



Part of the North East Migration Partnership's Refugee and Asylum Seeker Welcome & Induction Programme

## Welcome to the UK: PARENTING IN THE UK

### Slide 1: Introduction

in simplified English

## Welcome to the UK: Being a Parent in the UK

Information for parents to help you understand the school system and UK laws to keep children safe and well



Part of the North East Migration Partnership's Refugee and Asylum Seeker Welcome & Induction Programme  
Created in partnership with



### Welcome to this presentation.

Are you a mother or father from another country? You may be surprised by life here. We will help you understand this country so you can help your children.

The advice in this presentation comes from families similar to you. Refugees and Asylum seekers have collected all this advice for you because they want to help you to avoid problems. They remember how difficult it was to arrive in this country and not understand life here. This presentation tells you about family life in the United Kingdom.

Your life is probably difficult. You are new here. You have painful memories and you are learning English. Perhaps you are waiting for a decision on your asylum case. All of this is stressful and difficult.

You want your children to be safe, healthy and happy. All parents want the same. How can you help your children in this new country? You need to understand how this country is different from your home country. You need to understand the education system, local services and the local authority.

If you don't understand this country your family can have problems. You may have problems with other parents, with schools or with the local authority.

Here are two examples. How much freedom do you give your children? How do you punish your children if they misbehave? These examples can cause problems. Some behaviours that seem normal to you and normal in *your* country can cause problems in *this* country. British attitudes are probably different from your attitudes. British laws are probably different from the laws in your country. You need to understand this, and we hope that the information here will help you.

You love your child. We understand this. You want your child to have a good education and a good future. You want your child to feel safe and to make new friends. Next you will hear *how* you can keep your child safe in Britain. You will hear that parents do not do this alone. Parents receive help from The Local Authority.

A **handout** is a document with useful information. There are two handouts you can have after this presentation.

- One handout shows all this information.
- One handout shows extra information. It shows organisations and places you can go for help.

## **Slide 2: Protecting a child from physical and emotional harm**

### **2 Who helps keep children safe from physical and emotional harm?**



**Local Council**



**Police**



**Social Worker**



**Health Visitor**



**School**

2

Here you can see photos of all the different people who keep children safe and well. The Local Council, parents, the police, Social Workers, Health Visitors and schools. They all protect children. Of course the most important are the parents. But the organisations in the photos also have a legal duty to keep children safe and well. These organisations check on the children living in their local area. If they hear a child isn't safe, they must investigate. If they find a child needs protection, they can take the child away from its parents.

Of course nobody wants that to happen. This information will help you understand what the law is here, and what the local authority expects parents to do.

What is the Local Council? Every area has a Local Council. Another name for this is the Local Authority. 'Social Workers' are people who work for the local authority. Their job is to make sure children living in the area are safe and parents get the support they need to look after their children. A social worker will visit a family if they are worried about a child.

Health Visitors are people who work for the National Health Service, which we call the 'NHS'. They check the health of children up to 5 years old.

Of course Schools have a big role in a child's life. Schools also have legal duties to make sure children are safe and well.

And the Police also have a duty to protect people, including children.

If a person reports **a concern** about a child with these organisations, they have a duty to investigate and take action to protect the child. What is 'a concern'? A concern is a worry. If a person is concerned about a child it means they are worried.

This may be different to the way children are kept safe in your country. We hope this information will help you understand your responsibilities under the law here. And also your rights.

**Slide 3: The UK education system**

**3 UK Education System**

Stage	Child's age	Name of class	Exams
Nursery	3-4		
Primary School	4-5	Reception class	
	5-6	Year 1	
	6-7	Year 2	National Standard Assessment Test (SAT)
	7-8	Year 3	
	8-9	Year 4	
	9-10	Year 5	
Secondary School	10-11	Year 6	National Standard Assessment Test (SAT)
	11-12	Year 7	
	12-13	Year 8	
	13-14	Year 9	(Chose GCSE subjects)
	14-15	Year 10	
Post 16 education or training	15-16	Year 11	National General Certificate of Education exams (GCSE)
	16-17	Year 12	
	17-18	Year 13	National Advanced level exams (A levels) or vocational qualification



First let's look at the Education system in the UK.

School is not optional here. School is compulsory. If your child misses days of school it can cause problems. Children aged 5 to 16 years old must go to school. It is your job as a parent to ensure that your child goes to school.

If a child leaves school when they are 16 years old they must continue their education in a different place. For example in a college. They cannot stop their education until they are 18 years old.

School is optional for children under 5. Children under 5 can go to a nursery or pre-school. This is not compulsory.

Children start Primary School when they are 5 years old. They attend Primary School from age 5 to age 11.

Children change schools when they are 11 years old. They go to a secondary school from age 11 to age 16.

Is education free? In most schools yes. Most schools are state funded so you don't pay any fees. Independent schools or private schools charge fees. Universities and Colleges charge fees. The fees are called tuition fees.

Are schools mixed? Yes. Most schools teach boys and girls together.

All schools teach the same subjects, the same information and the same exams. This was decided by the government and is called the **Core Curriculum**. In addition, schools offer other subjects and activities.

Schools send parents information for example newsletters. Always try to read it. If you read letters you will know about opportunities for your child. Please ask someone to help you if your English is limited.

All children learn the same subjects until they are 13 years old. When they are 13 they choose which subjects to study. At age 13 they start studying for some important exams. They do their **GCSE** exams when they are 16. GCSE means General Certificate of Secondary Education.

After GCSE exams different children study very different things. Some children choose skills-based courses, **apprenticeships** and training. Some children study **A level qualifications**. A levels means Advanced level exams. After A levels, some children go to university.

## Slide 4: 1) Before your child is 5: Nursery

### 4 Before your child is 5 years old: Nursery



**Nursery: Ages 3 and 4 .**  
15 hours a week during  
school term



4

Every child starts going to school **full time** at age 5. Some children start school when they are 3 or 4 years old. It is optional and it is **part time**.

