

'Stranger Danger' Top Tips



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Children, families & young people



1) WHO'S WHO?

A stranger is anyone that your child doesn't know or doesn't know very well. It's both common and dangerous for your child to think that 'strangers' look scary or sinister, like villains in films or cartoons. In a recent survey the majority of children aged 5 to 8 thought this. Play a game with your child and ask them to draw a stranger, it will help you reinforce that a stranger can look like anyone. Tell your child that they won't be able to tell if a stranger is nice or not, so all strangers should be treated in the same way.

2) DON'T GO - SAY NO!

If your child is approached by a stranger, encourage them to raise the alarm by saying 'NO' to draw attention. They should not be scared to do this and be told that it is the right thing to do. For children aged 3 to 4, be careful not to scare them too much but start with "there are bad people so it's very important you never..." All children should ask for help from other adults. Teach them to look out for people in uniforms such as police officers, or teachers and traffic wardens if they're at the school gates. Teach your child this basic slogan, 'DON'T GO, SAY NO'.

3) PLAN AHEAD

As obvious as it seems, please stress to your child that they should NEVER talk to a stranger, NEVER accept gifts or sweets, and NEVER walk off or get into a car with one. This is important if your child is aged 5 to 8 as they are at their most vulnerable. This situation might arise if you are late collecting them from school for example, so agree a plan with your child that they know you will stick to if you are late. For example, teach them that you would only ever send a teacher from their school or a friend's parent that they recognise to collect them if you aren't able to. Give your child your home, work and mobile numbers so they can reach you at all times, especially if they're aged around 9 to 11, as they will be spending more time on their own.

4) TIME TO TEACH

Tell your child that even if they are not sure if someone is a stranger they should always behave in the same way and not take risks. Teach them stock phrases to help give them confidence. For example: A child, offered money or sweets, should respond, "No thank you. Please leave me alone". It's important children don't think that talking to a stranger is ok if they're with a friend. Teach them they should only talk to someone they don't know if you are there by their side.

One way you can prepare your child is by practice scenarios. Try playing a game called, 'What if?' Discussing and thinking about what to do, is often more helpful than having the 'right' answers. Ask them what to do if a stranger approaches them to help reinforce the advice 'DON'T GO, SAY NO' By practising these strategies in a fun way, your child will be as equipped as possible should difficult situations arise. It's important to have this conversation regularly, especially with young children so make time every 3 to 4 months. **Remember 'DON'T GO, SAY NO'**



A word from Paul Moffat, Corporate Director of Children's Services

Dear Parents

As the school year gets well underway, we wanted to share these useful top tips from our friends at Kidscape; a UK wide charity that provides resources to keep children safe from harm . These top tips are designed to help us talk with confidence with our children about keeping themselves safe when out in public.

Our fears of strangers around our children, and other elements of child safety, combine to stop children playing out as much as they would like. As a corporate parent we know the value of raising awareness, highlighting key support from services and sharing useful information. The focus for us as parents and organisations is education to enable.

Child safety is a key part of the Northumberland Children's Services broader commitment to our children's wellbeing, and 'Stranger Danger' awareness is one area that schools and services cover to help us all enable our children to think through decisions, gain increased self-confidence and attain greater resilience. Some examples of ongoing work and further online resources include:

Across schools, there are areas within each Key Stage of the curriculum where safety can be addressed:

- Key Stage 1 - discussions about which types of strangers can be helpful in situations where there is danger.
- Key Stage 2 - keeping safe outside of school and recognising personal risk.
- Key Stage 3 - how to recognise when pressure from others threatens their personal safety and wellbeing and also to develop effective ways of resisting pressure and knowing where to get help.
- Key Stage 4 - guidance is taken to next level through awareness of potential exploitation in relationships.

All schools in the county have access to support and advice, plus direction to appropriate learning resources, from the Health and Wellbeing Team within the Education Service.

Northumbria Police are involved with schools via their local Police Community Support Officers, who visit schools to help children feel safe and confident with police officers and to talk about various aspects of community safety.

The Northumberland Safeguarding Children Board is an independent partnership responsible for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Their website provides accessible and up-to-date information for professionals, children and families. Click the buttons below to access some suggested online resources and fun interactive tools:

Best wishes for a successful and safe first term back –

