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Snapchat

Parent / Carer Advice



What is Snapchat?

Snapchat is one of the image-based social media platforms which is incredibly popular with children. One of the key features of Snapchat is that, by default, messages sent through Snapchat disappear seconds after they are viewed by the recipient. The minimum age to use Snapchat is 13 but it is a popular and widely used platform among children younger than this.

13

Safety Tips

As with all Internet activity, talk to your child about how they use Snapchat, the importance of not 'oversharing', and any issues they have faced.

The default privacy setting of 'My Friends' prevents children from sharing 'snaps' with users unknown to them. However, children may change this setting and make their posts public. Ensure your child is aware of the importance of maintaining strong privacy settings and check the settings your child has selected.

In the settings options, ensure your child has Snapmap set to 'ghost mode'. This will ensure that nobody can see their current location.

Ask your child if they know how to report or block a user who sends them anything that upsets them. This can be done by going to the friends list, selecting the person creating the issue and then selecting the gear icon.

Remind your child that although Snapchat automatically deletes images once seen, somebody can copy the image and share it with others.

Reasons for concern



Abuse and bullying

As messages disappear shortly after being read, Snapchat has become a popular tool for abuse such as online bullying as abusers feel they will not be held to account for messages posted once they are deleted. This is supported by the fact that if somebody takes a screenshot of a message posted on Snapchat then the person who posted it is informed that this has happened, making it more uncomfortable for people to take evidence of abuse they have suffered or witnessed.



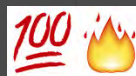
The Snap Map

The Snap Map allows users to see the live location of their friends on a map. Cartoon-style avatars are used to represent people in a move that was clearly designed to be popular with younger users. This feature can result in children sharing their location (including effectively their home address) with individuals.



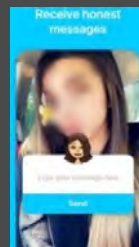
Addiction-inducing features

Children are naturally more prone to addictive behaviour than adults. As such, the inclusion of features such as 'Snap Streaks' (where two users share pictures with each other on consecutive days) encourages addictive behaviour. Snapchat rewards longer streaks with special emojis. This can result in children increasing their daily usage of the app.



Risk of secondary apps

Snapchat allows users to link to secondary apps that can be used inside Snapchat. A recent concerning example is YOLO which allows users to offer people the opportunity to anonymously ask them questions. Such apps have led to online bullying and hate crime.



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GREAT READ FOR
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Discover a great read for your child...

Operation Deewtonk - A Cheery Gang Adventure

Author: Sherbet Gilesy

Publisher: Troubador Publishing

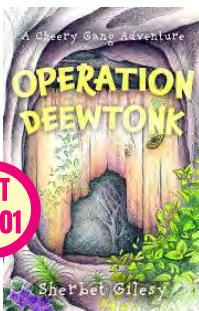
Meeting: SAT 10AM. Venue: OUR

HQ. - OPERATION DEEWTONK.

The text message arrived. The gang of four was now formed, their mission was clear...

This compelling adventure rampages through the excitingly daring exploits of the mischievous Dougie MacEwan as he masterminds his brilliant but TOP SECRET plan to save his school from being swallowed up! His imaginative antics and hilarious mishaps in everyday school life land him in trouble with teachers such as Borey Storey, Grumpy Hump and especially his old headmistress, Mrs Pualot, whose campervan he advertises on eBay!

In the end though, can Dougie's ingenious plan work? Does his dreadful poetry woo sensible Ruby? Will maths and drama geek Alfie come to the rescue? What shocks will the school play bring? And what are the mystical secrets of the wild violets?



OUT
28/01

Archie & Gerald's First Stupendous Adventure

Author: Guido Amari

Publisher: Troubador

Publishing

On a snowy, quiet evening, Gerald the pug suddenly appears on the doorstep of Archie, the baker.

Pugnaciously making himself at home, he creates mischief and havoc in the way of pugs, but then, through a series of trials, saves the day!

Following this, a second story involves the pair in a dangerous journey across sea, rail and land to save the baker's brother - luckily for Archie, he has the pug at his feet!

