

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 phases where we may feel more anxious, stressed or down and this is not necessarily a cause for concern. Often just talking to you or a trusted friend may be enough to help your child through these rough patches.

But sometimes problems grow or persist and you may want to think about getting help from someone outside the family. You may notice them becoming more anxious, or isolated and withdrawn from friends and family. Their sleep may be affected or perhaps they are neglecting their personal hygiene. 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 work out 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. .

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Parents, carers, young people, and professionals can also contact the Community Wellbeing service, which is the hub for all mental health referrals for children and young people in Brighton & Hove, including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). 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. Find their contact details below.

For mental health emergencies, different contacts apply. If you think your child is at immediate risk of taking their own life or showing psychotic symptoms you should contact the CAMHS Duty Clinician on 0300 304 0061 (9am-5pm Monday to Friday). Out of these hours, in a crisis, contact the Sussex Mental Healthline on 0800 0309 500 or call 999 for emergency medical attention.

Ask about

- **Amaze SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service)**- 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 [https:// amazesussex.org.uk](https://amazesussex.org.uk)
- **Brighton & Hove Community Wellbeing Service** – The CYP Wellbeing Service is the hub for all mental health referrals for children aged 4-17 in Brighton & Hove, including CAMHS. It is delivered by YMCA DownsLink Group. Visit www.brightonandhovewellbeing.org/children-and-young-people or call **0300 002 0060** or email BICS.brighton-and-hove-wellbeing@nhs.net
- **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Urgent Help team** – If a child or young person is at immediate risk of taking their life or showing extreme psychotic symptoms, you should contact the CAMHS Duty Clinician on **0300 304 0061** (9am-5pm Monday to Friday). Outside these hours, in a crisis, contact the Sussex Mental Health Line (see below). Routine referrals should be made via the Brighton & Hove Wellbeing Service (above).





Ask about (cont..)

- **CAMHS Learning Disability team** – specialist psychological, emotional and behavioural support for children with learning disabilities and their families. Referrals via Brighton & Hove Wellbeing Service (above) or call: **01273 265786**.
- **Chathealth** - confidential texting service for young people in Brighton & Hove aged 11-19 offering advice on sensitive issues including anxiety, self-harm and bullying. Text: **07480 635423**.
- **e-wellbeing** – specialist website, run in collaboration with Sussex CAMHS, to support children and young people with their mental health across Sussex. **<https://e-wellbeing.co.uk/>**
- **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 with mental health needs, who may “fall between the gaps” of services. Online referrals forms here: **<https://www.brightonandhovewellbeing.org/cyp-mind-the-gap>**
- **Pan-Sussex Children and Young People and Family Eating Disorder Service** - work with children, young people and their families to treat eating disorders like anorexia and bulimia. Young people can self-refer but they recommend a young person speaks to their GP first. Call **01444 472670** or email to **FEDS@sussexpartnership.nhs.uk** or **spnt.feds@nhs.net**.
- **Schools Wellbeing Service** - primary mental health workers that support children and young people in schools. Can also support parents through their consultation line **01273 293 481**.
- **Sussex Mental Health Line** - Crisis care 24 hours a day, seven days a week to anyone in Sussex needing urgent mental health support. Call 0800 0309 500 or 0300 5000 101
- **YAC Brighton Support & Advice** - Youth Advice Centre safe space where young people age 13-25 can talk to a worker one to one and receive support about issues including mental health **yacbrightonservices@ymcadlg.org**

Further information and useful links

- **Childline** - **extensive info and advice on issues relating to child safety and mental health**. Call: **0800 1111** or visit **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**.
- **docready** - helps young people get ready for a doctor's appointment if they want to discuss their mental health and wellbeing. **<http://www.docready.org/#/home>**
- **Harmless** - support and resources for people that self harm and their friends and family. Visit: **<https://harmless.org.uk/>**
- **Hopeline** - for young people who are suicidal or those concerned about a young person who is suicidal. Open 9am to midnight. Call: **0800 068 41 41/** Text: **07786 209 697**.





Further info cont...

- **Local Offer** – the local authority's online listing of services and support available to families with children with SEND in the area. Visit: <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/special-educational-needs-and-disabilities>
- **Mind** – go to their website: www.mind.org.uk or call their information line on: **0300 123 3393**.
- **Place 2 Be** - lots of parenting advice from child mental health experts
<https://parentingsmart.place2be.org.uk/>
- **Papyrus** - young person's suicide prevention charity. Run Hopeline and have lots of website resources. Visit: <https://www.papyrus-uk.org/>
- **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.
- **Sussex CAMHS Parent Page** - advice for parents on their child's mental health and tips for managing together. Visit: <https://sussexcamhs.nhs.uk/help-support/parents-carers/>
- **Young Minds** – advice for parents on their child's mental health
<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent>. Also runs a parent carer webchat helpline on: **0808 802 5544**

