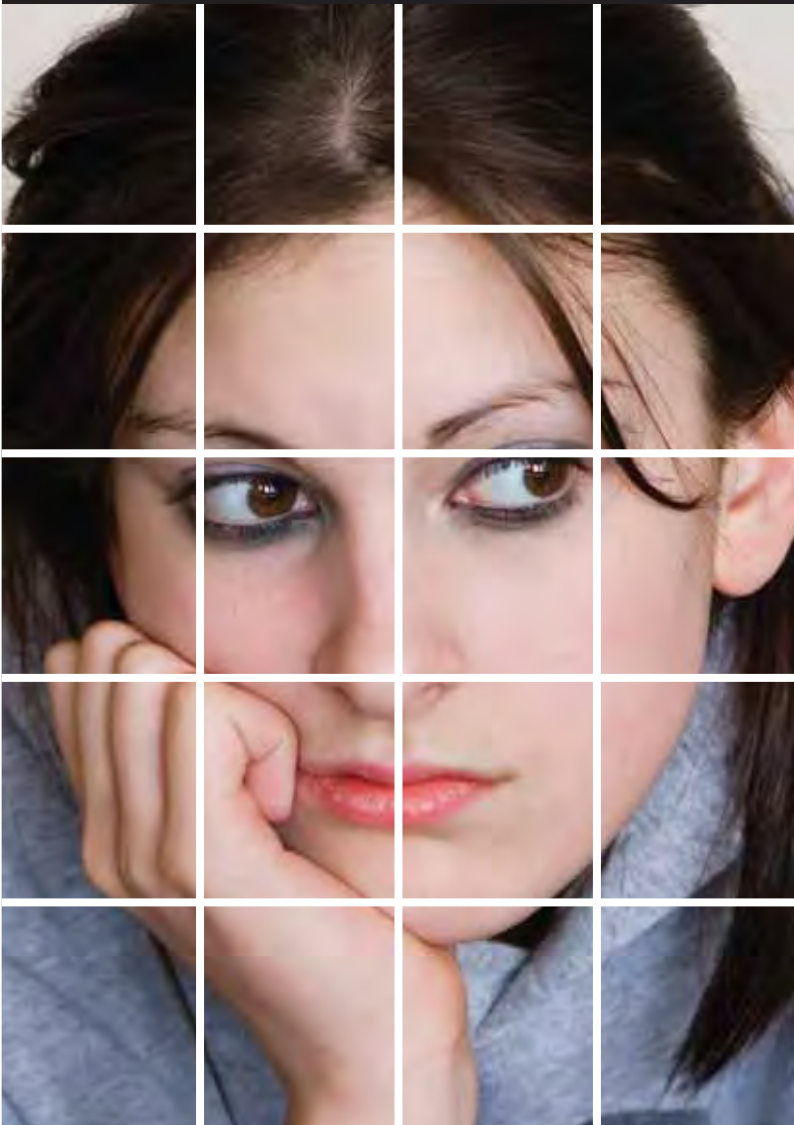
PREVENTION

The more your teenager knows about sex, the longer they are likely to wait for their first time and to use contraception. Make sure you have the information to help them.



CONTACTS

- www.fpa.org.uk (parents' pack)
- No Worries Teenage Health Service 01934 425718
- www.nhs.uk/livewell/sexandyoungpeople
- www.brook.org.uk 0808 802 1234



Stress and anxiety

Helping them cope

“ When my daughter fell out with her friends at school recently she got really upset and anxious. At first, I wondered what all the fuss was about but then I realised how important friends can be at her age. ”

- » Young people can feel stressed for many reasons
- » Being bullied and parents divorcing are two of the most common reasons for stress
- » Sometimes parents don't realise they're putting too much pressure on their child to do well at school
- » Exercise is a great way to reduce stress
- » It's normal to feel stressed sometimes, but it's also good to know how to relax
- » Teach them problem solving skills

You might remember childhood as always being a happy and carefree time. It's easy to forget the pressures young people can be under. They don't have to pay bills or have jobs like adults, so what do they really have to worry about?

