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ENTER



A guide for **mums, dads** and **carers** of children

from **birth to 4** years old

www.northsomersetpartnership.org.uk

North Somerset

partnership

Introduction

This guide is one of a set of three, covering parenting issues from birth up to 19 years. Read the right guide/s for your family.



Parents and carers of 4 to 11 years old



Parents and carers of 11 to 19 years old

Welcome to the North Somerset guide for mums, dads and carers of children from birth to 4 years old.

We have produced this set of three guides for mums, dads and carers in response to requests for information and advice at different stages of a child's life. Inside, you will find practical advice and information as well as parenting tips. There are also contact details for national and local agencies. Please remember that the handbook is only a guide. Each child is unique and different children will develop at different rates.

In addition to the booklet, an online version may be found on the North Somerset Family Information Service's website www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk

Sheila Smith
Director of Children and Young People's Services

Throughout this booklet the term 'parents' has been used to mean mothers, fathers, carers and other adults with responsibility for caring for a child.

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North Somerset Services

Working together

In North Somerset we want children, young people and families to have the support they need when and where they need it. Practitioners work closely together in multi-agency teams to provide joined up services for children, young people and their families.

Within these teams there are people from a wide range of services who can help with health, education, early years and family issues. Young people can also get support from Connexions and the Youth Service.

Children's Social Services is now called Children's Social Care and social workers are part of these teams. Some of the staff from Social Care also offer more specialist services. There is a multi-agency team for children with complex additional needs (for example, children with learning and/or physical disabilities), one for children who are looked after and adoption and fostering teams.

There are other specialist services for children and young people in North Somerset, for example, the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and the Youth Offending Service and there are also lots of voluntary organisations. We try to work together (and with Adult Services) to provide the best possible service to families in North Somerset.

Assessments

An assessment often needs to be made of a family's needs. The person writing the assessment will ask the family what is going well, what they would like to change and what they think would help them. They will also ask permission to contact any other services involved with the family to get a better, all round view.

Wherever possible, we try and work with the whole family so that we can look at the family's needs at the same time as the individual's and because we know that family support is so important to children and young people.

Family Information Service (FIS)

The Family Information Service provides up-to-date information and guidance over the telephone or through its online directory of local childcare, support groups and organisations that work with children and young people. You can search by postcode and by keyword. All enquiries are treated in confidence.

Family Information Service
01275 888778 or 01934 426300
www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk

North Somerset Partnership

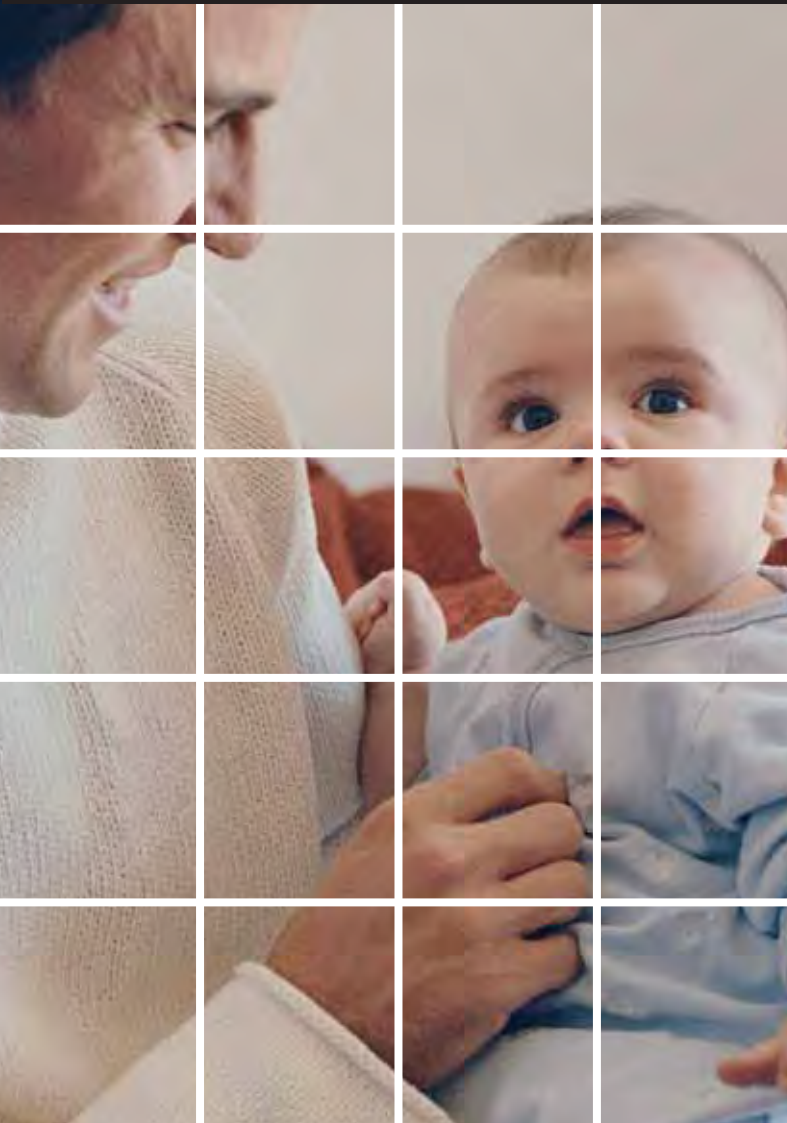
Organisations achieve more by working together in a coordinated way to tackle the most important issues in the community, for example, transport, education, crime, jobs and the environment. The North Somerset Partnership brings together representatives from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors for the benefit of everyone who lives in North Somerset.

For more information, please visit www.northsomersetpartnership.co.uk

North Somerset Council

Local councils, including North Somerset, provide services directly to the public or arrange for other organisations to provide them. Most of these services affect the daily lives of local people in a major way such as health, social care and education. North Somerset Council is part of the North Somerset Partnership. For more information, please visit www.n-somerset.gov.uk





All kinds of parents

What is a family?

“ Louise is ten months old. I am a single dad - it is hard work but fortunately I have the support of a loving family. ”

- » Your family is unique. Who is in your family? How does it work?
- » Babies and children need stability and change can make them feel especially vulnerable
- » Different people handle change in different ways
- » Family change takes time to get used to
- » Whatever kind of family you have, you're not alone - if you need help, make contact
- » It's important to understand how your family make-up can affect children

There's no such thing as an 'average' family - every family is different.

Going it alone

Growing up with one parent can be a good thing, leading to a close relationship. Encourage your child to spend time with their other parent if it's safe and possible. Help them understand how both of you will be part of their lives and that it's okay to love you both.

Separated families

Families are separated for all kinds of reasons, these include divorce, bereavement, working away, a prison sentence. Separation can mean that you and your child are coping with a lot of change. All of us act differently in times of stress. Make sure that you have support so that you can support your child.

New families

In a new relationship, everyone will need time to get used to things. If your new partner has children of their

own there could be extra challenges. Change can make us all feel unsafe, so it's important to make sure everyone feels secure. Take things slowly and carefully and try to see things through each other's eyes.

Grandparents

They can provide a welcome extra pair of helping hands and are an important link to family histories and a sense of belonging. They may have busy lives of their own so don't ask them to do too much. In family breakdowns they may fear losing touch with much-loved grandchildren.

Private fostering

If you are caring for someone else's child and you are not a close family member this is known as 'private fostering'. You must inform Social Care of this arrangement, which also provides you with the opportunity to get support.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk



WARNING SIGNS

Changes in the way your child is acting. Watch out for feelings of blame or guilt if your relationship with your partner is not working.



ACTION

Talk through changes early - children are quick to pick up 'vibes' and may know if you're keeping something from them. Keep talking about the new things that are happening.



WHAT TO SAY

Stability is important to children. Remind them that they are loved, give them lots of hugs and cuddles and let them know that it is not their fault, whatever is happening.



PREVENTION

Counselling, mediation and support agencies can help to spot possible problems. Know your rights.



CONTACTS

- One Space (lone parents) www.onespace.org.uk
- Winston's Wish (childhood bereavement) 08452 03 04 05 www.winstonswish.org.uk
- www.theparentconnection.org.uk (separation and divorce)
- Action for Prisoners' Families 0808 808 2003 www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk



Babysitting and childminding

Who can I leave my child with?

“ My babysitter has come highly recommended so I feel happier leaving my son with her. ”

- » **Children rely on their parents for their safety**
- » **Your child has the right to care which is free from harm**
- » **Make sure your child gets the best quality care**
- » **Select a babysitter or childminder carefully**
- » **Make sure your babysitter or childminder knows where to contact you in an emergency**
- » **You have the right to the same standards of care from all organisations**

As parents you are responsible for the safety and well-being of your children. As a result it is important that you think very carefully about who you are going to leave them with, whether this is a babysitter, childminder, close relative, friend or organisation. Childminders are regulated and registered by Ofsted. The Family Information Service has a list of registered childminders. Babysitters are not registered.

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. When choosing a temporary carer for your child it is important that you choose someone with the abilities and high standards that you would expect of yourself. This includes someone who will make sure they feel secure, well fed, and someone who can deal with difficulties if they occur.

A good organisation offering children's activities will welcome questions about what they do and the safety of their surroundings. They should have a child protection policy, including guidelines about keeping children safe. Find out as much information as you can - ask other parents.

Generally a babysitter will come to your home to take care of your child. Make sure you talk to them before you leave. Let them know when to expect you back and make sure they have contact details in case of emergencies.

The NSPCC recommends that the minimum age of a babysitter should be 16. Children cannot manage the responsibility of being left alone. There are many possible risks, both physical and emotional. They can feel sad, lonely, frightened and it can be dangerous.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk



WARNING SIGNS

Children will not always be able to tell you if something is wrong, so note changes in their mood and physical appearance. Agree with the carer to discuss, from the beginning, all accidents and incidents.



ACTION

Use people you trust to care for your child or ask them to recommend someone. If there is immediate risk of harm to a child, call the police.



WHAT TO SAY

Tell the carer all about your child's routines and their likes and dislikes. Always leave a contact number in case of emergencies.



PREVENTION

Make sure you feel completely comfortable about your carer before you leave your child in their care.



CONTACTS

- Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT)
020 7608 3828
www.capt.org.uk
- www.inhomechildsafety.co.uk
- www.rospa.com
- www.nspcc.org.uk
0808 800 5000



Bedwetting and sleeping difficulties

How can I help my child?

