

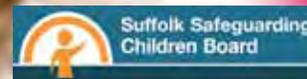
A Guide

FOR **PARENTS AND CARERS** of children aged **0-11 years**

Positive parenting

This handbook has been produced by
NHS Ipswich and East Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group,
Suffolk County Council and
Suffolk Safeguarding Children Board (SLSCB)

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Ipswich and East Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group



Welcome

No job is as rewarding as being a parent or caring for a child. It is a job where very little training is given to prepare parents for what lies ahead. Every family experiences difficulty from time to time. When extra pressures come along it may be difficult to think about what help or information you may need. We hope you find this handbook and website a helpful and useful resource.

What is the handbook about?

This handbook can offer some ideas to help you find your way through what can be a maze of issues and advice. It gives contacts and further information you can follow up when you are deciding how to deal with issues. This handbook also offers helpful tips from professionals and things to look out for.

Who has produced this handbook?

This handbook has been produced by professionals from health, education and social services, as well as parents and carers across Suffolk.

Visit www.ipswichandeastsuffolkccg.nhs.uk to view this booklet online.

Throughout this booklet the term 'parents' has been used to mean mothers, fathers, carers and other adults with responsibility for caring for a child. All factual content has been sourced from Department of Health, NHS Choices, NICE and Suffolk FIS. This information cannot replace specialist care, if you are worried about your child contact the relevant services for help and advice.

A guide to Common childhood illnesses for birth to 5 years is also available. Visit www.ipswichandeastsuffolkccg.nhs.uk



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A guide to services

Here in Suffolk we have a wide range of professionals.



Health Visitor

Health Visitors are there to support you and your family until school age. They will visit you at home or see you in your local clinic. They assess your health and development needs and can tell you where to get extra help if you need it.

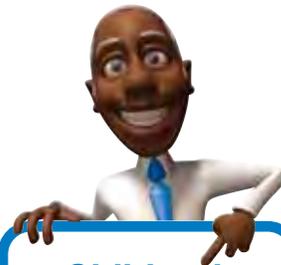
School Nurse

The School Nurse takes over from the Health Visitor and supports your child's health and well-being



GP

You will need to register with a GP (to find a GP in your area, use the NHS Choices Find Services System on: www.nhs.uk/servicesdirectories) Your GP can advise, give medicines and information on other services. You will need to make an appointment but most GPs will see a baby quite quickly if you are worried. After 6.30pm weekdays, at weekends and public holidays most services are covered by a GP out-of-hours service call **NHS 111**.



Children's Centres

Families can access a wide range of information in a friendly environment. Children's Centres provide a range of advice including health promotion and advice on safety and they promote all aspects of child health and well-being.



Families Information Service (FIS)

FIS provides free, up-to-date information about services for children and young people in Suffolk, including information for parents and carers of children with disabilities. It can also give you information about childcare provision, parental employment rights and local holiday activities for families call **0845 60 800 33**.



Social Worker

The role of a Social Worker is varied. Generally their job is to guide and support. Their focus is helping a person or a family to support themselves as much as possible. They also work in a variety of places like Children's Centres, schools, local education authorities and hospitals. Others work within voluntary organisations or in the family's own home.



School

Teachers develop skills, not only around the curriculum but also social skills to help our children develop and progress. It is often a teacher who a parent may first contact if they are worried.

Parenting Support Advisors

The role of the PSA is to work directly with parents in a non-judgmental way, helping them and their families to get the most out of educational opportunities available.



Children and Young People's Services (CYP)

The CYP service brings together education, early years support, children's social care, youth support, community health and wider services to support children and families across Suffolk. Raising the Bar is providing a focus for services across Suffolk County Council, with the aim of raising attainment and aspiration across the whole age range from early years to further education.



Extended Services

Most Suffolk schools offer out of school activities and clubs for their pupils which can take place before or after school hours (like breakfast and after school clubs). Some also work with voluntary and community groups in their local area to provide holiday activities during the main school holidays - at Easter and over the summer.



Dads matter

Dads can often be forgotten, but it is important to remember that both parents are just as important as each other. Parents need to work together and keep to the same rules. This applies when disciplining your child, and it is also important that you do not take sides in an argument. Parents should never argue in front of their child, and if you are separated, it's important to agree on your parenting roles and responsibilities.

A positive attitude

Make them feel great!

Positive parenting is about bringing out the best in your child. Listen and try to understand their point of view, encourage their efforts and you will really start to form the basis of a good relationship. They will always be your child but allowing them to develop, grow and establish their independence will give them the confidence they need.

In trying to help, it may appear that you are nagging. Learning from their mistakes, where it is safe to do so, is a good thing. It can be easy to point out where you think things are going wrong and forget to notice the things that go right. Everyone enjoys a bit of praise and encouragement, so when they do well, tell them.

Children gradually learn to make their own decisions, which may not always fit with yours. That is why tension is normal. Choose your battles and let some go! You might find that their friends seem to take priority as they get older. This is normal but you might feel jealous and even feel a bit left out.

1

They seem unhappy, have mood changes, are unusually secretive and are avoiding you.

2

Could you be doing what you think is right without listening to how they feel?

3

Try to develop an open relationship. Be supportive and let them know you are always there to listen.



Growing & developing

A sense of self-esteem and being aware of dangers is the best protection you can give your child. Let them know you're around to talk about puberty and changes in their body, sexual health and relationships. Let them know that you will always be there as a support through growing up, at exam times and on into adulthood.



1

My child seems to be addicted to fizzy drinks.

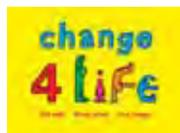
2

Each can of fizzy drink contains up to six teaspoons of sugar. This risks tooth decay, obesity and interrupts sleep.

3

Introduce non fizzy drinks like sugar-free squash, fruit juices and milk. Don't forget water too.

 Call 0800 022 4332 or visit www.smokefree.nhs.uk



Healthy lifestyles

Looking after their health

What they eat

Make sure your child eats a good variety of foods in sensible amounts - balance is the key. Make meal times fun and make time to sit down to eat and to enjoy food together as a family. Setting a good example is one of the best ways of encouraging healthy eating habits early in life (see page 10).

Exercise

Food is used in our bodies to create energy. If we do not use it we get fat. Encourage your children to be as active as possible. You and your child can get plenty of exercise just by walking to the shops or to school. Playing sports with your child is another great way to keep fit.

Sleep

As a parent you know that lack of sleep can affect your mood and ability to function at work or as a parent. The same is true of children. Lack of sleep can impact on your child's behaviour and achievement at school.

Smoking

If you smoke you should protect your child from secondhand smoke. This will reduce the risk of them becoming ill. Contact your Doctor or local free stop smoking service who can help you kick this damaging habit for good.

Teeth

Look after your child's teeth and take them to visit the Dentist regularly. Make sure your child brushes their teeth twice a day with a children's fluoride toothpaste. Children are especially at risk from tooth decay because of the sugary things they eat. If your child has problems with their teeth, take them to the Dentist, this will help to prevent serious problems in the future.



GP's Tips:

- Balance is the key to a healthy lifestyle.
- If you eat more calories than your body burns, you will put on weight.
- Try to stop smoking and protect your children from secondhand smoke.
- Make sure your child gets plenty of sleep and exercise.
- Obesity (being very overweight) is becoming more common in children.

