
 Child Development & Additional Needs (/child-development-additional-needs/) >
  Additional Needs (/child-development-additional-needs/additional-needs/) >
 (/child-development-additional-needs/additional-needs/) Sleep

Additional Needs & Disabilities

Sleep

Sleep and the lack of it is a big topic for many parents. When your child has an additional need the likelihood of ongoing sleep problems is higher.

Some research says that about 80% of children and young people with additional needs have sleep issues.

You are not alone and there is support and information available that can help you.

Taking care of yourself in whatever way you can is important. If you have a partner plan ahead to share the broken nights. Try and make sure you are both getting the occasional longer stretch of sleep.

- Are there family and friends who could help out sometimes?
- Take any chance to nap. If your child is at school, nursery or has a sleep during the day it is tempting to use the time for chores. Resting when you can will benefit your physical and mental health.
- Try mindfulness and meditation – some people find it helps to top up energy levels.
- Eating well, getting exercise are habits that can help keep you well.



Talk to your GP and professionals involved in your child's care. They can help assess your child's sleep challenges and support you too. There may be more help available for you and your family.

Dive Deeper

Bedtime Routines

Not getting enough sleep has big effects on the whole family. It affects physical and mental health. When you and your child are sleep deprived everything can feel harder.

The advice that is given to all families to help with sleep problems is a good place to start.

Bedtime Routines

- Start at the same time each night
- Have quiet, screen free playtime
- Bath
- Snack, drink and story time
- Try and keep the wake up time the same – even after a bad night.

If your child does not settle – go to them and reassure them that you are nearby and leave the room as soon as they are calm again. You might have to repeat this many times but will build their confidence that you are there when they need you.

Keep to it even if you don't think it is making a difference – routines take time.

Supporting Bedtime Routines

- Talk to your child about what is going to happen – some children understand this better if you have pictures of the different stages of bedtime.
- Make the bedroom a calming place to be. Don't use it as a place for 'time outs'. Bedrooms should be a place your child likes to be.
- Try a clock that changes colour to show when it is night time or morning. This works well for children and young people who cannot tell the time yet, or those that need a visual reminder.

What Else Can I Try?

You may have tried all the usual advice with no success.

- Get in touch with parent support groups for children with similar additional needs to your child. This can be a good way to share challenges and find out how others cope.
- Keep a sleep diary – this can help you spot patterns. Are there some events, foods activities that make for better or worse nights for your child? Your child may be especially sensitive to sights, sounds, feelings and sensations.
- Make sure they are not hungry or thirsty before bed. Avoid sugary or caffeinated snacks or drinks, especially in the evenings.
- Close curtains / use blackout blinds at night time to make the room dark. Open curtains during the day time.
- Play 'white noise' (there are apps and toys for this) or relaxing music through the night.
- Tucking in bedding can help children to feel safe and secure, and stops duvets or blankets coming off in the night.

If disturbed sleep has been a problem for a long time it is likely to be having a negative affect on you. If you are still struggling ask the any of the team working with your family for more help or support. You can also contact Just One Number for advice.

Downloads

Sleep Diary Template

Download
(<https://www.nhs.uk/livewell/insomnia/documents/sleepdiary.pdf>)

Sleep Hygiene

Download
(</media/3b3lxzvj/sleep-hygiene.pdf>)

Sleep East Information

Download
(<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/-/media/norfolk/downloads/children-and-families/sleep-east-cic-sleep-deprivation-has-devastating-effects-upon-children-and-families.pdf>)

Online Course for Parents of Children with Additional Needs

This online course is for parents with a child with additional needs. It is for parents, relatives and friends of children who may have a physical or learning disability or who may have autistic traits. This short course will help you learn about:

- Understanding and responding to your child's feelings
- Self-regulation & anger
- Communication and tuning in

Having fun together

Sign up for FREE with access code: JON70

Find out more (https://inourplace.heiapply.com/online-learning/register_new/?plan=Fri164648-A21)

Who can Help?

Sleep East

(<https://communityinterestcompanies.blog.gov.uk/2018/08/09/sleepeast-cic/>) provides sleep counselling services for families and the professionals who support them. Their qualified sleep counsellors have extensive experience of working with children, particularly those with special needs.

If your child is 12 months or older, you can contact the [National Sleep Helpline](https://thesleepcharity.org.uk/national-sleep-helpline/) (<https://thesleepcharity.org.uk/national-sleep-helpline/>) on **03303 530541** for support and advice. This is available Sunday - Thursday 7pm - 9pm. The helpline is run by a team of specialist trained sleep advisors. Although they cannot give medical advice, they can talk through your issues, offer you some practical strategies and recommend services that could help.

You can contact the Healthy Child Programme by calling **Just One Number** on **0300 300 0123** or texting **Parentline** on **07520 631590**. Our opening hours are 8am-6pm Monday-Friday (excluding bank holidays) and 9am-1pm on Saturdays.