In the third adventure, disaster happens as pug and baker are journeying back home. A mysterious figure appears from out of nowhere to set in motion a series of events that will test both Archie and Gerald!



OUT
NOW

Lost on Infinity

Created by Steve Punt,

Matthew Sweetapple

and Elaine Sweetapple

Published by

Sweetapple

Created by comedian

Steve Punt and

husband-and-wife duo

Elaine and Matthew

Sweetapple, Lost on Infinity manages to deliver an essential message about caring for the planet in a way that will engage even the most reluctant of readers. Set between Battersea and the island of Infinity - home to the last one of every extinct creature on earth - the story follows London boy Moog, his dog Rockford, and a cast of colourful characters that the two encounter when they accidentally stumble onto the island.

With surprising and inspiring insight, Lost on Infinity is a thrilling adventure that delivers a real-world message of hope for current and future audiences.



OUT
NOW

GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS: FOOTBALL

EDITION 2026

Publisher: Guinness

World Records Limited

Count down the 100 most significant records from the beautiful game, showcasing the greatest teams, the most prolific goal scorers, the fastest strikes, the highest-scoring matches and much more.

Whether you're new to football or an expert in XG, satisfy your need for trivia, facts and stats with an all-new edition from the ultimate authority on record breaking.



OUT
NOW

Dog Man 14: Big Jim Believes

Author: Dav Pilkey
Publisher: Scholastic

The celebration comes to a halt for our heroes in Dog Man: Big Jim Believes when the mischievous Space Cuties From Space return. Our caped crusaders -- Dog Man (aka Scarlet Shedder), Commander Cupcake, and Sprinkles -- along with Mecha Molly discover that the city has changed, and nothing is how it should be.

Can Big Jim's positivity and innocence help our heroes? Will Dog Man, Big Jim, Grampa, and Molly have the courage to trust each other and save the day? How does the past help shape the future? And who is the chosen one?

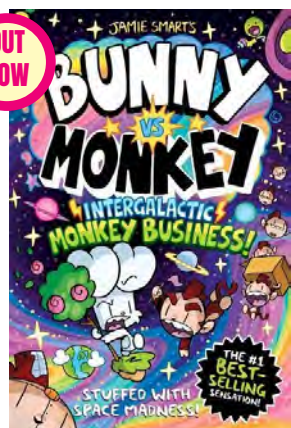


Bunny vs Monkey: Intergalactic Monkey Business!: Team Monkey Edition

Author:
Jamie Smart
Publisher:
David Fickling Books

There's a new mischief-maker in The Woods - Little Monkey! A smaller, cuter, and even stranger Monkey than our beloved chaos-causer. But as Bunny and friends try to work out his motives, they are led far from the woods . . . into outer space.

And on Planet Monkey, the laughs are positively intergalactic!



Donut Squad: Take Over the World (a Phoenix Comic Book): Exclusive Christmas Special Edition

Author: Neill
Cameron
Publisher: David
Fickling Books

Ever wondered what donuts get up to when they're not being eaten?

No, because that would be silly! But it turns out, donuts have BIG PLANS FOR WORLD DOMINATION!

Meet Sprinkles, the leader of the Squad; Jammyboi, who spreads stickiness EVERYWHERE; Dadnut and Lil' Timmy, who explain obscure facts and Spronky whos is bizarrely unconventional! But don't mention the arch-nemeses of the donuts ... the bagels, secretly plotting the Donut Squad's doom!

Guffaws guaranteed!



Little Miss Marple: Muddle at the Vicarage - Mr Men Little Miss Agatha Christie

Mysteries
Author:
Adam Hargreaves
Creator:
Roger Hargreaves
Publisher: HarperCollins Publishers

Little Miss Marple lives in St Mary Mead, where she counts Mr Nosey and Little Miss Chatterbox among her friends and she herself takes a keen interest in the goings on in the village! So, when Reverend Muddle suspects there's been a theft at the vicarage, and there are further mysteries of the rather muddled kind, Little Miss Marple is sure she can help Inspector Nonsense and Constable Silly uncover the truth...