There are many reasons why young people can feel stressed and anxious:

- They're being bullied or abused.
- They're not getting on with their friends. It's natural to want to fit in, so falling out with friends is really important.
- They're anxious about moving house, school or going back to school after the holidays.
- A family member or friend has died or moved away.
- You may be arguing with your partner, which can hurt their sense of security and make them feel very alone and frightened. It is worse when parents make them choose sides or say hurtful things about the other parent.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk

- They may have split up with their boyfriend or girlfriend, which can seem devastating.

Most young people worry about schoolwork, tests or exams. It's perfectly normal wanting them to do their best, but some parents might not realise they're putting too much pressure on them to achieve.

If you send out the message that they must do well, it can create too much anxiety for them. It's also important to be realistic yet positive about their abilities.

Sometimes, young people overhear parents talking about money worries or problems they're having at work and they start to feel anxious about these things themselves. You'll probably be able to help when they feel stressed, but if their anxiety continues, or if it greatly affects their behaviour, you might want to speak to their teachers or even ask your doctor for professional help.



WARNING SIGNS

Mood swings, trouble sleeping, nightmares, trouble doing schoolwork, taking drugs or alcohol, preferring to be alone or overreacting to minor problems.



ACTION

Make sure they get enough sleep and healthy food. Exercise can reduce stress, so encourage sport and leisure activities.



WHAT TO SAY

They will find it easier to cope with stress if you talk to them about what's causing it. Tell them it's normal to feel stressed now and again. Let them know you're there for them.



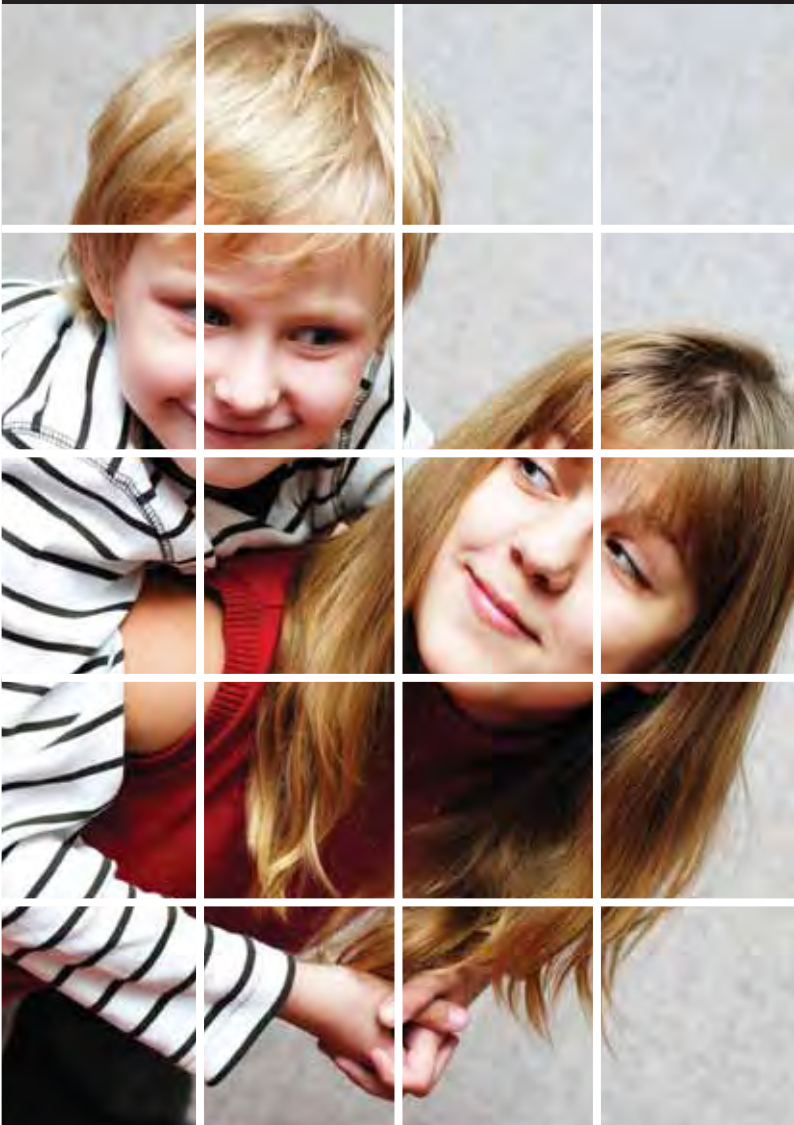
PREVENTION

Make time every day so they can talk to you if anything's worrying them. Look out for times when they might worry, like exam time.