“ I tried not to get cross when I had to change the sheets again and made sure I praised her for going all night without wetting the bed. It's made a huge difference, she's dry most nights now. ”

- » **Bedwetting may be a sign of a health problem but more often than not your child will learn to control their bladder at their own pace**
- » **Each child's sleep pattern is different**
- » **Take time to sort out a bedtime routine, including a time for your child to relax and unwind before going to bed**
- » **If your child often wakes in the night, try to find out why they have woken, for example because of a bad dream or being hungry**

Potty training

Your child is more likely to learn control if you are relaxed and calm about it. Children learn at their own pace and praise, rather than telling them off, will help. Between the ages of three and four years your child is likely to be dry during the day, with the odd accident. Remember, this is often not an instant change but a gradual process where more and more nights will be dry nights. It is common for children older than four to have accidents.

Bedwetting

It is not easy to know why some children take longer to be dry at night than others. However, bedwetting is not due to laziness or lack of willpower. Although this may be stressful for you both, try not to lose your patience. It is rare for a child to wet or soil on purpose. If your child often wets their bed, the problem may be caused by a number of things. Talk to your child and reassure them that other older children

experience this too. Talk to your doctor or health visitor for advice and support.

Sleeping difficulties

If you have a sleepless baby, this can be very stressful. Ask your health visitor for advice because you need your sleep too. Most children experience a range of sleep problems throughout childhood and there are many reasons for this. We strongly believe that there is no single solution and that every family is unique. Make contact with a helpline for advice and support.

Establishing a routine

It is important to get a regular night time sleep routine where they go to bed at a regular time each night. A warm and comfortable room is easier to relax in. A story at bedtime will help your child to unwind and relax.

Encourage your child to have at least six to eight good drinks per day. This will help to improve their bladder capacity. Aim for five of these drinks to be before 5pm.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk



WARNING SIGNS

There may be none, but does your child seem to be unhappy? Has something happened in the family or in your child's life that is worrying them?



ACTION

Stay calm if your child is wetting or soiling the bed. Is there a particular time when your child wets or soils? Talk to your doctor or health visitor for advice.



WHAT TO SAY

Talk to your child about how they feel. Try to keep calm and relaxed without showing signs of strain. Praise your child when they sleep through.



PREVENTION

Let your child know they can share any worries with you. If you need advice about preventing wetting, discuss your concerns with your doctor or health visitor.



CONTACTS

- Your doctor or health visitor
- www.eric.org.uk 0845 370 8008
- Cry-sis Helpline 08451 228 669 www.cry-sis.org.uk



Breastfeeding and immunisation

Giving your baby the best start

“When Fiona was born I had a few problems breastfeeding at first, but I’m glad I stuck with it. It is good for her and makes me feel so close to her.”

- » **Make sure your baby has a healthy diet from the start**
- » **Until your baby is six months old, breast milk has got everything they need**
- » **Breastfeeding is the best way to protect your baby against infections**

Giving your baby a healthy diet from the start is one of the most important things you can do for them, not just now but for their future years too. Some mothers breastfeed their babies, some bottle feed with formula milk and some mothers do a mixture of both.

Breastfeeding is good for babies because breast milk contains antibodies that help protect against illnesses. There are other advantages for you too - it is free, you don't need to prepare breast milk and you can do it in most places. Breastfeeding can take time for you and your baby to get used to - do ask for support if you are finding it difficult. If you use formula milk, make sure all your equipment is sterilised and follow the instructions on the packet.

When your baby is six months old, they will still need to breastfeed or have formula milk but now is the time to offer your baby some solids. This

period is called 'weaning', which means your baby will be trying lots of different foods to see what they like. Remember that babies can't drink cow's milk until they're a year old.

Immunisations, also known as vaccinations are usually given by injection. The Immunisation Programme mainly takes place during the first five years. It's important for your baby to have their vaccinations at the right age to keep the risk of disease and any side-effects as low as possible.

Childhood immunisations are free and most are given within the first 12 months. Advice on vaccinations should be sought from your family doctor or health visitor.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk



WARNING SIGNS

Once established, most mothers find breastfeeding easy but many find it difficult at first. Talk to your midwife or health visitor.



ACTION

It is important to feed your baby whenever they seem hungry. This will make sure you produce plenty of milk to meet their needs.



WHAT TO SAY

Don't be afraid to talk to your midwife or health visitor if you have any concerns.



PREVENTION

Breast milk contains all the food and water your baby needs. Make sure all your equipment is sterilised if you are bottle feeding and follow the instructions on the packet.



CONTACTS

- Your doctor, health visitor or midwife
- www.nhs.uk/start4life
- www.nhs.uk/birthtofive



Building blocks to good behaviour

Positive feedback

“ I tell Billy off if he's naughty but I don't like criticising him too much. Hurtful comments could damage his confidence. I think it's better to highlight his good behaviour - that way he wants to behave well for me. **”**

- **Children want approval so childhood is a good time to teach them positive behaviour**
- **Use positive feedback to build up your child's self-esteem**
- **Praise your child, explain why you're pleased with them**
- **Children are happier if they have rules to follow**
- **Use play to teach your child about good behaviour**

Every day your child learns new things, it's what makes childhood such an exciting time. Your child will learn from you and your example. As a parent, you have an important job teaching them about your values and beliefs. Start this when they're young and you'll see all your hard work pay off in the future when they grow into a happy teenager.

Childhood is a good time to teach them good behaviour because they respect and want to be close to you. Give lots of praise to build up your child's self-esteem and talk about their strengths rather than their weaknesses. Your opinion of your child has a huge impact on what they think of themselves and so being too critical can damage their confidence.

When your child does something good, praise them and explain why. So rather than saying "Good girl" when they put their toys away, say "You're a good girl for putting your toys away." Your child will learn the value of good behaviour.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk

Try to make it clear that you're upset with their behaviour and not them. Instead of saying "You're a very naughty child," try saying, "I don't like it when you leave toys on the floor. Please pick them up and put them back in the box before tea." That way, your child won't see themselves as a bad person and will know they have the power to change their behaviour.

It's up to you to set rules and boundaries in your child's life - most children are happier living with rules. Be consistent, for example, don't 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.

Have fun with your child. Life is often so busy that many parents don't have the time to sit down and play with their child. Play is important because it helps your child feel good about themselves. Having fun with your child is as important as them having their own friends.



WARNING SIGNS

Is your child's self-esteem low? Do they say things like "I'll never be able to do this." If so, their confidence has somehow been damaged.



ACTION

What you say to your child and how you treat them can hugely influence their behaviour as they grow up. Develop a good relationship with them before they reach their teens.



WHAT TO SAY

Praise your child when they're good and when they have done something difficult. Try not to lose your temper when you discipline your child. Make it clear you're unhappy with their behaviour, not them as a person.



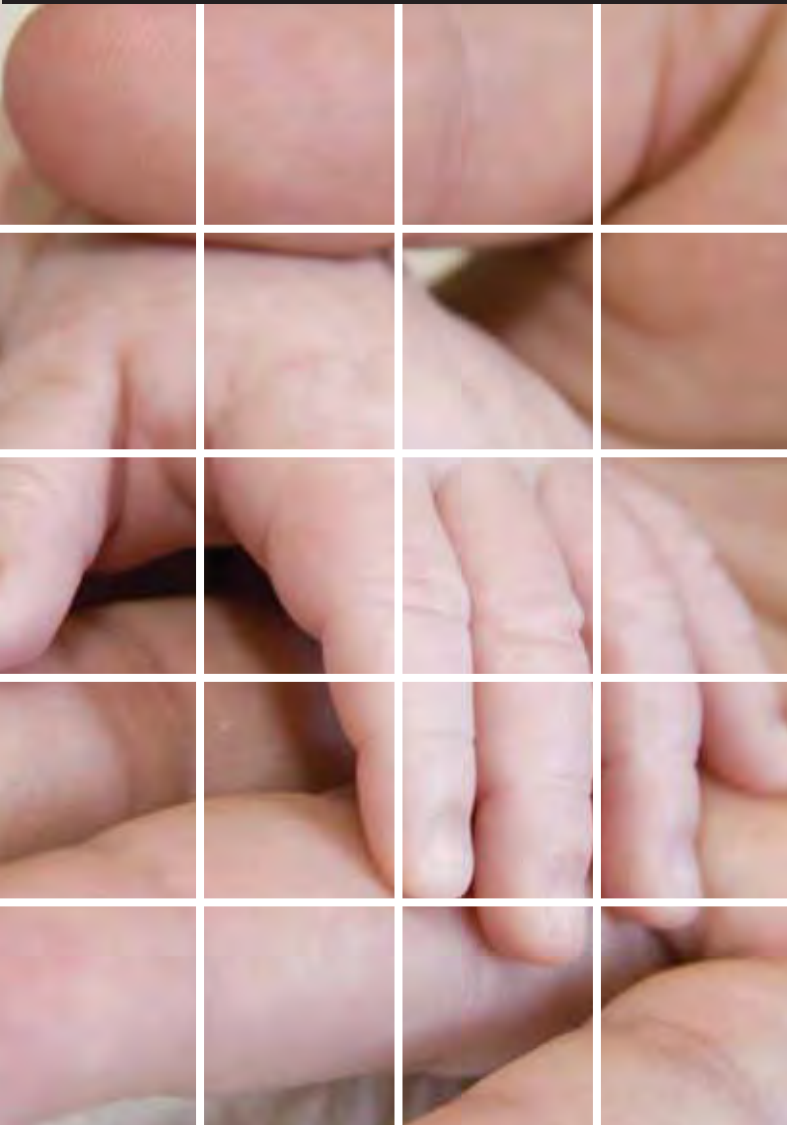
PREVENTION

You can help stop unacceptable behaviour when your child gets older by putting in the hard work now - it really is worth it!



CONTACTS

- Your doctor, health visitor or local Children's Centre
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222 www.parentlineplus.org.uk
- www.bbc.co.uk/parenting



Child protection and safeguarding

Myths and realities

“ Social work has changed a lot. We work more in partnership with families where there are concerns to make sure they get support before things reach a crisis. ”

- » **Parents are responsible for their children’s safety**
- » **Social Care become involved once a concern is shared**
- » **Children are best cared for by their own families**
- » **Professionals want to work in partnership with families to reduce the risk of harm**

When harm happens to children, families also need support. Social workers and other professionals become involved when parents may be unable to protect their baby or child from harm and need some help. In some cases the police Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT) will investigate with social workers to help protect children and decide whether an offence has been committed.

