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 (/child-development-additional-needs/behaviour-sleep/) Understanding Your Child's Behaviour

Behaviour & Sleep

Understanding Your Child's Behaviour

Children and young people's brains continue to develop and grow until they are around 20 years old. This development can take longer for some and may affect their ability to control emotions, manage behaviour and learn positive ways to communicate.

All behaviour has a purpose. It is a way of communicating needs and feelings, although it is not always easy to work out what that purpose is.

- Watch out for patterns in the behaviour (keep a 'behaviour diary') – what do you notice makes things worse or better?
- Try and predict situations and experiences that are triggers for your child. Avoid or distract if you can.
- Put yourself in your child's shoes and try to understand why your child may be acting in the way they are. Are they tired? Overwhelmed? Hungry? Bored?
- Remember you know your child best – you probably know the challenges, worries and experiences that cause them to behave in certain ways better than anyone.

It is easy to be unrealistic in the behaviour we expect from our children. Think back to when you were that age, talk to family and friends – it can be reassuring to find that the behaviour that is worrying you is common at their age.

Dive Deeper

Praise

Praise is one of the most important tools in a parenting toolbox. It is one of the best ways to help your child understand how you want them to behave. It can be easy to take the times when you child is behaving well and managing their feelings for granted.

Always try and point out when you see the behaviour you want in your child;

- 'You are playing so nicely with your sister.'
- 'Thanks for putting your bowl in the dishwasher.'
- 'You did really well to keep calm then.'

Your positive attention can be the best prize for your child. If you only point out the behaviour you don't want, your child may use this as a sure way of getting a reaction instead.

Try and find time to 'just be' with your child – story time, games, walks or watching TV together – really concentrate on enjoying each other's company. It doesn't have to be for long but will make your child feel valued and know they are important to you.

Advice

There is so much advice on managing children's behaviour it can be confusing. Friends, family and even strangers may make comments or give advice on the way your child behaves.

Times have changed and what we understand about children; their needs and how they develop has grown too.

- Remember every child is an individual and different things will work for each child.
- You know your child best. You can decide on the advice that you think might help your child and politely ignore things that you do not find helpful.
- If you have spent a long time trying to help your child it can be exhausting and make family life hard for everyone.

Please remember that there are services to support you. Yours is not the only family who might struggle at times and you don't have to cope alone. You can call Just One Number to speak to a health professional or speak to your child's school or early years setting.

online Solihull Programme

Dealing with difficult behaviour can affect your confidence as a parent. Understanding more about the roots of behaviour and how you can support your child can help. All professionals working with children in Norfolk are offered this training too.

As well as helping you understand development, the Solihull course talks about, play, styles of parenting, sleep, temper tantrums and communication. Learning is split the following sections:

- Understanding pregnancy, labour, birth and your baby
- Understanding your baby
- Understanding your child
- Understanding your child with additional needs
- Understanding your child's feelings (a taster course)
- Understanding your child's mental health and wellbeing
- Understanding your teenager's brain
- Understanding your brain (for teenagers only!)
- Understanding your relationships

Sign up and complete the course for free (<http://bit.ly/norfolk-ol-web>)

Positive Behaviour Strategies (PBS)

Families who have been referred to a specialist team for assessment of their child's additional needs may be signposted to the Positive Behaviour Course which is run by Family Action in Norfolk.

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak this programme has been amended and offered online. Although intended for families awaiting assessment and possibly diagnosis the strategies can be used with any child with additional needs.

Start the course (</child-development-additional-needs/behaviour-sleep/norfolk-positive-behaviour-strategies-pbs/>)

Looking After Yourself

It can be exhausting supporting a child when their behaviour is challenging you. Some days you will have more energy to cope than others.

- Take any moments you can to rest or relax – it might be 5 minutes looking at a magazine or try some [relaxation exercises \(https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/moodzone-mental-wellbeing-audio-guides/\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/moodzone-mental-wellbeing-audio-guides/).
- Support groups where you can talk with parents facing similar challenges can be helpful. Find out about advice on [finding a suitable group \(https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-local-offer/advice-and-support/groups-and-organisations-offering-help\)](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-local-offer/advice-and-support/groups-and-organisations-offering-help).

