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**ENTER**



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

from **4 to 11** years old

[www.northsomersetpartnership.org.uk](http://www.northsomersetpartnership.org.uk)



# 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 birth to 4 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 4 to 11 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](http://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 a responsibility for caring for a child.

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# North Somerset Services

## Working together

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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](http://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](http://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](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk)





# All kinds of parents

## What is a family?

“My new partner also has a son, who lives with us now. It's taken a while to get used to the new family set up, but it's great.”

- » **Your family is unique. Who is in your family? How does it work?**
- » **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 or maybe 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](http://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 and that it is not their fault, whatever is happening.



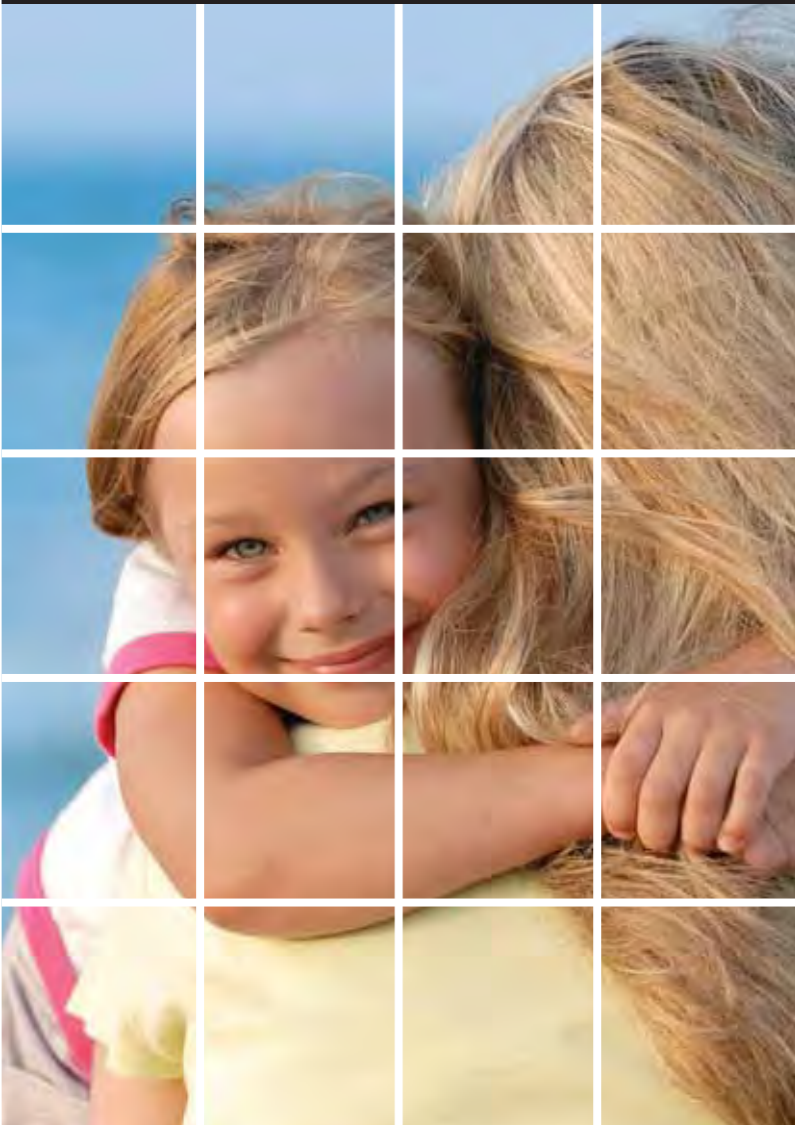
PREVENTION

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



CONTACTS

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



# Babysitting, childminding and leaving children alone

## Who can I leave my child with?

*“I’m so lucky as my mum and dad live close by and help out if I get stuck.”*

- » **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 available**
- » **Select a babysitter or childminder carefully**
- » **Children under 13 years should not be left at home alone**

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 while babysitters are not.

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. The Family Information Service has a list of registered childminders and after-school activities.

When you need a babysitter, generally they will come to your home to take care of your child. Make sure you talk to your babysitter 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. It also advises that children under the age of 13 should not be left alone. Children under this age 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](http://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](http://www.capt.org.uk)
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) 0121 248 2000 [www.rospace.com](http://www.rospace.com)
- [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk) 0808 800 5000



# Building blocks to good behaviour

## Positive feedback

**“** I tell Emma off if she's naughty but I don't like criticising her too much. Hurtful comments could damage her confidence. I think it's better to highlight her good behaviour - that way she 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 see the value of good behaviour.

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."

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 spend time playing 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 and hobbies.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 [www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk](http://www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk)



WARNING SIGNS

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



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. Don't 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 prevent unacceptable behaviour when your child gets older by putting in the hard work now - it really is worth it!



CONTACTS

- Your doctor, health visitor, school nurse or child's school
- Parentline Plus  
0808 800 2222  
[www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk)



# Bullying

## The real story

**“** *I knew something was wrong, they always singled her out. I'm so glad she talked to me. Together we sorted it out.* **”**

- » **Bullying behaviour is never acceptable**
- » **Bullying can take many forms**
- » **Talk to your child if you think they are being bullied**
- » **Speak to the school immediately if you have any concerns**
- » **Children need to know how to protect themselves and get help**
- » **Encourage them to speak up**
- » **Your child could be pressurised into doing something they do not want to do by their friends**



### What is bullying?

Bullying is deliberate, is meant to cause hurt or harm, is repeated and involves an imbalance of power. It can be carried out physically, verbally or in cyberspace - that means by text or email. Bullying is a frightening experience and it can make your child feel alone and damage their self-confidence. Bullying can have bad long-term effects, leading to depression and low self-esteem.

### If your child is being bullied at school:

- Listen to them and discuss ideas on how to sort the problem out.
- Plan together what to do next.
- Refer to the school Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Ask them to write a report, or write it for them, listing all the incidents and take it to the school.
- Meet with their school to work out a plan.
- If you are unhappy with the meeting or the action taken by the school to support your child, follow the school complaints procedure.

**Family Information Service 01275 888778 [www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk](http://www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk)**

Cyberbullying is a method of bullying and can be through text or email messages. Physical and verbal bullying are more common at this age. Your child could be bullied into doing something they do not want to by their friends. Tell them that just because everyone else is doing something (like being horrible to someone) they do not need to follow the crowd. This is called 'peer pressure'.

Look out for unexplained injuries, missing items or money. They may be acting in a secretive way. If your child is being bullied, they may not want to bother you about it. You need to know so that you can help this to stop. Bullying can happen at home with brothers or sisters. Point out that they should respect one another.

If your child is the 'bully' tell them this is wrong and help support them in stopping their actions. Often children bully because they need help themselves. Try to be understanding.



**WARNING SIGNS**

Not wanting to go to school, learning and behavioural difficulties, injuries with no explanation, loss or damage of their possessions.



**ACTION**

If they say they are being bullied, listen carefully and take this seriously. Talk to your child's school.



**WHAT TO SAY**

Tell them to refuse to put up with bullying, walk away, tell someone and avoid fighting. Listen and be there for them. Make sure they know something will be done.



