

Children and the Law

The age of criminal responsibility in England and Wales is **10 years old.**

The rules are different in Scotland.

This means that children under 10 can't be arrested or charged with a crime. There are other punishments that can be given to children under 10 who break the law.

Children over 10

Children between 10 and 17 can be arrested and taken to court if they commit a crime.

- They are treated differently from adults and are: dealt with by youth courts
- given different sentences
- sent to special secure centres for young people, not adult prisons



What happens if your child gets in trouble with the police?

You can be held responsible if your child repeatedly gets into trouble or if you do not take reasonable steps to control their behaviour.

You could be:

- asked to attend a parenting programme
- asked to sign a Parenting Contract
- given a Parenting Order by a court

Each of these supports you in stopping your child from getting in trouble again.

They are usually voluntary but you might be told by a court that you have to do one or more of them.



NSPCC

Role of the Police



Article 17: every child has the right to reliable information from a variety of sources

The Role of the Police

Although the police do a variety of things, their main duties are:

- to maintain law and order (this means making sure people keep the country's laws);
- to protect members of the public;
- to protect people's property;
- to prevent, detect and investigate crime.



Safe Strangers

Children should understand that police are "safe strangers" and can be approached in times of need. The police uniform is an easy way to spot them.

Who are the Police?

The police service is one of the emergency services. The main emergency services are:

- Police
- Fire Brigade
- Emergency Medical Service



Should children be frightened of the police?

It is commonly recognised that the police are not used to parent children and there should not be a fear of them. The police are there to help and to keep everyone safe. It is important that this message is emphasised with children.



Different Types of Police

Police have ranks. An officer joins as a Police Constable (PC). Other ranks include Sergeant, Inspector and Chief Inspector. The highest ranking police officer is known as a Chief Constable or Commissioner.

Within the service, there are different types of police. Some of them include:

- CID (Criminal Investigation Department) – These police officers investigate crimes. They don't usually wear uniform.
- Traffic police – These officers are specially trained drivers. They patrol roads, such as motorways, and can be involved in chasing criminals in cars.