It is a good idea to send your child to school age 3 or 4. This way they begin gently, just part time, and later they feel more confident when full time school begins.

School for 3 and 4 year old children is called '**pre school**.' It is also called '**nursery**'. All children can have this education for free. It isn't full time, it is just 15 hours per week. Children can start nursery after their 3rd birthday.

Maybe you can have free childcare when your child is two years old. Some types of Asylum Support give free early-years childcare for 2 year olds.

In this photo you can see a Health Visitor. She is visiting a family at home. Her job is to check on the health of the baby. Health Visitors continue to visit until the child is five.

Health visitors work for the 'NHS'. The NHS is the National Health Service. The job of Health Visitor is done by nurses or midwives. Their job is to help families with small children. They can give you advice, for example they can advise you on how to feed your child and how to manage your child's behaviour.

Sometimes you may be surprised by the advice a health visitor gives you. For example here in the UK, babies start eating solid food when they are about 6 months old. Perhaps it is different in your country? Maybe in your country you give babies food much earlier or later than this. All countries are different.

If you are worried about your child, the health Visitor will be happy to help you. They can give advice and they can also tell you about local services.

## Slide 5: 2) Education from 5 to 11: Primary School

### 5 Education 5 to 11: Primary School



Homework



School meals



School uniform



Travel



4-5 years	Reception class	
5-6	Year 1	
6-7	Year 2	SAT Test
7-8	Year 3	
8-9	Year 4	
9-10	Year 5	
10-11	Year 6	SAT Test

Dressing up days



When do children start Primary School? All children start in September. The new school year always starts in the beginning of September.

The first year of school isn't called Year 1. It is called **Reception Class**. Your child will start Reception Class when they are 4 years old.

How old will your child's classmates be? Will they be older or younger than your child? This depends on the birthday date of your child. The oldest children in the class are the children born in September. The youngest children in the class are born in August.

There are three '**terms**' in one school year. The first term starts in September and finishes at the end of December. This is the **Autumn Term**. Next is the **Spring Term**, and after that is the **Summer term**. There is a long holiday at the end of every term (two weeks or more.) There is also a short holiday in the middle of the term. The name of this holiday is 'half term.' The half term holidays are one week long.

School is every day Monday to Friday starting before 9 in the morning and finishing after 3pm

After Reception Class, your child goes up to Year 1. They stay in Primary School until Year 6.

Which school will your child go to? Will it be very near to your house? Maybe, maybe not. The local council decides which school your child will go to. The school does not decide this. If you live near to a school, but that school is full, then your child will go to a different school. It may be possible to change this later. You should speak to the council.

Textbooks are free. The school gives children the text books they need. School uniforms are not free. Most families pay for school uniform. But if paying for the uniform is difficult for you, speak to the school. Sometimes the school can help, or charities can help. It is important that your child has the correct uniform. If a child comes to school looking dirty, or

with the wrong clothes, the school will worry about the child's safety. For this reason it is much better to speak to the school if you have difficulty paying for the uniform. The school will understand and they will try to help.

Children eat lunch at school. Some children have a **free school meal**. Do you receive Section 95 Home Office asylum support? Then your child can have free school meals. Do you receive Section 4 support? Then maybe your child can have free school meals. You should ask the school or the local council.

If your child needs to eat something different, tell the school. For example if your child has an allergy, or if your child needs to eat Halal food or vegetarian food. The school can change the school meal for your child's needs.

Does your child travel by bus or train to school? Children under 16 can pay a cheaper price. The name is a **reduced fare**. Children can have a reduced fare if you buy an **Under-16 Travel Card**. To buy this you need evidence of your child's date of birth and a photo. Your child should keep their card in their pocket or bag at all times. They may need to show it.

Homework is an important part of your child's education. Teachers expect you to help your child remember to do their homework. Check your child's school bag every day after school. You can see their homework this way, and you may also see letters from the school.

If you can't speak English well, it is difficult to help your child with their homework. The school will understand this and maybe they can help. Ask the school if they have a homework club. Also ask the school if there is a local community group which can help. Would you like to improve *your* English and maths? Sometimes you can find a free course at a local college.

All children have tests when they are 7 years old in maths, English and science. There are more tests age 11. The name of these tests is **SATs**. SATs means Standard Assessment Tests. Teachers use the test results to put the children in the right groups for learning. They put your child in a group with other children who have a similar level. The name of this learning group is a **set**.

Most days, children wear school uniform, but there are special days when children don't wear uniform. For example National Book Day in March. On National Book Day, children dress up as a character from a book. If your child wears school uniform on National Book Day, they will feel very different from their friends. There are other days when children don't wear uniform. It's a good idea for parents to read school information so that your child can participate.

Some children need extra help learning. Here are two examples.

1. Children who don't speak English at home need extra help. The name is **EAL**. EAL means **English as an Additional Language**. Schools give extra help to children with EAL.
2. Children who learn more slowly need extra help. The name is **SEN**. SEN means **Special Educational Needs**. Schools give extra help to children with SEN. One teacher organises this. Their job title is '**SEN Coordinator**.' Speak to the SEN Coordinator if you think your child needs extra help.

Some schools have another organisation that can help you. Its name is the **Ethnic Minority Achievement** team. They can give extra help to EAL children.

### Slide 6: Attendance at school

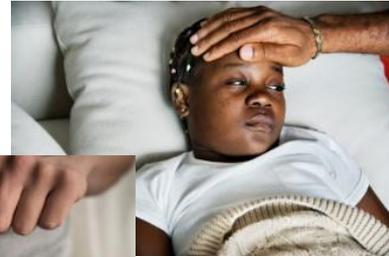
#### 6 Attendance at school



Name	Jan 06	Jan 07	Jan 08	Jan 09	Jan 10	Jan 11	Jan 12
ter							
arlotte							
mma							
Aailey							
Hunter							
Isabella							
Jada							
Joseph							
Kayleigh							

100%

Communicate with the school



Engage with the school

6

Under British law, parents are responsible for children going to school. Its not a choice!