The eatwell plate

Use the eatwell plate to help you get the balance right. It shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group.

(Recommended for children over five).



Source: The Food Standards Agency www.food.gov.uk

What can I do?

Many parents are unaware of the dangers of childhood obesity but by following the top tips below you can make a difference to your child's health.

- 1. Sugar Swaps** - Swapping sugary snacks and drinks for ones that are lower in sugar can make a huge difference.
- 2. Meal Time** - It's important for kids to have regular, proper meals as growing bodies respond better to routine.
- 3. Snack Check** - Many snacks are full of the things that are bad for us - sugar, salt, fat and calories. So try and keep a careful eye on how many the kids are having.
- 4. Me Size Meals** - It's important to make sure they get just the right amount for their age.
- 5. 5 A Day** - 5 portions of fruit and/or vegetables a day.
- 6. Cut Back Fat** - Too much fat is bad for us. It's not always easy to tell where it's lurking.
- 6. Up and About** - Most of us spend too long sitting down. Keep active. Encourage your child to walk, you may need to use child safety reins.

Source: Change4Life - DoH 2009 (www.dh.gov.uk/obesity).



Children in shape

Eat well and exercise more for over 5's

Obesity is a medical term used to describe children (and adults) who carry 20 per cent extra body weight. This extra weight, if not treated early on, could cause serious health problems such as arthritis, cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes and depression in later life. Help stop obesity before it starts by making sure they eat a balanced diet and get enough exercise.

Being overweight is rarely to do with having a medical problem, many children simply have unhealthy diets and don't do enough exercise. It is better to stop your child becoming overweight or obese in the first place. Many parents feel guilty (or in denial) that their child is overweight and ignore it, but this will have a damaging effect on your child in many ways including their physical health, mental health and self-esteem. If your child feels bad about themselves they can comfort eat to make themselves feel better, so leading to them being more overweight - this creates a vicious circle.

You are responsible for your child's health and well-being, this includes what they eat. A healthy balanced diet (see the eatwell plate opposite) and exercise is the simple answer. Try to have family outings which include walking and cycling so you can all get fitter together. Being active burns more energy and the body then starts to use up its fat stores.

1

My child looks chubby and seems to only want to eat junk food.

2

Exercise together as a family and find out more about healthy eating.

3

If you are worried discuss with your GP.

Health Visitor says

Salt and sugar is added to nearly all processed products. Three-quarters of the salt and sugar we eat is already in the food, the rest is what we add to cooking or shake on our meals. Children aged 7 to 10 years need less than 5g of salt a day (around 1 teaspoon).



Juice drink
23g sugar
(5 teaspoons)



Cereal bars
8g sugar
(1.5 teaspoons)



Fromage frais
12.4g sugar
(2 teaspoons)



Safer sleeping

Keeping your baby safe and healthy:

- Place your baby on their back to sleep, in a cot in your bedroom for the first six months.
- Place your baby in the 'feet to foot' position i.e. baby's **feet** at the **foot** of the bed/cot.
- Do not let your baby get too hot and keep his head uncovered.
- Never sleep with your baby on a sofa or armchair.
- Do not smoke in pregnancy or let anyone smoke in the same room as your baby.

It's dangerous for your baby to sleep in your bed if you (or your partner):

- Are a smoker (even if you never smoke in bed or at home).
- Have been drinking alcohol or taken any drugs.
- Have taken any medication that makes you drowsy.
- If your baby was premature (born before 37 weeks).
- If your baby was low birth weight (less than 2.5kg or 5 1/2 lb).
- If you or your partner are overweight.

It is very dangerous to fall asleep together on a sofa, armchair or settee and it is also risky to sleep a baby alone in an adult bed.

If you have any questions, or are worried about how to make it work for you, call our Helpline on 0808 802 6868.

 **SMOKEFREE** Call 0800 022 4332 or visit www.smokefree.nhs.uk

Sleeping difficulties

Patience, praise and peace

There are many different reasons why babies and toddlers do not sleep through the night. Feel confident in yourself to know whether your child is really distressed or just restless. Trust your instincts.

Try to establish a regular night time sleep routine for your child early on by putting them to bed at a regular time each night. Prepare a warm, comfortable place for them to relax in. Reading to your child at bedtime helps them to unwind, and gives you some special time together. If your child is scared of the dark, try keeping a night light on. Adult beds are not designed for babies and toddlers and do not conform to safety standards. Only breastfeeding babies should ever be fed in bed, and if so, should be positioned on the outside of the bed and returned to the cot after the feed has finished.

Bedwetting may be stressful for both of you and can wake your child. It is not easy to know why some children take longer to be dry at night than others. Try not to lose your patience or punish them, your child is not doing this on purpose. Children learn at their own pace and praise and support will help.

1 I am so tired when my baby wakes up at night it seems easier to share the bed.

2 The safest place for your baby to sleep is in a cot by your bedside for at least the first 6 months. Try to establish a regular sleep routine.

3 Speak to your Health Visitor about how to keep baby safe and get some sleep.



Health Visitor

If your sleep is often disturbed, arrange for a trusted relative or friend to care for your baby or child so that you can get some sleep. Talk to your Health Visitor. Your child's sleep may be disturbed by bedwetting. Between the ages of three and four they are likely to have the occasional accident but gradually more and more nights will be dry.



We are offering free early years provision for two, three and four-year-olds in Suffolk. For children aged two there is a targeted service called the **Two Year Old Scheme** and for children aged three and four there is a universal service called **Free Early Education Entitlement**.

The Two Year Old Scheme funds eligible children from the term after their second birthday. Children must meet a range of criteria to qualify and can access up to 15 hours of childcare in selected childcare settings.

All children from the term after their third birthday can access up to 15 hours of free flexible childcare in nurseries, pre-schools, accredited childminders, nursery schools and classes. Both schemes operate for 38 weeks only (term time). Talk to your chosen childcare provider on how they offer the free 15 hours as many offer it in different ways. For more details go to www.suffolk.gov.uk

Childcare

How do I make the right choice?

You are responsible for the safety and well-being of your children. It is important that you think carefully about the childcare provision that you choose for you child whether this is an Ofsted registered childminder or nursery/pre-school, or informal childcare such as a relative, friend or babysitter. Ofsted registration is required for any person or organisation who cares for children under eight years for more than two hours per day.

When you leave your child in the care of someone else you want them to be as well cared for and safe as they are with you. Therefore, when choosing childcare take your time and visit a number of different childcare providers. Always ask to see their Ofsted Registration Certificate which should be on display. Talk to other parents.

For impartial information, advice and guidance on finding, choosing and using childcare and free early education, financial support, parenting and help to find out more about local services and support for children, young people and your family, telephone the **Suffolk Families Information Service on 0845 60 800 33**.

1

I am confused about types of childcare, what's free and what I have to pay for.

2

Suffolk County Council's Families Information Service (FIS).

3

Visit www.suffolk.gov.uk or call Suffolk FIS on **0845 60 800 33**.