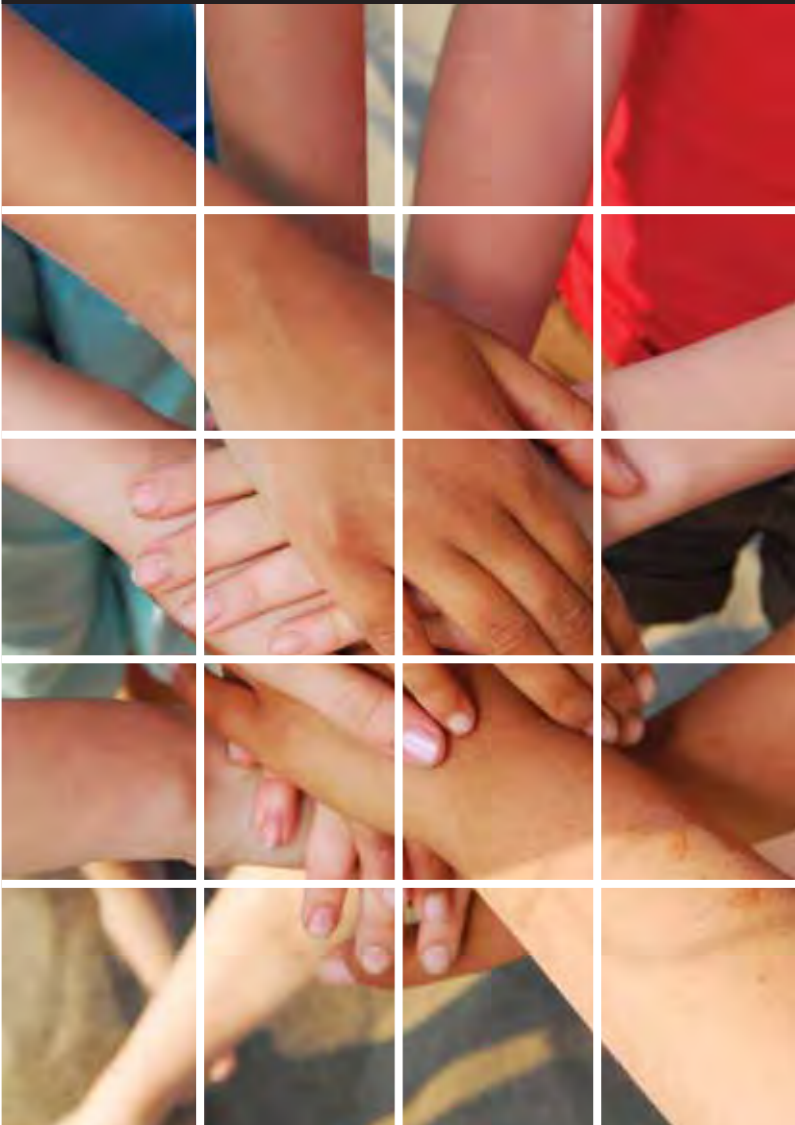
**PREVENTION**

Talk to them about their school day. Teach them to respect others and to be kind. Teach them that prejudice and bullying are unacceptable.



**CONTACTS**

- [www.beatbullying.org](http://www.beatbullying.org)
  - [www.cybermentors.org.uk](http://www.cybermentors.org.uk)
  - [www.bullying.co.uk](http://www.bullying.co.uk)
  - [www.bullyfreezone.co.uk](http://www.bullyfreezone.co.uk)
  - [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)
- 08451 205 204  
(parents anti-bullying helpline)



# Child protection and safeguarding children from harm

## 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 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 possible 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](http://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.



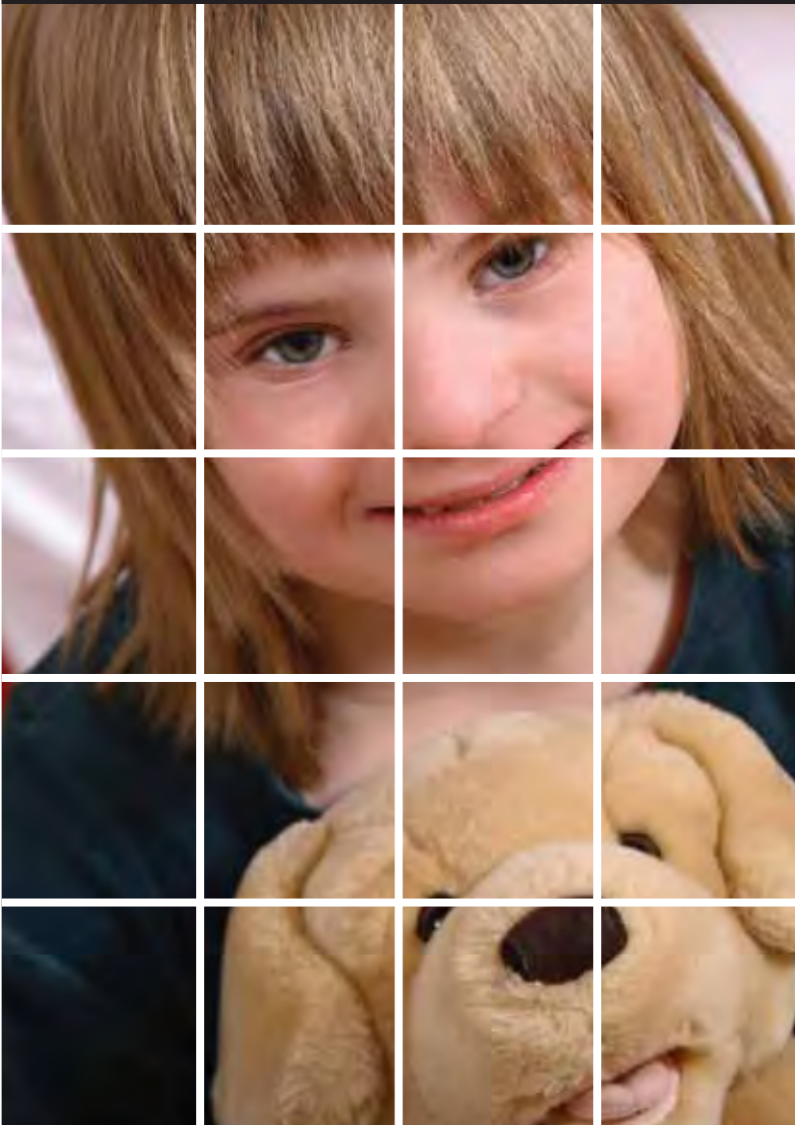
PREVENTION

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](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)
- Parentline Plus  
0808 800 2222  
[www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk)



# Children with a learning or physical disability

You're not alone

“Taking advantage of the help available has made a huge difference to our lives.”

- » **Your child is protected by the Disability Discrimination Act**
- » **Support is available from national and local services**
- » **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](http://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 special school (a school specifically designed to meet their educational needs) or to a mainstream school, with extra support. The Special Educational Needs Team can give you more information about what is available locally.

## Make contact

Contact your doctor, the Special Educational Needs Team, Supportive Parents or the school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo). 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.



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

- Supportive Parents 0117 989 7725 [www.supportiveparents.org.uk](http://www.supportiveparents.org.uk)
- The Firs Resource Centre 01934 632538
- Special Educational Needs (SEN) Team 01275 888294



# 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**
- » **Listen and talk to your children. 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, with it will come lots of questions, and you may find yourself having worries or concerns about becoming a father. 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.

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 from both of their parents, and that whatever happens in life they will always be there for them. Therefore, try and develop a caring and loving environment for your child and get involved with their schoolwork and their extra curricular activities.

**Family Information Service 01275 888778 [www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk](http://www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk)**

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.



**WARNING SIGNS**

Signs your child may be suffering can include, mood swings and blaming you for things that they are not happy with. Children often have trouble communicating. However, don't give up and try talking to your child.



**ACTION**

Try to get involved with your child as much as possible. Help with their development and help them feel secure and loved whether you live with them or not.



