

BEHAVIOUR

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



What are behavioural problems?

If your child has a disability or additional needs that affect their behaviour, it can be extremely upsetting and stressful to deal with. This is especially true when you are out and about with your child, when unusual or socially unacceptable behaviour may lead to unwanted comments or judgements by other people. Often, this is down to ignorance. If a child does not 'look' disabled, people may assume that their behaviour is because they are 'naughty' or that you are a 'lax parent'. Even so, comments and 'tuts' can be hurtful and add to the stress of dealing with an already difficult situation.

What kinds of behaviour may be a cause for concern?

What's acceptable or unacceptable behaviour varies from person to person but, in general, the following behaviour may mean you and your child need some help:

- physically aggressive behaviour such as kicking, biting, hair-pulling or pinching
- verbally aggressive behaviour
- self-harm, such as head-banging, scratching and biting
- being withdrawn and unusually quiet
- vomiting
- obsessive behaviour
- repetitive behaviour such as rocking, repetitive speech or movements
- other issues such as smearing poo, damaging furniture or other objects

Causes of behavioural problems

Whatever the cause, if your child is having difficulty communicating their needs or something that's troubling them, it can surface as an unwanted behaviour instead. Sometimes it may be that your child is experiencing sensory overload (see our *Sensory Issues* fact sheet for more information). Understanding why it is happening and giving your child the right support can help to ensure their needs are met and head off some issues before they result in unwanted behaviours. Changing how you respond to their behaviour may also help.

Ways to help behaviour

In the first instance, it could be useful to discuss your concerns with your child's health visitor, school nurse or school and seek their advice. You can then seek further information and support via the following channels:

- **Therapy** – there are a huge variety of therapies available. Which method you use can depend upon the cause of the behaviour – ask for advice.
- **The Challenging Behaviour Foundation** – works with families caring for children with severe learning disabilities. As well as information on their website, they can also have a family linking scheme so that parents can speak to others who have had similar issues.
- **Scope** – their website has some useful advice about challenging behaviour. See: www.scope.org.uk/support/families/diagnosis/behaviour.



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- **The National Autistic Society** – if your child is on the autistic spectrum, you can find useful advice on behaviour at their website: www.autism.org.uk/about/behaviour.aspx.

Ask about

- **Advice from your child's special school** – if your child is at a special school, school staff will have lots of experience of dealing with challenging behaviour and may even run advice sessions for parents where they share their expertise.
- **CAMHS (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service) Learning Disability Team** – can offer advice and support if your child has behavioural difficulties and a learning disability. This may include one to one advice at home. Call: **01273 718680**.
- **Children's Centres** – if you are having problems with your under 5's behaviour, visit your local Children's Centre and speak to a Health Visitor.
- **Early Help hub** – a local authority service that works to support the whole family providing support with parenting, employment, anti-social behaviour and emotional wellbeing. Speak to a teacher or someone who is already working with your family to find out about Early Help. Or, to find out more, email: earlyhelp@brighton-hove.gcsx.gov.uk or call: **01273 292632**.
- **Parent support groups** – there are lots of parent led groups for children with disabilities in Brighton and Hove. Some are for all children with SEND and some for children with specific disabilities. See a full list of local groups at: www.amazebrighton.org.uk/services-and-support/parent-support-groups.
- **Triple P positive parenting courses** – positive parenting is all about learning tips for managing behaviour and stressful situations to create more harmonious family lives. Amaze runs Triple P courses specifically for families of children and young people with SEND. Call: **01273 772289** to ask about upcoming course or visit: www.amazebrighton.org.uk/services-and-support/training-support-groups to find out more. Brighton and Hove City Council also run Triple P talks and courses. To find out more, call: **01273 294471** or visit: www.brighton-hove.gov.uk
- **The Compass Card** – this is a free leisure discount card (administered by Amaze) for 0 to 25 year olds with SEN and disabilities who live or go to school in Brighton and Hove or West Sussex, or who are looked after by social services in these areas. Call Amaze on: **01273 772289 (Brighton and Hove)** or: **0300 123 9186 (West Sussex)**.
- **Making a claim for DLA** – for further information visit: www.gov.uk/dla-disability-livingallowance-benefit/overview or call the Amaze helpline on: **01273 772289** – we can offer information and advice on making a claim.

Further reading and useful links

- **The Challenging Behaviour Foundation** – www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk.
- **Family lives** – parenting and family support charity with link to extensive catalogue of videos about specific issues. Visit: www.familylives.org.uk and www.youtube.com/user/parentchannelvideos.
- **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: www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/localoffer.
- **Looking after you and Survival Strategies fact sheets** – for these companion fact sheets visit: www.amazebrighton.org.uk/resources/publications/fact-sheets.
- **MindEd for Families** – provides materials for parents and carers of children and teens struggling with mental health issues. Visit: <http://minded.e-lfh.org.uk/families/index.html>.
- **Young Minds** – the mental health charity for young people has a section of their website devoted to ADHD with fact sheets and advice. Visit: www.youngminds.org.uk/for_children_young_people/whats_worrying_you/adhd.