Types of childcare:

- **Nurseries** offer childcare for children aged 0-5 often during the hours of 8am-6pm all year round.
- **Pre-schools** offer childcare for children between two and five often for three-fours a day, term time only.
- **Out-of-school childcare** offers childcare after school or during the school holidays.
- **Childminders** care for children aged 0-7 (and above) in the childminder's own home. All of the above childcare providers must be registered and inspected by Ofsted see www.ofsted.gov.uk for more details.

- **Nannies, au pairs and home child carers** can provide care in the child's own home and may be registered on the Ofsted Voluntary part of the Childcare Register.



TV tips

For children under two years even children's TV has been found to have limited value. It is suggested that children of this age find it more difficult to learn new words from the TV than they do in a face-to-face situation.*

Children under two should not be left watching screens on their own and have faster language development if they spend no time in front of screens in the first two years of life.

*Source: www.gov.uk - Research Report DFE-RR134

Speech, language & communication

It starts with you!

Parents are often a child's very first teachers and those who actively play an active part can have a great impact on the child's ability to communicate verbally. Talking to babies, and having fun with nursery rhymes and songs is a great way to lay the groundwork when it comes to learning speech.

While there is no magic formula to help your child talk, there are things you can do to help with your child's development. The process of talking involves listening, understanding, thinking, wanting and needing to speak, and being able to coordinate all the right muscles.

Talking to babies everyday is important, preferably without resorting to 'baby talk'. Babies learn to talk from listening to others and it is important to talk in a fun and friendly manner. Talking can easily fit into your daily routine and can be extremely beneficial in speech and language development.

If a child can start school with good speech and language skills they can maximise their full personal and social potential. These skills underpin all areas of a child's development. Children with poor communication and language skills are at increased risk of being bullied. If you think your child's communication skills are not developing as they should discuss with your Health Visitor or your child's school.

Source: Speech, language and communication needs - Commissioning Support Programme 2011



Dummies

Prolonged dummy use and thumb sucking for long periods each day can affect a child's speech and language development, as well as teeth alignment. They also reduce babbling and a child's experimentation with sounds which is an important step in learning to talk.

If your toddler or child continually uses a dummy after 12 months it may affect speech and language development by restricting tongue movement.



Key stages at school

All schools now provide sessions for parents at key educational transition points from **Key Stage 1** (age 4-7) to **Key Stage 4** (age 14-16). Schools want to work in partnership with parents to make their child's experience at school as productive as possible. They provide information and advice on a wide range of school and other issues. It is important to keep in touch with the school, attending parents' evenings and letting the school know of any changes in your circumstances which may affect your child.

Starting nursery and school

Change and transition

For children, any kind of change or transition can be scary. Start thinking about your child's early learning place well in advance and research their new nursery or school. It can be a difficult time for parents too. Talk to FIS about your childcare choices and what might be best for your child.

Nursery school: Being in a large group of children, sometimes for the first time can be a frightening experience. Try going to a Parent and Toddler Group, or attend other activities where other small children are around so they get used to mixing. Be patient if they become clingy and take it slowly.

Starting school: This is a big change in your child's life. Try to prepare them for what will happen and encourage their independence. Visit the school before they start. Talk to their Teacher and share information about your child that may help. Children must be in education by the term after their fifth birthday.

All children can attend school full-time in the September following their fourth birthday. You need to make an application for a full-time place. Visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissionstoschools or call The School Admissions Team on 0845 600 0981.

If your child has a disability or Special Educational Needs (SEN) there are more things to think about.

1

You are feeling anxious about your child starting school.

2

Do not let your child know how you feel, be strong for them.

3

Be positive. Talk to your child and reassure them. Take them to visit the nursery in advance.



Tips:

- Give your child lots of support and make sure they know what to expect.
- They may feel nervous and say they feel too ill to go to school, they may also be angry towards you or cry - this is all quite normal.
- You might worry how your child is going to cope with being in a new environment, have confidence in them and be strong for them.



Bookstart

Bookstart in Suffolk is a programme that aims to encourage all parents and carers to enjoy books with children from as early an age as possible.

Bookstart currently provides three packs for children up to the age of four. Every pack contains books for the child and guidance on book selection and reading for parents.

Bookstart gives away free books to every child in England.

Bookstart Baby Pack

In your baby's first year, you will receive your free Bookstart baby pack from your Health Visitor, or another health professional.

The Bookstart baby pack has been carefully chosen to include everything you need to get started sharing stories, rhymes and songs with your baby. Please ask at your local library if you have difficulty in getting hold of your pack.

Bookstart Treasure Chest

When your child reaches 3-4 years old, you will receive your free My Bookstart Treasure Chest from your child's nursery or playgroup or other early years setting. Please ask at your local library if you have difficulty in getting hold of your pack.

Books and learning

Making learning fun

Book sharing is a great way to help your child learn to talk, particularly when the stories have rhymes, lots of repetition or encourage joining in. You will be amazed at how books can influence your child's vocabulary and how many new words and phrases they pick up from the books and stories you share.

As a parent, you are your child's first and most important Teacher. Children are born to be lifelong learners, with an eagerness to learn new things everyday. Babies and toddlers who are introduced to books early, grow into confident readers with a curiosity about life and a lifelong love of books. Sharing books with your child is also a wonderful way to build a loving relationship, increase their language skills and help them to understand the world.

As your child grows and develops, one of the best things you can do is to establish a routine of visiting the library together. This way your child will feel confident about using the library, finding books and information for school projects or to pursue an interest.

1

My child is struggling with language and communication.

2

Choose a quiet place with no distractions and sit and read with your child. Chat and communicate as much as you can.

3

Talk to your Health Visitor, Children's Centre or school if you are worried.



Tips

Libraries

Libraries have wonderful books for babies and toddlers and they don't mind how excited or noisy their young visitors get. All families are welcome. All Suffolk Children's Centres are library access points where you can register your child for the library and order/drop off books.



Voicing concerns

Organisations should tell you what to do if you or your child have any concerns. If you are concerned you must take action:

- Speak to other parents.
- Speak to the leader in charge.
- If you are not confident that they are the right person, talk to someone more senior.
- If you are unhappy about the response you receive, remove your child and contact the local authority for advice.

Choosing children's activities

Have fun and be safe

Check it out

A good organisation will welcome questions about their activities and the safety of their surroundings. They should have a Child Protection Policy, including guidelines about keeping children safe and safer recruiting of staff and volunteers.

Questions you may want to ask:

- Are the staff and volunteers suitable to work with children?
- Is there a written code of behaviour?
- How does the organisation manage staff and volunteers?
- How does the organisation provide for personal care needs?
- Does the organisation have a Health and Safety Policy?
- What are the arrangements when children go on outings?
- Have the staff been Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checked?

Safe at all times

Parents and carers have a right and a responsibility to ensure that children are safe. Daycare activities, such as pre-school playgroups and crèches, are required to register with the local authority. Not all organisations have to register, yet they still have a responsibility to provide a safe environment for your child.

1

My child is a bit worried about one of the staff at one of his clubs.

2

Listen to your child and ask questions about the activities they take part in.