One of the jobs of the school is to check a child is coming to school every day. It means they check your child's **attendance**. What does attendance mean? Good attendance means a child goes to school every day. Bad attendance means the child misses lots of days of school.

Of course if your child is ill they will miss school. The important thing is to **communicate** with the school. You should always phone and tell the school if your child is ill. Phone before 8.30am.

If your child misses a lot of school because of illness, the school will worry. If your child is ill and you forget to phone the school, the school will worry. They may visit your home. If the school is worried about your child, they can contact the Local Authority.

Sometimes parents have to pay **a fine** if their child has missed too much school . A fine is a financial penalty.

Here are some things you should do.

1. If your child is too ill for school, phone the school. Say "My child's ill today and they can't come to school." Say your child's name.
2. If your child will arrive late, phone the school and tell them.
3. Tell the teacher if your child has an injury. For example a bruise or a cut. Just explain how they hurt themselves.

If you don't tell the school, they will need to investigate to check if the child is safe.

Never take children on holidays during school time. Only go on holiday during school holidays.

What about special religious days? Can your child miss school if there is a festival for example Eid, Diwali or Nawroz? Or for a marriage or funeral? You have to ask for permission. Maybe the school will say yes, maybe not.

What about medical appointments? Can children miss school to see the dentist or the doctor? Try to book appointments after school. If you can't, tell the school.

Engage with the school. What does this mean? It means build a relationship with the school. It's good if you know the teachers and they know you. Say hello to them when you take your child to school and when you collect them. Speak to them about your child's progress and about any problems you are having. If you are invited to an appointment, don't miss it.

### **Slide 7: Role of schools in protecting children from harm ('Safeguarding')**

#### **7 Schools help protect children from harm ('Safeguarding' role)**



Schools will check for signs of abuse and neglect



Schools have to protect children. Here are four examples.

Number 1. If your child has an accident at school, the teachers have to tell you. They have to explain how it happened.

Number 2. If your child is being abused by another child, the school has to protect your child. Abuse could be physical or verbal. The school has to do something if another child is abusing your child.

Number 3. At the end of the day, young children can't go home alone. An adult must collect the child. A stranger cannot collect the child. It must be the parent. If you can't collect your child, you must give the name of the adult who will collect them. Most schools

ask parents every September to write the names of two adults who can collect the child if the parents are busy.

Number 4. Schools have to think about the journey to school and how children can travel safely. Can a child aged ten travel safely without an adult? What about age 11? The school decides. Every school has a policy on this. Most schools say that parents must accompany children under 12 to school and home again. Ask the school what age they recommend.

Another important thing that schools do to keep children safe is that they report it to the Local Authority if they think a child is not safe and well.

Some children are not safe at home. If a school realises that a child is not safe, happy and well, they pass this information on to the local authority. The local authority investigates. They will send a **Social Worker** to meet the family and check on the child.

Here are some signs which schools look for-

- If a child is dirty, or hungry, or extremely tired in class.
- If a child behaves strangely. For example they are often upset, or they are aggressive, or they don't participate in school activity.
- If a child often has injuries, because this can be a sign of physical abuse.
- If parents often forget to collect their child.
- If a young child travels alone to school.

If these things happen again and again, the school will notice. This is because they keep records on a computer.

Here is an example. If a child comes to school hungry on multiple occasions, the school will contact the parents to ask if everything is OK at home. Maybe this family needs help? Professionals will try to help. These professionals are from the **Early Help** team. They will make a support plan for that family.

The worst thing this family can do is reject the offer of help and support. If the family refuse to cooperate with the Early Help team, next they will hear from a Social Worker. This is because if the family keep silent or don't cooperate with the Early Help team, then the team can't be sure the child is safe.

Here is another example. Imagine if a child says "My mother hit me." This is more serious than a child being hungry. In this case, the school don't contact the Early Help team. Instead they contact a Social Worker immediately.

In both of these examples there is a possibility that the child could be '**taken into care.**' This means that the child stops living with their parents. Social Workers try to help families to stay together by helping the parents. But eventually, if a child is not safe and well at home, the Local Authority must take the child into care. This is the law.

In the examples above, how can the parents avoid losing their child? This is what they need to do-

- Always talk to the Early Help team and Social Worker. Answer phone calls and attend appointments.
- Accept offers of help and support.

- Change their behaviour. For example, stop hitting the child.

Another thing you can do to help your child is give them enough sleep. Schools worry about children who are always too tired to learn well. The recommendation is that children who are 3 or 4 years old should sleep for 11 to 12 hours every night. Primary school children need to sleep between 9.5 and 11 hours. Secondary School children need between 9 and 9.5 hours of sleep.

### Slide 8: 3) Education from 11 to 16 : Secondary School

#### 8 Education 11 to 16: Secondary School



Chose subjects  
Chose future



11-12 years	Year 7	
12-13	Year 8	
13-14	Year 9	
14-15	Year 10	
15-16	Year 11	GCSE Exam

More  
Homework



GCSE  
exams

After primary school, children go on to **Secondary School**.

Children start Secondary School When they are 11. Secondary school starts with Year 7 and finishes with Year 11.

How does your child get a place at secondary school? It doesn't happen automatically. You must fill in the form. If you forget, you may have problems.

What if the school you want is in a different area with a different council? How do you apply? You apply through your local council.

The form asks you to write the name of the school you prefer for your child. The council will try to give your child a place at the school. Sometimes there is not enough space for all the children. If that happens to you, your child may be sent to a different school in a different area.

What if you are not happy with the decision? You can appeal if you think the council decision is wrong. Ask the ethnic minority achievement team for more information and help.

Children have more homework at Secondary School. Children should do all their homework. Teachers will expect you to help your child. You should remind your child to do their homework on time. How much homework do children have in Secondary school? At first your child will probably have 1 or 2 hours of homework every day. When they are 14 this will increase to two or three hours.

If a child keeps forgetting to do their homework, the teacher will probably ask you to come to school and talk about the problem.

