

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- being withdrawn and unusually quiet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 also 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.
- **The National Autistic Society** – if your child is on the autistic spectrum, you can find useful advice on behaviour at: www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/behaviour.





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Ask About

- **Aspens** – Autism charity in West Sussex offering behavioural advice services, parent workshops, children's groups and sibling support. Visit www.aspens.org.uk, or call: **01892 822168**.
- **Family Hubs** – you can access information and support for children under five from your local family hub (formerly children & family centres), which you can find at: www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-children-and-families/find-a-family-hub.
- **Find it Out Centres** – where young people aged 11-25 can drop in for information, advice and guidance. These are housed within your local Family Hub (see above for information).
- **Health Visiting Service** - support for parents of children under five. You can find your health visitor through your GP surgery, local Family Hub (see above), or call: **01273 242004**.
- **Learning and Behaviour Advisory Team (LBAT)** – Offers consultation & training to schools around learning and behaviour when a pupil's progress is being affected by these issues. Ask your child's school for details & visit: <https://westsussex.local-offer.org/services/229>.
- **Portage** – a home-based educational programme for very young children, tailored to individual needs: Crawley & East Grinstead: **01293 572480**, Chichester & Horsham: **01243 536182**, Mid Sussex: **01444 243150** & Worthing: **01903 242558**.
- **Reaching Families** – provides training, information & other fact sheets related to this topic. (See especially our *Making Sense of Challenging Behaviour* workshops). We also offer benefits advice, peer support, a Facebook group & handbook (see below) for parent carers of children & young people with SEND in West Sussex. See: www.reachingfamilies.org.uk.
- **Single Point of Access (SPoA) West Sussex** - a dedicated route to access specialist emotional wellbeing and mental health support for those aged 4-17. Anyone can refer to SPoA including children & parent carers. Referrals will be directed to the most appropriate help from Youth Emotional Support, YMCA Dialogue or Sussex Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Alternatively, signposting to other sources of support may be given. To make a referral, use the online form at: <https://e-wellbeing.co.uk/support>, or Tel: **0300 304 0462**.
- **West Sussex Children's Services** – support from health and social care. If your child is under 18, contact the Integrated Front Door (IFD) for West Sussex Children's Services. Tel: 01403 229900 or email: WSChildrenservices@westsussex.gov.uk. For social care for over 18s call the Adults' CarePoint: **01243 642121**, or email: socialcare@westsussex.gov.uk.
- **Young Minds** – has a parent guide on challenging behaviour at: www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/challenging-behaviour.
- **Youth Offending Services** – work with young people and other organisations to prevent and reduce offending. Email: youthoffendingteam@westsussex.gov.uk.

Further reading and useful links

- ***Making Sense of it All: From Birth to Adulthood*** – Reaching Families' handbook for parent carers of children and young people with SEND in West Sussex. This provides essential information on money matters, including claiming DLA and PIP, as well as social care, health, leisure, travel, education and employment. Go to: www.reachingfamilies.org.uk/guides.html.
- **The Challenging Behaviour Foundation** – www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk.
- **West Sussex Libraries** – For books on this topic available to borrow for free, go to <https://arena.westsussex.gov.uk/welcome> and search the library catalogue.
- **West Sussex Local Offer** – go to <https://westsussex.local-offer.org> for local services, support and details of *Short Breaks* providers for children & young people aged 0 - 25 years with SEND.