Child abuse can be recognised, prevented and stopped.

A child cannot always clearly tell you what has happened. A careful assessment is needed before deciding how best to help and support a child. A social worker will ask questions about the family circumstances, consider the frequency and the seriousness of the incident and the effects. All of these factors will help to decide what should happen next. Social workers and the police have a duty to investigate concerns of child abuse.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk

Professionals are not solely responsible for protecting children.

Traditionally, social workers have been expected to make sure that children are safe. In order to do this well, they rely on information from parents, family, other professionals and the local community who all play an important part in identifying concerns. This helps to ensure support is offered before the situation becomes far worse.

Removing a child from home is not the main aim of social work enquiries and rarely happens.

Social workers can only remove children from home with a court order, having demonstrated that there is serious and immediate risk. In emergency situations the police have the power to remove a child for 72 hours.



WARNING SIGNS

Social workers will get involved when they believe that physical injury, neglect, sexual or emotional abuse has occurred or is likely to occur.



ACTION

Make sure you know what child abuse is and contact the police or Social Care if you think this is happening. A social worker will meet with you if abuse is reported.



WHAT TO SAY

If you are worried about your own or someone else’s child, seek advice about what practical and emotional support is available.



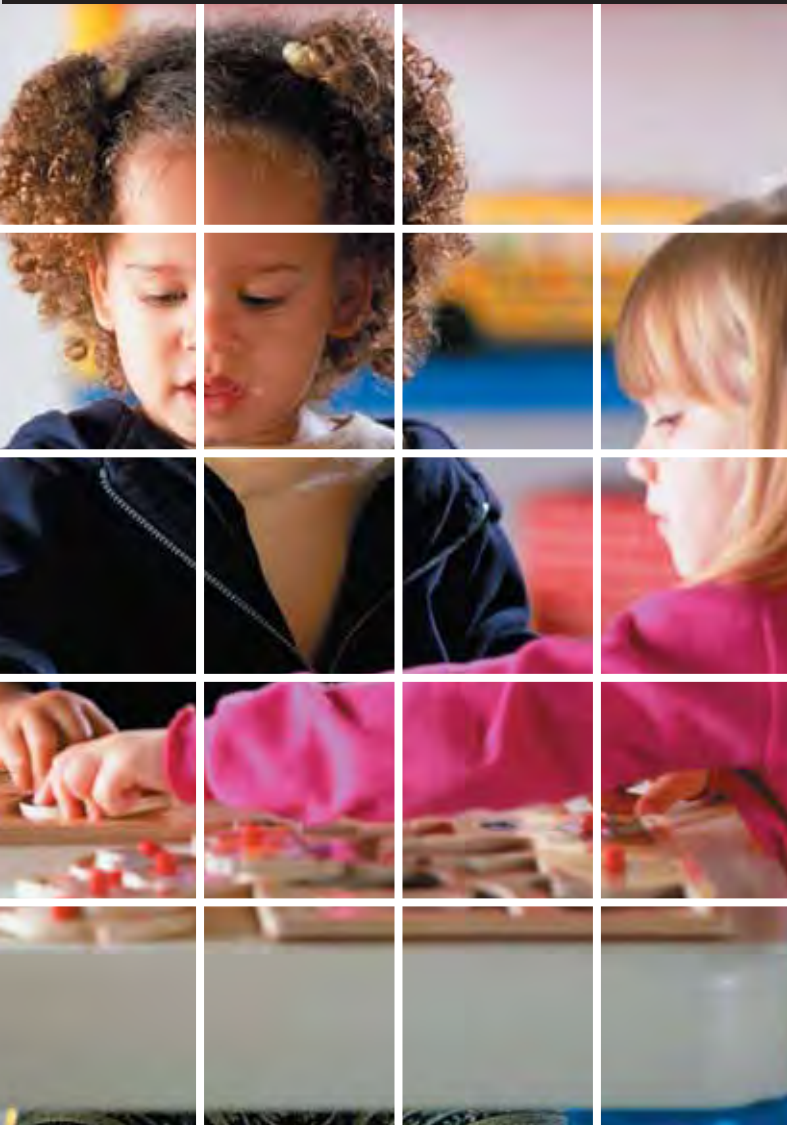
PREVENTION

It is important they know what to do when they feel unsafe. Do they know who to talk to and how to get to a safe place or person? If you are worried, seek help early.



CONTACTS

- Social Care Referral and Assessment Team
01275 888266
- NSPCC 0808 800 5000
www.nspcc.org.uk
- Parentline Plus
0808 800 2222
www.parentlineplus.org.uk



Children's Centres

Giving your child the best start

“ They say you experience a second childhood when you get old. I experience it every time I play with my child. I'd forgotten what fun it could be! ”

- » **Children's Centres across North Somerset offer support and advice to families with young children**
- » **Children's Centres and playgroups are a good place to meet and talk**
- » **Children of all ages learn through play. Play is a vital part of your child's development**
- » **Early childhood experiences affect children's attitude to learning**

Young families have a range of needs and the demands on you as parents never really stop. Children's Centres are about making sure that it is as easy as possible for you to get the help and advice you need from services, close to home, and when you need them.

There will be a range of services available, including meeting with a health visitor, advice on breastfeeding, parenting support, baby massage classes, Jobcentre Plus and learning opportunities. Different Children's Centres offer different services.

You can get help and advice during and after your pregnancy, right through to when your child is preparing to start school, as well as meeting and talking to other parents. Children's Centres may offer childcare advice on what is available in your area, child and family health services or family support and outreach to parents away from the centre.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk

If you are looking to return to training or work there will be links with Jobcentre Plus, local colleges and training providers. There will be activities and training available for parents who want to learn new skills and meet others.

Children's Centres can help both you and your child prepare for school and education. The centre will be able to offer you a variety of play and learning opportunities, as well as telling you what else is available in the local area. Children learn through play and having fun, as well as being praised for their efforts. Your child will have access to toys, games and books, which you might not have at home.

Children's Centres are also great places for family learning where you can learn a new skill, safe in the knowledge that your child is being cared for.



WARNING SIGNS

If your child isn't receiving enough stimulation from you or from other carers, they may not be getting the opportunity they need to learn. It could affect their development and future attitude to learning.



ACTION

Make time to have fun playing with your child. Make sure other carers have a positive attitude to play and learning. Find out what's available locally.



WHAT TO SAY

Just go with the flow. Introduce as many different experiences as you can. Try to discover what sort of play interests your child and play along with them.



PREVENTION

Avoid letting your child get bored. Spend time with young children - keep them stimulated. Try to think up new activities.



CONTACTS

- Local Children's Centre (via the Family Information Service)
- Supportive Parents 0117 989 7725 www.supportiveparents.org.uk
- Springboard 01934 426165 or 01275 341113 www.springboardweb.org.uk
- www.direct.gov.uk



Children with a learning or physical disability

You're not alone

“ When I found out that Joe had a disability I didn't know how I was going to cope. I just didn't think I'd be able to do it alone. Pretty soon I realised I didn't have to. ”

- » **Your child is protected by legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act and the Children Act (1989)**
- » **The government, health, education, Social Care and other local services are there to help**
- » **You may be able to receive financial help to help you care for your child**

Support and advice

'Disability' covers a wide range of different impairments. Local health, education, Social Care and voluntary agencies offer a wide range of support, including information and short break services for children and their carers according to their assessed need.

Legal protection

Your child is protected by legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act, which says it is against the law for anyone providing a service (including schools, businesses and organisations) to treat people with a disability less fairly than others because of their disability. It also asks them to make reasonable adjustments to their services (like ramps or disabled toilets) so that people with a disability can use them too.

Health

Your doctor and local health service will give advice and support and assess your child's disability. This may include ongoing medical care and treatment, therapy and equipment.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk

Benefits

There are several benefits that you can apply for to help you with the costs of caring for a child with a disability. These include the Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Carers' Allowance.

Education

Depending on your child's disability, you may want them to go to a specialist pre-school (Springboard) or to a mainstream nursery with additional support. Your health visitor, Children's Centre or Springboard Opportunity Group can give you more information about what is available locally.

Make contact

You're not alone - get the support you need. Contact your health visitor, doctor or Children's Centre. The Supportive Parents website has a link to information and support groups for parents of children with disabilities and special educational needs.



WARNING SIGNS

Some disabilities are spotted early, others take time to develop. However it happens, you may need support. Speak to your doctor or health visitor.



ACTION

Get as much information as you can about your child's condition. Find out about the support and benefits available. Ask about getting your child registered with the North Somerset Disabled Children's Family Network. For an application form contact The Firs Resource Centre.



WHAT TO SAY

Parent led groups in North Somerset help you meet others in a similar situation and there is a forum for parents and carers with links to local policy makers.



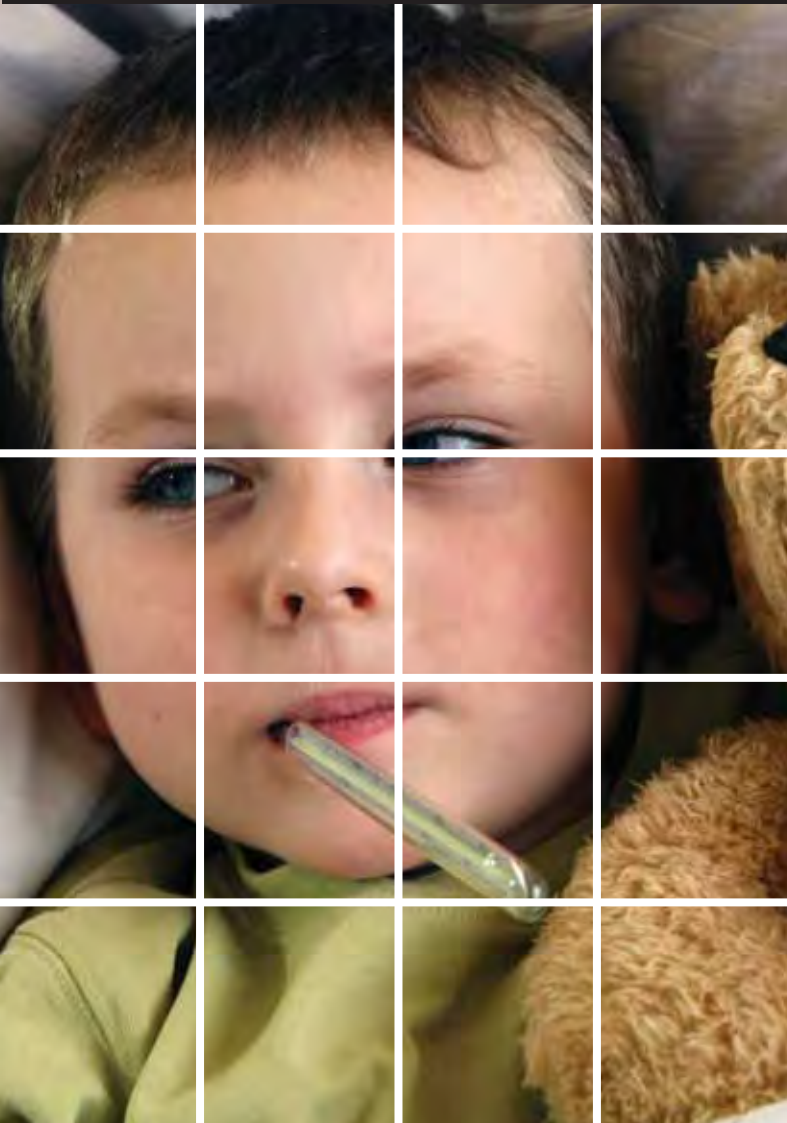
PREVENTION

You can't stop your child's condition but you can make sure you know about your rights and the services that are available.