Many schools have a homework club where children do their homework. It happens after school with teachers there to help. These clubs can be very useful.(note)  
When a child is in Year 9 – when they're 13 or 14 – they need to make Important decisions about what subjects to study next. They will study their chosen subjects in year 10 and 11, and at the end of year 11 they will do important exams. The name of the exams is **GCSE**. GCSE means General Certificate of Secondary Education. All children do English, Maths and Science, but they can choose the other subjects.

You should help your child decide which subjects to do, because this will affect their adult life. GCSE results come out in August. The result is based on children's exam performance and their course work. A pass is a grade 4. The best grade is 9 and the lowest grade is 1.

If a child has good GCSE grades, they have more choice about what to study next. For example, imagine that a girl wants to do A level biology. Without a good GCSE grade in biology she can't continue to study this subject at A level. She also needs to have 5 or more GCSEs with grade 4 or higher. If she doesn't have 5 good GCSEs she can't do any A levels and she will have to either choose a different path, or repeat the GCSEs.

The most important GCSEs are English and maths. If a child passes 5 GCSEs this is probably good enough to get a place at a **Further Education College**.

After GCSEs, some children stay in the same school. If the school has a **Sixth Form**, children can stay in the same school. In some schools this is not possible because the school has no Sixth Form.

If the school has a Sixth Form, the child can stay there if they like. Or they can move to a college. The name is **Sixth Form College**. Another name is **Further Education College**.

## Slide 9: 4) Education and training over 16 and up to 18

### 9 Education and training: 16 to 18

16 years	Year 12	
17	Year 13	GSCE A level exams



6<sup>th</sup> Form College

Further Education College

Apprenticeship

Training



After 16, children have to continue with education. It could be full time or part time. There are three different paths.

1. If they stay in full time education they could do **A levels**, or they could do NVQs. People who want to go to university usually study A levels. **NVQ** means National Vocational Qualification. People learn **skills** on an NVQ course, for example how to be an electrician or a hairdresser.
2. They can do an **Apprenticeship** or a **Traineeship**. This is a way to learn a skill and work at the same time. Apprenticeships last between 1 and 5 years and the young person earns money whilst studying. A Traineeship lasts 6 months or less. It's a course with work experience. After the traineeship the person can find a job or start an apprenticeship.
3. They can study part time and work part time. The work could be paid or unpaid (unpaid work is called **volunteering**.)

If your child wants to go to university, they will need to study A levels. With good A level grades they can get a place at a university. Most A level students do 3 subjects. For example biology, physics and chemistry. A small number of students do 4 or 5 A levels but this is unusual. A levels are difficult and 3 subjects is enough.

A level courses last 2 years with exams at the end. Students begin in year 12 when they are 16 years old. In May and June of year 13 they do the exams and they learn their results in August. If their exam results are good enough they begin university in September. Most students are aged 18 when they start university.

If a child has a grade C or higher they have passed their A level. If they have grade D or E they have failed. The highest grade they can possibly get is an A\*.

If a student doesn't pass 3 A levels what can they do? They can do a Foundation Degree. Or they can find another course to do.

It is difficult for children to decide which job they would like to have in the future and which subjects to study. Schools help with this. Schools give careers advice, starting in Year 8.

You can also help your child to make decisions. But remember that when they are 16 they don't have to follow your advice. A 16 year old is considered to be old enough to make decisions independently. You are not responsible for their decisions any more.

### Slide 10: 5) Education after 18

#### 10 Education and Training after 18



University

Sanctuary  
Scholarship



Further Education colleges and vocational training

10

School is free but university is expensive. University courses are called degrees. A degree is the name of the qualification. Most degree courses last 3 years. One year of study usually costs £9000. A degree usually costs £28,000. In addition, there are living costs, for example food and transport. Living costs are more expensive if a student goes to university in a different city.

How can asylum seeker families pay for this? Some people can borrow money, the name is a **Student Loan**. But Asylum Seekers can't apply for Student Loans. They have to wait until they have permission to remain in the UK. However, some universities offer **Sanctuary Scholarships** for asylum seekers. If your child gets a Sanctuary Scholarship, they can study for free. Search 'Sanctuary Scholarships' on the internet to check which Universities offer them. Some universities in the North East offer Sanctuary Scholarships. If you receive Leave to Remain, or when your child is 18, ask for advice.

Students usually apply to universities *before* they know their A level results. When the results come out they discover if they have the necessary grades to go to the university they prefer.

Students don't apply to universities directly. They apply via **UCAS**. UCAS means the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service. On one application form the student writes the names of all the universities they want to apply to.

Another option may be a Further Education College. After A levels some students continue at a Further Education College. Ask the college if they have any courses your child can do for free.

If your child has tried to get a free university place and been unsuccessful, this will be a difficult time for them. It is difficult because their friends continue studying and get jobs. If you are still waiting for a decision on your asylum case, your child can't work. They will need something meaningful to do. What about **volunteering**? Volunteering is unpaid work. It impresses future employers. It can also help your child to feel more positive about their life if they are busy gaining experience or helping other people. Ask about opportunities at the local volunteering office

### Slide 11: Protecting your child from bullying, hate, cyber abuse

#### 11 Protecting your child from bullying, hate and cyber abuse



Bullying at school



Hate



Cyber abuse



Harmful  
online  
material

What is bullying? **Bullying** is when a child hurts another child intentionally and repeatedly. The abuse could be verbal or physical.

It will help if your child knows that they can speak to you. Always listen to your child and ask them how they are. Sometimes children feel afraid to speak about their abuse.

It is stressful for parents if their child is bullied. You may want to speak directly with the parents or the other child but this is a bad idea. It can cause more problems. The best thing is to speak to the school.

Begin by speaking to your child's class teacher. You could start small, for example ask the teacher to notice how the children behave together. Or ask the teacher for ideas on what to do.

If you feel like the school is ignoring this problem, continue to tell the teachers about it. Schools cannot ignore bullying. Ask to see the school's **behaviour policy**. Every school has a behaviour policy. It is a document that says how the teachers will manage behaviour

problems. Another good person to speak to is the head of year. Their job is more senior than a teacher.

