

## Concerned about a child? Make sure you report it

Many people feel uneasy about taking concerns about a child further – but it's everyone's responsibility to speak up if they think a child is suffering abuse. Lots of people worry that they're wrong but last year in the UK nearly 400,000 children in England were supported because someone noticed they needed help. Today (Mon 19 Nov) is "World Day for the Prevention of Child Abuse" and Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board is taking this opportunity to remind people about how to spot signs of child abuse and what to do if they are worried.

### Did you know?

There are four types of child abuse: Physical abuse, Emotional abuse, Sexual abuse and Neglect.

Many types of abuse fall under these categories, for example, domestic violence, child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation.

Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) is made up of key local organisations, like the police, the county and district councils and schools and health organisations. It exists to protect all children in the county and it determines what action should be taken if concerns about a child are raised.

BSCB wants to use today to remind people how to spot signs of child abuse.

One way is to use the A B C checklist; changes in a child's **Appearance**, **Behaviour** or **Communication** could be nothing – but they could indicate abuse.

- **Appearance** – are there frequent unexplained injuries, consistently poor hygiene, matted hair?
- **Behaviour** – is the child displaying demanding or aggressive behaviour, are they often late or absent from school, avoiding their own family, misusing drugs or alcohol, or being constantly tired
- **Communication** – is the child using sexual or aggressive language, self-harming, becoming secretive and reluctant to share information or being overly obedient?

Warren Whyte is Buckinghamshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Children's Services. He said:

"World Day for the Prevention of Child Abuse is the ideal opportunity to talk about this difficult subject. A lot of people don't speak up about concerns about a child because they're worried they've got it wrong, but you don't have to be certain. If you suspect a child is being abused or if their safety is at risk then speak to someone - then we can take things forward if need be. "

Fran Gosling-Thomas is the Independent Chair of the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board.

She said: "Most people find the decision to report concerns about a child difficult and that's entirely understandable, but you don't have to be certain of what you've seen or heard for it to be looked into properly. You can report concerns about a child anonymously – a report about a child could be the missing piece of information that

is needed to keep that child safe so don't ignore a gut feeling if you do have any fears."

How to report concerns about a child:

**If there is immediate risk of harm to a child, call the Police on 999**

If you are concerned about a child in Buckinghamshire, it is important that you talk to someone about this. Don't ignore your concerns or delay taking action.

- You can call Buckinghamshire County Council's First Response Team on **01296 383 962** (out of hours: 0800 999 7677). They will listen to your concerns and decide on the appropriate course of action.
- You can contact the NSPCC on **0808 800 5000** (free service, lines open 24 hours a day). They will listen to your concerns, offer advice and support and can take action on your behalf if a child is in danger. You can also report concerns anonymously.
- For further information or to report your concerns online visit: [www.nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/report-abuse/](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/report-abuse/)