CONTACTS

- Springboard 01934 426165 or 01275 341113 www.springboardweb.org.uk
- The Firs Resource Centre 01934 632538
- Supportive Parents 0117 989 7725 www.supportiveparents.org.uk



Common childhood illnesses

Being prepared and knowing the signs

“ I want to know what I should do if I am worried that my child is ill, who should I go to for help? ”

- » **Children are very susceptible to illnesses, especially to typical childhood illnesses**
- » **Breastfeeding provides some immunity to common illnesses**
- » **Children explore the world around them with their mouths and their hands. Things that come into contact with their mouth and hands can potentially cause an illness**
- » **The more your child is exposed the stronger their immune systems will become, and their ability to fight off infection**

Parents usually notice when something is wrong with their baby from quite early on. Trust your instincts, you know your baby best. It is normal to worry that you won't recognise the signs that your baby is unwell. Learn how to spot the signs of serious illness and how to cope if an accident happens. If you know the basics and are well prepared, you will find it easier to cope and less scary. Keep a small supply of useful medicines such as a thermometer, plasters, liquid paracetamol (e.g. baby paracetamol) and barrier cream. Keep it somewhere high where a child cannot reach it. Make sure you've got the right strength of medicine for the age of your child, always follow instructions carefully and check expiry dates.

I want to know more

There are two handbooks, which are very helpful. These are available free of charge for all expectant mothers and parents. These are the Pregnancy Book and Birth to Five Book, which

are published by the Department of Health. Contact your local maternity team or doctor for a copy.

The Pregnancy Book aims to:

- Support the mother, her partner and baby throughout pregnancy, labour and childbirth and the first weeks with your new baby.
- Explain the different aspects of pregnancy, ensuring optimal health and well-being of all involved.

The Birth to Five Book aims to:

- Introduce parents to the healthy child programme for the first years of life, explaining issues like immunisation.
- Provide a guide to the early years of life, ensuring mother, her partner and baby have support throughout this time.
- Explain, the different aspects of the first five years of life, ensuring optimal health and well-being of all involved.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk



WARNING SIGNS

Is your child struggling to breathe? Do they have a high temperature? Do they have a fever?



ACTION

If your child seems to have a serious illness it's important to get medical attention as soon as possible. Trust your instincts - you know your baby best.



WHAT TO SAY

Almost all babies, toddlers and children aged up to five will get the most common childhood illnesses like chickenpox, colds, sore throats and ear infections.



PREVENTION

Learn how to spot the signs of serious illness and how to cope if an accident happens.



CONTACTS

- Your doctor or health visitor
- www.nhs.uk/birthtofive



Crying babies and temper tantrums

Managing behaviour

“ Not only has he learnt to walk and talk, but now he’s learnt to stamp his foot, argue, scream until he’s bright red and embarrass me in public on a regular basis. What’s happened to my child? ”

- **The ‘terrible twos’ are a normal part of your child’s development and can last for a year or so**
- **Getting angry is a natural reaction but it makes the situation worse**
- **Smacking does not teach children self-discipline**
- **Be firm but find a positive way to deal with the problem**
- **Do not suffer alone, seek support from others**

Ways to cope with a crying baby

On average a baby will cry for at least two hours every day. If a baby has additional difficulties, they will cry more and this can be very stressful and difficult to manage. But crying is the way all babies make sure that their basic needs are met - they may be hungry, thirsty or need a change of nappy or be uncomfortable. Crying is neither your fault nor the fault of your baby. Here are some ways to cope:

- Count to ten before doing anything and allow yourself to calm down.
- Hug and cuddle your child - perhaps with the use of a baby-carrier so that they are close to your body in order to help soothe them.
- Go for a walk or a drive to help them sleep.
- If necessary walk out of the room for a short time but stay nearby.
- Ask someone else you trust to take over for a while.
- Use any time away from baby to look after yourself.
- You do not have to cope alone - speak to your doctor, health visitor or family.

Dealing with temper tantrums

It is important that children learn how to behave and control how they act as they get older. Parents have a very important job as role models for their children in helping them to learn how to do this. Tantrums are especially likely to happen if a child is tired, hungry or uncomfortable. Here are some ways to deal with temper tantrums:

- You can reduce the likelihood of a tantrum by planning ahead.
- Keep calm. Getting angry and shouting at your child can make you both feel worse.
- Try to find a distraction. Finding something else interesting to do or look at can help.
- Always try to offer a positive way out.
- If you do say “no” don’t be tempted to give in later to calm them down. If you’re at home you can try ignoring the tantrum. Encourage your child to cool down on their own.
- After the tantrum, praise your child for settling down. Give them a cuddle and make it clear that you still love them no matter what.



WARNING SIGNS

It could happen anywhere, but watch out for a tired or hungry child in any situation when they want something that you have said “no” to.



ACTION

Stay calm, consider whether your child needs food or rest. Give your child attention and if possible, find a quiet place or some way of distracting their attention.



WHAT TO SAY

Try to offer your child a choice or a positive way out. Be calm and understanding. Keep it simple and clear. Praise your child (and yourself) for calming down afterwards.



PREVENTION

Try to foresee possible causes for tantrums in the day ahead and find ways to avoid them.



CONTACTS

- Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk
- Your health visitor or doctor
- Cry-sis Helpline 08451 228 669 www.cry-sis.org.uk
- Parentline plus 0808 800 2222 www.parentlineplus.org.uk



Dads matter

An important part of your child's life

“*Becoming a dad completely changed my life. I am so glad I got involved in my son's life and I wouldn't change him for the world.*”

- » **Both parents are just as important as each other**
- » **Children who have a positive relationship with their dads, are more likely to succeed at school**
- » **Provide a caring and loving environment for your child**
- » **Listen and talk to your child, and try to be involved in their lives as much as possible**

Becoming a dad is a fantastic experience and one that will change your life. However you may have worries or concerns about becoming a father or even feel slightly pushed out by the baby. You may find that it is useful to talk to other fathers about their experiences, as most of them will have asked themselves the same questions. There are dads' groups in North Somerset and Children's Centres welcome fathers.

Fathers play a significant role in the lives of their children, and this is often underestimated. Research shows that children who have a positive relationship with their dads are more likely to do better at school, be more confident, and develop better adult relationships. Children need to feel that they have unconditional love and attention from both of their parents, and that whatever happens in life their parents will always be there for them.

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. Try not to argue with your child's mother in front of your child. If you are separated, it's important to get on well together for the sake of your child.

If you are not living in the same home as your child, it is vital to keep a strong relationship with them. Whatever feelings you have about being separated, it's important that you put your child's needs first.

If you have PR or Parental Responsibility, you have certain legal rights and duties. To find out whether you do have PR and what this means, please contact one of the organisations listed.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk



WARNING SIGNS

Signs your child may be suffering can include, needing extra attention, being clingy or pushing you away, crying more than usual, not eating or sleeping well.



ACTION

Try to get involved with your child as much as possible. A strong family unit will help with their development and help them feel secure and loved, whether both parents live together or not.



WHAT TO SAY

Suggest doing something together and find something you both enjoy. Build a good relationship early on as research shows this will benefit your child later in life.



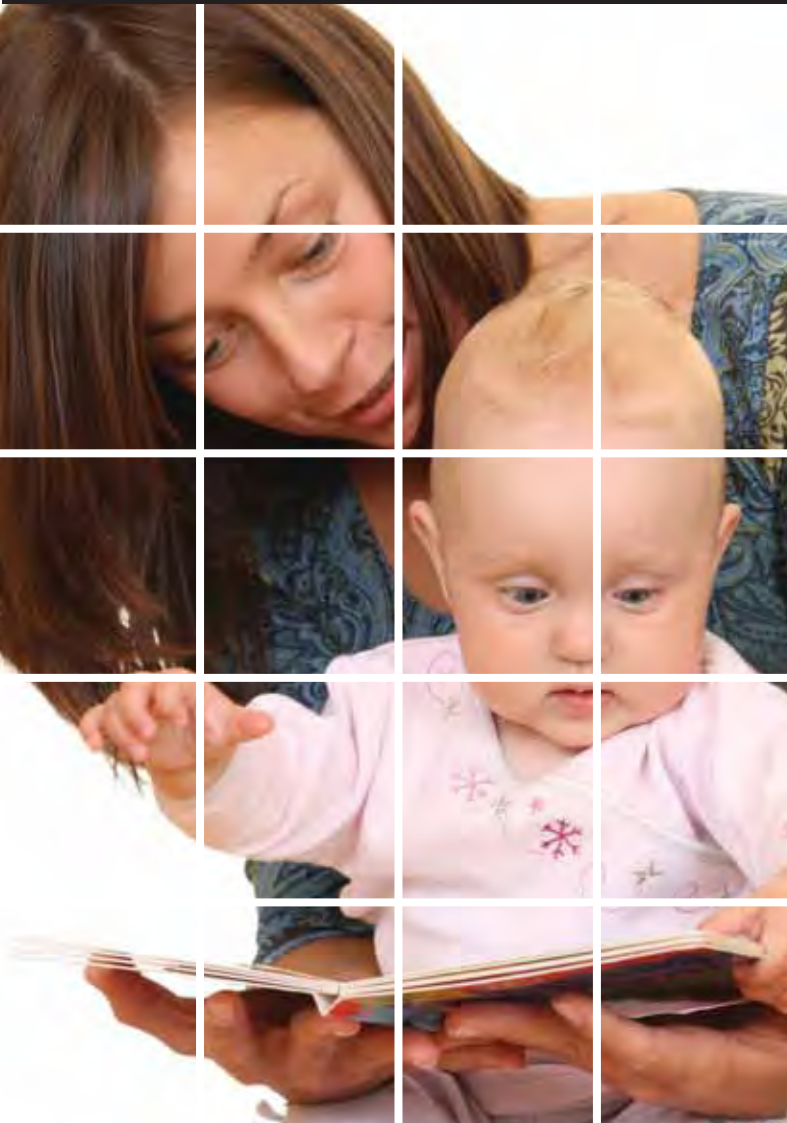
PREVENTION

Never speak negatively about your child's mother in front of them. Have fun with your children and value your time together.