It can be a good idea to write a daily record of the bullying. This is evidence. Write what happened. Also write the times, dates and the names of witnesses.

Sometimes, if bullying is very stressful, children refuse to go to school. If this happens, it is very important to speak to the school. Explain the problem. Don't keep your child at home without explanation. The school could contact a Social Worker if they don't understand why your child is missing school.

Remember that the school has a legal duty to keep children safe. This is called a 'duty of care.' If you tell the school that your child is being bullied they must take action. If they don't it is a breach of their legal duty. You can make a complaint against the school. Another option is to explain things to the local Ethnic Minorities Achievement Team. They should help.

Some forms of bullying are illegal. You should go to the police if the bullying is illegal. It is illegal to steal or to use physical violence. Repeated harassment is illegal too.

If a person is bullied or attacked because of their religion or race, this is very serious. It is called **hate**. If you or your children experience hate, tell the police. Hate is illegal.

Sometimes bullying can happen via a mobile phone or the internet. This is called **cyber bullying and abuse**. Another problem with mobile phones is that children can see things on the internet which they should not see. For example, images of sex or violence, or extreme opinions.

It is important to talk to your child about these dangers. Encourage them to talk to you about anything bad they experience online.

How can you protect your children online? There are tools you can install on phones and computers. For example, apps and filters. There are organisations that give advice. They can also help you report incidents to the authorities.

## Slide 12: Helping your child stay inside the law

### 12 Help your child stay within the law



No alcohol before 18



No smoking under 16



No sex or marriage before 16



No illegal drugs

12

Here are some examples of things that children shouldn't do. They can have problems with the police if they-

- Spray graffiti
- Are very noisy
- Break things intentionally
- Verbally abuse people.

The name of this is '**Anti-Social Behaviour**' or 'ASB'. Police will take action against young people who commit ASB. Punishments start small but increase if the child doesn't stop.

The minimum age for buying **alcohol** is 18. Children can smoke when they are 16 but they cannot buy **cigarettes** until they are 18. Only adults can buy cigarettes. If a person looks 25 years old (or less), they have to show an identity card to the shop assistant if they want to buy alcohol or cigarettes. It is against the law for an adult to buy alcohol for a person under 18.

You should warn your child about drug dealers. A drug dealer sells **illegal drugs**. If a person uses, carries or sells illegal drugs the police can arrest them. Sometimes drug dealers force children to deliver drugs. They begin by offering free drugs to the child. Next they tell the child to deliver some drugs to a customer. If the child refuses to deliver the drugs, the dealer threatens violence.

Police can help you understand this. They can give you advice if you are worried.

**Sex** under 16 is illegal. Imagine a girl is 15 and she wants to have sex with her boyfriend. If the boyfriend is over 16 he breaks the law if he has sex with her. Maybe he thinks she is 16? This is not a valid excuse in the law.

Unwanted sexual activity is called rape or sexual assault. Rape and sexual assault are crimes. The maximum prison sentence is 15 years.

In England, the minimum legal age to get **married** is 16. Your child cannot marry without your consent until they are 18 years old.

### Slide 13: Managing expectations: 'Sleepovers'

#### 13 Manage Expectations: Sleepovers and 'must have's'



What is a **sleepover**? A sleepover is a party where friends are invited to stay the night at a friend's house. For example, to celebrate a birthday. Sleepover parties are popular in the UK, especially with girls. Most children think sleepovers are normal.

What will you say if your child wants a sleepover, or is invited to a sleepover? It is a good idea to plan in advance what you will say. This is completely your decision. Perhaps you feel too anxious about your child's safety?

If you say no to a sleepover, your child will probably feel disappointed. Especially if all their friends think sleepovers are normal. It is a good idea to think of an alternative activity. For example, can you arrange a daytime activity with your child's friends?

If you allow your child to go to a sleepover, it is OK to ask for the name and address of the parents. You can ask for the phone number too.

What if you host a sleepover in your house? Remember that children should not watch films or TV with adult content. For example, evening television can be too sexy or violent for children. Cable TV and Sky TV show adult content after 8pm. Channels 1 to 5 show adult content after 9pm.

Some schools may organise a sleepover at the school. They will give children the 'sleeping bags' and teachers will be there all night. The children are supervised at all times.

Another problem you may have is when your child wants to buy things. Children usually want to have the same things as their friends. For example, expensive trainers or a new mobile phone. How can you buy these things when you are receiving asylum support and not allowed to work? It's impossible.

Children can feel very frustrated about this. It may be a good idea to talk to your child honestly. If they understand the financial situation they will understand the reason why you can't buy these things. They will know that you love them but don't have enough money. This may be better for the child.

#### Slide 14: Keeping children safe in the house

##### 14 Supervising children: at home



14

Now we'll look at how parents keep their children safe while they are in the house or playing outside.

We'll look at how parents **supervise** their child. 'Supervise' means how parents watch children to check they stay safe.

And then we'll look at how parents **discipline** their child. Discipline means the way parents manage their children if they behave badly.

This information is really important. The asylum seekers that collected this information really want you to understand this because they were surprised by this when they arrived in the UK.

In the UK children are supervised a lot. Children do not spend much time alone. In the house or outside the house.

Also, physical punishments are not used on children who behave badly.

In the past it was different. Children had more freedom, and it was normal in many families to smack naughty children. This has all changed. Refugees and Asylum seekers are often surprised by this. These are very important differences. You need to know the law.

First you are going to hear British ideas about keeping children safe inside the home.

In the UK, child safety is not only your responsibility. It is also the responsibility of the local authority and the police. This includes inside the home. If a child isn't safe in the home the local authority can take the child away.

Parents need to supervise children a lot in this country. If a parent does not supervise a child enough, people will say the parent is **negligent**. The law says that parents cannot leave their children unsupervised.

Here are some examples.