[Qwell](https://www.qwell.io/) (<https://www.qwell.io/>) provides free, safe and anonymous mental wellbeing support for adults in Norfolk and Waveney from a professional team of qualified counsellors.

If your child attends school or an early years setting, talk to them about any concerns you may have, they can reassure you and / or help you find the right help.

[Early Childhood and Family Service](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/early-childhood-and-family-service/early-childhood-and-family-service-activities) (<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/early-childhood-and-family-service/early-childhood-and-family-service-activities>) supports all Norfolk families with children under 5 years.

To speak to other Norfolk parents and carers, you can join our online community forum below.

Ask Norfolk Parents

(Click here to speak with other parents & carers)

(<https://healthisnorfolk.com/one-norfolk-parents>)



Information, advice & support

(<https://www.norfolksendiass.org.uk/>)



Norfolk SEND Local offer Website

(<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-local-offer>)

Also in this section...

Sleep → (</child-development-additional-needs/additional-needs/sleep/>)

Toileting → (</child-development-additional-needs/additional-needs/toileting/>)

Physical Activity → (</child-development-additional-needs/additional-needs/physical-activity/>)

Oral Health → (</healthy-lifestyles/teeth-and-toothbrushing/oral-health-for-children-with-additional-needs/>)

Behaviour → (</child-development-additional-needs/behaviour-sleep/behaviour/>)

Norfolk Positive Behaviour Strategies (PBS) → (</child-development-additional-needs/behaviour-sleep/norfolk-positive-behaviour-strategies-pbs/>)

Additional Needs & Disabilities → (</child-development-additional-needs/additional-needs/>)

Child Development & Additional Needs → (</child-development-additional-needs/>)

Still Worried / Need More Help? (</our-services/still-worried/>)

Need More Information

Family Lives - Sleep Advice For Parents With Disabled Children

→ (<https://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/your-family/special-educational-needs/sleep-advice-for-parents-with-disabled-children>)

Norfolk SEND Partnership



(<https://www.norfolksendiass.org.uk/>)

Scope - Helping Your Disabled Child Sleep

→ (<https://www.scope.org.uk/advice-and-support/help-disabled-child-sleep/>)

NHS Scotland - Bedtime

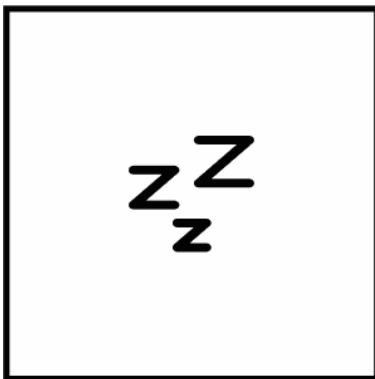
→ (<http://www.readysteadytoddler.org.uk/everyday-routines/bedtime/index.aspx>)

NHS Scotland - Can't Sleep, Won't Sleep

→ (<http://www.readysteadytoddler.org.uk/everyday-routines/sleep/index.aspx>)

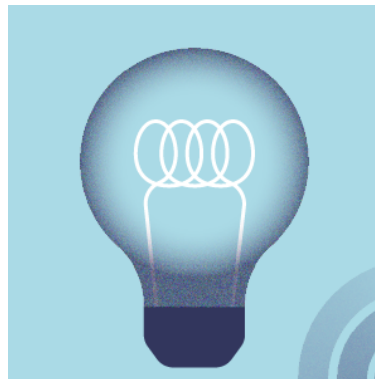
Sleep East → (<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/-/media/norfolk/downloads/children-and-families/send/care-and-support/sleep-east-cic-sleep-deprivation-has-devastating-effects-upon-children-and-families.pdf>)

Other Useful Pages



Baby's Sleep

(/child-development-additional-needs/behaviour-sleep/baby-s-sleep/)



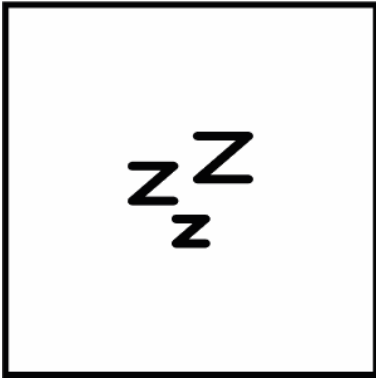
Childrens Sleep

(/child-development-additional-needs/behaviour-sleep/childrens-sleep/)



Understanding Your Child's Behaviour

(/child-development-additional-needs/behaviour-sleep/understanding-your-child-s-behaviour/)



Safe Sleep For Babies

(/staying-safe/staying-safe-in-the-home/safe-sleep-for-babies/)



Family Networking

(/our-services/family-networking/)

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