CONTACTS

- Your local Children's Centre
- Families Need Fathers
0300 0300 363
www.fnf.org.uk
- www.theparentconnection.org.uk (separation and divorce)
- www.fatherhoodinstitute.org
- www.dads-space.com



Developing speech and language

Chatter matters

“ *She already loves books and it's great fun sitting down and reading to her.* ”

- » **Before babies can speak, they communicate with you through eye contact, smiling and gurgling**
- » **Crying is another important way for them to get their point across**
- » **Communication isn't just about words, but your tone of voice and your facial expressions too**
- » **Reading to your child, storytelling and rhymes are all great forms of communication**

Communicating with your child helps you form a strong bond. Before your child can talk, they interact with you through eye contact, smiling, gurgling and even crying. Their brain develops the most between birth and two years so their early days are really important.

Your baby learns by hearing and doing, so if you say words and make sounds, this will encourage them to copy you. If you talk and interact with your baby it will help them to learn to talk later on. By responding to your child's attempts at communication this will increase their confidence to try more sounds and words.

It's not just about words. Your child will notice your tone of voice, how you stand and how you use your hands - even your facial expressions. Children develop at different rates, so don't worry if other children their age seem to be talking more.

In the first six months, most children learn to make eye contact, smile and use different cries for different needs. Talk to your child remembering to use eye contact.

From six months to a year, your baby will try out sounds for themselves, like 'ma-ma' and 'da-da'. Use lots of positive facial expressions and tones of voice, copy their sounds and play around with gestures.

From 12-18 months, your child will probably try out their first words, or point and make a noise to say what they want. Respond to and accept any attempts at words

From 18 months-2 years your child will be able to understand more familiar items by name and will be trying to use more words. Try not to correct words that they get wrong - just repeat them back to them correctly.

From 2-3 years your child's single word vocabulary will increase and they will begin to combine words to make short phrases and sentences. Help them to expand these by repeating back what they say but adding on one or two extra words.

From 3-4 years, your child should be talking more freely and clearly. Take it in turns to listen and speak so that they learn the social rules of conversation.



WARNING SIGNS

Children develop at different rates but if you're worried about your child's speech and language, ask your health visitor, staff at your child's nursery or your local Children's Centre for advice.



ACTION

Give lots of smiles and praise. Looking at picture books will improve your baby's language and listening skills too. Nursery rhymes or making up songs is another fun way to learn. Meeting other babies and toddlers helps with social interaction.



WHAT TO SAY

Remember that babies absorb lots of things, so try to use a calm, gentle voice whenever you're around them. Use actions and gestures with words to help your child understand, for example waving 'bye bye'.



PREVENTION

Talk to your child and remember to use language at the right level for their age, avoiding long sentences and complicated words.



CONTACTS

- Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk
- Your health visitor or local Children's Centre



Domestic abuse

It could be happening at home

“ She made you feel like you weren't the only person going through it and just knowing she was there whenever I needed her and that she wanted to help gave me more confidence. ”

- » Domestic abuse can affect children in serious and long-lasting ways
- » Domestic abuse may be a one off, but it may get worse and more frequent over time
- » Pregnant women are more vulnerable to domestic abuse
- » Children often blame themselves for domestic abuse

Domestic abuse includes threatening behaviour, violence, psychological, sexual, financial or emotional abuse. Domestic abuse is a crime and a major social problem affecting many families.

Babies and children who see or hear violence can be affected in many different ways. They do hear, they do see, and they are aware of violence in the family. Children will learn how to act from what they see their parents do. Domestic abuse teaches children negative things about relationships and how to deal with people.

For example:

- It can teach them that violence is the way to sort out arguments.
- They learn how to keep secrets.
- They often do not trust those close to them and think that they are to blame, especially if it happens after an argument about them.

Many people find it difficult to understand why people stay in or return to violent situations. Fear, love, the risk of homelessness and financial

issues can make it very difficult for partners with children to leave and some may just not want to.

Short-term effects

Children are affected in many ways by domestic abuse, even after a short time. These can include feeling frightened, becoming shy and quiet, behaving badly, poor concentration and emotional upset.

Long-term effects

The longer children are around domestic abuse, the worse the effects on them are. These can include a lack of respect for the non-violent parent, loss of self-confidence, which will affect how they form relationships in the future, being over-protective of the non-abusing parent and loss of childhood.

Talk to your midwife, health visitor, doctor or call NADA 01934 627841 or Gemini 0870 066 4233 or the police Domestic Abuse Investigation Team (DAIT) 0845 456 7000 (or 999 in an emergency).

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk



WARNING SIGNS

Any abuse between adults will negatively affect children no matter how little they are. Seek support and help as soon as possible.



ACTION

Report your concerns about yourself or someone else to the police. If you are worried that your child might be affected, talk to them about what is happening.



WHAT TO SAY

Children need time to talk about the feelings they have about violence. They need to know that it is not their fault and that this is not the way it should be.



PREVENTION

Make sure that you are a good role model for your children so that they learn better ways of dealing with conflict.



CONTACTS

- Domestic Violence Helpline 0808 2000 247 www.womensaid.org.uk
- www.mankind.org.uk 01823 334244
- Victim Support and Domestic Abuse FreeFone Service (DAFFS) 0845 45 66 099 or 0800 6949 999 www.victimsupport.org.uk



Drugs and alcohol

Being a good role model

“ I thought my drinking was just the same as anybody else’s. I thought the children didn’t notice as they are only toddlers. ”

- » **When parents use drink or drugs, it often affects the emotional development and well-being of their children**
- » **Parental drug or alcohol use can put children in danger**
- » **When violence occurs in families, alcohol is often involved**
- » **Pregnant women are often victims of domestic abuse**
- » **Pregnant women who drink alcohol or take drugs are seriously damaging their unborn baby**

Most adults drink in moderation but if your answer to a problem is to drink a lot or take drugs, things can get to the stage where you are not taking proper care of your children or protecting them.

Think about what your behaviour says to your child - do you come in from a difficult or stressful day and reach for a drink. Children learn from what they see and begin to think that alcohol or drugs are okay and the normal way of sorting out problems. Often people start using drugs in a similar way 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 a serious effect on them as they grow up.

It is important that you talk to your partner or some other relative who could offer support to you and your children. Children may be too young to understand what is going on or

think they will get into trouble if they tell. There is support available for children who live in households where drugs and alcohol are a problem.

If you think you or another adult at home has a problem seek advice and support. Things are beginning to become a problem if your use of alcohol or other drugs is affecting the following:

- Relationships - has someone spoken to you about their concerns for you?
- Your work - have you been late, missed work or performed poorly as a result of substance 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 child.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk



WARNING SIGNS

Your use of alcohol or drugs might result in changes to your child’s behaviour. They may act out or have changes to their appearance or stop seeing friends.



ACTION

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



WHAT TO SAY

Encourage them to talk to someone who can help them. Help them to do normal things like playing with friends.



PREVENTION

Be conscious about your use of alcohol or drugs. If you think they may be causing problems for you or your family get more information and seek help and advice.



CONTACTS

- Addiction Recovery Agency (ARA) 01934 415376
- Specialist Drug and Alcohol Service 01934 412273
- COSMIC (Children of Substance Misusing Carers) 01934 426444
- FRANK 0800 77 66 00 www.talktofrank.com
- Drinkline 0800 917 8282
- www.nhs.uk/livewell/alcohol



Fostering

Could you make a difference?

“ All children need someone to care and guide them. As a foster parent you can make a real difference to a child’s life. ”

- **Foster carers and adopters come from all walks of life**
- **There are many different ways that you can make a difference to a child’s life**
- **You’ll receive excellent support and training**

We need more foster carers to help children who are unable to live with their own families.

Children need to be looked after for all sorts of reasons. Many have been through difficult and distressing experiences and will need your time and support.

Foster carers come from all walks of life. We need ordinary people who can play an extraordinary role. You need to enjoy being with children, to be patient with plenty of energy and have a sense of humour.

You don’t need to be married, have children or any direct previous experience but you will need room in your home for a child. We need carers who reflect a child’s ethnicity and cultural heritage. We try to keep brothers and sisters together.

Types of foster care

Some children need to stay for a few days, others a few months and some need to be with a family until they become adults. Foster carers can also offer breaks to children with disabilities and their families.

What support is available?

The Fostering Team can give help and support. You will have your own social worker and be given training. Foster carers receive an age-related allowance and some are paid a fee.

Adoption

If you would like more information on adoption, please contact our Adoption Team.



WARNING SIGNS

Research tells us that children who are unable to live with their own families are generally happier and do better at school, if they are in family-type placements, rather than children’s homes. That’s why we need more foster carers.



ACTION

Contact our Fostering Team and find out more about how you can make a difference to the lives of children.



WHAT TO SAY

Discuss fostering and adoption with your friends and family. Could you make a difference?