**WHAT TO SAY**

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



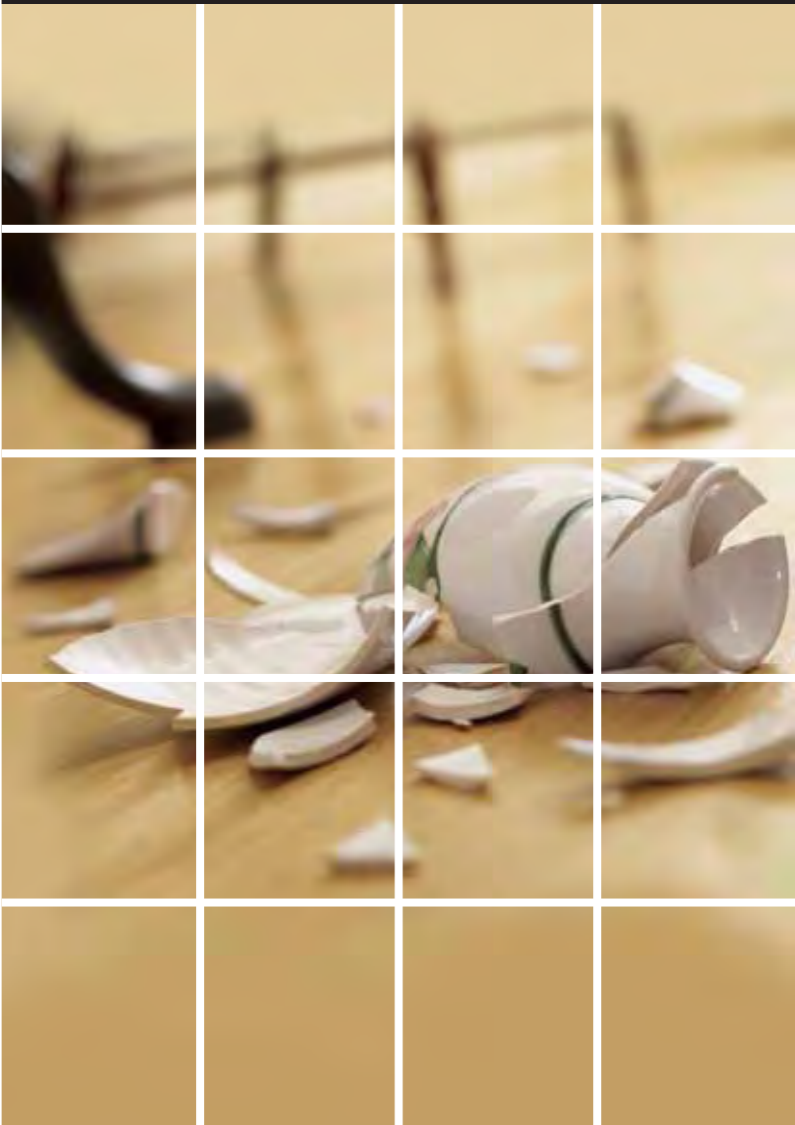
**PREVENTION**

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



**CONTACTS**

- Families Need Fathers 0300 0300 363 [www.fnf.org.uk](http://www.fnf.org.uk)
- [www.theparentconnection.org.uk](http://www.theparentconnection.org.uk) (separation and divorce)
- [www.fatherhoodinstitute.org](http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org)
- [www.dads-space.com](http://www.dads-space.com)



# 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
- » Children often blame themselves for domestic abuse

Domestic abuse includes threatening behaviour, violence, psychological, sexual, financial or emotional abuse.

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.

**Family Information Service 01275 888778 [www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk](http://www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk)**

### Short-term effects

Children are affected in many ways by domestic abuse, even after a short time. These effects can include feeling frightened, becoming shy and quiet, running away, behaving badly, issues with school, poor concentration and emotional upset. Children can show violent tendencies towards parents too. This could be physical or in the form of blackmail or verbal abuse.

### 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, loss of childhood and running away. They may also be so worried about what is happening at home they can't give their full attention at school.

Talk to your doctor or a local service:  
NADA 01934 627841 or  
Gemini 0870 066 4233.



WARNING SIGNS



ACTION



WHAT TO SAY



PREVENTION



CONTACTS

Any abuse between adults will negatively affect children. Seek support and help as soon as possible. The longer it lasts the more damaging domestic abuse is.

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.

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.

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

- [www.thehideout.org.uk](http://www.thehideout.org.uk)
- [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)
- [www.mankind.org.uk](http://www.mankind.org.uk)
- Domestic Abuse Investigation Team (DAIT) 0845 456 7000 or 999 in an emergency
- Victim Support and Domestic Abuse FreeFone Service (DAFFS) 0845 45 66 099 or 0800 6949 999
- [www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://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 and I didn’t realise for a long time how they were being affected. ”*

- » **When parents misuse drink or drugs, it often affects the emotional development and well-being of their children**
- » **The safety of children is put at risk**
- » **In families where drug and alcohol are misused it is common for children and young people to go on to use them**
- » **Violence at home is often connected with drug or alcohol misuse**

Most adults drink in moderation but if your answer to a problem is to drink a lot or take 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 drinks a lot of alcohol or takes drugs remember children learn from what they see and may begin to think that 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 a serious effect on them as they grow up. They could also find drugs and try them for themselves leading to serious problems. Make sure you keep alcoholic drinks and drugs out of reach of your children.

It is important that you talk to your partner or family member who could offer support to you and your child.

**Family Information Service 01275 888778 [www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk](http://www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk)**

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 to meet with others in a similar situation.

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 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 and keep them safe.



WARNING SIGNS

The misuse of alcohol or drugs at home may result in changes to the way your child acts. They may misbehave or become secretive.



ACTION

Think about your actions - what does your use of alcohol or drugs teach your children? Are you sure that they are not aware of what you do?



WHAT TO SAY

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



PREVENTION

Think 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

- Specialist Drug and Alcohol Service 01934 412273
- COSMIC (Children of Substance Misusing Carers) 01934 426444
- FRANK 0800 77 66 00 [www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)
- Drinkline 0800 917 8282
- [www.nhs.uk/livewell/alcohol](http://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 to 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](mailto:fostering@n-somerset.gov.uk)  
[www.n-somerset.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/fostering)
- [adoption@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:adoption@n-somerset.gov.uk)  
[www.n-somerset.gov.uk/adoption](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/adoption)
- British Association for Adoption and Fostering  
[www.baaf.org.uk](http://www.baaf.org.uk)

Family Information Service 01275 888778 [www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk](http://www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk)



# Health

## Looking after their body

“ I encourage my children to be as active as possible. We do a lot of activities as a family, which is good for my health too! ”

- » **Balance is the key to a healthy lifestyle**
- » **If you eat more calories than your body burns, you will put on weight**
- » **Act now and protect your children from secondhand smoke**
- » **Setting a healthy example - encourage a healthy lifestyle in your children**
- » **Healthy teeth give you something to smile about**

### What you eat

Obesity and heart disease are major problems in the UK today, because we eat too much saturated fat, salt and sugar in fast foods and snacks and not enough fresh fruit and vegetables. Balance is the key. It's important to make sure your child eats a good variety of foods in sensible amounts. Keep trying them with those healthier foods that they don't seem to like as much. Eventually they will learn to enjoy them. Remember, setting a good example for your children is one of the best ways of encouraging healthy eating habits.

### Exercise

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

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### 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 the local free stop smoking service.

### Looking after teeth

There are plenty of tooth friendly snacks such as fresh fruit, plain toast, rice crackers and fresh vegetables. Milk and water are the only two drinks safe for children's teeth.