Christmas Tech

Lucky children across the country will be hoping to receive new gadgets or shiny new tech this Christmas.

While parents and carers might be looking forward to a little quiet time while their children enjoy their new laptops, games, tablets or consoles, it's important that we take time to think about how safe those devices are.

The internet is an enormous part of the lives of young people these days, and it can help them with their schoolwork and to keep in touch with their friends and members of their families they may not otherwise see during the holidays.

However, the online world is also a hunting ground for those who wish to contact or do harm to young people, and the ease with which they can approach children through online games, apps and chat sites is worrying.

Recent data analysed by the NSPCC showed police forces across the UK recorded 7,263 sexual communication offences with a child last year. That's almost double the number recorded when the offence first came into force in 2017/18

Christmas is a fantastic time for families, but it's important for any parents or carers gifting their children tech this year to be aware of the risks and the precautions they can take to help keep young people safer online.

So if you're gifting tech to a child this year, remember to take some time between decorating the house and opening presents to check out and set up the safety features on the new device.

Even if you don't feel that comfortable using tech yourself, brushing up on online safety ahead of the big day is always a good idea. There should be easy to follow instructions when setting up a new device or app, but a manufacturer's website should also have the information you need, including details on parental controls which help restrict the type of content they can see.



Once the gift is unwrapped, you could even explore these procedures along with your child, enabling you both to learn more about the device, app or game including how to report or block anyone or any material they encounter that upsets them.

Away from the screens though, it's vitally important for parents and carers to be on the lookout for signs that a young person might need more support following something they've experienced online.

Children who have experienced something upsetting online might become more withdrawn or quieter than usual. They may become angry when you try to go near their device, might experience mood swings, issues with sleeping and their mental health, or you may notice other changes to their behaviour.

Having regular, open conversations with children about how they use technology is so important, and online safety doesn't have to be intimidating. There is free and simple guidance available on the NSPCC website around online safety which is easy to understand and will help parents start conversations with children about how they use their tech.

If they don't want to speak to you about what they've experienced but they still seem worried or upset by something, remind them they can speak to one of our Childline volunteers.

Anyone wishing to find out more about how to stay safer online can visit the **NSPCC's Online Safety Hub**. There's an online safety quiz parents can take, as well as useful conversation starters for parents and carers, and pages sharing advice for children of different ages.

Children can contact Childline counsellors at any time day or night on **0800 1111** or through the **Childline website**.

The website also includes lots of information and advice around online safety, as well as access to our specially trained counsellors for private and confidential one to one chats.

In addition, they can access message boards, moderated by our Childline team, where children and young people can speak to others their own age about whatever they are experiencing. Sometimes, knowing someone else has been through similar experiences can be enough to help.





How Much Screen Time is Too Much for Children?

In a world where screens are everywhere, from tablets and TVs to phones and laptops, it's no wonder parents are asking: how much screen time is too much for young children?

Screens can entertain, educate, and even connect us, but they can also get in the way of something far more powerful - human connection.

Recently, The Princess of Wales and Professor Robert Waldinger have collaborated on an essay, 'The Power of Human Connection in a Distracted World', discussing how the quality of our relationships matters more than almost anything else when it comes to happiness and healthy development, and how the increasing use of technology and screens can impact this.

Here at Busy Bees, we pride ourselves on encouraging these early connections through laughter, stories, and play. We understand that technology is an

important part of the world around us and ask the question 'how do we strike a healthy balance between technology and togetherness?'

Let's explore what screen time really means, the benefits and risks, and how you can use it mindfully in your family life.

WHAT COUNTS AS SCREEN TIME?

"Screen time" simply means any time your child spends in front of a screen — watching, playing, or interacting. But not all screen time is the same. According to research into the different types of screen time by Global Edtech, screen time can be divided into four categories: passive, social, interactive and educational.

Some activities can be enriching and interactive, such as video calling grandparents or playing educational games together. Others, like passive scrolling or background TV, offer less opportunity for engagement and

can distract from meaningful moments of connection.

IS SCREEN TIME BAD FOR CHILDREN?