PREVENTION

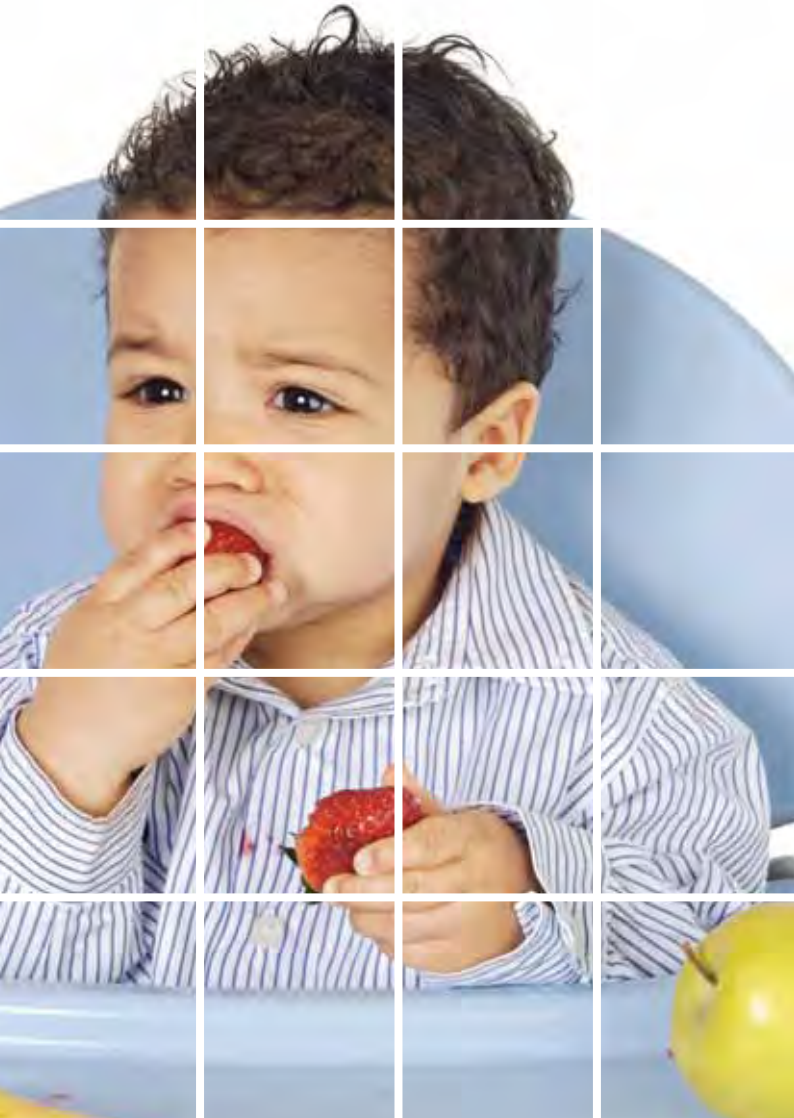
Prevent children from falling behind, by providing a safe, supportive and nurturing home environment.



CONTACTS

- 01275 888999
fostering@n-somerset.gov.uk
www.n-somerset.gov.uk/fostering
- adoption@n-somerset.gov.uk
www.n-somerset.gov.uk/adoption
- British Association for Adoption and Fostering
www.baaf.org.uk

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk



Health

Looking after their health

“ I have tried to start him on healthy foods early on. He loves fruit and does not seem to fuss with sweets. ”

- » **Start as you mean to go on, a healthy baby grows into a healthy child**
- » **Many children are becoming obese (very overweight) due to lack of exercise and eating all the wrong foods**
- » **If you eat more calories than your body burns, you will put on weight**
- » **Make sure your child gets plenty of sleep and exercise**
- » **Act now and protect your children from secondhand smoke**

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 try to make time to sit down to eat and to enjoy food together as a family. To get the best possible start to the day, it is important that children have a good healthy breakfast. Setting a good example is one of the best ways of encouraging healthy eating habits early in life.

You do not need to give your toddler low fat or diet foods. They do not need to 'diet', they just need good, plain, healthy foods. Avoid fast foods or too many pre-prepared meals.

Exercise

Food is used in our bodies to create energy. If we don't use it we put on weight. Encourage your children to be as active as possible. You can get plenty of exercise just by walking to the shops or to nursery. Playing sports with your child is another great way to keep fit.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk

Sleep

You know that lack of sleep can affect your mood. The same is true of your children. Not enough sleep can affect your child's behaviour and how they learn. Establish a good bedtime routine and agree a set time for bed. Children are growing and use lots of energy so can need up to 12 hours sleep a night.

Smoking

If you smoke you should protect your child from secondhand smoke (passive smoking). This will reduce the risk of them becoming ill. Contact your doctor or local free stop smoking service.

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 children's toothpaste. Children are especially at risk from tooth decay if they eat sugary things. Avoid sugary snacks and fizzy drinks. If they like sweet things try fruit instead.



WARNING SIGNS

A healthy person should eat a balanced diet, be active, sleep well, have sufficient energy and generally feel that they enjoy life. If this isn't you and your family, perhaps some basic improvements could make a difference.



ACTION

Ask your health visitor or doctor for diet, exercise and general advice on a healthy lifestyle. Make sure your child eats a healthy balanced diet. Take your child to the dentist regularly. Give up smoking.



WHAT TO SAY

Remind yourself that you can change your general state of health. Ask your family and friends for support in your decisions to change.



PREVENTION

Too much saturated fat, salt and sugar are bad for the body. Prevent ill health by balancing your lifestyle. Stop smoking.



CONTACTS

- Your doctor, health visitor, midwife or dentist
- www.nhs.uk/start4life
- www.nhs.uk/change4life
- www.nhs.uk/birthtofive
- www.northsomerset.nhs.uk/publichealth/smoking



Maternal mental good health

Coping with change

“ I had everything - a home, a loving husband and a darling baby girl. I felt like I should feel happy, but I felt guilty because I wasn't. Having my family around me really helped. ”

- » **Some women have forms of 'baby blues' during pregnancy**
- » **Not every mum copes straight away with motherhood**
- » **Most women suffer 'baby blues' in the first ten days**
- » **The sooner you get help, the sooner you'll feel better**
- » **Talk to your doctor about your worries**

Having a baby is a wonderful experience but new parents may have times, in the first few days, weeks and months, when they feel anxious, tense, tired or depressed.

Baby blues

Some new mums get the 'baby blues' when they feel, not surprisingly, very tired, worried and weepy. This usually goes away without the need for treatment about ten days after the birth. A small number of women will have deeper depression, sometimes weeks or months after the birth of their baby. Signs such as constant weepiness, worry, tension, difficulty in bonding with their baby, loss of interest in sex, trouble sleeping, feeling completely alone or living in a 'bubble', feelings of guilt and resentment can be those of more serious depression.

Many women do not see that they have postnatal depression and carry on without getting the help they need.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk

It is often women who expect a lot of themselves who find caring for a new baby hard to cope with. Health visitors ask all new mums about how they are feeling - be honest.

Getting support

Being at home with a new baby who always seems to need feeding and changing, takes all your attention and leaves you feeling really tired, can be a lonely experience. If you feel depressed, it is very important to let your midwife, health visitor, family and friends know so that you can get help. Local groups and Children's Centres can be an enormous support to mums, dads and carers.

If you are worried about your long-term mental health, please contact your doctor so that you can get the support you need to look after yourself and your child.



WARNING SIGNS

It's normal to feel emotional and very tired after having a baby, but look out for symptoms of postnatal illness.



ACTION

If you feel low or depressed, don't try to cope on your own and don't be afraid to ask for help - all new mums need help from family and friends.



WHAT TO SAY

If you feel you are not coping, talk to your health visitor, midwife or doctor. Don't feel embarrassed that you're not handling motherhood as well as other mums seem to be.



PREVENTION

Although more people now know about postnatal illness, only about half of mothers who need help are getting it. So don't keep your feelings to yourself - the sooner you talk about it, the quicker you can get help.



CONTACTS

- Your doctor, health visitor or midwife
- www.nhs.uk/conditions/postnataldepression
- SANE 0845 767 8000 www.sane.org.uk



Parenting and family support

Supporting parents, supporting their children

“Attending the parenting course has increased my confidence and I have grown as a parent.”

- » There is a wide range of family support in North Somerset
- » Individual support is available through your doctor, health visitor, local Children’s Centre and community groups
- » Parenting courses are offered in every geographical area, giving parents the opportunity to learn additional parenting skills, while meeting other mums and dads with children at a similar stage of development

Parenting courses

North Somerset offers ‘evidence based’ parenting programmes which means that they have been well researched and shown to be effective. All of them explore child development, giving praise and positive discipline.

North Somerset offers: Incredible Years (IY)

IY helps parents to understand and manage their child’s behaviour. The programme aims to increase the use of positive strategies to enhance children’s positive behaviours (play, praise, rewards) and to increase confidence in selectively using strategies to reduce unwanted behaviours (limit setting, ignoring, time out). The course which runs over 12 weeks, covers: building a relationship through play; praising and rewarding; setting boundaries; reducing unwanted behaviour through ignoring and time out; looking after yourself and helping to stay calm; solving problems with your child.

Family Links

The Family Links Nurturing Programme is a 10 week course and is offered in schools. It is designed to

strengthen family relationships, promote positive parenting, explore new parenting skills, understand needs and emotions, reflecting on how children grow up physically, intellectually, socially and emotionally. There are four main themes, or building blocks: self-awareness and self-esteem; appropriate expectations; empathy; and positive discipline.

PEEP and Baby PEEP

Peep groups are parent/carer and child groups that are about making the most of everyday life with young children and having fun. They build on what parents/carers already do and on children’s amazing ability to learn. These groups are held in Children’s Centres.

Other groups

There are other parenting groups which have a specific focus, for example, parenting after domestic abuse (the Phoenix Group); parenting if your child has additional needs (for example, the ADHD support group and Supportive Parents groups); difficulty in bonding with your baby. Please contact the Family Information Service for more details.



WARNING SIGNS

You feel that you are becoming stressed, you are losing your self-confidence as a parent and you are unsure what to do next. You might be shouting or crying more.



ACTION

Discuss the parenting and family support options we have in North Somerset for parents of young children.



WHAT TO SAY

Talk to your partner about getting involved too.



PREVENTION

By doing something at this stage you are helping yourself and helping your child in developing a great relationship.



CONTACTS

- Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk
- Supportive Parents (children with Special Educational Needs) 0117 989 7725 www.supportiveparents.org.uk
- NADA (Phoenix Group) 01934 627841



Positive parenting

Make them feel great!

“ I tell my kids off if they are naughty but I don't like criticising them too much. Hurtful comments could damage their confidence. I think it's better to highlight their good behaviour - that way they want to behave well for me. ”

- » **Children need to feel secure, loved and valued - this is the basis of self-esteem and confidence**
- » **Noticing and praising good behaviour is the best way of having a positive effect on your child's behaviour**
- » **Keep your expectations realistic**
- » **Listen to and talk to your child**
- » **Do things together that you both enjoy and have fun**

Positive parenting is about bringing out the very best in your child. Listen, praise, encourage their efforts, notice and reward good behaviour and do things together that you both enjoy. It is tempting to only point out where a child is going wrong and forget to notice the things that go right. By doing this you are giving your child attention for the unacceptable things that they are doing, rather than for the good things you would prefer them to do.

