

2nd April 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

Understanding Mental Health and Wellbeing

Mental health is just as important as physical health. It affects how we think, feel, and act. Just like physical illnesses, mental health challenges can affect anyone, regardless of age. For children and teenagers, these challenges can manifest in many ways, including changes in behaviour, withdrawal, emotional distress, or difficulties in school. Supporting our children's mental health helps them develop resilience and coping strategies for life.

It's important to understand that mental health is not just about managing stress or dealing with a difficult situation. It's about creating a balanced environment that nurtures emotional wellbeing, social connections, and positive self-esteem.

Signs to Look Out For

As parents and carers, it's important to be aware of signs that may indicate your child is struggling with their mental health. Some common signs include:

- Withdrawal from social activities and friends
- Increased irritability or mood swings
- Difficulty concentrating or struggling at school
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Excessive worry or fear
- Feeling overwhelmed or hopeless
- Unexplained physical complaints (headaches, stomach aches)

If you notice any of these signs, it's important to open a conversation with your child in a non-judgemental, supportive way. Sometimes, it might take a few attempts for them to open up, so be patient.

Supporting Your Child's Mental Health

There are several steps you can take to support your child's mental health:

1. **Create a Safe Environment** – Make sure your child feels they can express their emotions without fear of being judged. Encourage open communication.
2. **Encourage Physical Activity** – Exercise is not only good for the body but also for the mind. Encourage your child to engage in physical activities they enjoy, whether it's sports, walking, or dancing.
3. **Promote Healthy Routines** – Help your child develop a routine that includes healthy eating, regular sleep patterns, and time for relaxation.
4. **Limit Screen Time** – Encourage your child to engage in real-world interactions and activities that promote their emotional wellbeing, rather than excessive screen time, which can sometimes increase feelings of isolation and anxiety.
5. **Talk About Mental Health** – Break down the stigma around mental health by talking openly about it. Normalise feelings of sadness, stress, or anxiety.
6. **Seek Professional Support** – If you notice that your child's mental health struggles persist or worsen, it's important to seek professional support.



Mental Health Support Services in Bristol

If you're concerned about your child's mental health, there are many support services available in Bristol:

1. **YoungMinds** (National) – A charity dedicated to supporting the mental health of young people. Their website provides resources, helplines, and advice for parents.
 - Website: www.youngminds.org.uk
 - Parent helpline: 0808 802 5544
2. **Off The Record** – Offers a range of services for children and young people experiencing mental health difficulties. Help is available via accessing the website or visiting one of the HUB sessions they run locally.
 - Website: www.otrbristol.org.uk
3. **Childline** – A free, confidential helpline for children and young people, available 24/7. They offer support on any issue, including mental health concerns.
 - Phone: 0800 1111
 - Website: www.childline.org.uk
4. **CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services)** – If your child needs more specialised support, CAMHS provides mental health services for children and adolescents. A referral from a GP or school is typically required.
 - Website: www.bristolcamhs.nhs.uk
5. **Mind in Bristol** – Mind offers mental health services for people of all ages. They provide support for emotional wellbeing, counseling, and guidance on managing mental health.
 - Website: www.mind.org.uk/information-support
6. **Bristol Children's Centre** – A great resource for parents and carers, offering advice, parenting support groups, and activities for children. They also provide a safe space to talk about emotional and mental wellbeing.
 - Website: www.bristol.gov.uk/bristol-childrens-centres
7. **The Samaritans** – Although not specifically for children, the Samaritans offer a confidential listening service for anyone who needs to talk about mental health struggles.
 - Phone: 116 123 (24/7 support)
 - Website: www.samaritans.org

What Can Parents Do for Their Own Mental Health?

Supporting your child's mental health also means taking care of your own. Being a parent can be overwhelming, and it's important to recognise when you need help. Don't hesitate to seek support or talk about how you are feeling. Remember, there are numerous services that provide support for parents and carers too.

Useful Resources for Parents:

- **Parenting Support Groups:** Many local groups in Bristol offer support for parents, where you can share experiences and get advice.
- **Mindful Parenting:** A way to learn how to support your own mental health while helping your child cope with emotional challenges.
- **Bristol City Council's Parenting Programmes:** Offering advice and courses to support parents with managing family life and mental health.
- **Snowdon Village Coffee Morning:** These are normally run once per term – Please keep an eye out for further details



- **Snowdon Village Website**

Closing Thoughts

Mental health should be a priority for everyone, including our children and ourselves. It's important to know that you don't have to face these challenges alone. There are many services available, and there is no shame in seeking help.

If you have any concerns about your child's mental health or need guidance, please don't hesitate to reach out to us or organisations listed above. We're here to help create a safe and supportive environment for all our families.

Yours Sincerely

Lacie Hooper
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