- Babies and very young children should never be alone in the house. You cannot quickly go to the local shop without them. Take the children with you.
- It is not a good idea for a child under 12 to be alone in the house or to look after younger children, with no adult nearby. Some children are very mature, but most children under 12 are not mature enough for this.
- Children under 12 should not cook independently, without adult supervision.
- Children under 16 should not spend all night in a house without adults.
- Children aged 16 to 18 can be alone all night, but not frequently and not for many nights.

So how can you know if your child is old enough to be unsupervised? The law is not specific about age because all children are different. The law asks parents to think about the capabilities of their child. It is against the law to leave a child alone if they will be at risk.

Here is what you should think about.

- Think about the child's capabilities. Will they know what to do in an emergency? What if something scary or unexpected happens? Will your child know what to do?
- Think about the location. Is it safe? What are the dangers? For example, could a child fall out of an open window? Is there a sharp knife on the table?
- Think about your availability. Can they easily contact you if they need you? Do they know how? Are you nearby? The child should always know how to contact you or another trusted person.

If your children are unsupervised, somebody may worry about them. They may tell a social worker. The social worker has to investigate. They will ask you to explain why you decided it was safe to leave your children unsupervised on that occasion. Police can prosecute parents if they think the children are not kept safe.

**Slide 15: Supervising children outside the home**

**15 Supervising children: outside the home**



15

If young children are playing outside, they must be supervised by an adult. Young children can't cross roads alone or go to the park with friends and no adults. Children need to learn how to cross a road safely. You have to teach them how.

It may be very different in your home country. Perhaps children have responsibility when they are younger? It is very important that you understand how different it is here.

**Slide 16: The law about children and cars**

**16 The Law about children in cars**



**Baby Car Seats**



Children must be in correct seat with the right restraints

16

You should also never leave your child in a car with no adult. Not even for 5 minutes. You should not smoke in a car if children are with you. If you and your children are with a smoker, do not let them smoke in the car. It is your responsibility to protect your child from

cigarette smoke. This is the law. Opening the windows makes no difference, it is always illegal to smoke in a car with children. E-cigarettes are different. It is legal to smoke e-cigarettes in a car with children.

Smoking is not allowed in schools.

Car accidents are dangerous for children. You can protect your child by using the correct **child seat**. The law says a child must have a car seat that is the correct size.

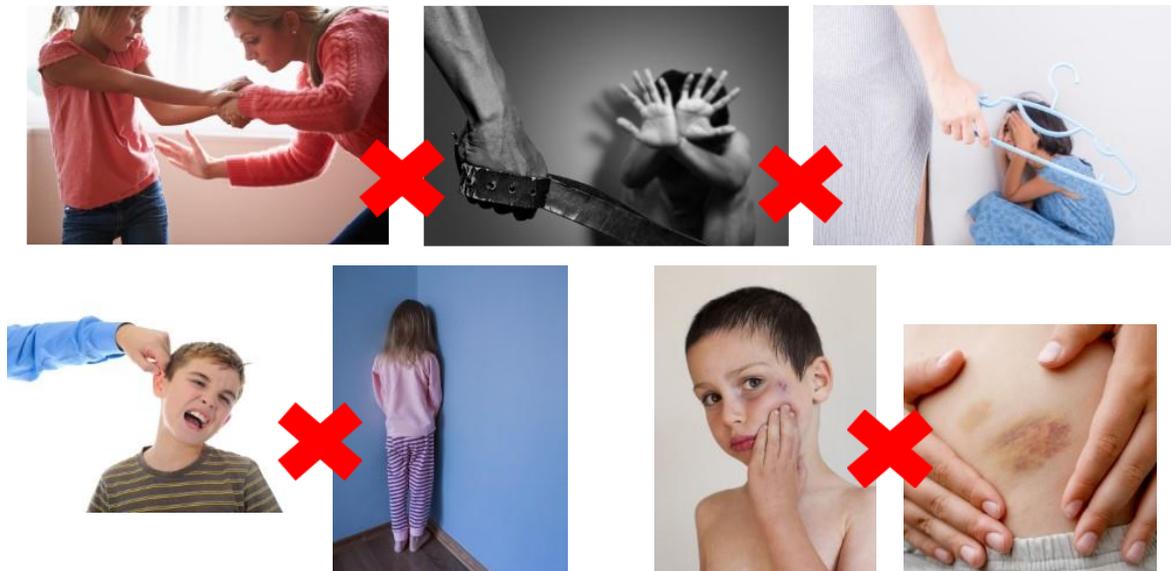
- Babies under 15 months must travel in a baby seat. The baby seat must be rear-facing. (Rear-facing means that the baby is travelling backwards.)
- After 15 months children can use a child-seat. It isn't rear-facing. They must use this until they're 12 years old OR until they are 135 centimetres tall.
- Big children don't need a car seat but they must wear a seat belt. This is children over 12 years old or over 135cm tall.

There are three exceptions to this law. It is legal to travel without a child seat if-

- The journey is short and unexpected. Or-
- It is an emergency. Or -
- You are in a taxi with no child seat.

### Slide 17: The law about disciplining children

#### 17 The Law about disciplining children



Many problems arise if Local Authorities learn that parents use **physical punishment**. What is physical punishment? For example, if your child misbehaves and you smack or hit them, this is physical punishment. In many countries it is OK to smack children or use other physical punishment. It was the same here but now it is not accepted. It is very important that you understand the consequences if you use physical punishment when your children misbehave. If you physically punish your child in the UK, it is called abuse.

Here are the reasons why the law changed.

Children who receive physical punishment can experience psychological problems later. Also, if parents use physical punishment it gives a bad message. It gives the child the message that it's OK to use violence to solve problems, and it's OK to use violence to make a person do what you want.

***Do not use any physical punishment to discipline your child. And don't threaten your child with physical punishment either.*** If you use physical punishment, your children could be taken away. Health Workers, Social Workers, Teachers and the Police have a duty to act if they are worried about a child. If they have information that a child may be at risk of abuse in the home, they must investigate.