No screen time is recommended for children under two years old, however all screen time can't be classed as 'bad' for older children; it's about how it's used.

Research continues to show that loving relationships and responsive caregiving in the early years are what truly shape a child's emotional and cognitive development. Findings from the Institute for the Science for Early Years and Youth (ISEY), shows that the brain develops fastest in the first five years of life. During this crucial stage, face-to-face moments help to build the neural connections that support learning and emotional wellbeing. When screens begin to replace these moments, younger children in particular may miss opportunities to learn vital social and emotional skills.

It can sometimes be tempting to turn on screens to keep little ones calm or occupied but using them this way can make it harder for children to learn how to manage their emotions. Gentle reassurance, play, or shared stories are far more effective ways to support their emotional development.

When it comes to screen time, try to focus on balance, here at Busy Bees we recommend considering these questions:

- Is my child getting plenty of time for play, movement, and face-to-face interaction?
- Am I using screen time as a shared activity or as a distraction method?
- Are we creating space for “no-screen” moments such as family mealtimes or bedtime routines?

THE BENEFITS OF POSITIVE SCREEN TIME

Used wisely, screen time can complement your child’s learning and creativity.

Educational apps and programmes can help develop language, early literacy, and numeracy. Interactive games can build problem-solving skills, while video calls with loved ones can strengthen family bonds, especially when relatives live far away.

The key is shared screen time. Watching, playing, and exploring together helps turn digital experiences into opportunities for real connection. When you talk about what’s on the screen, ask questions, or join in, your child is not just consuming, they’re learning and bonding with you.

A NOTE ON INTERNET SAFETY FOR SMALL CHILDREN

As young children begin exploring the digital world, it’s important to make sure that the experience is a safe one.

Always use parental controls on devices, choose age-appropriate apps and programmes, and keep screens in shared family spaces rather than bedrooms. For preschoolers and younger children, it’s best to explore online content together, so you can help them make sense of what they see and answer their questions in real time.

At this age, your presence is their greatest protection, and your guidance helps build the healthy, confident digital habits they’ll carry into later childhood.

RECOMMENDED SCREEN TIME BY AGE

The World Health Organisation (WHO) offers guidance on healthy screen habits for young children

- Under 2 years: Avoid screen time altogether, except for video calls with family and friends. Babies learn best through real-world interactions such as your voice, your touch, and your facial expressions.

- 2 to 5 years: Up to one hour per day of high-quality, age-appropriate content, ideally co-viewed with an adult.

- Over 5 years: No more than two hours a day, with parental supervision and regular screen-free breaks.

These aren’t strict rules but helpful benchmarks. What matters most is maintaining balance and ensuring that screens don’t replace the time children need to move, play, explore, and connect with others.

HOW TO CREATE HEALTHY SCREEN HABITS

Here are some practical tips to help you manage screen time while keeping connection at the heart of family life:

1. Be a Role Model - Children learn by watching. Try to model mindful of how much technology

you use. Putting your phone down during meals and story time shows your child that they are your priority.

2. Protect Connection Moments - Make mealtimes, playtime, and bedtime “screen-free zones”. These shared moments are where language, empathy, and emotional understanding grow.

3. Choose Quality Content - Select educational, age-appropriate apps and shows that encourage interaction, curiosity, and creativity. Watch or play together when possible.

4. Set Gentle Limits - Use parental controls or simple household routines to set clear expectations. For example, no screens an hour before bedtime helps protect sleep and encourages calm.

5. Find Screen Free Alternatives - Screens should enhance life, not replace it. Prioritise outdoor play and messy fun for boredom busting and encourage reading books and stories to develop children’s imagination.

Screens should enhance life, not replace it. Prioritise outdoor play and messy fun for boredom busting and encourage reading books and stories to develop children’s imagination.

Ultimately, the goal isn’t to ban screens — it’s to balance them. As The Princess of Wales reminds us, “our undivided attention is the most precious gift we can give another person.”

In truth, there’s no single definitive answer to the question of screen time for children. Instead, it’s a case of understanding the many variables and making an educated decision based on your child’s needs.

