

We all want children to have happy and safe childhoods, with plenty of fun and surrounded by people who care about them. You can help make this a reality for children – both the ones you know well and also the ones you see when you are out and about.

Unfortunately, we know that things are not always easy for children. Sometimes they have to cope with problems like abuse, violence, neglect, bullying or other types of harm. They should never have to cope with these things alone – this is where you come in!

Here are **Ten Top Tips** to help you listen, support and take action to keep the children that you know or see, safe and happy:

1. Be the one a child can talk to.

Children sometimes struggle to cope with problems on their own because they do not have an adult to talk to about it. You could be that person. Make time to listen to a child if they want to tell you how things are for them at home, at school or with their friends. Try not to interrupt. Check you understand what they mean.

2. Take them seriously. If a child talks to you about any kind of problem, listen to them, take them seriously and tell them that you care. Let them know that talking about a problem is always better than keeping it to yourself. Listening and making sure you understand shows that you care.

3. If a child is in immediate danger, do something about it. Maybe you think a child may be at immediate risk in their home or on the street. Ask yourself if there is anything that you can do now to make the child safe. Or if you cannot help on your own, maybe you need to ask someone else such as a friend, social work or the police to help.

4. Get advice. Sometimes it is difficult to know what to do when you have a concern about a child. Sometimes you just need to talk it through. Other times you need advice about what action to take. Any adult who cares for a child can phone ParentLine Scotland on the confidential Freephone 0808 800 2222 Mon, Wed, Fri 9am-5pm, Tues and Thurs 9am-9pm, or you can email for support and information on parentlinescotland@children1st.org.uk

5. Don't let your fears put you off. People are sometimes afraid that speaking to social work about a child will lead to the child being removed from home or to the family being broken up. Sometimes people are afraid of false allegations. But, it is important that your fears do not stop you acting to help a child. The child could be depending on you! It might help to know that social workers only remove children from home when they believe they are at serious risk of abuse or neglect and after agreement with other agencies. And, you could always speak to a friend or a call taker at ParentLine Scotland on 0808 800 2222 about your concerns.

6. Don't ignore your concerns. Notice if there are unexplained changes in a child's behaviour. A child may just be quieter than usual, or maybe they seem afraid to go home or their behaviour has changed. Maybe you feel worried that a child is not being cared for. Check out your concerns. If you can, ask the child how they are feeling, check if everything is OK?

7. Tell them about ChildLine 0800 11 11. Unfortunately sometimes children find it very difficult to talk face-to-face about problems in their lives. It can often be easier for them to speak to ChildLine first. Encourage a child to phone or to contact ChildLine online – www.childline.org.uk – about any problems they have, big or small.

8. If you have a serious concern about a child, speak to social work. If you are concerned that a child is being abused, neglected or is at serious risk of harm, contact your social work services either through the number in your local phone book or by phoning the national Child Protection Helpline on 0800 022 322 who can transfer your call to your local social work office where you can discuss your concerns with social workers anonymously. Sometimes it is hard to know if you should talk to social work about a child – if you are not sure, you can talk it over with ParentLine Scotland first on 0808 800 2222.

9. Offer help to parents and carers where you can. Bringing up a child is probably the most difficult job in the world. Parents and carers need our help, though it is not always easy or possible to give it. If you know a family who is struggling, consider whether you can help. Or you could tell them about ParentLine Scotland on 0808 800 2222 so that they can get support and advice for themselves.

10. Make your community a safe place for children. Children of all ages, from toddlers to teenagers, need somewhere safe to play or be with friends. Think about the safety of streets and parks in your area. Think about the needs of children and young people who live near you. Is there anything that you can do to make sure that your community is a safe and positive place to grow up?



These 'Ten Top Tips' are some simple messages to encourage us all to think about what we can do to keep children safe. Can you help pass on these messages by displaying a poster or leaflets with the 'Ten Top Tips' somewhere near you? An email version is available from www.children1st.org.uk

We all have a part to play.

Sometimes it can be easy to think that looking after children's safety and welfare is someone else's job. But it takes all of us.

Whatever you do, whether big or small, you are helping to keep Scotland's children safe. Thank you.

For more information and advice about keeping children safe, or to ask for more 'Ten Top Tips' leaflets or posters, go to www.children1st.org.uk

THIS LEAFLET IS AVAILABLE
IN LARGE PRINT



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WE TAKE ACTION**
for Scotland's vulnerable
children and families

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