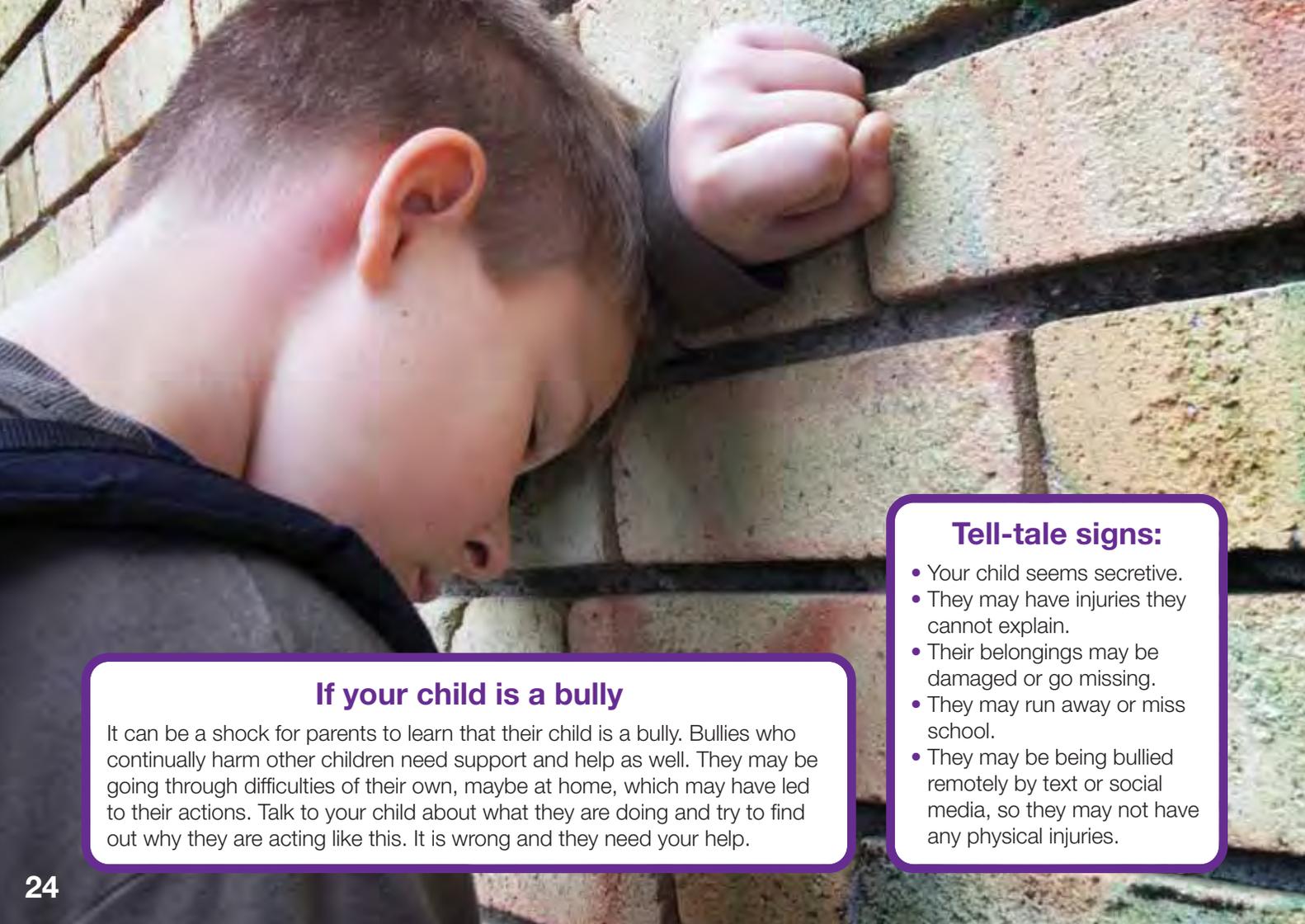
3

Read and ask about the list above and make sure you are totally satisfied.



Be wary of:

- Behaviour that encourages rough play, sexual innuendo or embarrassing punishments.
- Staff who take charge and operate independently of organisational guidelines.
- Staff who show favouritism or personally reward specific children.
- Encouragement of inappropriate physical contact.
- Poor communication and lack of parental involvement, leaving you feeling uneasy.
- Invitations for children to spend time alone with staff or volunteers (even to visit their home).



If your child is a bully

It can be a shock for parents to learn that their child is a bully. Bullies who continually harm other children need support and help as well. They may be going through difficulties of their own, maybe at home, which may have led to their actions. Talk to your child about what they are doing and try to find out why they are acting like this. It is wrong and they need your help.

Tell-tale signs:

- Your child seems secretive.
- They may have injuries they cannot explain.
- Their belongings may be damaged or go missing.
- They may run away or miss school.
- They may be being bullied remotely by text or social media, so they may not have any physical injuries.

Bullying

Children have the right not to be hurt

Bullying is a frightening experience. It can isolate and damage self-confidence. Bullying can have negative long-term effects on children, leading to depression and even suicidal thoughts and actions.

What other children think is very important to your child and fitting in is a must. Those thought of as different for any reason may be picked on and bullied. Be aware of the possibility of bullying and make sure you know the tell-tale signs.

You may think that your child is unlikely to be bullied but the reality is that bullying can happen at any time and to any child. If your child tells you about a 'friend' who is being bullied listen carefully and take them seriously. They may be trying to tell you that it is happening to them.

All schools in Suffolk have an Anti-Bullying Policy. School action alone cannot guarantee it stops, so it is important that you work together with your child's school.

1

I have noticed injuries with no explanation. Behaviour seems different, they may seem secretive.

2

They may be being bullied. You need to do something about it and find out what is happening.

3

See the Headteacher. Outside school consider contacting the Police. Reassure your child.

Source: CEOP



The facts:

- Bullying is unacceptable.
- Bullying can happen anywhere to any child.
- It can take many forms, from cyberbullying or verbal abuse to physical attack.
- Bullying is the repeated abuse of a child by one or several people.
- Most bullying is done by children who are the same age as the victim.
- Bullies may be children who are experiencing bullying themselves, maybe at home.
- Children with a disability or Special Educational Needs (SEN) are more vulnerable to bullying.



Boys

Boys' bodies can start to change from around the age of nine or ten with sexual development soon after. Your son will be developing into a young man. He will need your support and trust but he will also need some privacy, respect and encouragement.

Puberty and growing up

Changing times

Growing up can be a challenging time for all and a bit of love and understanding can go a long way. Let them know you are there to support them. Sometimes it can come as a bit of a shock when your child starts to develop and change. Of course, you are still their parent and they still need you. Be there to support them.

Discussing matters such as friendships, relationships and growing up are important. Be open-minded and do not judge them, so they feel they can trust you and turn to you when they need help and support.

Friendships are very important to children. Having a close friend or group of friends and belonging to a group helps them feel good about themselves, learn to deal with people and develop their own identity.

You can show them how to trust their own feelings and values, building up an emotional strength that will help them as they get older.

Spend some time together looking at sites like www.bbc.co.uk/health or www.nhs.uk/livewell/puberty or www.sensecds.com - this can be an easy way to communicate and open up communication without embarrassment.

1

He keeps asking me awkward questions about sex, I am not sure what to say.

2

The more they understand about growing up, the less confused they will be.

3

Find out, maybe you could go online. Do not be embarrassed, let them know they can ask you anything.



Girls

Puberty in girls can begin from around the age of nine. Your daughter will probably be going through puberty and developing into a young woman. She will need your support and trust but she will also need some privacy, respect and encouragement.