Many thanks to Busy Bees

Childhood Vaccinations in Family Law:

Balancing Parental Rights and the Best Interests of the Child

**Dawson
Cornwell**

shaping
family law



As public health considerations intersect with parental rights, the question of whether a child should be vaccinated remains an issue the courts are increasingly asked to resolve where parents hold opposing views regarding whether their child(ren) should receive routine childhood immunisations.

While public health policy and clinical guidance strongly support vaccination as a key tool in preventing the spread of infectious diseases, vaccinations are not a legal requirement. As a result, disputes can and do arise between parents when determining whether their child(ren) should be vaccinated or not. This article explains how the family courts in England and Wales approach parental disagreements over childhood vaccinations.

Are parents becoming more reluctant to vaccinate their child(ren) against common childhood illnesses?

According to the latest annual data on childhood vaccines reported by the UK Health Security Agency between April 2024 and March 2025, 18.6% of children (almost 1 in 5) have not received their pre-school booster jab. Over the last 10 years, the lowest uptake rate for pre-school booster jabs has been found in London at 81.4%. Outside London, the coverage has been at 85%. Health Authorities warn

that at least 95% coverage is required to increase chances of preventing virus or disease outbreaks.

This growing trend shows that parents are choosing not to vaccinate their children against common childhood illnesses. This could be due to a variety of factors, including reduced access to healthcare and GP appointments, and the spread of misinformation regarding vaccine safety particularly via social media. This places children at an increased risk of contracting serious diseases due to the lowering immunity across the country.

Who decides whether a child should be vaccinated?

In England and Wales, vaccinations are not compulsory legally. For children aged 16 or 17, the decision to receive a vaccine is generally theirs to make. However, when it comes to children under the age of 16, the decision rests with those who have “parental responsibility”. Therefore, it is up to the parents (or those with parental responsibility) of a child to decide whether a child should be vaccinated against specific viruses or diseases. Parents who have parental responsibility for a child have equal rights in relation to making decisions for their child(ren). Parental responsibility is defined in Section 3(1)

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of the Children Act 1989 as “all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his property”.

If important decisions for a child cannot be agreed between parents, such as in relation to medical treatment and immunisation, one parent will need to make an application to the court for a specific issue order (an order where the court gives permission for the child(ren) to be vaccinated) or a prohibited steps order (an order of the court preventing the child(ren) from being vaccinated).

What are the courts approach to vaccinations?

In several recent cases, when considering whether the child(ren) should receive medical treatment and immunisations, the court has reinforced the view that the child's best interests, is the primary concern.

The issue of whether a child should be vaccinated was considered by the Court of Appeal in the case of *M v H Private Law Vaccinations* [2020] EWFC 93. In this case, the father had made a Specific Issue Order application for the children to receive the MMR vaccine and the COVID-19 vaccine. At that time, due to the unavailability of public guidance on the COVID-19 vaccine, the court did not address this issue. However, in respect of the MMR vaccine, the court reaffirmed that routine immunisation in accordance with NHS schedules was in the children's best interests. The Court confirmed that it was very difficult to foresee a situation in which a vaccine approved for children and endorsed by official guidance would not be in a child's best interests.

In *Re H (A Child) (Parental Responsibility: Vaccination)* [2020] EWCA Civ 664, the Court of Appeal confirmed that vaccinations approved by Public Health England

(now the UK Health Security Agency) and included in the routine immunisation schedule are highly likely to be in a child's best interests. The Court further noted that the only instances in which a vaccine may not be in the child's best interests is if there is established research “indicating significant concern for the efficacy and/or safety” of a vaccination in individual cases. The Court also reiterated that, in private law disputes, neither parent has greater authority than the other in decision-making, and where agreement cannot be reached, a judicial determination is required.

Gillick Competency

A child under 16 may consent, independently of parents, to medical treatment, including vaccination, if assessed as “Gillick competent”. This concept comes from the case of *Gillick v West Norfolk* [1985] where the House of Lords held that a minor under 16 may consent to medical treatment if they possess sufficient understanding and intelligence to fully comprehend what is involved. This case allowed for the fact that parental responsibility and control diminish as the child matures.

