



## PLANNING FOR LIFE AFTER 16

### Personal Safety

#### What is Personal Safety?

Everyday life involves a number of potential dangers that can threaten our security and wellbeing. Personal safety is about:

- > Being aware of the risks
- > Knowing how to avoid them if possible, and failing that,
- > Knowing how to limit the harm to yourself and others.

When your children are young, it is largely your responsibility to make sure they are safe. But as they grow up and begin to do things on their own or with friends, you won't always be there to protect them. So the best way you can help is by making sure they know how to keep themselves safe.

#### Recognising the risks

- Going out on your own or with friends

This can cover everything from meeting friends at a local café, to staying out late at parties or rock concerts or even going away on holiday by yourself. Obviously, different situations will require different strategies, but at its most basic level, this includes things like:

- > Letting someone know where you are going and what time you expect to be back
- > Remembering to take along your bus pass (if you have one), mobile phone, door key and enough money to get home again if need be.

- Finding your way around

This might be on foot, bicycle, by car or public transport, and includes knowing:

- > Where you are going and how to get there
- > What to do if you get lost, feel unsafe, or something unexpected happens

The factsheets on *Public Transport* and *Driving* also contain some relevant safety information.

- Using the internet

This means things like:

- > Shopping online securely
- > Recognising and avoiding 'phishing' emails and scams
- > Using social media and mobile phones safely

These issues are covered in more detail in the factsheet *Internet Safety*.

- Bullying and harassment

Bullying and harassment may occur in many situations: at school, work, online etc. and can cause considerable distress. Young people need to know how to recognise it, avoid it and what to do if they are affected. Bear in mind, too, that in some cases bullying and harassment may amount to disability discrimination. For more information about this, see the factsheet *Education – Disability Discrimination*, or contact the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Their details are listed below.

#### Learning about Personal Safety

Young people with speech and language difficulties are often particularly vulnerable, for a number of reasons:

- > They may find it harder to recognise a potentially risky situation
- > Their immaturity and weaker social skills may make them more of a target
- > Their poor communication skills will make it harder for them to negotiate their way out of a tricky situation
- > They may find it hard to remember what to do if they get stuck, or feel uncomfortable

This means that they will probably need to learn and practise personal safety skills quite intensively, but you should not assume this will happen as a matter of course. Special schools or units and special needs youth groups may provide the high level of support most young people with speech and language difficulties need. Some mainstream schools or youth groups may also offer intensive personal safety training to vulnerable young people, perhaps as part of social skills courses. See the factsheet *Making and Maintaining Friendships* for more information about social skills courses. Most, though, will probably only routinely offer occasional, one-off sessions.

If your son or daughter is particularly vulnerable, it is advisable to talk to their school and/or Connexions advisor (if they have one), to find out what personal safety training they will receive. If it is not adequate, ask whether they can access a higher level of support and remember that, if so, their statement and/or transition plan should specify precisely what input they will receive and how it will be delivered (i.e. where, when, by whom and for how long).

If your son or daughter does not have a statement, you could still ask the school to include personal safety training on their IEP. Alternatively, if they need considerably more help than other young people their age, they might be eligible for a statement and/or enhanced Connexions support. See the factsheets *The Transition Process* and *The Connexions Service* for more information, or ring the **Afasic Helpline** on **0300 666 9410**.

#### How parents can help

Make sure you find out what your son or daughter will be learning at school or elsewhere, so that you can reinforce and supplement the lessons at home as required. One useful approach is to have a 'family agreement' setting out what everybody will do in certain situations. This might say, for example, that if you are going to be home more than half an hour later than expected, you will ring to let the rest of the family know.

If you feel there are still a lot of gaps in your son or daughter's knowledge, or you need extra help, there are lots of resources available online, and a number of useful links are listed below. Some contain information and advice for parents to pass onto their children. Others are designed for young people to read themselves, but if your son or daughter finds this difficult, you might prefer to go through the information with them.

### Sources of further information and advice

#### - General Personal Safety

- > The **Afasic Youth Info Pack** contains tips for young people on bullying (in section 7) and general personal safety (in section 9) – see below for details of how to obtain a copy
- > Most **police forces** contain information on personal safety on their websites.
- > The **Metropolitan Police** site contains lots of advice about personal safety generally, internet safety specifically, and includes some easy read factsheets: <http://tinyurl.com/c2s8hl7>. It also contains a section specifically for young people: <http://safe.met.police.uk/>.
- > The **West Midlands** police site includes a download entitled **Keep Safe**, an accessible guide to personal safety for people with learning disabilities, published by the Home Office: <http://tinyurl.com/d99gmag>. It also has a separate site aimed at students: <http://tinyurl.com/b38g4lx>.
- > The **Suzy Lamplugh Trust** is a charity that specialises in personal safety. Its website contains a range of useful information including tips on various aspects of personal safety, a directory of personal safety apps and links to sources of further information: <http://tinyurl.com/cq3gef9>
- > **Transport for London** contains a lot of advice on walking, cycling and using public transport safely. While the information is designed specifically for London, most of it will also apply elsewhere: <http://tinyurl.com/aw7jhax>
- > **The Site**, a website run by the charity YouthNet for students and other young people aged 16 – 25, contains a range of information on personal safety, see: <http://tinyurl.com/c9tkfdt> (for general safety advice), <http://tinyurl.com/c8ynr2m> (clubbing and partying), <http://tinyurl.com/cu5rmwv> (music festivals), <http://tinyurl.com/dy7lkr6> (drink and drugs), <http://tinyurl.com/cfthrxr> (safe sex) and <http://tinyurl.com/b97jjjb> (online safety). Young people can also submit their own questions or join a discussion board: [www.thesite.org/community](http://www.thesite.org/community).
- > **Jnrspace.info** contains some accessible information on keeping safe in a range of situations. While designed for 6 – 12 year olds, it might also be suitable for some younger teenagers: [www.jnrspace.info](http://www.jnrspace.info)

#### - Bullying and harassment

- > **Childline**, a confidential service for young people under 19, has a website with lots of useful advice: <http://tinyurl.com/yz2cc7a> (online and mobile safety), <http://tinyurl.com/bxrqu4t> (bullying) and <http://tinyurl.com/at338bv> (abuse and safety). Young people can also ring Childline, talk to a counsellor online, contribute to the message board, send a query by e-mail or read the answers to other people's queries. For more information, see: <http://tinyurl.com/yjrqnhh>.
- > **Kidscape**, the anti-bullying organisation, has a website with a section for parents and a separate one for young people: [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk). It has a range of books, leaflets and other resources about bullying, safety, assertiveness and online bullying. It also has an anti-bullying helpline for parents: **08451 205 204** and confidential **youth2youth** helpline run by young people for young people: **0208 896 3675**.
- > **The Dyspraxia Foundation** has two downloads about bullying, one designed for parents and the other for children: <http://tinyurl.com/b78cdqz>
- > The **Equality and Human Rights Commission** website has information for young people about bullying, harassment, abuse and keeping safe: <http://tinyurl.com/ldolpcc>. It also has a telephone support service: **0800 800 0082**.

### Afasic Publications and Services

*Young Person's Identity Card*: £0.50

*Watch Your Language* – professionals' pack: £17.00

*The Parent's Voice: Advocating for your Child* – This booklet aims to encourage and empower parents to become involved in influencing and improving services for children and young people: £5.00

**Afasic Helpline** - Open 10.30 - 2.30, Monday - Friday, tel: **0300 666 9410** or **0207 490 9420/1**

Afasic - voice for life

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