

# MENTAL HEALTH

This fact sheet has been written by parent carers for parent carers



Life brings many additional challenges for our children, not only because they may feel acutely aware that their disability makes them 'different' to their peers but also because they may be more vulnerable to some mental health conditions because of their disability. Some children with autism, for example, can be more likely to develop conditions such as anxiety, depression, or obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). For other children and young people, mental health issues will be their main area of need.

Adolescence in particular can be a challenging time. The physical changes of puberty are accompanied by psychological changes that can affect young people's behaviour and emotional wellbeing. And the social pressures that all teenagers face can be more acute for children with disabilities, which can lead to fragile self-esteem and higher anxiety.

Many children who are having difficulties with their mental wellbeing find it hard to talk about, even to adults they trust. It's also important to remember that mental health issues can sometimes be harder to recognise in children and young people with disabilities. This might be because of communication difficulties, the complexity of their condition or the fact that some mental health symptoms may be confused with their other symptoms.

## Signs that something may be wrong

It's natural for us all to go through difficult patches where we may feel more anxious, stressed or down. Often, we can get through these times without needing outside help or support, as long as we are fairly resilient and our self-esteem is in good shape (for more on this see our fact sheet on **Self-esteem**). If you notice that your child is having difficulties, it may be that talking to you, or a trusted friend of the family will be enough to help to resolve them.

However, sometimes a problem can be harder to resolve and it may be that your child will need the help and support of people outside the family. You may notice, for example that your child is more anxious, or is becoming isolated and withdrawn from friends and family. Their sleep may be affected and you may also notice that their personal hygiene is neglected. Similarly, you may notice changes in their behavior; they may be more irritable and may possibly harm themselves or others.

If your child has a learning disability, it may be harder to ascertain what is going on. You may just feel that something is 'off'; that there has been a change in the way that they communicate, their behaviour has changed, that they are sleeping more or less, or they are no longer enjoying their favourite activities. It's important to trust your instincts and speak to professionals involved with your child if you have concerns.

## Getting outside help

The first step when you notice a problem with your child or young person is to speak to other people who know them well or work with them regularly. It's a good idea to note down everything that you are worried about so that you can raise all of your concerns when you talk to professionals.

If your child is still in education, speak to their school or college about your concerns and they may be able to arrange support such as counselling. Or you could speak to their GP or paediatrician.

## MENTAL HEALTH



Parents, carers, young people, and professionals can also contact the Community Wellbeing service, which has a central triage hub and make a self-referral if they feel this is appropriate. This service focuses on children and young people's emotional and mental health, providing a range of community-based short-term therapeutic interventions for issues such as mild depression, anxiety, low self-esteem and relationship issues. The Community Wellbeing triage/assessment team is available Monday to Friday from 9am. to 1pm. and can be contacted on **0300 002 0060** or by email at **BICS.brighton-and-hove-wellbeing@nhs.net**.

The only exception to this is for urgent specialist CAMHS referrals, which are required if a child or young person is already **known** to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and is at **immediate risk of taking their own life** or is showing **severe psychotic symptoms**. In this instance, the Urgent Help Team should be contacted, see the 'Ask About' section below.

You can also get support, information and advice from local and national charities (see further reading).

### Ask about

- **Amaze – the Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)** offers impartial, confidential advice on anything to do with special educational needs and disabilities for 0 to 25 year olds. Parents, carers, children and young people under 25 with SEND living in Brighton & Hove or East Sussex can use the service. Email **sendiass@amazesussex.org.uk**, call **01273 772289** or visit our website at **https://amazesussex.org.uk**
- **Brighton & Hove Community Wellbeing Service** – contact to access mental health services for children and young people aged under 25. Visit **www.brightonandhovewellbeing.org** where you can find a range of services for children and young people, call **0300 002 0060** or email **BICS.brighton-and-hove-wellbeing@nhs.net**.
- **CAMHS (Children & Adolescent Mental Health Service)** – routine referrals should be made via the Brighton & Hove Community Wellbeing Service (see above). If a child or young person is **known** to the service and **at immediate risk of taking their life** or **showing extreme psychotic symptoms**, you may contact CAMHS Urgent Help Service. Find out more at: **www.brightonandhovewellbeing.org/specialist-camhs**
- **CAMHS Learning Disability and family intensive support service** – specialist psychological, emotional and behavioural support for children with learning disabilities and their families. Contact the CAMHS LD team for information or a referral on: **01273 718680**.
- **e-wellbeing** – weekly online counselling for young people aged 13 to 17. Complete the online referral form at **www.bit.ly/2LAWXdr** or contact the Community Wellbeing service (see above)
- **Find get give** - online directory of mental health support services that work with 13 to 25 year olds in Brighton & Hove and beyond. Visit **www.findgetgive.com**
- **Mind Brighton & Hove** – for their mental health advice and information service call: **01273 666950** or email: **info@mindcharity.co.uk**
- **Mind the Gap** – community wellbeing support for young people aged 11 to 25. Complete the online referral form at **www.bit.ly/2IAWXdr** or contact via the Community Wellbeing Service (see above)
- **Right Here Brighton & Hove** – online resources and projects that support 11 to 25 year olds/



## MENTAL HEALTH



Go to [ymcarighthere.com](http://ymcarighthere.com).

- **Support and Advice Service** – a daily drop in service at the Youth Advice Centre where young people aged 13-25 can get support and advice on a wide range of topics, including emotional health and wellbeing. For more information go to [www.ymcadlg.org/what-we-do/support-and-advice/youth-advice-centre-yac/](http://www.ymcadlg.org/what-we-do/support-and-advice/youth-advice-centre-yac/)

### Further information and useful links

- **Amaze's Self-esteem fact sheet** - Download from <https://amazesussex.org.uk/resources/fact-sheets>
- **Childline** - extensive info and advice on issues relating to child safety and mental health. Call: **0800 1111** or visit [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)
- **Contact** – a national charity for families who have a child/young person with a disability. As well as information and resources, it also runs a helpline. Go to: <https://contact.org.uk> or call: **0808 808 3555**.
- **Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities** – go to: [www.mentalhealth.org.uk/learning-disabilities](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/learning-disabilities).
- **Local Offer** – the local authority's online listing of all the services and support that are available to families with children with SEND in the area. Visit [new.brighton-hove.gov.uk/special-educational-needs-and-disabilities](http://new.brighton-hove.gov.uk/special-educational-needs-and-disabilities)
- **Mencap** – specialist support, advice and information for people with learning disabilities. Go to: [www.mencap.org.uk](http://www.mencap.org.uk).
- **Mental Health Foundation** – [www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)
- **Mind** – go to their website: [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk) or call their information line on: **0300 123 3393**.
- **Samaritans** – 24-hour help for people who are feeling anxious, depressed or suicidal. You can also call if you are worried about someone else. Tel: **116 123** or go to: [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org).
- **Young Minds** – wide range of information and resources for young people with mental health issues at: [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk). Also runs a parent carer helpline on: **0808 802 5544**
- **Youth Access** – provider of young people's advice and counselling services: [www.youthaccess.org.uk](http://www.youthaccess.org.uk)