CONTACTS

- Your doctor or child's school
- www.getconnected.org.uk (free confidential help for under 25s)
- www.youngminds.org.uk 0800 018 2138 (parents helpline)
- www.anxietyuk.org.uk
- www.rcpsych.ac.uk (useful leaflets)



Young carers

Too busy to enjoy life

“ She didn't say anything, but I could tell that having to look after me and her brother was having an effect on Katie. I made a few phone calls and found out that more help was available. ”

» It is important that young people do not suffer as a result of their caring

» Support is available from local services

Some young people help look after someone in their family by:

» Helping them to get up, get washed or get dressed

» Doing lots of the household tasks like cleaning, cooking, shopping and looking after younger brothers and sisters

» Staying in the house a lot because they worry about them being on their own

Some parents may have a mental illness, a learning or physical disability, a drug or alcohol problem and their children may take on a caring role.

Education

Many young carers achieve good results but research has shown that caring can affect attendance and behaviour at school or college and make it more difficult to concentrate on learning. It is important that the school or college staff know that a young person has additional responsibilities so that extra support can be put in place.

When a young carer leaves school, they may feel worried about the impact that finding a job, going to college or leaving home will have on the person they are caring for.

Health

Sometimes young carers can be so busy looking after others that they forget to look after themselves and they

can become ill, stressed or depressed. The best way to avoid this is to get help from their doctor and other local services. A young carer sometimes takes on responsibilities any adult would find challenging and they still need to have their own friendships and activities as well.

Extra support

There are organisations that can help, including North Somerset Young Carers. Many people are afraid of asking for support because they worry services might try to interfere or think that their children might be taken into care. Social workers can make an assessment of the help that is needed and make sure the family is getting the right benefits.

The Princess Royal Trust has a website for young carers with lots of information and advice, including a section for parents. Visit www.youngcarers.net

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk



WARNING SIGNS

Poor attendance at school or college, late homework, poor exam results and feeling tired may be signs a young carer is struggling.



ACTION

Get as much information as you can and find out what services, support, benefits and advice are available.



WHAT TO SAY

If your child is a young carer make sure, the school or college and your doctor know about what is happening and keep them up-to-date if things change.



