

Information

for County Councillors

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| From: | Julian Wooster, Director for Children's Services |
| Date: | 07/03/2016 |
| To: | All County Councillors |

Together we can tackle child abuse

The Department for Education has recently launched a campaign in the West Midlands and Outer London, which aims to encourage members of the public to act when they suspect child abuse or neglect. Somerset County Council is supporting this campaign locally.

Called "Together, we can tackle child abuse", the campaign also aims to dispel certain misconceptions the public have about making a report to Children's Services. For example, the myth that a child will be taken away by a social worker if someone calls 'social services' or the myth that child abuse only happens in urban areas or 'the city'. Child abuse and neglect can happen anywhere.

One of the key messages of this campaign is that we all have a role to play in protecting children and young people from child abuse and neglect. This is true of the general public, and also of councillors.

A third of people who suspect child abuse do nothing. In the South West in particular, 37 per cent of the public are put off reporting because they think they might be wrong. This is compared to 42 per cent of the public nationwide.

The reality is that information is usually gathered from lots of different sources, like teacher's, GPs and from the police, so any report made by a member of the public would just form one part of a bigger picture.

In 2014/15, more than 400,000 children in England were supported because someone noticed they needed help. In Somerset, we worked with 8358 children and young people in the same year.

We all have a role to play in protecting children and young people from all forms of abuse and neglect. If you are already in contact with a professional with a role in looking after children, for example a police officer, then you can raise concerns with them. If you have a concern about a child at your child's school,

then raise it with the school – there will be a member of staff with a responsibility to listen to safeguarding concerns. They are trained to understand when a child may need help from Children’s Social Care or whether another agency could support the family.

Although child abuse and neglect can happen, lots of work goes into preventing it. Health visitors, police officers, school nurses, housing officers and others all work together to help families before they need support from Children’s Social Care. They also work with social workers when they do become involved.

The Council’s Communications Team will be supporting the campaign with a number of activities, including social media posts which Members are encouraged to share.

You can find Somerset County Council on Facebook and Twitter by following the below links:

www.twitter.com/somersetcouncil

www.facebook.com/somersetcountycouncil

Note to councillors about safeguarding:

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 defines safeguarding as:

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children's health or development;
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

For more information about the work that is done to help prevent child abuse and neglect in Somerset, visit www.somerset.gov.uk/thresholds

If you, or one of your constituents, are worried about a child, call Somerset Direct on 0300 123 2224. Or, if you're worried about a child’s immediate safety, contact the police by dialling 999.

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| For more information please visit: | www.somerset.gov.uk/sscbthresholds |
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