### Main oral health messages

Keep sugary foods and drinks to meal times only. Make sure children brush their teeth twice a day with a family fluoride toothpaste. Have a dental check-up every year, or as recommended by your dentist.



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, school nurse or doctor for diet, exercise and general advice on a healthy lifestyle. Eat a healthy balanced diet. Go 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.



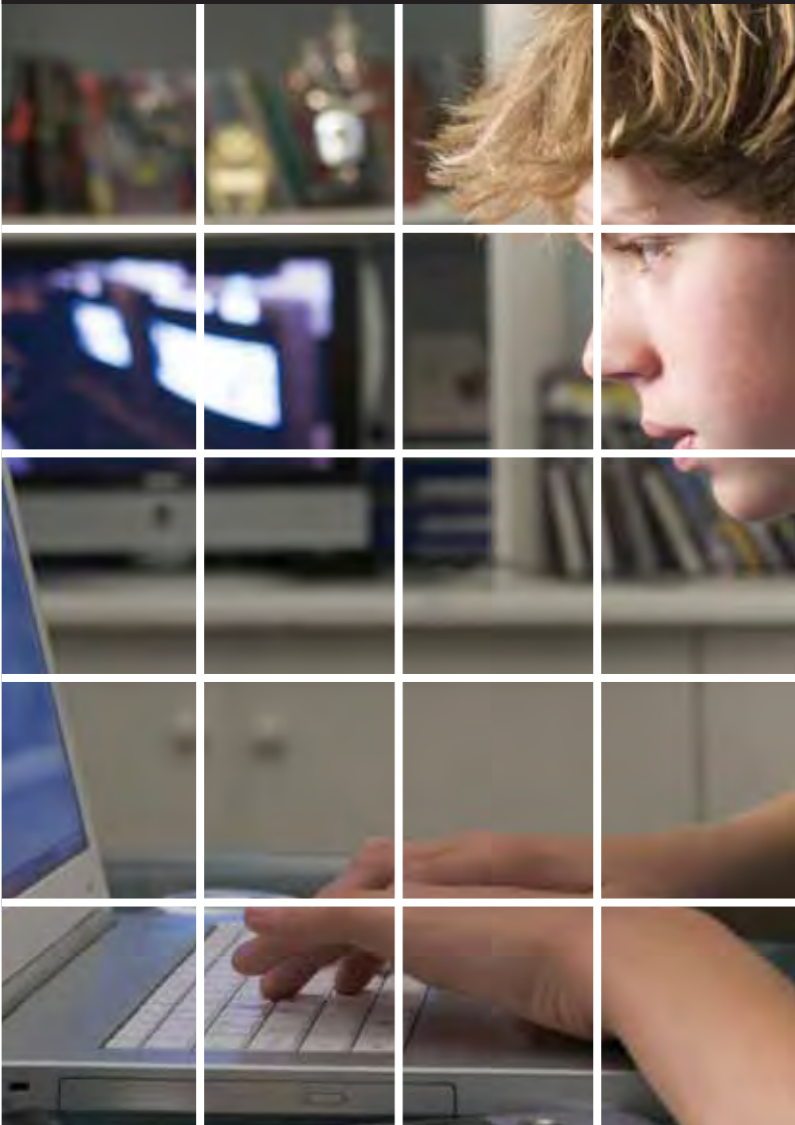
PREVENTION

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



CONTACTS

- Your doctor, health visitor school nurse or dentist
- [www.northsomerset.nhs.uk/publichealth/smoking](http://www.northsomerset.nhs.uk/publichealth/smoking)
- [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk)
- [www.nhs.uk/change4life](http://www.nhs.uk/change4life)
- [www.smokefree.nhs.uk](http://www.smokefree.nhs.uk)



# Internet safety

## New technology, old problem

*“ I haven't met him but we chat on the internet all the time. He's really funny. He wants to meet up tomorrow. I can't wait to see what he's like. ”*

- » **The internet can be fun and is useful**
- » **Have family internet rules to encourage safer use**
- » **Paedophiles may use the internet to contact children**
- » **It is important that parents understand the internet**



The internet is a wonderful and quick way for children to find information, help them study, keep in contact with friends or meet new ones.

The internet is also an easy tool for abuse. Paedophiles may use chatrooms to become friendly with children, often by pretending to be the same age. Using the internet too much can lead to an unhealthy lifestyle and can be addictive.

### Keep it safe

Keep an eye on what's going on by keeping the computer in a family room, rather than in a bedroom. Learn how to use a computer, access internet sites and try out a chatroom for yourself so you understand what can happen. Check out which sites they are visiting to see if they are acceptable and appropriate. Look for sites that check messages in chatrooms and those which include clear guidelines for use, child-friendly advice, warnings and how to report concerns. On social networking sites make sure the privacy

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settings are set to 'private'.

Some children think it's fun to post sexual images of themselves or others on the internet. What seemed like a good idea at the time can turn into an embarrassing nightmare for them and their family.

### Set ground rules:

- Try to limit the amount of time they spend on the internet.
- Discuss the kinds of websites they are visiting.
- Make it clear that they must never give out their personal details or post photos of themselves on the internet.
- They should always let you know if someone is asking questions or wanting details they don't feel happy about giving.

The people they chat to on the internet may not be who they seem. Remind them that strangers on the internet can be just as dangerous as strangers on the street. Children should never agree to meet anybody they only know through the internet.



WARNING SIGNS

Secretly using the internet. Unusual sexual questions. Leaving clues (such as emails) that they are having chats with others which seem sexual or you are not comfortable with. Not telling you where they are going.



ACTION

Set up and stick to internet use ground rules. Learn all you can about the internet and how to use it so you can understand the possible dangers.



WHAT TO SAY

Discuss the dangers of chatrooms and unsuitable websites. Make sure they know that no personal information or photos should be passed on to anyone else.