Whether a child is Gillick competent is assessed using criteria such as the age of the child, their understanding of the treatment (benefits and risks), and their ability to explain their views about the treatment. If deemed to be Gillick competent, the child can make their own decision about vaccination.

Where a dispute over vaccination is before the courts, and a Gillick competent child wants to be vaccinated, generally, the court will respect that choice even when the parents object because it is presumed that vaccinations approved by public health authorities are in the best interests of the child.

The court will only challenge the Gillick competent child's wishes

where there is a clear welfare concern or where the competence itself is unclear.

Do I have to go to court if I disagree with my ex-partner about vaccinating our child?

Court proceedings should be a last resort. If you and your ex-partner cannot agree, consider alternative dispute resolution methods such as:

- Mediation
- Collaborative law

These options are usually more cost-effective, less stressful, and more likely to result in a resolution that puts the child's welfare first.

Practical Guidance for Parents

Parents involved in vaccination disputes should consider:

- Gathering medical evidence from qualified healthcare professionals;
- Documenting communication with the other parent;
- Avoiding emotional arguments and focusing on child-centred reasoning; and
- Seeking early legal advice or mediation to avoid prolonged litigation.

Courts prefer parents to resolve disputes collaboratively, and mediation can often narrow or even resolve disagreements.

CONCLUSION

Childhood vaccinations in family law represent a complex intersection of medical science, parental rights, and child welfare. Parents in disagreement on whether to vaccinate their child should be conscious of the court's current position with respect to childhood vaccinations, in particular routine vaccinations. While courts respect parental autonomy, they ultimately prioritise the child's health and best interests.

Please note that this article is provided for general information only. You must obtain professional or specialist advice before taking, or refraining from, any action on the basis of this article.



Are too many children being diagnosed with ADHD?

Specialists say the real issue is something else entirely.

Recent claims in the press that ADHD is being over diagnosed are missing the real point. The issue is not a surge in incorrect labels, it is rushed assessments, long NHS waiting lists and inconsistent standards across parts of the private sector.

Only 26.6 per cent of children with ADHD in the UK receive any form of treatment. Rising diagnosis numbers, therefore, reflect unmet need finally being recognised, not the overdiagnosis suggested in recent coverage.

As awareness of neurodiversity grows, more parents are seeking answers to help their children. This does not mean families are pushing for labels or that clinicians are handing out careless diagnoses. It may feel as though more children are being identified with ADHD, yet if they are receiving the right support, that is a positive outcome.

The data shows the challenge lies in access, not excess. Around 549,000 people were on NHS waiting lists for an ADHD assessment in March 2025, which reflects system strain rather than widespread overdiagnosis. Prevalence studies estimate that 5 to

8 per cent of children have ADHD, yet UK diagnosis rates remain below 3 per cent, so many children are not being identified at all.

The whole point of diagnosing a child or adult with ADHD is to give them the understanding, structure and support they need to thrive at school and in their social lives. Currently, many children are given a diagnosis and then simply labelled, and then receive only basic support from the SEN at school without the practical tools or guidance that would help them and their parents manage their symptoms.

Research consistently shows that when ADHD is identified and properly supported, children experience significant gains in confidence, behaviour and academic progress.

Growing up is challenging enough, so a careful and robust ADHD assessment supported by coaching, school adjustments and or medication can make a real difference to their confidence and progress. At the same time there are still thousands of children who genuinely do need a proper assessment and who remain overlooked, which is why a balanced and thorough approach matters so much.

Dr Kripalani, Consultant Psychiatrist at The ADHD Centre, says: *"ADHD is a complex condition. You cannot properly assess a child in one short appointment. When the process is rushed, the danger is not too many diagnoses. The danger is the inaccurate ones. Some children get missed, others get misunderstood, and families are left confused."*

A robust assessment is essential. UKAAN and AQAS standards recommend two to three-hour structured assessments with information from parents, teachers and clinicians, which is far from what many families currently experience.