Attention and praise affects children so you need to use it in the right way. Not only will this have a positive effect on their behaviour, it will also make them feel happy, loved and secure. This is the basis of lifelong confidence and positive self-esteem.

It's up to you to set rules and boundaries in your child's life - most children are happier living with rules. Always be consistent - work together as parents and carers and keep the same rules so that children don't become confused. For example, don't

tell your child off for jumping on the table one minute and then let them do it the next.

Another way to make sure your child grows up happy and secure is to have fun with them. Modern life is often so busy that many parents don't have time to sit down and spend time playing with their child.

Play is important because it helps your child feel good about themselves. Also, your child will enjoy being close to you. Having fun with your child is as important as them having their own friends.

North Somerset practitioners use positive parenting principles in their work with children. Pre-school groups, Children's Centres and other North Somerset organisations offer individual and group support. Home-Start provides practical and emotional support. Volunteers are carefully matched to parents who need help, friendship, advice or support.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk



WARNING SIGNS

There may be none. Have you noticed any changes in how they act? Is your child trying to tell you something? Are they constantly unhappy, with mood changes and temper tantrums?



ACTION

Be involved and develop a good relationship with your child before they reach their teens. Lead a healthy lifestyle. Do things together.



WHAT TO SAY

Set rules - stick to them and remember that you are in charge.



PREVENTION

Have fun with your child. Choose your battles and let some go! Put in the hard work now. It's really worth it!



CONTACTS

- Your local Children's Centre
- Home-Start (support and friendship for families) 01934 419396
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222 www.parentlineplus.org.uk



Safer sleeping

Reducing the risks of cot death

“ It has to be every new parent's nightmare. But thanks to a few simple guidelines we're all sleeping much better now. ”

- ▶ **Always put your baby to sleep on their back, with their feet against the foot of the cot**
- ▶ **Babies aren't good at keeping their temperature constant, so make sure they don't get too hot or too cold**
- ▶ **Keep your baby away from smokers**
- ▶ **If you must sleep with your baby do not take any medicine, drugs or alcohol that may make you sleep more heavily than usual**

'Back to sleep'

Unless told otherwise by health professionals your baby should always be put to sleep on their back. This has been shown to be highly significant in ensuring babies safety during sleep. Never let your baby fall asleep propped up on a cushion, on a sofa or chair and don't let anyone fall asleep whilst nursing your baby.

The safest place

A well-designed and stable cot in your own room is by far the safest place for your baby to sleep in their first six months. Keep it simple and tidy, do not use plastic sheets, bumpers, baby nests, wedges, bedding rolls or any ribbons or mobiles that your baby could get caught up in. The mattress should be firm, flat, clean and have a secure waterproof covering. Cover the mattress with a clean sheet and make sure there are no gaps between the mattress and the sides of the cot as your baby could slip or become caught.

Temperature

Babies can overheat, which is known

to play a part in cot death. Try to keep the room between 16 and 20 degrees centigrade. Do not use duvets, quilts or pillows until your baby is one year old. Give your baby one light layer of clothing or bedding. Never use hot water bottles or electric blankets. Position your baby with their feet against the foot of the cot.

Sleeping with your baby

If you take a baby who cannot sleep into your bed, do not take any medicine, drugs or alcohol that may make you sleep more heavily than usual. Remember that when sleeping next to you your baby will be warmer anyway, so if they fall asleep under your duvet they may get too hot. Be aware that they face a bigger health risk if you or your partner is a smoker.

Clean air

Never let anyone smoke near your baby. If you or your partner smoke, you should give up now. Tobacco smoke is known to be in the breath of a smoker for a considerable time after they have been smoking.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk



WARNING SIGNS

Cot death or Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is becoming more and more rare. Most deaths occur in babies under six months old. There are no clear warning signs so preventing this is crucial.



ACTION

Look at the prevention advice given on this page and take any steps needed to create a safe place for your baby.



WHAT TO SAY

Make sure that all people who take a role in caring for your baby know of the risks from cot death, especially if they smoke. If you are unsure about what to do get medical advice at once.



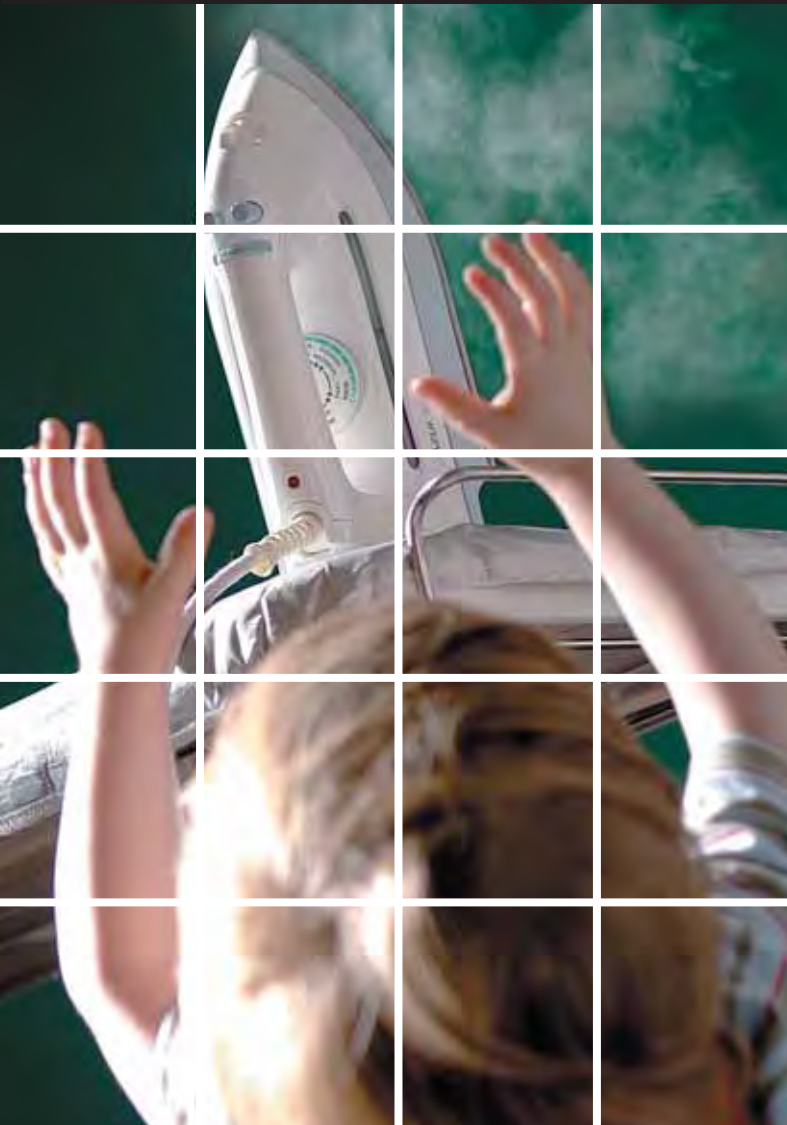
PREVENTION

Follow the prevention steps outlined on this page. Keep your baby's cot in your room for the first six months, this way it will be easier to keep an eye on their sleeping position and surroundings.



CONTACTS

- Your doctor, health visitor or midwife
- FSID Helpline 0808 802 6868 www.fsid.org.uk



Safety in the home

Making your home safe

“ Before he was born I never thought about where I left things. Now everything in the house seems dangerous. So I have taken some simple steps to make the house a more child-friendly environment. ”

- » **Babies and children learn by exploring their surroundings**
- » **Babies do not automatically know what is dangerous**
- » **Children need guidance to keep safe at home**
- » **Remove all potential dangers in your home**
- » **Watch your child and remove them from danger**
- » **Explain about safety to your child from an early age**

Babies and toddlers learn about their world by exploring it. This means that, as soon as they are able to, they will crawl, touch and grab at whatever is in their line of vision. They are curious by nature and need careful and gentle guidance from a young age about what danger is and what to stay away from. Shouting at, or smacking children will not teach them about safety.

Some dangers around the home:

- Make sure that all medicines and drugs are locked away well out of reach and your use of them is private to avoid your child copying you.
- Certain rooms are necessarily full of danger, such as the kitchen, and should remain out of bounds or made safe by the use of safety devices.
- Are your children contained within the house? Is the safety chain high enough on the front door even for a very active toddler?
- Do not leave windows open and make sure you have safety locks fitted to windows.

- Crawling and exploring are an essential part of development - keep an eye on your young children, especially near wires and sockets and use plug guards.
- Small children should never be left alone with pets. Even trained and good natured animals can be tested when children are around.
- Make sure that irons, saucepans and hot drinks are kept out of the reach of children. Scalding and burns are common and avoidable accidents.
- Inhaling cigarette smoke is bad for children's health. Children will be affected by secondhand smoking and your smoking may encourage them to smoke when they are older.
- Check toys for safety marks. Ensure that your child does not play with toys that are not suitable for their age, especially if the pieces are small enough to choke on.

Most accidents happen in the home and this is why it is important to ensure that your home is safe for all your family, especially for young children.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk



WARNING SIGNS

Spend some time exploring your house as if you were a young child. This will show you the many potential dangers that, if not removed, could harm your child.



ACTION

Make a list of these potential dangers and remove them to safety or protect your child from them by using safety devices.



WHAT TO SAY

With very young children the tone of your voice and facial expressions, alongside explanations, are extremely important. Children will begin to sense the warning tone in your voice over time.



PREVENTION

Keep drugs, syringes, medicines and household chemicals out of reach of children and lock them away safely. Do this before your child is exposed to any hazard.



CONTACTS

- Your health visitor or local Children's Centre
- www.inhomechildsafety.co.uk
- www.rospa.com
- www.capt.org.uk
- www.nspcc.org.uk



Smoking

Smoking is dangerous for everyone

“ Now my wife is pregnant it has given me the push I needed to give up. ”

- » **Secondhand smoke (passive smoking) is harmful to everyone especially children**
- » **Children are at a greater risk because their lungs are still developing. They breathe more rapidly and so absorb more toxic chemicals**
- » **If you are a smoker consider giving up - help is out there!**
- » **Never smoke during pregnancy**

Passive smoking

Breathing in other people's smoke is especially dangerous for babies and children and is a cause of serious respiratory illnesses, such as bronchitis and pneumonia. Passive smoking also increases the risk of children developing asthma and can cause asthma attacks.

