

## Diversity

There are lots of different ideas about how to be a 'good' parent. These can vary within families, ethnic groups and communities. British society acknowledges and affirms cultural diversity but children, whatever their cultural background, always have a right to be protected. Anything that causes harm to a child, whether part of a cultural or faith tradition, is never acceptable. Some practices (e.g. female circumcision, often called female genital mutilation) that may be culturally acceptable in some countries are banned by law in the United Kingdom, and indeed in many other countries.

## The Ten Key Points:

1. **Get to know your child**
2. **Listen to your child**
3. **Be as positive as you can**
4. **Keep the rules simple**
5. **Be consistent**
6. **Reason and discuss matters with your child**
7. **Provide positive opportunities**
8. **Agree sanctions with the child**
9. **The behaviour is bad – not the child**
10. **Ask for help**

*If you have any questions about this leaflet or any of the issues it raises, do not hesitate to contact social workers responsible for the care of children in Bexley, West Child Care Team, based at either the Southlake Centre in Thamesmead 020 8320 6300 or East Child Care Team based at the Civic Offices 020 8303 7777. If you would like help with parenting, please contact the Family Centre Service on 020 8294 6158.*

*If you would like help with childcare please contact the Family Information Service on 020 8303 7777.*



If you would like to know more about the services the Council provides, or would like either a translation of this document or the information in a different format, please call our Customer Contact Centre on 020 8303 7777 and press 0, quoting reference: 603924/11.10



# Child Protection – What's it got to do with you?

## A guide for parents when disciplining their children



## Child Protection – What’s it got to do with you?

Most parents and carers want the best for their children. Discipline is important to help our children grow into well-balanced and responsible people. Parents and carers help their children by giving clear and consistent messages about their behaviour. However, sometimes we can respond too harshly to situations and a child might suffer an injury or emotional harm as a result of the methods used. On some occasions Social Care (Social Services) may be called to investigate. This results in great stress for the whole family.

The aim of this leaflet is to support parents and carers to feel confident in managing their children’s behaviour and to seek advice if they are having difficulties.

## The Law – how it applies to you

UK law protects any child from cruel and abusive treatment by their parents or carers up to the age of 18 years. For example, it is against the law for a parent to use physical punishment on their child that causes bruising, either by hitting or using an implement to inflict injury. It is also against



the law to use any form of physical punishment when a child is being looked after by someone else, such as a childminder or foster carer. The law recognises that children are not the property of their parents to do with as they like, but are individuals in their own right who should be nurtured, valued and respected.



## Discipline

Discipline should not be seen as the same as punishment. It includes being a positive role model and setting good example. It also includes negotiation and compromise, instruction, providing boundaries, guidance, advice, and helping your child set realistic goals. There are lots of different ways of disciplining a child and if you restrict yourself to simply reacting against behaviour you don't like, you will be missing lots of opportunities to bring positive, loving discipline into their life. Introducing sanctions or punishing your child is only a part of the process and should only be done in ways that are fair – never abusive. Above everything else, children need to know they are loved unconditionally, even when they are behaving badly. This will help in developing a healthy self esteem which is very important for your child's emotional wellbeing.

## Boundaries

We all know that children test our limits at some time or another. These are the rules that we have in our family. We set 'boundaries' about what we expect of our children and family. If these boundaries are too loose then children have little direction in life. If they are too harsh then children do not develop their own sense of responsibility. Think about the rules in your house and explain these to your children. Tell them about why you think these are important. Give them a chance to discuss the rules and to know when things might be changeable. For instance, during school days you expect a fixed time for bedtime but at weekends this could be later.

## Consistency

It is important that children have routine and predictability. They need to know that there are consequences for how they behave. Rewarding positive behaviour is, generally, more effective than punishing challenging behaviour. Praise and encouragement are powerful tools for developing good habits. However challenging your child's behaviour it is important to be as consistent and fair as possible.

Your children need your attention and support. Young children should never be left on their own or in the care of other children. If you need help with childcare you can ask the Family Information Service for advice (see reverse).