It is especially bad if you use an object to smack your child. For example a belt or a spoon. Or if you say you will hurt them with the object. For example, don't say "*if you do that again I'll smack you with this spoon.*"

What is physical punishment? All of these punishments are physical-

- smacking, slapping, hitting with a hand or an object
- kicking, shaking or throwing.
- scratching, pinching, biting.
- pulling hair or ears.
- forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions (for example standing) for a long time
- burning, scalding.
- forcing a child to eat something.

Don't use these punishments to discipline your child. In this country these punishments are called abuse.

No punishments should cause marks on the skin. For example-

- swelling
- bruises,
- cuts or grazes,
- reddening of the skin,
- abrasions,
- Scratches.

If a child often has marks on the skin, teachers will ask questions. Repeated marks on the skin can be a sign of abuse.

Everyone can contact local authorities if they are worried about a child. People can contact them if they *see* abuse, or *suspect* it, or *hear about* it. If a person works for the local authority, they are required by law to do this. For example, if a person works for a school and they see you smack your child, they must report it. It is a compulsory part of their job.

The first step is that the Police or a social worker will investigate. They speak to the parents and the child. If they think that the abuse is real AND if they think that the abuse will continue, they have the power to remove the child from their family. The child will be taken away to live in another place.

If you get a visit from the police or a social worker this is what you should do.

Listen to the social worker and speak to them about your situation. Social workers prefer to leave a child with his or her parents, but they can only do this if the child is safe. The social worker's job is to learn the child's real situation. Their job is to protect the child. If you show them that the child is safe with you, the social worker will be satisfied. If you keep silent and if you don't cooperate they can't do their job.

Show the social worker that you want your child to be safe. Answer all their questions. Build a relationship with the social worker. If necessary, change your behaviour. The social worker should help you to do this. Why is the social worker worried about your child? Maybe you are punishing your child physically? Tell the social worker that you want to find new ways to discipline your child. The social worker's job is to support you and help you.

Your situation is difficult. It is stressful to wait for a decision on an asylum case. In addition, you experienced trauma and loss before you arrived here. When children misbehave, stressed parents feel angry more quickly. Teenagers often feel very angry too. Teenagers who have experienced trauma find it more difficult to control their anger. If everyone in your house feels angry and stressed, how can you stay in control? It is especially difficult. You may need help.

In the next section you will hear about non-physical methods for controlling a child's behaviour.

### Slide 18: Alternative ways to discipline a child

#### 18 Alternative ways of disciplining a child



Images from [www.verywellfamily.com/](http://www.verywellfamily.com/)



Local Council  
Early Help  
Team

18

How do parents discipline their children without using physical punishments?

The **Early Help Team** can help. They are professionals who work for the local council. They organise lessons, called workshops. In the workshop they teach alternative methods

for managing a child's behaviour. If you prefer, they can visit your home to help you use these methods. They help mothers *and* fathers.

How can you contact the Early Help Team? You can ask a person who works for the local authority, for example a teacher or Health Visitor. Or you can contact the local council.

The Early Help Team can help you with many problems. They can help with-

- children's behaviour
- family relationships
- parenting
- living with little money
- Things you need in the house
- finding other professionals who can help.

Instead of punishing children, the alternative is to teach them. You teach your children which behaviour is good. The child learns that all their behaviour has consequences. Good behaviour results in rewards. Bad behaviour has negative consequences, but not violent consequences.

Here are 7 methods that parents use if a child misbehaves-

1. **Use 'Time out.'** Remove the child from the activity and ask them to stay quiet for a while. This will help them learn how to calm down.
2. **Take away a privilege.** A privilege is something nice, for example a favourite toy. Explain that they can have the toy again if they behave well.
3. **Ignore mild misbehaviour.** Often, a child misbehaves because they want the parent to look at them. They want attention. Don't respond, don't look, don't listen. Only pay attention again if they behave nicely. Over time they will learn that polite and positive behaviour is the best way to get attention from you.
4. **Provide logical consequences.** For example, if your child refuses to tidy their toys in the morning, don't allow them to play with those toys in the afternoon. Slowly children learn that things they do have consequences.
5. **Allow for natural consequences.** This gives the child an opportunity to learn from their mistake. For example, if they say they don't want to wear a coat, allow the child to go outside without a coat and feel cold. Keep the child safe but let them learn.
6. **Give rewards for good behaviour.** For example, if your child fights with their brother or sister, give a reward if they don't fight. Tell them in advance about the reward. Rewards help children to focus on what they need to do to earn privileges. This is better than emphasising their bad behaviour.
7. **Praise good behaviour.** Notice if your child is good and tell them you are happy with them. For example, when your child is playing nicely with others. Say, "You're doing such a good job sharing your toys today." Another good idea is to give the most attention and praise to the children who are following the rules and behaving well. If there is a group of children, ignore the child who misbehaves and praise the children who behave well. Don't give a child much attention until they start behaving well.

**Slide 19: Relationships between parents at home**

**19 Relations between Parents at home**



Relationships between parents are important too.

If the adults have a relationship that involves abuse, and the child sees or hears this, it can harm the child. Abuse can be verbal, physical or emotional.

Social workers worry about children who live in homes with domestic abuse. A child is considered unsafe if they live with domestic abuse.

There are different types of domestic abuse. Here is a list.

- Physical abuse is physical violence, for example punching.
- Verbal abuse is shouting and screaming.
- Sexual abuse is unwanted sex.
- Psychological or emotional abuse
- Threats and intimidation
- Controlling and coercive behaviour. For example, one person stops the other from having friends, going places or making their own choices.

Police and Social workers investigate domestic abuse. Domestic abuse is against the law. Children suffer emotionally if they live with domestic abuse. For this reason, children are taken away from their parents if domestic abuse continues and doesn't stop. If your relationship with your partner is abusive, you may lose your children. Another possibility is that the social workers make the abuser go and live separately. The social workers may insist on this.

Why do Social Workers take children away from a family with domestic abuse? It is because of scientific research. Research shows children are psychologically damaged if they see or hear domestic abuse. Here is some more information about this.