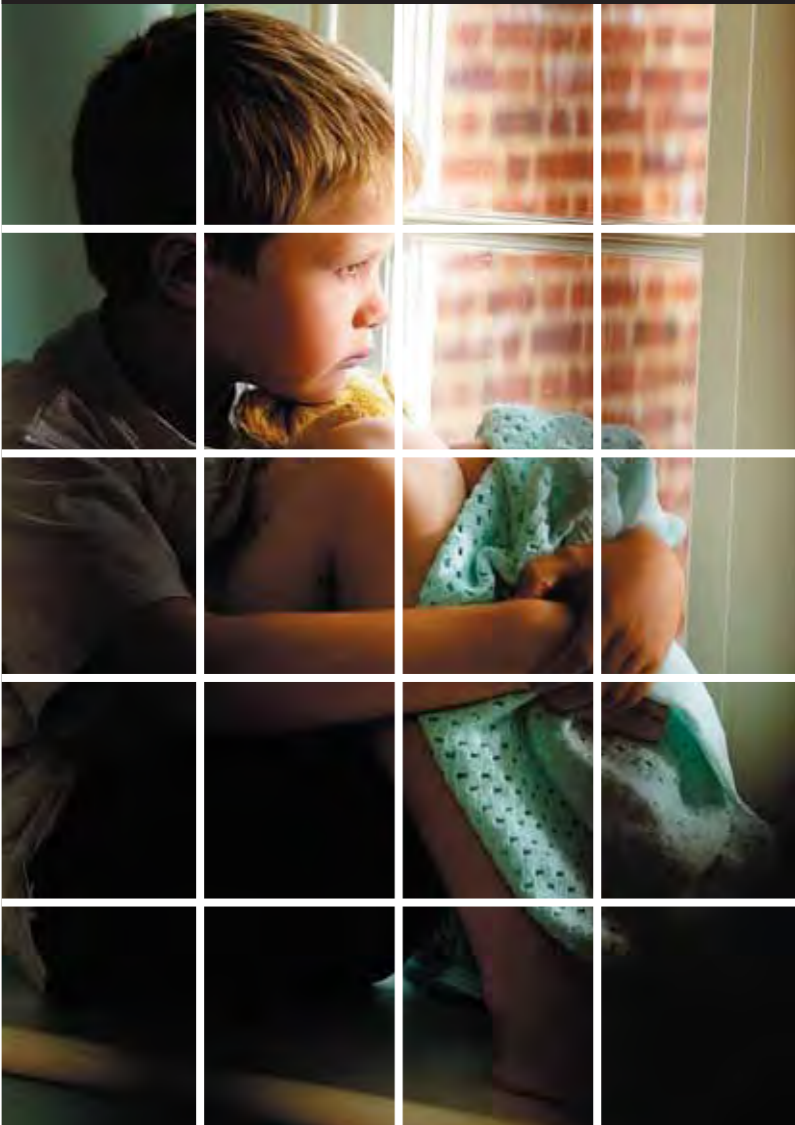
PREVENTION

Keep the computer in a family room, or keep an eye on what they are viewing. Discuss which websites they visit and take a look for yourself. Make sure they know the dangers.



CONTACTS

- Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) 0870 000 3344 [www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk)



# Loss and bereavement

## When someone dies

“ Since his dad died, my son seems to have disappeared into his own little world. I desperately want to help him but I don't know what to do. How can I help him? ”

- » **Share your loss**
- » **Loss or death affects everyone differently**
- » **Talking can help ease the pain**
- » **Understanding the grieving process will help your child**
- » **Be there for each other**
- » **A child can sometimes blame themselves or think it's their fault**

Loss, such as death of a loved one, is difficult for everyone and grief can take many forms. There is no right or wrong way to react and everyone handles things in different ways. There will be a range of feelings your child is likely to go through. These can include feeling numb as they try to understand that someone is really not coming back, anger at the person who has died, at you, at others or themselves, possibly blaming themselves in some way, feeling guilty because they don't think they're grieving 'enough,' or depression.

Their behaviour may change as they deal with their emotions and try to manage their loss. They may find it hard to cope with day to day life. They may take their anger out on you, get into trouble at school or find it hard to do their schoolwork.

They may not show any emotion at times and children do tend to dip in and out of grieving while adults' feelings are more sustained.

**Family Information Service 01275 888778 [www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk](http://www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk)**

Sometimes children wait until they know that their parents are coping before showing their own feelings.

### How you can help

Talk to your child about what has happened as much as they want to, and encourage friends or a teacher to be there for them too. Let them know that we don't just feel sad when someone we love dies, there are lots of different feelings. They may also need reassurance when they are poorly because they may worry about why people die. They may worry about you.

Remember grieving is normal and most children will come to terms with their loss over time when they are given permission to grieve. It can be hard to deal with your own emotions as well as your child's. Talking to other people can ease the process. If you or your child needs someone to talk to after the first few weeks or months, it may help to contact a bereavement counsellor.



**WARNING SIGNS**

You or your child needs someone to talk to after the first few weeks or months.



**ACTION**

You may not be the person they find it easiest to talk to, so encourage others to be there for them. Always let them know you are there for them too.



**WHAT TO SAY**

Let your child know it is okay to talk about the person who has died. Let them know it's alright to still laugh or have fun - it doesn't mean you're grieving any less. It's important to share memories of the person that has died.



**PREVENTION**

Keep the lines of communication open as the more you talk, the easier the healing process will be.



**CONTACTS**

- [www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk](http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk) 0844 477 9400 or 0117 926 4045 (local)
- [www.rd4u.org.uk](http://www.rd4u.org.uk)
- [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk) 08452 03 04 05
- [www.itsnotyourfault.org](http://www.itsnotyourfault.org)



# Moving to secondary school

## Coping with change

“ We visited Jack’s new secondary school and some of his friends from primary have been given places there too. They are very excited but a bit nervous. ”

- » **Moving from primary school to secondary school is a big change for your child**
- » **Start thinking about which secondary school you would like them to go to well in advance and visit more than one school**
- » **Find out as much as you can about the admissions process**
- » **Apply for a secondary school place before the closing date**

During the Autumn Term of Year Six, you will receive a letter telling you how to apply for a secondary school place. An online guidebook is available to parents. You can also ask the School Admissions and Transport Team for a hard copy and for advice about how places are allocated.

Find out as much as you can about the schools you wish to apply for and take your child to visit more than one school to meet the teachers and support staff. The closing date is 31st October. If you need help to complete the application form, contact your Choice Adviser (who is part of the Family Information Service). If you apply by the closing date you have more chance of getting the school you want. Parents will be sent a letter saying which school your child has been allocated on 1st March. If you haven’t been given a place at your preferred school, you can appeal against the decision. Please note that applying for a special school is

different. The Special Educational Needs (SEN) Team can advise you and Supportive Parents are there to help.

You might worry how your child is going to cope with making new friends and learning new subjects, or how they’ll deal with the pressures of being a teenager. Talk to the school about any concerns you may have. Reassure your child and make sure they know what to expect by attending school meetings where you will be given lots of information and tips about how to help them settle. All schools have a Parent Support Adviser who is a good first point of contact.

There are lots of things that your child will need when they start at secondary school, so try to be prepared - think about their uniform, a bag for their books, sports kit, stationery and equipment. Many schools offer a ‘nearly new’ service and there may be help with buying a uniform.

**Family Information Service 01275 888778 [www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk](http://www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk)**



WARNING SIGNS

Your Year Six child does not bring home a letter about applying for a secondary school place by the middle of September. Contact School Admissions.



ACTION

Complete and submit your application form by 31st October. Visit more than one school with your child to make an informed choice.



WHAT TO SAY

If your child has learning difficulties, talk to your primary school’s Special Educational Needs Coordinator to ease the transition to secondary school.



PREVENTION

Be positive about moving to a new school and go to the events that the school puts on for new parents so that you have as much information as possible to support your child.



CONTACTS

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



# Parenting and family support

## Supporting parents, supporting their children

*“ I attended a parenting course and it really helped me. ”*

- **There is a wide range of family support in North Somerset**
- **Individual support is available through your doctor, school, local multi-agency team 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 Information Service 01275 888778 [www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk](http://www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk)**

### 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.

### Other groups

There are other parenting groups, which have a specific focus: parenting after domestic abuse (the Phoenix Group); parenting if your child has additional needs (for example, the ADHD support group and Supportive Parents groups); workshops and shorter programmes. 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 4-11 year olds.



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](http://www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk)
- Supportive Parents (children with Special Educational Needs) 0117 989 7725 [www.supportiveparents.org.uk](http://www.supportiveparents.org.uk)
- NADA (Phoenix Group) 01934 627841



# Positive parenting and self-esteem

## Make them feel great!

*“ My dad’s great - he always finds time to talk to us about stuff and makes us feel special. We know we can talk to him about anything. ”*

- » **Children need to feel secure, loved and valued - this is the basis of self-esteem and confidence**
- » **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.

Be consistent - work together as parents and carers and keep the same rules so that children don't become confused. Not only will this have a positive effect on your child's behaviour, it will also make them feel happy, loved and secure. This is the basis of lifelong confidence and positive self-esteem.

A sense of self-esteem is your child's best protection from other difficulties. You can also help to make them feel good about themselves in many ways - by being a good role model, giving

positive feedback, understanding and helping your child and being spontaneous and affectionate.