Ask friends and family for help if you can. Sometimes others might not feel able to help with your child because of their behaviour, this can be hard. Ask them for help with other things like cooking, laundry and shopping. This can at least take some of the pressure off you to manage everything.

Never smack your child. This does not work – it can frighten your child and will teach them that smacking is OK. They may then hit other children or adults.

Find out more about behaviour troubleshooting

[Click Here \(/child-development-additional-needs/behaviour-sleep/behaviour-troubleshooting/\)](/child-development-additional-needs/behaviour-sleep/behaviour-troubleshooting/)

Who can Help?

Remember all children are different but if you are worried speak to your child's preschool setting or school, they will be happy to talk to you about how best to support your child.

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

Alternatively you can go to see your GP to discuss concerns.

If you are 11-19 you can text Chathealth on **07480 635060** for confidential advice from one of the Healthy Child Programme team.

To speak to other Norfolk parents and carers, you can join our online **Also in this section...**

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

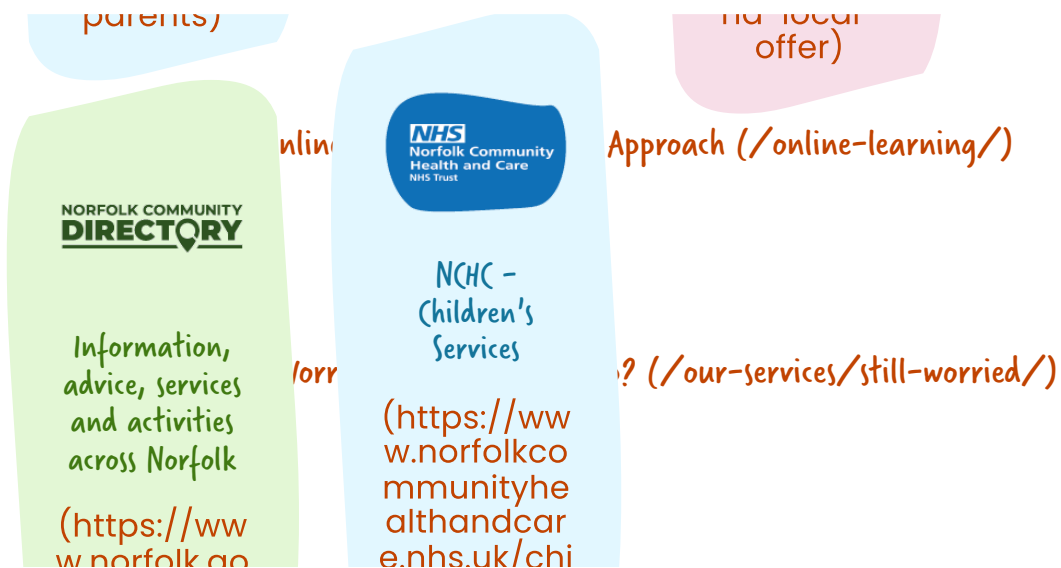
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Need More Information

Relate - Setting Boundaries for Teenagers → (<https://www.relate.org.uk/relationship-help/help-family-life-and-parenting/parenting-teenagers/behaviour/setting-boundaries-teenagers>)

Relate - Discipline for Teenagers → (<https://www.relate.org.uk/relationship-help/help-family-life-and-parenting/parenting-teenagers/behaviour/discipline-teenagers>)

Action for Children - How Do I Set House Rules For Teenagers?

→ (<https://parents.actionforchildren.org.uk/behaviour/using-rules-rewards/how-do-i-set-house-rules-for-my-teenager/>)

Other Useful Pages



Anger

(/emotional-health/children-young-people-s-emotional-health/anger/)



Supporting Children's Mental Health

(/emotional-health/children-young-people-s-emotional-health/supporting-children-s-mental-health/)



Coping With Stress

(/emotional-health/parental-emotional-health/coping-with-stress/)



Teenage Brain

(/child-development-additional-needs/supporting-development/teenage-brain/)

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