

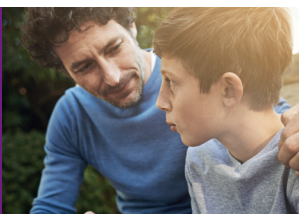
Advice for parents and carers

Early conversations can make a significant difference.

Consider:

- Knowing whether your child owns or has access to a catapult
- Knowing where it is kept
- Discussing responsible use
- Explaining the consequences of harming wildlife or damaging property
- Understanding who they spend time with and where they go

You are often the most effective influence in preventing behaviour from escalating.



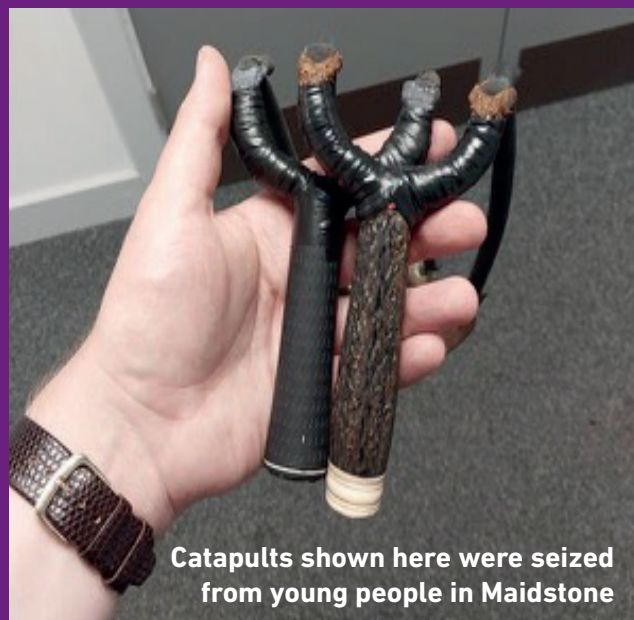
Using skills positively

Many young people are drawn to activities that involve skill, accuracy, patience and control. These are positive qualities that can be developed through sports, youth activities, outdoor learning, community projects and other diversionary opportunities.

The challenge is not the skill itself, but where that skill is applied. Real skill is demonstrated through good judgement, self-control and responsibility, not by damaging property, harming wildlife or causing concern within communities.

By providing positive opportunities, strong role models and constructive activities, we can help young people channel their abilities in ways that benefit both themselves and their communities.

Real skill is demonstrated through good judgement, self-control and responsibility.



Catapults shown here were seized from young people in Maidstone



**Skill earns respect -
damage doesn't**

Preventing catapult misuse in Maidstone

A guide to preventing harm and protecting our communities



**Kent
Police**



Why are we talking about catapults?

Unfortunately, a small number of incidents involving catapults can cause:



Harm to wildlife



Criminal damage



Fear and concern within communities



Serious injuries

Maidstone Borough Council, Kent Police and local partners are working together to reduce harm, identify those responsible and support positive alternative activities for people to do.

See it, report it

If you witness catapult misuse, report it.

Useful information includes:

- Date and time
- Location
- Number of people involved
- Description of clothing
- Names or nicknames if known
- Direction of travel
- Photographs or video where safe to obtain

The information you provide helps Police and the Council identify repeat offenders and take appropriate action.

Please do not put yourself at risk when gathering information or evidence.



Behavioural interventions



- Acceptable Behaviour Agreements (*a voluntary promise to stop anti-social behaviour*)
- Community Protection Notices (*a legal notice to stop anti-social behaviour*)
- Housing interventions
- Partnership working

Formal enforcement

Where evidence exists, Police and partner agencies may investigate:

- Criminal damage
- Wildlife crime
- Anti-social behaviour
- Violence and public order offences

What we know

Catapult misuse is often part of wider anti-social behaviour rather than an isolated incident. Factors can include peer pressure, boredom, lack of supervision and young people becoming involved in increasingly risky behaviour.

Early intervention, education and support are often the most effective ways to prevent incidents from escalating and causing serious harm.



What happens if someone is identified?

Responses are always proportionate to the circumstances.

This may include:

- Early intervention
- Parent engagement
- School engagement
- Youth diversion
- Community support



Working together

The most effective response is not always the most punitive.

Reducing harm requires:

- Parents
- Schools
- Residents
- Housing providers
- Community groups
- Youth organisations
- Police
- Local authorities

Working together to identify concerns early and support positive behaviour.