Your child is beginning to learn to make decisions and establish more independence. Their decisions might not always fit with yours - that is why tension is normal. Choose your battles and let some go! Be friendly and supportive and let them know you are always willing to listen.

Remember to give them the practical information they need about any physical and emotional changes and reassure them that their development is perfectly normal. Keeping your child fit and healthy is something we often do without even thinking about it. Whether it involves getting your child to brush their teeth or reminding them to pay attention to personal hygiene, you are an important source of information and advice and a role model for your child.

**Family Information Service 01275 888778 [www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk](http://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 and do things together.



**WHAT TO SAY**

With younger children, set rules, and remember that you are in charge. As they become older, it's still important to have boundaries but you will begin to negotiate more.



**PREVENTION**

Have fun with your child. Try to get them to make friends and have outside interests. Listen to your child's point of view. Help them to think through choices.



**CONTACTS**

- Your child's school
- Parentline Plus  
0808 800 2222  
[www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk)
- [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)  
0808 802 5544 (parents helpline)



# Smoking

## Smoking is dangerous for everyone

“ I know that smoking is bad for me, but I didn't know that it was endangering the health of my family too. Now I never smoke in the house or around my children and I am seeking help to give up. ”

- » **Keep children's playing, sleeping and eating areas smoke free**
- » **Make your car a smoke free zone**
- » **Ask other people not to smoke around your child**
- » **Choose smoke free places when out and about with your family**
- » **Avoid smoking anywhere near your children**
- » **If you smoke - go outside and out of sight**

### Passive smoking

Breathing in other people's secondhand 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. Make sure everyone who comes into your home is aware of your smoke free home rules and explain it is to protect your children and non smokers. Protect children before they suffer.

Family Information Service 01275 888778 [www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk](http://www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk)

### Protecting your child

Adults do not deliberately set out to endanger a child's health or put them at risk of becoming a smoker later in life. Yet every time anyone smokes around a child, whether indoors or outdoors, the child may learn that smoking is acceptable.

Remember that smoking in the house, even with the door or a window open is still not enough ventilation to stop smoke drifting into other rooms and lingering for a long time.

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 by making your home smoke free.



WARNING SIGNS

A range of signs may indicate if a child is already suffering from the effects of passive smoking these may include wheezing, coughing, asthma, chest infections, glue ear (child has difficulty hearing and often speech/language difficulties), or if they regularly suffer poor health.



ACTION

If you are worried about your child's health, take them to see your doctor. Never smoke around your children and seek help to give up. Create a clean air environment for your child.



WHAT TO SAY

Ensure that all people who come into your home are aware of your own 'No Smoking in the Home' rule.



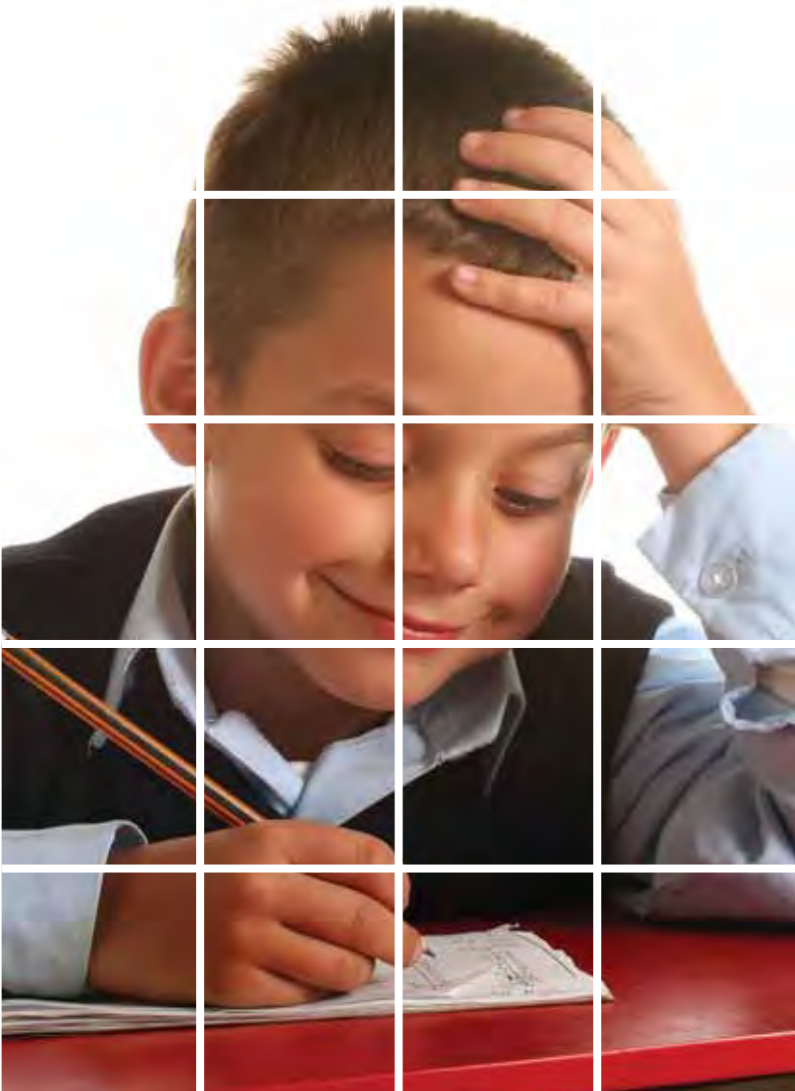
PREVENTION

Keep your home smoke free. Don't smoke around your children. Teach them about the risks associated with smoking.



CONTACTS

- North Somerset Stop Smoking Service 01275 546744 [sts@nsomerset-pct.nhs.uk](mailto:sts@nsomerset-pct.nhs.uk) [www.northsomerset.nhs.uk/publichealth/smoking](http://www.northsomerset.nhs.uk/publichealth/smoking)
- Your doctor
- [www.smokefree.nhs.uk](http://www.smokefree.nhs.uk) 0800 022 4 332



# Starting primary school

## Adapting to change

**“** *It was really useful going to visit the school to find out how best to support Ben when he started school. He's settled in really well. The school encourages parents to be involved and I always feel welcome.* **”**

- » **Starting school can be a huge change for your child**
- » **Having a good education will help to give your child the best possible start in life**
- » **Find out as much as you can about their new school**
- » **Give your child lots of praise and encouragement**

### Starting school

Prepare your child for what will happen in school and encourage their independence. Talk to your child's teacher and school support staff, especially if your child has a problem or family circumstances change. The more they know, the more they can help. They want your child to be happy at school. Many North Somerset schools have a parent and family support worker.

When they first start school, some children can feel very tired and may not want to answer your questions when you pick them up. Sometimes they find it easier to talk when they are back at home after having a snack. Some children want to tell you all about their day as soon as they see you. They will enjoy telling you about and showing you what they have been doing at school.

Give your child lots of support and make sure they know what to expect.

**Family Information Service 01275 888778 [www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk](http://www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk)**

You might worry how your child is going to cope with being in a new environment. School staff are skilled at helping children settle and it will be even easier for your child if they can see you visiting the school when you are invited to different events and meetings.

Regular attendance at school is important to help children achieve and reach their potential. You are responsible for making sure your child goes to school. If your child cannot attend school for any reason, you should contact the school straight away. The Education Welfare Service is there to monitor attendance.

If your child has a learning disability, you may have extra concerns about them starting school. Talk to your child's teacher, Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo), Learning Mentor or to Supportive Parents.



**WARNING SIGNS**

Your child may feel nervous about starting school. They may even cry or be cross with you for making them go. These feelings are quite normal but may mean your child needs extra support.