"ADHD touches every part of a child's functioning," said Dr Kripalani, including emotional regulation, friendships, and learning. When we take the time to assess properly, we can see the whole child and give families clarity and practical support."

The ADHD Centre adds that untreated ADHD is linked with poorer academic outcomes and higher risks of anxiety, depression and low self-esteem, which reinforces the importance of early and accurate assessment.

Another factor behind the rising demand is the structure of the education system itself. Many parents turn to a formal diagnosis because additional help in school often depends on having a recognised condition. Clinicians say this reflects pressure within schools rather than eagerness for a label.

This matches national findings that only children with formal identification can reliably access extra time or support plans in exams, making diagnosis a gateway to fairness rather than a trend.

The ADHD Centre believes the way forward is not fewer diagnoses. It is better, more consistent assessments so every child receives an accurate understanding of their needs. The clinic provides specialist ADHD assessment and treatment for children, young people and adults, and works closely with families and schools to ensure support plans that genuinely help.

Many thanks to the ADHD Centre





As we make our way into December, families and children across the UK will be looking forward to Christmas.

While carols and Christmas songs, lights, trees and gifts are the focus of most of us, for some families, the festive season feels very different.

New polling for the NSPCC found one in eight respondents across the country have been worried for the safety of a child during the Christmas holidays.

YouGov surveyed 4,259 adults across the UK around their concerns for a child at Christmas and found that around two-thirds believed children face an increased risk of abuse (66%), and exposure to domestic violence (69%), during the festive holidays. Factors adults mentioned for children experiencing increased risk over Christmas included financial pressures at home (73%), substance misuse at home (69%), food insecurity (65%), families spending more time together (61%), and reduced support from support services like social services and schools (55%).

The NSPCC's Childline service heard from thousands of children and young people from across the UK last winter who wanted to talk about abuse, and the charity has just launched its new Christmas campaign to encourage young people to seek support if they need it this winter.

Another child, aged 16, told the service: "It always all kicks off at Christmas. Mum goes crazy at dad; she hates him trying to speak to his family, even to say Merry Christmas. She hates him speaking to anyone else really. I can hear her calling him lazy and useless for not doing enough again this year and she's made him cry. I want to walk out, but where would I go on Christmas? I've locked myself in my room with my sister for now; when mum's done with dad, she might blow up on us next"

Another young person told Childline: "Dad's drinking always gets worse at Christmas. Then the drinking leads to arguments and the arguments turn into him hitting mum. I wish I could protect her, but dad is so much stronger than us both. I want to call the police, or social services, but who will come out at Christmas?"



The campaign advert, which is now showing on TV and radio stations across the country, is inspired by the true story of a woman who was abused by her father. It follows a little girl Sarah, who returns home from school at the end of winter term and is confronted by the presence of her abusive father.

This year's campaign is supported by actor, producer and NSPCC Ambassador for Childline, Natalie Dormer, who is a staunch supporter of the charity. She said: "While most of us are excited about Christmas, for a disturbing amount of some children it represents a time of uncertainty and fear.

"Behind the closed doors of homes across the country, children are suffering in silence while the rest of us celebrate. This NSPCC campaign, reminds young people that Childline will be there for them to across the festive period."

