

Improving Children's Behaviour

Community, Children and Families Services

Information for Parents / Carers



Pre-school children's behaviour, at times, can be very challenging and difficult to manage for a lot of parents. When thinking about your child's behaviour consider the following statements:

Normal behaviour of children and toddlers

- They crave attention and are very active with short attention spans
- They easily forget things and need a lot of reminding and prompting
- They can be disobedient
- They are learning what is, and what is not socially acceptable
- They are children and not little adults.

Realistic expectations

All children are unique and develop at different rates. Think about your child's:

- Age
- Level of understanding
- Communication skills
- Personality

Is there a reason for your child's difficult behaviour?

If there has been a change in your child's life they may react to it. Here are a few possible reasons:

- Birth of a new baby
- Moving house
- Starting nursery
- If you are upset or there are problems in your family
- Illness
- Loss of a family member or pet

The way you react to your child's behaviour is important. For example, if you give in when your child has a tantrum they are more likely to continue to have tantrums in the future.

Ways of encouraging good behaviour

- Reward good behaviour with positive attention
- Be specific about what you like about their behaviour. For example "I liked it when you put your crayons away".
- Be specific about what you don't like about their behaviour. For example "It really upset me when you kicked your brother".

- Set clear boundaries and stick to them.
- Try to set routines so your child knows what to expect and feels secure.
- Play! Children like to play with adults and other children. They need lots of variety due to their short attention spans, for example going to the park, painting and jigsaws.
- Think about what they enjoy the most.
- Listen to your child. Talk to your child. They will learn you enjoy their company and this will show them they are valued and make them happy.

Dealing with difficult behaviour

- All children love any kind of attention, positive or negative. When it is safe to do so, ignore any difficult or challenging behaviour
- Distract your child's attention to prevent the difficult behaviour starting or continuing, refocus attention elsewhere
- Be consistent. Think carefully before you say "no".
- Do not give in because they cry, whinge or protest as this will lead to more tantrums or whingeing in the future.
- Let your child know there are consequences to their behaviour, for example removal of treats, favourite toy or activity. You decide which would be the most effective with your child.
- Do not give too many warnings, as they will learn that there are no consequences to their actions.
- Time out – if bad behaviour persists remove your child from the situation and put them somewhere safe but boring for 1 minute of each year of their life; for example 4 minutes for a 4 year old. This will give both of you time to calm down.

If your child's behaviour is a concern to you there is a variety of support available. Please contact your Health Visitor for more information.

Options available

If you'd like a large print, audio, Braille or a translated version of this booklet then please call **01253 655588**

Patient Relations Department

For information or advice please contact the Patient Relations Department via the following:

Tel: **01253 655588**
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Further information is available on our website: **www.bfwh.nhs.uk**

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For the best way to plan your journey to any of the local sites visit our travel website:
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Useful contact details

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References

This booklet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this booklet are available on request from:
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