All children develop at their own pace.

Advice and support

If you think you or another adult at home has a problem seek advice and support. Your habit could be affecting the following:

- Relationships - has someone spoken to you about their concerns about your drinking or drug use?
- Your commitments - have you failed to do what is expected of you because of your drinking/drug use?
- Your health - are you having difficulty sleeping, feeling unwell or needing to use something to make you feel better?
- You have come into conflict with the law - have you been drinking and driving or arrested for possessing drugs?

These are all signs that you should seek help. All of these things will affect your ability to look after your children, keep them safe and help them develop into adulthood.

Suffolk Drug and Alcohol Team (DAAT)

Works together with other organisations across Suffolk. Call **01473 260777** or visit www.suffolkdaat.org.uk

 **SMOKEFREE** Call 0800 022 4332 or visit www.smokefree.nhs.uk

Smoking, alcohol and substance misuse

Being a good role model

Your behaviour affects your children. Whether your answer to a problem or a crisis is to have a drink or take some drugs, things can progress to the stage that you are not taking proper care of your children or protecting them. Their safety could be at risk.

Think about the way you act and what it says. If you or someone at home smokes, drinks alcohol or takes drugs remember children learn from what they see and may begin to think that smoking, alcohol or drugs are a solution to problems. Often people start using drugs to relieve stress or tension. No matter how careful you think you are, children are often very aware of their parents' behaviour. Both alcohol and drugs can affect your ability to look after your children and have serious effects on them as they grow up. They could also find drugs and try them - leading to serious problems. Make sure you keep alcoholic drinks out of reach.

It is important that you talk to your partner or other family members who could offer support to you and your children. Children may not want to talk about it because of the shame around alcohol or drugs or fear about what could happen. There is support available for children who live in households where drugs and alcohol are a problem.

1 Using alcohol or drugs at home may result in changes to the way your child acts.

2 Think - what does your use of alcohol or drugs teach your children?

3 Get more information and seek help and advice. Stop smoking now.



Be aware

- When parents smoke, drink or use drugs, it often affects the emotional development and well-being of their children.
- Parental smoking, drug or alcohol use can put children in danger.
- In families where drug and alcohol are used it is common for children and young people to go on to use them.
- Violence at home is often caused by drug and alcohol misuse.



Worried about a child?

Getting support

Very few adults harm children deliberately and most often, when harm does happen, families need support, not punishment or the removal of their children. Suffolk Social Workers and other professionals get involved when parents may be unable to protect their child from harm and need some help. In some cases the Metropolitan Police Child Abuse Investigation Teams will work with Social Workers to help protect children and decide whether an offence has been committed.

Speak out and consider how you would feel if it was your child. Discuss your concerns in confidence with either Suffolk Customer First/Emergency Duty Service **0808 800 4005** or the Police. Suffolk County Council also offer support and information. In an emergency call 999.

When we suspect, witness or are told of a child that is being harmed, action should be taken to stop things getting worse. Even if you think an incident is just a one-off, your information could be very important. Long-term abuse can have a negative affect on a child for the rest of their lives.

1

There are many signs of abuse, from physical and emotional injury leading to changes in behaviour.

2

Make sure your child knows who they can share worries with if and when they need to.

3

Seek advice about what practical and emotional support is available from schools and Children's Centres.



Abuse at home

When we suspect abuse of a child in our own home, we can react in many different ways. We may feel guilt, anger, disbelief or denial. Some of these reactions can prevent getting help to a child who needs it. You may not tell others because you fear that the child will be at further risk of harm. You may love the person who is causing the harm and not want to believe what is happening. You need to put your child's safety first.

What can I do?

If someone you know is having difficulties, you could offer the following:

- A listening ear.
- Ideas to cope with problems.
- Encouragement to get help.
- Practical support (for example offering to babysit).

If the family is unable to cope and they do nothing to get help you need to report it.

Speak to Suffolk Customer First/Emergency Duty Service: **0808 800 4005** or the Police. In an emergency call 999.



If you are the victim

Many people find it difficult to understand why people stay in abusive situations. Fear, love, the risk of homelessness and money worries can make it difficult for women with children to leave. If you are a victim of domestic abuse, you are not the only victim - your children are too. You can report domestic abuse to any professional. There are many agencies working in Suffolk who will help you to access support. For more information, call Customer First/Emergency Duty Desk on **0808 800 4005** (24 hours).

Even if you think an incident is just a one-off, other professional agencies may already have concerns. So your information could be very important.

Long-term abuse is much more likely to cause problems for a child or young person as they get older. The longer children are exposed to violence, the more severe the effects on them are. These can include a lack of respect for the non-violent parent, loss of self-confidence (which will affect their ability to form relationships in the future), being over-protective of a parent, loss of childhood, problems at school and running away.

Domestic abuse

Keeping your child safe

You are not responsible for your abuser's behaviour. You or your child do not deserve to experience any form of abuse. Your abuser may blame you and other things like being drunk, pressure of work, unemployment and minimise or deny what they are doing. You may have tried changing what you do, say and wear to try to pacify and not to antagonise the situation. Violence rarely happens only once and will get more and more serious as time goes on. You need to make sure you and your child are safe. It's not easy to accept that a loved one can act in this way and you may be trying to make the relationship work.

Domestic abuse can affect children in many ways. They may feel frightened, become withdrawn, aggressive or difficult, bedwet, run away, have problems at school, lack concentration and suffer emotional upset. Domestic abuse places children at risk of significant harm and professional support is needed. It is best that action is taken early to stop things getting worse. Keeping your child safe is your responsibility. Children can often get caught up in the crossfire and become victims.

Children need time to discuss the feelings they have about violence or abuse. Children need to know that it is not their fault and that this is not the way relationships should be.

1

I am being abused and it is affecting my child but if I contact someone it may get worse.

2

Don't keep what is happening secret, you have nothing to be ashamed of. The longer abuse goes on the harder it gets to take some action.

3

Don't suffer alone, get help by talking to someone you trust or contact one of the organisations listed. Be a survivor - not a victim.

What is domestic abuse?

Abuse can take many forms:

- Physical including sexual violence.
- Mental and verbal cruelty.
- Financial control.
- Controlling behaviour.

The facts

Domestic abuse affects many families. Women are at increased risk of domestic abuse during pregnancy and the first year after giving birth, even if there has not been any abuse before. Men can also be victims. Children do hear, they do see and they are aware of violence at home, even if you think they do not. Children react in different ways to violence and research suggests that they are more likely to become abusers or victims later in life.



Is it legal?

It is unlawful for a parent or carer to smack their child, except where this amounts to 'reasonable punishment' regardless of any individual, cultural or religious justification. There is a grey area in the Law as to whether a 'smack' amounts to reasonable punishment. However, physical punishment will be considered 'unreasonable' if it leaves a mark on the child or if the child is hit with an implement such as a cane or a belt*. As a result, child protection professionals will assess incidents of physical ill-treatment of children, in order that they can understand, prevent and explain the consequences of further incidents to parents.

Source www.childrenslegalcentre.com

Smacking

We do not need to resort to this

It is important that children learn how to behave. Parents have a very important job as role models for their children in helping them to learn how to do this.

