



Recognising Early Signs of Risk

A practical guide for parents and carers

What this guide is for

Children and young people experience many changes as they grow. Most changes are a normal part of development, but sometimes patterns of behaviour can indicate that a child is under pressure or becoming vulnerable.

This guide helps parents and carers:

- notice early changes
- understand why these changes matter
- feel confident about what to do next

It is not designed to alarm or to label behaviour, but to support early awareness.

Early signs to notice

You might notice:

- changes in mood, confidence or behaviour
- increased secrecy or withdrawal
- sudden changes in friendships
- unexplained money or items
- increased time online or reluctance to talk about online activity
- changes in school attendance or engagement

No single sign means something is wrong. Patterns and changes over time are what matter.

What to do if you're unsure

- stay calm and curious
- keep communication open
- note what you are noticing
- talk to your child's school or college
- ask to speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Sharing concerns early helps schools offer support before issues escalate.



Prevention and protection begin with adult awareness

Free resources support awareness. Training supports understanding and confidence.