**ACTION**

Contact your child's school and let them know if you are concerned about your child. Attend school meetings so that you can learn about the school.



**WHAT TO SAY**

Talk to your child about how you felt when you started school. Tell them about the things you enjoyed at school.



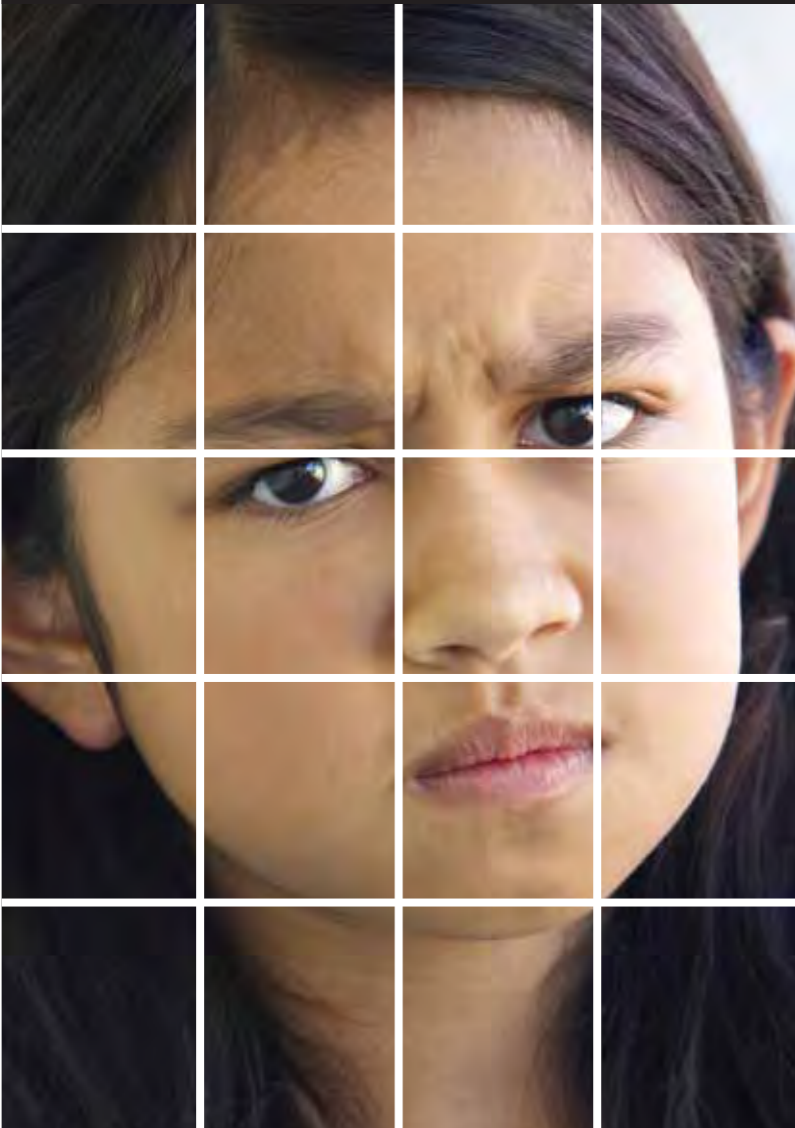
**PREVENTION**

Be positive and reassure them about what is going to happen when they start school.



**CONTACTS**

- Your child's school
- School Admissions and Transport Team 01275 884078 [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/admissions)
- Special Educational Needs (SEN) Team 01275 888294
- Supportive Parents 0117 989 7725 [www.supportiveparents.org.uk](http://www.supportiveparents.org.uk)



# Stress and anxiety

## Helping them cope

*“When my daughter fell out with her friends at school recently she got very upset and anxious. At first, I wondered what all the fuss was about but then I realised how important friends can be at her age.”*

- » **Children can feel stressed for many reasons**
- » **Being bullied at school and parents divorcing are two of the most common**
- » **Sometimes parents don't realise they are putting too much pressure on their child to do well at school**
- » **Exercise is a great way to reduce stress**
- » **Children can pick up on their parents stress**

Sometimes children get stressed and anxious and there may be many reasons why this can happen:

- They are being bullied at school. Feeling in danger every day can greatly affect a child's state of mind.
- They are not getting on well with their friends. It's natural to want to fit in and falling out with friends can seem like a really important thing to a child.
- They are anxious about moving, starting a new school or going back to school after the holidays.
- A family member, friend or pet has died. Sometimes children can blame themselves for these things.

There may be arguments at home, a separation through divorce, bereavement, working away or a prison sentence, or your child may be a young carer.

Some children worry about schoolwork, tests or exams. It's normal to want to see your child do well, but some parents may not

realise that they are putting too much pressure on their child. Remember to be realistic about your child's abilities and encourage them to do their best. Look ahead to when your child may be feeling stressed, for example, before tests, and talk about it.

Think about what you say - a passing comment you didn't really mean can be blown out of all proportion. Sometimes, children overhear parents talking about money worries or problems they are having at work and they can start to feel anxious about these things themselves. It can be easy to pass on your own anxiety.

Make time for your child every day so that they know they can talk to you if they are worried. If their anxiety goes on for longer than a month, or if it greatly affects how they are at home or their behaviour at school, you might want to speak to their teacher or ask your health visitor, school nurse or doctor for help.

**Family Information Service 01275 888778 [www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk](http://www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk)**



**WARNING SIGNS**

Mood swings, trouble sleeping, nightmares, bedwetting, trouble doing schoolwork, stomach aches, headaches, preferring to spend time alone, overreacting to minor problems.



**ACTION**

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and a healthy diet. Exercise can reduce stress, so encourage your child to be active.



**WHAT TO SAY**

Talk to your child about what is causing their stress. Tell them it is normal to feel stressed now and again, but it is also good to know how to relax and make yourself feel better when you're upset.