Setting limits early on and explaining reasons for these limits helps to instill self-discipline. Smacking has no long-lasting positive effect and in fact smacking usually has to increase in severity in order to have the same impact on your growing child. This is where the fine line between smacking and hitting can be crossed. Smacking does not teach self-discipline and may teach your child to hurt others. It could make them frightened of you.

Every parent gets frustrated at times and it is at these times that it could be easy to smack in the heat of the moment. However this is an outlet for the parent's frustration, rather than a helpful way of influencing the child's behaviour. Try to use different ways to teach acceptable behaviour. Praise them when they are good and try to distract them from misbehaving.

If you are concerned about the safety of a child (or an adult) at risk of abuse or harm call Customer First/Emergency Duty Desk Service on **0808 800 4005** (24 hours).

1

My child is being so naughty I feel like smacking them.

2

Do not resort to smacking your child.

3

Think about different ways of showing your child how to behave. Explain why you are angry.



How to avoid smacking:

- Try not to let a situation get so bad that you feel you need to smack your child.
- Set limits early on.
- Explain why you may be unhappy with their unacceptable behaviour and praise their good behaviour.
- If you feel so angry you are out of control take time out and walk away.
- Try to take a break, all parents get frustrated sometimes.



Being a good role-model

Having a child means a lifelong commitment to someone who will need your care and support. If you are a parent then you are responsible in the eyes of the law for the safety, well-being and upbringing of your child. Your children are a reflection of you and your parenting. The most effective parenting tool we have is the example we set as good role models early on. This will help your child grow into a responsible, healthy and happy adult.

Encouraging good behaviour

Establishing good behaviour early on

Every day, your child learns new things. It is what makes childhood so exciting. You have an important job in teaching them about values and beliefs and by being a good role model. Start early and see your hard work pay-off.

Using positive feedback is a great idea. Build up self-esteem by talking about their strengths. Being too critical can damage confidence. When they do something good, praise them and explain why. Rather than saying “Good boy” try saying, “You are a good boy for helping me”. It’s our actions and what we do, not what we say or moan about, which impacts on a child for life.

You can use positive feedback when they are misbehaving too. Tell them you are upset about their behaviour, not them. That way they will not see themselves as a bad person and know they have the power to change the way they act. It is up to you to set boundaries and rules in their life, which will change as they grow. Discuss your parenting styles early on with your partner so you both set consistent rules.

Life is busy but it is important to make time to spend together. Ask for help if you need it, there are many professionals who can give you hints and tips to help.

1

My child’s self-esteem seems low. They may say things like “I cannot do this”.

2

Have you discussed this with your child’s Nursery Nurse or Teacher?

3

Praise them where you can. Try to focus on what they are good at.



Positive feedback:

- Use positive feedback to build up self-esteem.
- Praise your child when they do well and explain why you are pleased with them.
- Children are happier if they have rules to follow.
- Use play to teach your child good behaviour.
- As they grow, change the way you encourage them.

Tips:

- Set boundaries and rules in your child's life - most children are happier living with rules.
- Be consistent, do not tell your child off for jumping on the table one minute and then let them do it the next.
- Rules work better if your child knows why they exist.
- What you say and how you act can affect their behaviour.
- Follow through with punishments if you have threatened them. If you say "no TV for a week" then it's no TV for a week - follow through.
- Do not lose your temper.
- Work on developing a sound relationship early on.
- Seek advice and extra support from parenting programmes.

Play

Play, even as they grow a bit older is important because it helps your child feel good about themselves. Having fun with your child and using play as a way of teaching good behaviour can be fun for both of you.



Managing behaviour

Positive feedback as they grow

Challenging behaviour can be hard to deal with. As well as dealing with difficult behaviour it is helpful to try to understand your child's feelings and why they are acting this way. There are a range of parenting programmes across Suffolk.

Childhood is a good time to teach them good behaviour because they respect and want to be close to you. Using positive feedback is a great idea. Give lots of praise to build up your child's self-esteem by talking about their strengths and not their weaknesses. Your opinion of your child has a huge impact on what they think of themselves, so being too critical can damage confidence. Follow through with punishments (e.g. no TV or computer) if you have given them a number of warnings and they have not done or acted in a suitable way.

Growing up can be a challenging time, let them know you are there to support them. Sometimes it can come as a bit of a shock when your child starts to develop and change, it can be difficult to 'let go'. As your child gets older you can agree together on boundaries and levels of trust. Give them a little responsibility and reward them with praise and encouragement if they do well. Of course, you are still their parent and they still need you. Be there to support them.

1

My child seems to ignore everything I say or do.

2

Talk to them. Be positive about the good things. Try to discuss why they are acting this way.

3

If you are still worried talk to your child's teacher.



Mood swings

Puberty often brings on mood swings. This is often put down to the surge of hormones produced at the start of and during puberty. Therefore it can be perfectly normal to feel happy one minute, and depressed, angry or frustrated the next. Mood swings usually stabilise as they head towards their late teenage years, but if you are worried contact your GP.

Internet hazards:

- **It is easy and fast** - making a decision at the click of a button can cause long-term problems.
- **I am in the privacy of my own home** - because they may be at home, and cannot be seen, children may be more reckless and bold in their actions. The emotional and physical distance of being online gives a false feeling of security.
- **Mob mentality** - social networking groups may have 'pages' specifically designed to target and bully individuals. It is easy to be anonymous and feel less responsible for their actions.

Set ground rules:

- Limit time spent on the internet.
- Talk about age appropriate websites.
- Tell them to never give out contact details or post photos of themselves on the internet.
- They should always let you know if someone is asking questions or wanting details they do not feel happy about.
- Ensure social networking profiles are set to 'private' so only friends can view them.

Make sure your child understands why there needs to be rules. Because they can not see or hear the people they chat to, they may not be who they seem.

E-safety and exploitation

New technology, old problem

The internet is part of life. It opens up many educational and social opportunities, giving access to a world of information and experiences. Whether on a computer at school or at home, a games console or mobile phone, children are accessing the internet whenever they can and wherever they are.

Children have a different language that we as parents need to learn and understand. If you and your child understand the risks you can get the most from the internet and stay safe. Chatrooms can be used by paedophiles to meet children and often the child thinks they are the same age. They can also 'groom' children to become victims, either psychologically on the internet itself, or by arranging to actually meet with them, gain their trust and abuse them. Make sure your child does not give away any personal details. The Police and Children's Services have specialist teams trained to counter these forms of exploitation and offer support to children and parents.

The minimum age to open a Facebook account is 13 but it is easy to fib about your age. It is estimated that 30% of children between 8 and 13 have Facebook profiles (Source: BBC News Technology). There are online social networking clubs aimed at children between 6 and 14. You need to know what your child is looking at.

Make sure grandparents and other family members are aware of the dangers.

1

Your child is using the internet in secret. He knows his way around the computer better than I do.

2

Could they be visiting unsuitable sites, or chatting with someone who may harm them?

3

Learn about the internet yourself. Keep the computer in a family room. Limit computer time.



The Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre is dedicated to eradicating the sexual abuse of children. They are part of UK policing and are very much about tracking and bringing offenders to account either directly or in partnership with local and international forces. If you are in immediate danger contact the Police.

