

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 You may notice them becoming more anxious, or isolated and withdrawn from friends and family.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.

Parents, carers, young people and professionals can also contact the Single Point of Advice (SPoA) to get support for 0-18 year olds who are experiencing social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All referrals will be triaged at the SPoA hub by Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and East Sussex County Council Children's Services staff who are experienced in mental health. The young person will then be offered advice or support according to their needs.

If your child or young person is injured or at risk of harming themselves or others, you need emergency support. Call the Sussex Mental Healthline on 0800 0309 500. They offer 24/7 crisis care to anyone in Sussex needing urgent mental health support. Alternatively, you should call 111 or 999 or visit your nearest hospital A&E.

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)
- **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)** - specialist mental health support services. Referral is usually via GP, health practitioner or school, after other forms of support have been tried. Young people experiencing social, emotional and mental health difficulties can refer themselves however, via the East Sussex Single Point of Advice (SPoA) - see below.
- **e-motion** - free online counselling service for 12-18 year olds in East Sussex. To get support, visit <https://www.e-motion.org.uk/>
- **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/>
- **East Sussex School Wellbeing Service** - school nurses and practitioners who support children and young people with a range of health issues. Parents, professionals and young people can refer into the service via 'Text your school nurse' - **07507 332473** (for 11 to 19 year olds and parent carers of 5-19 year olds) or <https://www.kentcht.nhs.uk/forms/school-health-service-east-sussex-referral-form/>





Ask about (cont..)

- **Health in Mind** - free NHS Talking Therapies service for over 18s experiencing emotional stress, anxiety or low mood. Ask your GP to refer or you can do it yourself here: <https://www.healthinmind.org.uk/what-we-do>
- **Holding Space** - for East Sussex parent carers whose children are struggling with their mental health. Support includes coffee mornings, walks, telephone advice, counselling and therapies. Visit www.holdingspace.org.uk/contact-us
- **i-rock advice and support** - advice and support on emotional and mental wellbeing for 14-25 year olds in East Sussex. Virtual drop-in 11am to 6pm, Monday to Friday and limited number of face to face appointments. Email irockhastings@gmail.com.
- **The Old Bank Wellbeing Trust Call:** low cost counselling and psychotherapy services. Call: **01323 502 827** or email: info@theoldbankwellbeing.org.uk.
- **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: FEDS@sussexpartnership.nhs.uk or spnt.feds@nhs.net
- **Single Point of Advice** - first point of contact for support for young people with mental health and other difficulties. Call: **01323 464222** (Monday to Thursday 8.30am - 5pm, Friday 8.30am - 4.30pm) Email: 0-19.SPOA@eastsussex.gov.uk
- **Sussex Mental Health Line** - 24/7 telephone service offering listening support, advice, information and signposting to anyone experiencing difficulties with their mental health. Call **0800 0309 500**

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. 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**.
- **East Sussex SEND Info Hub** - the local authority's online listing of services and support available to families with children with SEND in the area. <https://localoffer.eastsussex.gov.uk/>
- **Mind** - Visit: www.mind.org.uk or call their information line on: **0300 123 3393**.





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- **Papyrus** - young person's suicide prevention charity. Run Hopeline and have lots of website resources. Visit: <https://www.papyrus-uk.org/>
 - **Place 2 Be** - lots of parenting advice from child mental health experts
<https://parentingsmart.place2be.org.uk/>
 - **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:
<https://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**
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