

Would you know the signs?

Child abuse is an issue which should concern us all. A new child protection unit is encouraging the public to help by passing on their concerns

Child abuse is a grim fact of life in our society. Sadly, children's services in Angus often come across youngsters who have been victims of neglect or abuse.

Last year, many children in Angus were identified as being at risk. They were supported by services in Angus in the same way as Dawn (see below) and her children.

This is why the council has joined forces with other child protection experts from the police and health agencies to establish a new child protection unit in Arbroath.

It is recognised that children and their families are better supported when agencies work together to do so. Staff in the



council, police, health and the voluntary sector wish to support children and their families at an early stage to prevent difficulties escalating to a crisis point.

The public can play a vital role by being alert to circumstances when children need the support

of agencies that can help. Childcare professionals are urging people to take action if they believe a child needs help.

"We can all play a part in seeking support for these vulnerable members of our community and protecting them," said Kate Mearns, development manager for child protection with Angus child protection committee.

"Remember that expressing your concerns about a child's welfare is not about telling tales, but about ensuring children get the help they need.

"Anyone who is concerned about a child can rest assured all information received by any of the agencies will be treated seriously and acted upon."



the facts

An abused child may:

- Have unexplained bruising or bruising in an unusual place.
 - Appear afraid, quiet or withdrawn.
 - Appear afraid to go home.
 - Appear constantly hungry, tired or untidy.
 - Be left unattended or unsupervised.
 - Have too much responsibility for their age.
 - Act in a sexually inappropriate way.
 - Misuse drugs or alcohol.
 - Tell you something that sounds as though someone has hurt them.
- If you are worried about a child or young person, speak to someone who can help – a teacher, doctor, health visitor, social worker, police officer or nursery staff.

We're here for your benefit

The council's welfare rights service has teamed up with ACCESSLine to provide advice for citizens wishing to check their rights.

By calling 08452 777 778, residents can receive free confidential advice on a range of issues including debt, rent and council tax arrears, eviction or repossession, social security benefits and appeals, tax credits and employment problems.

The line is open between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday.

Real life: Dawn's story

Names have been changed for the sake of confidentiality

CHILDREN do not have to be physically abused to suffer – domestic abuse between their parents can also have a damaging affect.

This was the case with Dawn's three children after she suffered years of assaults and abuse from Graham, her husband of 20 years.

"The children were very fearful of their father and this

had a big impact on the family. We were never sure when he would lash out," said Dawn, who was afraid to contact the authorities as Graham had told her she would lose her children.

However, the final assault, which resulted in Dawn requiring six months of intensive physiotherapy to recover, brought things to a head. Social work, child and

family psychiatry, housing, Barnardo's and Tayside Police had to act to ensure the future safety of Dawn and her children.

Although she was anxious about their involvement, she said their help was invaluable.

"Everyone was brilliant. They helped me recover physically and emotionally, helped with housework while I recovered,



WHO TO CALL

Angus Council social work and health department
Arbroath 01241 878585
Forfar 01307 462405
Montrose 01674 672702

Dundee 01382 223200

Scottish Children's Reporter Administration
01241 873194

Childline
0800 1111

Parentline
0808 800 2222

Health visitors
Your local health visitor can be found through your local surgery or health centre

Out-of-hours social work service
01382 436430
5pm-8.45am weekdays and 5pm-8.45am weekends and public holidays

Tayside Police
Arbroath 01241 872222
Forfar 01307 302200

USEFUL INFO

Angus Child Protection Committee has recently published guidance on protecting children and young people in community groups. Copies are available at www.angus.gov.uk/childprotection from the Joint Strategic Support Unit, County Buildings, Market Street, Forfar, telephone **01307 473178**.



>>Everyone was brilliant. They created stability for our family and treated us in a caring and supportive way



created stability for our family and treated us in a caring and supportive way," said Dawn. She and her children were rehoused, but although the youngsters were now safe, they needed a lot of support and reassurance.

They were supported by their social worker, Olivia, who was committed to keeping them safe and helping them live together as a family.

"It was important we got the children to talk about their experiences, as they were very

Children are often the innocent victims of domestic violence or abuse, but there are many agencies able to offer support

traumatised and they also needed reassurance that they were now safe from their father," said Olivia.

For the sake of stability, the children went to their own school and attended clubs they had previously been involved with.

School staff and others were also kept aware of the situation and were able to respond to the children in a supportive way if they misbehaved.

Dawn is now a college student while her children remain settled in their schools.