

PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

- 1 Talk to children and babies about feeling safe and keeping safe. It's never too early to start.
- 2 Always give children the reason for any decisions you have made – it helps them to understand 'why?' ...'Because I say so' is not a good enough reason!
- 3 Help to build your child's confidence and self esteem. Praise them often. People who choose to bully or who are dangerous to children will often pick out less confident children or those who spend time or go out alone.
- 4 Listen to your children, especially when they are trying to tell you about things that worry them. Let children know that you will always take them seriously and do whatever you can to keep them safe.
- 5 Let children know they never have to do anything they don't like with an adult or another child - even if it is someone they know. Practise this at home by never making them kiss or hug an adult if they don't want to.
- 6 Teach children to trust their own 'Early Warning Signs' or 'gut feelings' about people and situations.
- 7 As soon as children are able to understand, teach them their full name, address and phone number. Practise these with them until you are sure they can remember.
- 8 In most situations, children under about eight years old shouldn't be out alone. Even when out playing with older children, they need to be kept in the care and sight of an adult or a much older child who is mature and trustworthy.
- 9 Never leave young children in unsupervised play areas in shops or parks. Don't leave them alone in the car or outside a shop, not even for a few minutes.
- 10 If you are in a crowded place, keep children in a pram or buggy, hold hands tightly or use reins. Don't walk ahead of small children who can't keep up. Remember it only takes a moment for toddlers to wander off.
- 11 You can start teaching children simple rules about personal safety from as young as two or three. Tell them clearly that they must never go off with anyone, not even with someone they know, without first asking you or the adult looking after them.
- 12 Teach older children safe ways of crossing roads, going shopping and asking adults for directions and let them practise these with you until you are sure they have understood. Help children decide who would be the safest adults to talk to if they need help or get lost (e.g. Police officer, shop-keeper, someone with a young child).
- 13 When children are mature enough to be out alone, make sure they tell you: Who they are going out with, Where they are going (and how to contact them), When they will be back.
- 14 In busy public places arrange somewhere to meet in case you get separated, like an information desk or specific shop/bank.
- 15 Keep electronic devices and televisions in public areas of your home, not in children's bedrooms. Monitor what your children are watching & looking at. Encourage children to talk with you if they feel uncomfortable about anything they come across.
- 16 There is no law that states the minimum age that a child can be left alone. However, it is an offence to leave a child alone when doing so puts him or her at risk. Never leave a baby or young child alone at home, whether asleep or awake. Most children under thirteen should not be left for more than a very short period and no child under sixteen should be left overnight.

No matter how much you teach your child about safety, remember the limits of their age and maturity.