If the children are young they will probably become anxious. As a result, they can have stomach aches or wet the bed at night. Or maybe they can't sleep, or they get very angry. Some children behave like babies when they feel anxious.

If the children are older, they react differently.

Boys usually become aggressive and disobedient. Some boys copy the violence they see in the parents. Older boys may miss school and start using alcohol or drugs. They use drugs and alcohol to forget traumatic experiences.

Girls more often hide their bad feelings, they keep their feelings inside. They can be very anxious or depressed. They may say they feel ill. Some girls have an **eating disorder**, for example anorexia. Some girls cut their skin and some take an overdose of pills. Girls who see their father abusing their mother often choose a bad husband or partner later.

Children can have **PTSD**. PTSD means 'Post-traumatic Stress Disorder' This can happen to children who experience abuse or see abuse. Here is a list of symptoms of PTSD-

- Nightmares
- Flashbacks
- Headaches
- Other physical pains
- Fear of sudden noises

Children often have bad school results if they live with domestic abuse. They can't concentrate on studying. Or they refuse to go to school, maybe because they want to protect the abused parent.

It can be difficult to have a happy relationship with your partner if you have experienced bad things that forced you to leave your country. And if you are anxious, waiting to hear about your asylum decision are an asylum seeker. If you have a stressful life with many worries, it is normal to feel angry or get angry quickly. And relationships are hard if you have to spend all day together because you can't work and have nothing to do. You can't work so you are together with your partner all the time. It can help if you go out more. If you make friends or find local activities.

Where can you go? Which local activities can you participate in? You can find ideas in two places. You can look on our website. You can also look at the pages from your housing provider. The name of these pages is a Local Welcome Pack.

Are you a victim of domestic abuse? You can get help. Phone the Asylum Help line. The number is in the handout. This is not the only place that can help you, there are other specialist services for victims. You can protect your child by asking for help with this problem.

## Slide 20: The law on Female Genital Mutilation or Female Circumcision

### 20 The Law on Female Genital Mutilation 'FGM' (Female circumcision)



FGM is illegal

Up to 14  
years prison  
for offenders



20

FGM is against the law in the UK. FGM means **Female Genital Mutilation**. Another name for this is Female Circumcision.

When a girl under the age of 16 experiences FGM, this is child abuse. It is illegal because it causes physical and psychological harm. This harm lasts a long time.

A person that performs FGM is breaking the law. But also the people who arrange FGM or help it to happen are breaking the law. It is a criminal offense to encourage FGM. It is also a criminal offense to take a girl to another country to have FGM. The maximum prison sentence is 14 years. The child is separated from her parents and taken into care.

Some refugees have campaigned against FGM in their home countries and they continue to campaign here. If you are worried that your child is at risk of FGM, you can protect them. There are organisations to help you protect your child. Some organisations are local, some are national. They help parents understand the harm caused by FGM.

What about women and girls who have already had FGM? They can get help from the NHS. They can also get help from specialist agencies.

**Slide 21: The child's voice**

**21 The Child's Voice**



The child's voice will be considered in safeguarding decisions about their future

21

The child's voice is important. What does the child think? How does the child feel? This is called the child's voice.

When professionals are deciding what is best for the child, they must think about what the child wants. Social Workers and the Police will talk to the child and listen to them. What does the child want for their future?

Of course children can't have everything they want. Some things are not allowed and children can't do everything they would like. But good parenting includes good communication between the parent and the child. If parents listen to their child and understand their child, they can help the child. Parents can guide the child toward a better future if they know and understand their child.

## Slide 22: Parents' rights

### 22 Parents Rights



You have the right to ask for an interpreter

Only sign a document if you are sure what it says and what will happen



22

What is a child protection case? A child protection case is if Social Workers become involved in keeping your child safe. There is a possibility your child will go into care and stop living with you. What are your rights if that happens to you?

You have the right to understand the information the social worker is giving you, including documents. You have the right to communicate your feelings fully and your explanation fully. This means you have the right to an **interpreter**. You don't pay for your interpreter.

You have the right to say no if a professional asks you to sign a document. Only sign it if you understand it fully. You should understand what the document says AND what the consequences will be if you sign it.

You have the right to **legal representation**. Legal representation means that a solicitor argues your case. The Social Worker should give you information about this. You can also get information on this from the local Citizens Advice Bureau ('CAB'). Another option is to contact a local solicitor yourself. You will need a solicitor that practices Family Law.

A solicitor is important because they will listen to what you say and help explain your point of view to your local council. The law about children being taken into care is very complicated. Your solicitor can explain it to you. They also make sure your local council is following the law.

Solicitors cost money. If you are receiving Home Office asylum support you may get legal representation for free. The Legal Aid scheme sometimes pays for solicitors.

Act quickly. Get legal representation and learn your rights as quickly as possible.

**Slide 23: Further information**



For leaflets summarising this information go to [www.nemp.org.uk/parenting-in-the-uk-leaflets/](http://www.nemp.org.uk/parenting-in-the-uk-leaflets/) and [www.nemp.org.uk/education-in-the-uk-leaflets/](http://www.nemp.org.uk/education-in-the-uk-leaflets/)

**THANK YOU FOR LISTENING**



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The Regional Refugee Forum North East membership of diverse refugee community organisations worked together to produce the content of this video. Thanks to English Unlocked for making this Simplified English version



A **handout** is a document with useful information. There are two handouts you can have after this presentation.

- One handout shows all this information.
- One handout shows extra information. It shows organisations and places you can go for help.

Thank you for listening.

'Parenting in the UK' is part of the NEMP Welcome & Induction Programme for recently arrived asylum seekers and refugees. This programme aims to provide an introduction to life in the UK, insights into social norms, expectations, rights and responsibilities and the tools to navigate unfamiliar systems.

Go to [www.nemp.org.uk/resources/](http://www.nemp.org.uk/resources/) for further videos available in English and other languages on:

- **Looking After Your Health**
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