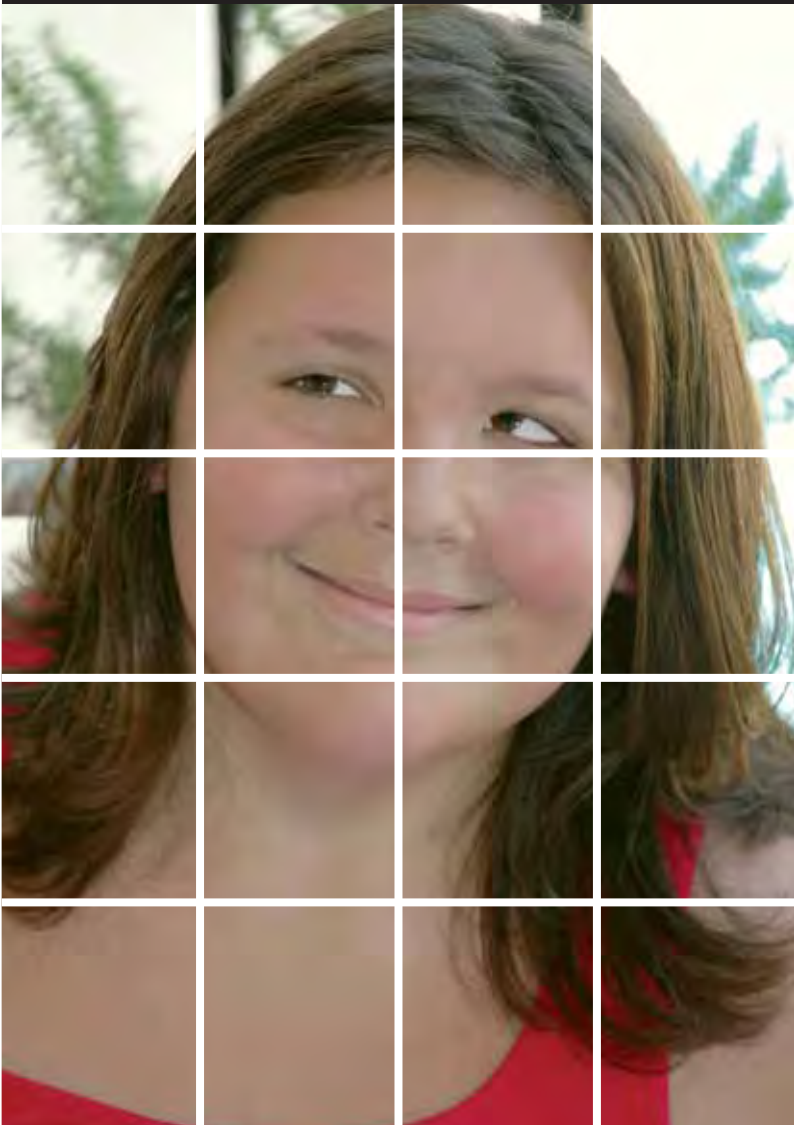
PREVENTION

Being a young carer could have an effect on their health, education and well-being. Make sure that they get the best support and advice available.



CONTACTS

- North Somerset Young Carers 01934 411854 youngcarers@nscrossroads.org.uk
- Care Connect (Community Health and Adult Social Care) 01934 888801
- www.youngcarers.net
- Your doctor or child's school or college



Young people with a learning or physical disability

Getting the balance right

“ I know my daughter is worried about what the future holds for her - her friends all seem to be making plans. ”

- » **Young people can experience similar emotions, whether they have a disability or not**
- » **Encourage them to meet people**
- » **Find out about local activities and groups**
- » **Support their educational needs**
- » **Check what benefits and services you both may be entitled to**

Young people can experience the same feelings and emotions, whether they have a disability or not. You have similar concerns as any other parent.

During this time of change, your child may need support. All young people want to go out and you can encourage them to meet friends regularly as a group. Ask about local 'befriending' schemes so they can enjoy activities without you, such as shopping or going to a café. Check if your local leisure centre runs supported sporting activities. Some local colleges run volunteer schemes where students take your child to a local course. Ask if any local organisations run clubs where they can enjoy activities or holidays away from home.

All young people face the same worries, such as what their friends think about them and how good they look. A young person with a disability is getting used to sexual feelings, like

any other teenager. School nurses can support all teenagers with information and advice. Like their brothers and sisters, they are beginning to think about going to college or getting a job. This will be discussed as part of the transitions process.

A young person with a Statement of Educational Needs will have a review in Year 9 at school. This is called the Transitions Review. This is the time to think about their interests and what opportunities there are for them in the future. Young people with a learning disability may want to continue their education when they leave school. They may eventually want to move away from home. Adult Social Care and Housing can provide information and advice on the services available. Check what benefits and allowances you are both entitled to.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk



WARNING SIGNS



ACTION



WHAT TO SAY



PREVENTION



CONTACTS

The teenage years can be difficult for all young people.

Encourage them to go out with friends. Contact the Family Information Service to ask about 'befriending' schemes and other local organisations offering the chance to get out and meet other people. Find out what Adult Services can provide.

Talk about their interests and what they would like to do after leaving school or college.

They are going through the same worries as other young people. Try to establish what these are so that you can get the right help and support.