Protecting children in the pub

Signs that your child might come to harm in a licensed premises include: you are drinking a lot, you do not know where your child is, they keep running off, there is adult entertainment available. Adults can buy young people aged 16 or 17 beer, wine or cider (not spirits) to drink with a meal as long as the adult is with them. It is against the Law for children under 18 to buy alcohol, or for an adult to buy it for them.

It is important to know about any risks there are for children in pubs, as well as other licensed premises, which means anywhere that supplies alcohol or entertainment. For example, restaurants where you are eating a meal and places like nightclubs where you might take your children for an event like a wedding reception or family party. Children have a right to be protected from harm - not just physical but emotional and moral. It is up to everyone to do what they can to protect them.

If you are taking your child somewhere where there is alcohol, remember that the more you drink the harder it will be to look after them. They can wander off or receive unwanted attention from strangers.

Play is important

It is very important that children are allowed to get muddy sometimes, shout, scream and feel free. It is easy to be over protective. Balance is the key. Give them a bit of independence as they grow, as long as they are safe.

Keeping safe

In and out of the home

Most accidents happen in the home which is why it is important to ensure that your home is a safe place for all your family, especially for young children. One of the highest reported incidents of accidents at home is children under five (especially boys) falling from furniture or down stairs. Make your home as child friendly as you can.

Make sure that all medicines, drugs and cleaning chemicals are locked away out of reach. Certain places are full of danger, such as kitchens, sheds and even garden ponds. An accident only takes seconds.

Make your child aware of the dangers of roads and railways. Always use an appropriate car safety seat for their age and height. Outside the home they should never be alone. Teach them to run, yell and tell if approached by a stranger. Make sure you always know where they are and if they are at a friend's house, make sure you have a contact number.

Sleep-overs - Discuss with your child's friend's parents who will be there and seek assurances that they will be supervised. Do not be embarrassed to ask.

1

My son is eight and wants to sleep over at a friend's house.

2

Discuss with your son's friend's parents and find out what they will be doing and who will be at home.

3

Make sure you feel comfortable and that you exchange contact details.

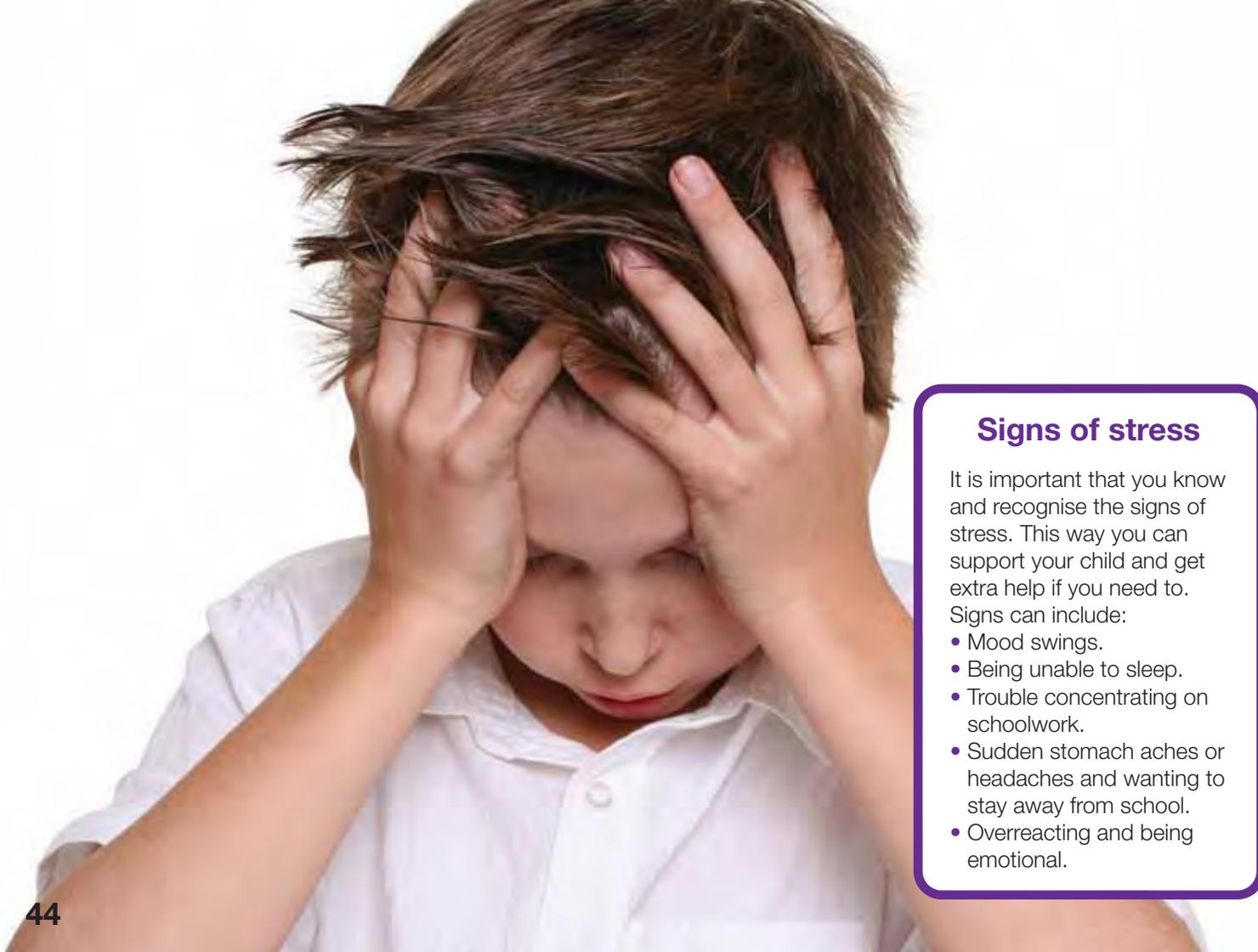
Source: www.rospa.com



Tips

All children love to explore. Even though they may be a little older it is important that they can play in a safe place where you, or another trusted adult can see or hear them.

- Children under 11 should never be left alone at home, especially with pets, even trained, good-natured animals can be tested.
- If your child wants to go and play at a friend's house, chat to their parent, make sure you have a contact number and arrange to collect them.



Signs of stress

It is important that you know and recognise the signs of stress. This way you can support your child and get extra help if you need to.

Signs can include:

- Mood swings.
- Being unable to sleep.
- Trouble concentrating on schoolwork.
- Sudden stomach aches or headaches and wanting to stay away from school.
- Overreacting and being emotional.

Stress and anxiety

Helping them cope

Children of all ages can get stressed and anxious. They can feel stressed for many reasons but the most common reasons are parental divorce, pressure at school and being bullied or abused. Be careful what you say, even when you do not think your child is listening to you. Children overhear parents talking about money worries or problems they are having at work and they start to feel anxious about these things themselves and take on worries beyond their years.

Many children feel under pressure to do things they are not happy about because of peer pressure. Friendships are very important and children often suffer stress if they have fallen out with a friend.

Children can suffer from stress and anxiety due to high expectations from parents and family. Let them know that as long as they are doing their best that is okay. Support them in getting extra help if they need it. Let them know you are there for them and that they can talk to you if they are worried. Mental health issues and depression can affect children. If you have concerns speak out.

1

Your child seems stressed out.