Babies and children exposed to smoking are more likely to get coughs and colds, as well as middle ear disease which can cause deafness. There may also be an increased risk of meningitis.

Action

Keep your home and car smoke free at all times. Designate them both smoke free areas. If you choose to smoke, go outside.

Protecting your baby or child from tobacco smoke is one of the best things you can do to give them a healthy start in life.

Cigarettes restricts the essential oxygen supply to your baby if you are pregnant. Stopping smoking will benefit you and your baby immediately.

Smoking can cause a greater risk of complications in pregnancy. The sooner you stop, the better. But stopping even in the last few weeks of pregnancy can be beneficial. If your partner or anyone else who lives with you smokes, their smoke can affect you and your baby both before and after the birth. They can help you and the baby by giving up now.

North Somerset NHS Stop Smoking Service is for anyone who would like free help to stop smoking. You're up to four times more likely to stop with the help of trained advisors at GP surgeries, pharmacies and drop-in centres. Get help to protect your family from the harmful effects of tobacco smoke, make your home smoke free.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk



WARNING SIGNS

Signs you baby or child are suffering include wheezing, coughing, asthma, chest infections, glue ear and regularly suffer poor health.



ACTION

If you are worried about your baby or child's health, take them to see your doctor. If you are a smoker do not smoke in the house, in the car or around your children. Get help to give up.



WHAT TO SAY

Adopt a no smoking policy around your children including at home. Explain to your children the health risks associated with smoking.



PREVENTION

Keep your baby or child away from all cigarettes and smoky places. Never smoke if you are pregnant.



CONTACTS

- North Somerset Stop Smoking Service
01275 546744
sts@nsomerset-pct.nhs.uk
www.northsomerset.nhs.uk/publichealth/smoking
- Your doctor
- www.smokefree.nhs.uk
0800 022 4 332



Starting school

Adapting to change

“ When Mia started school, it was an exciting time for her - and for us, too! She wasn't the only one who had to get used to a whole new routine - there were big changes for the whole family. ”

- » Starting school can be a big change for your child
- » Find out as much as you can so that you can support them
- » Apply for a school place before the closing date
- » Give them lots of praise and encouragement

Pre-school

For some children, being in a large group of children can be a scary experience. You can help your child prepare for school by going to a parent and toddler group at your local playgroup or Children's Centre. The Family Information Service can give you information about what is available in your area.

Primary school

Find out as much as you can about the schools you wish to apply for. Visit more than one school and talk to the teachers and the support staff. They want your child to be happy at school. By talking to them and visiting different schools, you can decide which school best suits your child. When you've decided which schools you're interested in, fill out the Common Application Form. You can do it online or on paper.

This can be done from the September before the school year in

which your child will start. At the moment, the closing date is 15 January. If you apply by the closing date you have more chance of getting the school you want. You'll find out which school your child has been allocated by the end of April. If they haven't been given a place at your preferred school, you can appeal against the decision. Please note that applying for special school provision is different. The Special Educational Needs Team and Supportive Parents can advise you.

Once you know which school your child has been allocated, make sure they know what to expect by attending school meetings where you will be given lots of information and tips on how to help your child settle. You and your child may both be feeling nervous and excited. Children quickly pick up on feelings, so let them see that you are happy and confident about them starting school.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk



WARNING SIGNS

Your child may feel nervous and insecure about these big changes. They may say they feel too ill to go or they may cry or be angry towards you. These feelings are quite normal but may mean your child needs extra reassurance and support.



ACTION

Start thinking about where you want your child to go to well in advance. Visit more than one school so that you can make an informed choice. Make sure you apply for a place at primary school by 15 January.



WHAT TO SAY

If your child feels nervous, listen to what they say and try to reassure them. Explain that it's natural to feel like this and they are not alone.



PREVENTION

Be positive about the exciting change. Talk to your child and reassure them about what's going to happen.



CONTACTS

- School Admissions and Transport Team 01275 884078 www.n-somerset.gov.uk/admissions
- Special Educational Needs (SEN) Team 01275 888294
- Supportive Parents 0117 989 7725 www.supportiveparents.org.uk



Young parents

Getting the support you need

“ It has taken a while but I’m trying to be the best mum I can. It’s really great spending time with him. ”

- » **Just because you are young doesn't mean you won't be just as good a parent as anyone else**
- » **You need to be prepared for changes in your life**
- » **Keep in touch with your best friends and family**
- » **Being a parent means some big changes to your life no matter what age you are**

Just because you are young doesn't mean you won't be just as good a parent as anyone else, but there are things that can make being a young parent a bit daunting. The demands of a child as well as sorting out your own future may be difficult.

There is lots of support for young mums and dads. Coming to terms with what's happening, understanding your rights about education and employment and finding support can all help you cope.

It's different for everyone, but it might put a strain on your relationship with your partner, your family and even your friends. You may also have money worries, so find out what benefits you may be entitled to. You might want to go back into education, training or work. Revisit some of the plans and dreams you had before you had your baby. You can still achieve your goals.

Looking after yourself

Having a baby can be exhausting and

Family Information Service 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk

stressful. Boost your energy levels by eating a healthy diet - you need to stay on top of things. Ask friends and family for help and involve your baby's father, even if you do not live with him.

What about losing baby weight?

Start by taking some gentle exercise and aim to give yourself a year to get back into shape. The best way to lose weight after having a baby is to follow a balanced diet and exercise regularly.

Substance misuse

Smoking during pregnancy is dangerous and is linked to low birth weight babies. If you are breastfeeding and you take drugs, drink alcohol or smoke you are directly passing some of these substances on to your baby. Don't let your baby inhale secondhand smoke (passive smoking). Never smoke when you are around them and ask others not to smoke at home. If you take drugs or alcohol you are not in full control and could put your baby at risk. You or someone else could harm them without knowing it.



WARNING SIGNS

You may be finding it hard to cope with the demands of looking after a baby and you may feel tearful. You may not be eating or sleeping well.



ACTION

Eat a healthy diet and try to sleep when your baby sleeps. Ask about local services and visit your local Children's Centre to see what's on offer.



WHAT TO SAY

Let your midwife, health visitor, family and friends know how you are feeling. Ask them for help.



PREVENTION

The more support you have during pregnancy, the more likely you will be able to cope once your baby is born. Ask about local support groups and try to meet other young mums and dads.



CONTACTS

- Family Information Service (for Young Parents booklet, individual and group support) 01275 888778 www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk
- Your midwife, health visitor or local Children's Centre
- Ask Brook 0808 802 1234 www.brook.org.uk

Useful national **Contacts**

Action for Prisoners' Families

0808 808 2003
www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk

Adfam

020 7553 7640 www.adfam.org.uk

Al-Anon

020 7403 0888 www.al-anonuk.org.uk

Beating Eating Disorders

0845 634 1414 www.b-eat.co.uk

Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT)

020 7608 3828
www.capt.org.uk

Contact a Family (for families with a disabled child)

0808 808 3555 www.cafamily.org.uk

Cruse Bereavement Care

0844 477 9400
www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

Cry-sis

08451 228 669 www.cry-sis.org.uk

Dads Space

www.dads-space.com

Disabled Parents Network

0300 3300 639
www.disabledparentsnetwork.org.uk

Family Planning Association

0845 122 8690 www.fpa.org.uk

Family Rights Group (for families involved with Social Care)

0808 801 0366 www.frg.org.uk

FRANK (drugs information)

0800 77 66 00 www.talktofrank.com

Incontinence

0845 370 8008 www.eric.org.uk

Mencap

0808 808 1111 (section for families including child development)
www.mencap.org.uk

National Domestic Violence Helpline

0808 2000 247
www.womensaid.org.uk
www.refuge.org.uk

NHS Smoking Helpline

0800 022 4 332
www.smokefree.nhs.uk

NSPCC

0808 800 5000 www.nspcc.org.uk

One Space (lone parents)

www.onespace.org.uk

Parentline Plus

0808 800 2222
www.parentlineplus.org.uk

Relate

0300 100 1234
www.relate.org.uk

Respect (domestic abuse)

0808 801 0327 (male victims)
www.respect.uk.net
0845 122 8609 (perpetrators)
www.respectphoneline.org.uk

Samaritans

08457 90 90 90
www.samaritans.org

SANE (mental health)

0845 767 8000 www.sane.org.uk

Shelterline (housing problems)

0808 800 4444
www.shelter.org.uk

Winston's Wish (childhood bereavement)

08452 03 04 05
www.winstonswish.org.uk

www.bbc.co.uk/parenting

www.direct.gov.uk

www.direct.gov.uk/en/moneytaxandbenefits

www.freecycle.org (recycling furniture and other goods)

www.inhomechildsafety.co.uk

www.moneymadeclear.org.uk

www.moneysavingexpert.com

www.theparentconnection.org.uk (separation and divorce)

Useful local **Contacts**

Avon and Somerset Police

0845 456 7000 (non emergency calls) or 999 in an emergency

Care Connect

Information about Community Health and Adult Social Care, housing, benefits and other support.
01934 888801

Citizens Advice Bureau

08444 111 444
Monday-Friday 10am-2pm
www.northsomersetcab.org

Community and Adult Learning

01275 888461

Connexions

01934 644443
www.connexionswest.org.uk

Gemini Project

Domestic abuse, accommodation and support.
0870 066 4233

Housing Advice Team

01934 426330
www.n-somerset.gov.uk/housing

Jobcentre Plus

0845 604 3719
www.direct.gov.uk

North Somerset Against Domestic Abuse (NADA)

Support services, parenting groups, emergency accommodation or counselling.
01934 627841

Social Care (Social Services)

Referral and Assessment Team
01275 888266
Out of office hours emergency
01454 615165

Weston-Super-Mare Hospital

01934 636363 (non emergencies)

For more information about these and other local and national services, please contact:

Family Information Service

One stop source of information for children, young people and families and those who work with them in North Somerset.
01275 888778 or 01934 426300
www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk

Every effort has been made to keep the information in this booklet up-to-date and accurate. However, we cannot guarantee that inaccuracies won't occur. North Somerset Council, its employees or partner agencies won't be held responsible for any loss, damage or inconvenience caused as a result of reliance on such information.



This guide is one of a set of three, covering parenting issues from birth-19 years old. Don't forget to pick up your copy of the next age range when your child gets older or if you have children of varying ages.

Call the Family Information Service on

01275 888778

or visit **www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk**



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who can be contacted on