- Supportive Parents
0117 989 7725
www.supportiveparents.org.uk
- www.ld4u.org.uk/
(Information for people with learning disabilities in North Somerset)
- www.mencap.org.uk
0808 808 1111
- www.disabilityalliance.org

Useful national **Contacts**

Action for Prisoners' Families
0808 808 2003
www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk

Al-Anon
020 7403 0888
www.al-anonuk.org.uk

Beating Eating Disorders
0845 634 1414 www.b-eat.co.uk

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)
www.ceop.police.uk

ChildLine
0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk

Contact a Family
0808 808 3555 www.cafamily.org.uk

Cruse Bereavement Care
0844 477 9400
www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

Dads Space
www.dads-space.com

Disabled Parents Network
0300 3300 639
www.disabledparentsnetwork.org.uk

Family Planning Association
0845 122 8690 www.fpa.org.uk

Family Rights Group (for families involved with Social Care)
0808 801 0366 www.frg.org.uk

FRANK (drugs information)
0800 77 66 00 www.talktofrank.com

Got a Teenager 0808 800 2222
www.gotateenager.org.uk

The Hide Out (domestic abuse site for children and young people)
www.thehideout.org.uk

Incontinence
0845 370 8008 www.eric.org.uk

Kidscape
08451 205 204
(parents anti-bullying helpline)
www.kidscape.org.uk

Mencap
0808 808 1111 (section for families including child development)
www.mencap.org.uk

Missing Persons
0500 700 700
www.missingpeople.org.uk

National Domestic Violence Helpline 0808 2000 247
www.womensaid.org.uk
www.refuge.org.uk

NSPCC
0808 800 5000 www.nspcc.org.uk

One Space (lone parents)
www.onespace.org.uk

Parentline Plus
0808 800 2222
www.parentlineplus.org.uk

Relate
0300 100 1234 www.relate.org.uk

Respect (domestic abuse)
0808 801 0327 (male victims)
www.respect.uk.net
0845 122 8609 (perpetrators)
www.respectphoneline.org.uk

Samaritans
08457 90 90 90 www.samaritans.org

SANE (mental health)
0845 767 8000 www.sane.org.uk

Shelterline (housing problems)
0808 800 4444
www.shelter.org.uk

Winstons Wish (childhood bereavement) 08452 03 04 05
www.winstonswish.org.uk

www.bbc.co.uk/parenting
www.direct.gov.uk
www.direct.gov.uk/en/moneytaxandbenefits

www.freecycle.org (recycling furniture and other goods)

www.moneymadeclear.org.uk
www.moneysavingexpert.com
www.theparentconnection.org.uk
(separation and divorce)

YoungMinds
0808 802 5544
www.youngminds.org.uk

Useful local **Contacts**

Avon and Somerset Police
0845 456 7000 (non emergency calls) or 999 in an emergency

Care Connect
Information about Community Health and Adult Social Care, housing, benefits and other support.
01934 888801

Citizens Advice Bureau
08444 111 444
Monday-Friday 10am-2pm
www.northsomersetcab.org

Community and Adult Learning
01275 888461

Connexions
01934 644443
www.connexionswest.org.uk

Gemini Project
Domestic abuse, accommodation and support.
0870 066 4233

Housing Advice Team
01934 426330
www.n-somerset.gov.uk/housing

Jobcentre Plus
0845 604 3719
www.direct.gov.uk

North Somerset Against Domestic Abuse (NADA)
Support services, parenting groups, emergency accommodation or counselling.
01934 627841

Social Care (Social Services)
Referral and Assessment Team
01275 888266
Out of office hours emergency
01454 615165

Weston-Super-Mare Hospital
01934 636363 (non emergencies)

For more information about these and other local and national services, please contact:

Family Information Service
One stop source of information for children, young people and families and those who work with them in North Somerset.
01275 888778 or 01934 426300
www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk

Every effort has been made to keep the information in this booklet up-to-date and accurate. However, we cannot guarantee that inaccuracies won't occur. North Somerset Council, its employees or partner agencies won't be held responsible for any loss, damage or inconvenience caused as a result of reliance on such information.



This guide is one of a set of three, covering parenting issues from birth-19 years old. Don't forget to pick up a copy of the other handbooks if you have children of varying ages.

Call the Family Information Service on

01275 888778

or visit **www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk**



This was given to you by

who can be contacted on