2

Have they fallen out with a friend? Are they being bullied? Pick a good time to chat.

3

Talk to their teacher and ask about friendship groups. If you are still worried speak to your GP.



Relieving stress

There are lots of ways you can help your child overcome or cope with stress and anxiety:

- Talk to your child about what is causing their stress.
- Tell them it is normal to feel stressed now and again.
- Help them learn to relax and cope better when they are upset.
- Do not put extra pressure on your child by expecting too much from them.
- If their anxiety goes on for longer than a month, let them know you will support them in getting help.



Warning signs

People with Anorexia: experience excessive weight loss, avoiding food while obsessing about it, pretending to have eaten already, hiding body shape, loss of periods, feeling cold, sleep problems, moodiness, not growing, thinning hair growth and dental problems due to being sick.

People with Bulimia: binge-eating, sore throat and related infections, dental problems from vomiting, missed periods, disappearing after meals, puffy skin, not drinking enough and using laxatives.

Body image and eating disorders

Getting the balance right

Food is an important part of our lives. For some, how much or how little food they eat becomes the most important thing in their lives. Eating disorders develop when food is used as a way of dealing with personal problems. How much is eaten, when, and where, can sometimes seem like the only thing in their lives that they can control and have a say about.

There are many reasons why people have eating disorders and if your child has a problem, you will need to try to understand what started it in the first place. Triggers may include abuse (physical, emotional or sexual abuse), bullying, family problems, parents pushing their child too hard at school (people with Anorexia are often high achievers), not being able to express feelings, lack of self-esteem, feelings of self-hatred or guilt, wanting to look like people in magazines and on TV and wanting to be popular.

Boys as well as girls can be affected.

1

My daughter avoids meal times and I never seem to see her eat a good meal.

2

Could she be hiding an eating disorder? Are there changes in her weight and the way she acts?

3

Chat to her about your concerns. Take an easy approach and try not to judge. Get help if needed.



What to do

You cannot make somebody eat, but you can give your child the chance to talk about their problems. Let them know that you are there to help. It may also help if you speak to other parents who have gone through similar experiences and to share and support each other.

Girls are more likely to develop eating disorders during their teenage years but boys can be affected too. If your child knows they can talk to you about any worries, they are less likely to use food as a way of dealing with her problems.



Separation and divorce

There is a lot to think about when a relationship ends, especially if you have children. You may be worried about money, where you will live and what the future holds. There can be difficult issues to address with your ex-partner, such as working out when they can see the children. As well as sorting out the practicalities, it is important to remember the emotional needs of your children and to get support if you need it.

What to do straight away:

The following should be dealt with urgently.

- 1 Protect yourself and your children.
- 2 Check your immigration status.
- 3 Know your housing rights.
- 4 Claim benefits and tax credits.
- 5 Contact your bank.
- 6 Protect joint assets.

Depending on your situation, you may also need to get urgent legal advice.

Source: NHS Choices, gingerbread.org.uk

Missing someone

Coping with loss

Loss of a loved one can be through their death, moving away, divorce or separation, or a parent in prison.

Death of a loved one causes a range of feelings as they try to cope with what has happened. They may feel anger at the person who died, at you, at others or themselves. They may feel guilty, possibly blaming themselves in some way. Talk about what has happened as much as they want to.

Separation and divorce is hard. The more your child knows what is going on, the easier they will find it to cope. Children can think that their parents breaking up is somehow their fault and they have done something wrong. Let them know that what has happened is not their fault. Tell them you are both there for them. Tell your child's school what is happening so they can give extra support if needed.

Whoever your child misses is important to your child. Support them and let them know you are there.

1

Has a significant person left your child's life through separation, death or moving away?

2

Have you thought about how this will affect your child?

3

Talk to them, let them know you are there for them. Tell the school and get extra support.



Parents in prison

Encourage your child to keep in touch, perhaps by writing letters or drawing pictures. Let them know that their parent in prison still loves them and talk to them about a possible prison visit. Talk about what you will tell others and how your child feels about that. They may not wish friends at school to know. You may wish to tell your child's school in confidence so they can offer them support.



New to Suffolk

Our services for you

If you are new to Suffolk things will of course seem a bit strange at first but with our help we can work together to support you. Health workers, teachers and carers can offer a whole host of services to welcome you.

To get the best start, make sure you register with a local GP, Health Visitor and Dentist and find out about schools. Suffolk School Admissions Service will be able to help you. If you have a pre-school child, your nearest Children's Centre may be able to help get in touch with other services to help you. Contact Suffolk FIS for information. Going to clubs or local activities will help your child make new friends and begin a new enjoyable learning experience.

Try to make new friends yourself, once you've made the effort you will be pleased you did. Join local clubs or learn a new skill - this way you will immediately have something in common with everyone else.

Useful contacts

NATIONAL

ACE (Advisory Centre for Education)

0808 8005793 www.ace-ed.org.uk

AFASIC (overcoming speech impairments)

0845 3555577

www.afasicengland.org.uk

British Dyslexia Association

0845 2519002

www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

Change4Life

0300 123 4567

www.nhs.uk/change4life

www.nhs.uk/start4life

Childline

0800 1111

www.childline.org.uk

Cruse Bereavement Care

0844 477 9400 www.cruse.org.uk

DadTalk

www.dadtalk.co.uk

Directgov

www.direct.gov.uk

Family Lives

0808 800 2222 www.familylives.org.uk

FRANK (24hrs)

0800 77 66 00 www.talktofrank.com

Hyperactive Children's Support Group

01243 539966 www.hacsg.org.uk

I CAN (speech & language impaired)

0845 2254071 www.ican.org.uk

Independent Schools Council

0207 7667070 www.isc.co.uk

Kidscape

08451 205 204 www.kidscape.org.uk

National Association for Gifted Children

01908 646433 www.nagcbrtain.org.uk

National Domestic Violence Helpline

0808 2000 247

www.womensaid.org.uk

<http://refuge.org.uk>

Netmums

www.netmums.com

Network 81 (SEN)

0845 0774055 www.network81.org

NSPCC

0808 800 5000 www.nspcc.org.uk

Rights of Women

Free Legal Advice Line

02072 516577

The Samaritans

08457 90 90 90 www.samaritans.org

Working Families

0800 0130313

www.workingfamilies.org.uk

LOCAL

Activities Unlimited (for children with additional needs)

01473 832971

www.activities-unlimited.co.uk

Autism Suffolk

01473 632700

www.autism.org.uk/autismsuffolk

Children's Centres

0845 6080033

www.suffolk.gov.uk/childrenscentres

Parent Partnership in Suffolk

01473 265210

Schools Admissions

0845 600 0981

www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissionstoschools

Suffolk County Council

08456 066 067

Suffolk Drug & Alcohol Action Team

01473 260777

Suffolk Families Information Service

0845 6080033 www.suffolk.gov.uk/childcare

Suffolk Family Carers

0844 2253099

Suffolk Rape Crisis helpline

Women and girls only 08000 850520

Men's Advice Line 08088 010327

Victim Support 08453 899548

Suffolk Police Services

Victim Care Centre:

Ipswich & East Suffolk 01986 835170

Suffolk Safeguarding Children Board

If you are worried about a child call 0808 800 4005 www.suffolkscb.org.uk

In an emergency call 999