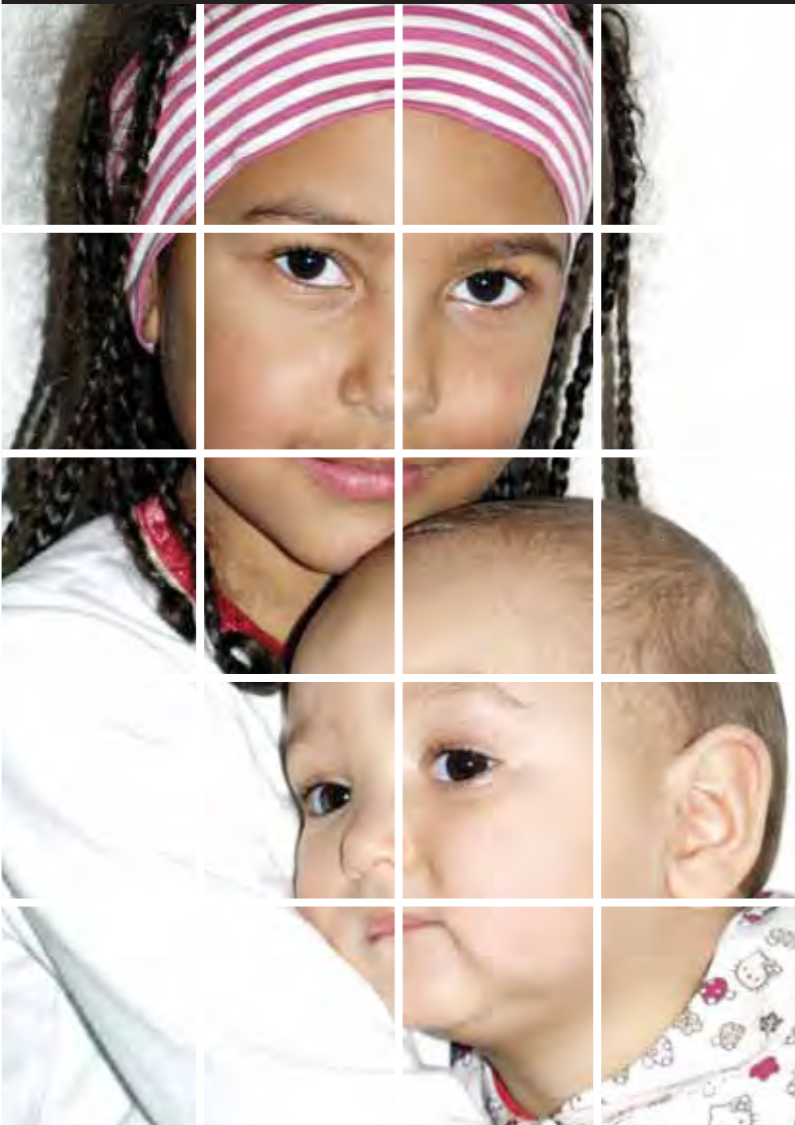
**PREVENTION**

Encourage your child to come to you with their worries.



**CONTACTS**

- Your health visitor, doctor or child's school
- [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)
- ChildLine 0800 1111 [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)
- [www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk](http://www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk)
- [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)
- [www.theparentconnection.org.uk](http://www.theparentconnection.org.uk)



# Young carers

## Too busy to enjoy life

“ She didn't say anything, but I could tell that having to look after me and her baby sister was having an effect on Emma. I made a few phone calls and found out that more help was available. ”

➤ **It is important that young people do not suffer as a result of their caring role**

➤ **Support is available from local services**

**Some children help look after someone in their family by:**

➤ **Helping them to get up, get washed or get dressed**

➤ **Doing lots of the household tasks like cleaning, cooking, shopping and looking after younger brothers and sisters**

➤ **Staying in the house a lot because they worry about them being on their own**

Some parents may have a mental illness, a learning or physical disability, a drug or alcohol problem, and their children may take on a caring role. It is important that they both have support.

### Education

Many young carers achieve good results but research has shown that caring can affect attendance and behaviour at school and make it more difficult to concentrate on school work. It is important that school staff know that a child has additional responsibilities so that they can give them extra support.

### Health

Sometimes young carers can be so busy looking after others that they forget to look after themselves and they can become ill, stressed or depressed. The best way to avoid this is to get help from their doctor and other local services. A young

carer sometimes takes on responsibilities any adult would find challenging and they still need to have their own lives, with their own friendships and activities.

### Extra support

There are organisations that can help, including North Somerset Young Carers. Many people are afraid of asking for support because they worry services might try to interfere or think that their children might be taken into care. Social workers only ever remove children if they are in danger at home and there is no other way of keeping them safe. Social workers can make an assessment of the help that is needed and make sure the family is getting the right benefits.

The Princess Royal Trust has a website for young carers with lots of information and advice, including a section for parents. Visit [www.youngcarers.net](http://www.youngcarers.net)

Family Information Service 01275 888778 [www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk](http://www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk)



WARNING SIGNS

Poor attendance at school, late homework, other difficulties at school and feeling tired may be signs a young carer is struggling.



ACTION

Find out what services, support, benefits and advice are available.



WHAT TO SAY

If your child is a young carer, make sure the school and your doctor know about what is happening and keep them up-to-date if things change.



PREVENTION

Make sure they get the best support available and that they enjoy the things other children their age enjoy.



CONTACTS

- North Somerset Young Carers 01934 411854 [youngcarers@nscrossroads.org.uk](mailto:youngcarers@nscrossroads.org.uk)
- Care Connect (Community Health and Adult Social Care) 01934 888801
- [www.youngcarers.net](http://www.youngcarers.net)
- Your doctor and child's school

## Useful national **Contacts**

### **Action for Prisoners' Families**

0808 808 2003  
[www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk](http://www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk)

### **Beating Eating Disorders**

0845 634 1414 [www.b-eat.co.uk](http://www.b-eat.co.uk)

### **ChildLine**

0800 1111 [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

**Contact a Family** (for families with a disabled child)

0808 808 3555 [www.cafamily.org.uk](http://www.cafamily.org.uk)

### **Cruse Bereavement Care**

0844 477 9400  
[www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk](http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk)

### **Dads Space**

[www.dads-space.com](http://www.dads-space.com)

### **Disabled Parents Network**

0300 3300 639  
[www.disabledparentsnetwork.org.uk](http://www.disabledparentsnetwork.org.uk)

### **Family Planning Association**

0845 122 8690 [www.fpa.org.uk](http://www.fpa.org.uk)

### **Family Rights Group** (for families

involved with Social Care)  
0808 801 0366 [www.frg.org.uk](http://www.frg.org.uk)

### **FRANK** (drugs information)

0800 77 66 00 [www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)

**The Hide Out** (domestic abuse site for children and young people)

[www.thehideout.org.uk](http://www.thehideout.org.uk)

### **Incontinence**

0845 370 8008 [www.eric.org.uk](http://www.eric.org.uk)

### **Kidscape**

08451 205 204 (parents anti-bullying helpline) [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

### **Mencap**

0808 808 1111 (section for families including child development)  
[www.mencap.org.uk](http://www.mencap.org.uk)

### **National Domestic Violence Helpline**

0808 2000 247  
[www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)  
[www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk)

### **NSPCC**

0808 800 5000 [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

### **One Space** (lone parents)

[www.onespace.org.uk](http://www.onespace.org.uk)

### **Parentline Plus**

0808 800 2222  
[www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk)

### **Relate**

0300 100 1234  
[www.relate.org.uk](http://www.relate.org.uk)

### **Respect** (domestic abuse)

0808 801 0327 (male victims)  
[www.respect.uk.net](http://www.respect.uk.net)  
0845 122 8609 (perpetrators)  
[www.respectphoneline.org.uk](http://www.respectphoneline.org.uk)

### **Samaritans**

08457 90 90 90  
[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

### **SANE** (mental health)

0845 767 8000 [www.sane.org.uk](http://www.sane.org.uk)

### **Shelterline** (housing problems)

0808 800 4444  
[www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)

### **Winstons Wish** (childhood bereavement)

08452 03 04 05  
[www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)

### [www.bbc.co.uk/parenting](http://www.bbc.co.uk/parenting)

### [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

### [www.direct.gov.uk/en/money taxandbenefits](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/money_taxandbenefits)

### [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org)

(recycling furniture and other goods)

### [www.moneymadeclear.org.uk](http://www.moneymadeclear.org.uk)

### [www.moneysavingexpert.com](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com)

### [www.theparentconnection.org.uk](http://www.theparentconnection.org.uk)

(separation and divorce)

### **YoungMinds**

0808 802 5544  
[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

## 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](http://www.northsomersetcab.org)

### **Community and Adult Learning**

01275 888461

### **Gemini Project**

Domestic abuse, accommodation and support.  
0870 066 4233

### **Housing Advice Team**

01934 426330  
[www.n-somerset.gov.uk/housing](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/housing)

### **Jobcentre Plus**

0845 604 3719  
[www.direct.gov.uk](http://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**

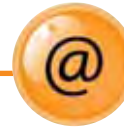
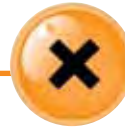
01934 636363 (non emergencies)

**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](http://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](http://www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk)



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who can be contacted on