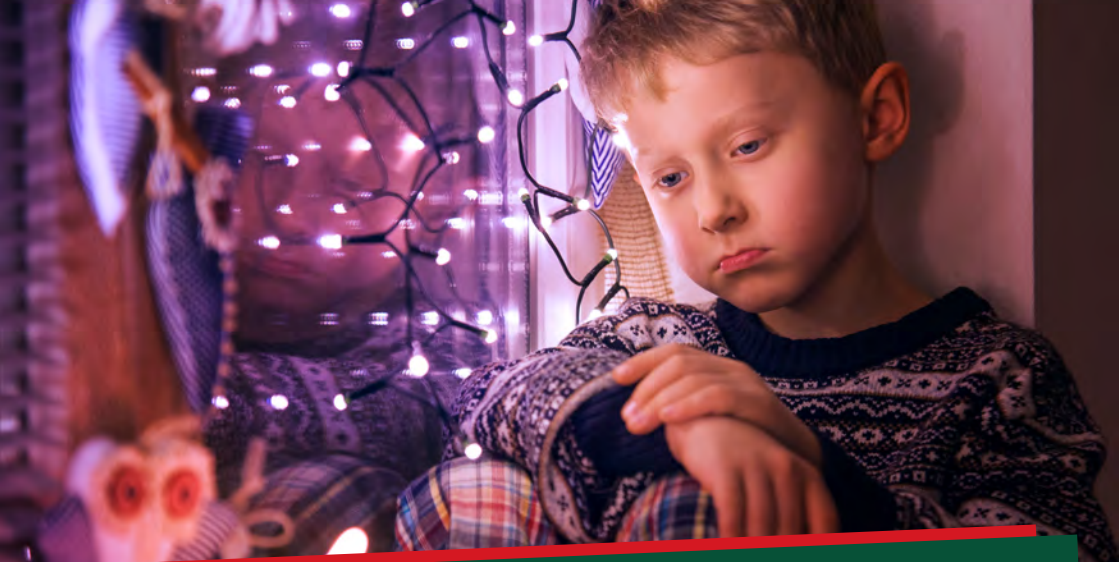
Chris Sherwood, CEO of the NSPCC, said: "This new research highlights a troubling reality that Christmas – which should be a time of joy and happiness for all children – can instead be a period of heightened danger for some.

"Financial strain, increased alcohol consumption, and families spending more time together behind closed doors are all factors that can heighten the risk of child abuse in the home over the festive period. That's why our Christmas campaign is so important, reminding children they are not alone and that Childline is here for them day and night over the festive period."

Childline is available for young people around the clock, even on Christmas Day, by phone on **0800 1111** and online through the 121 chat on the Childline website.

Any adults concerned about a child's safety or wellbeing can contact the **NSPCC Helpline** at help@nspcc.org.uk or by calling **0808 800 5000**.





How to Manage Festive Gatherings with SEND Children

Revealed by Expert, Lisa Spann, Managing Director at

Fledglings said: "Every child deserves a Christmas that feels comfortable, not overwhelming. However, the increase in social plans, change in routine, and heightened sensory demands of the festive season can make it challenging for children with SEND. Despite this, there's a range of ways parents can make celebrations feel more joyful and inclusive. Here's how they can manage festive gatherings with children with SEND."

1. Prepare Your Child Before Gatherings

"Children with SEND can often feel more secure when they know what to expect. For this reason, parents should use visual timetables or take time to explain who will be there, the types of activities to expect and how long the gathering might last. Predictability can go a long way in reducing anxiety and making them feel more in control, creating a more enjoyable experience for both parent and child."



2. Create a Quiet, Safe Space

"Crowded homes and loud events can quickly create feelings of overwhelm. If you're hosting the gathering, I strongly recommend making a quiet, safe retreat for children to relax in, should the event get too much for them. This can include noise-cancelling headphones, soft lighting and comfort toys. If the gathering is not at your home, openly communicate with the host ahead of time to ensure the child has a quiet space to retreat to whenever they need a break."

3. Manage Sensory Triggers As Much As Possible

"At festive gatherings, there are plenty of triggers that could overwhelm SEND children, including strong smells, bright lights and unfamiliar textures. Parents should try to identify potential triggers ahead of time and adapt where possible. This can mean dimming lights, offering familiar food options or having sensory toys on hand. Small adjustments can make a huge difference, helping children to stay comfortable throughout the Christmas celebrations.



4. Hold Onto Some Form of Routine

"Christmas naturally brings changes to daily life and routines, but holding onto even the smallest form of a child's usual routine can make a huge difference. Maintaining consistent mealtimes or bedtime rituals helps anchor them during a period of uncertainty. It can allow children to feel more regulated and relaxed, despite the disruption of the festive season. During gatherings, try to incorporate familiar activities or breaks to provide a sense of consistency and security.

5. Celebrate Their Way

"Christmas looks different for every family, so don't be afraid to skip certain traditions or prioritise alternative activities that better suit the child's sensory needs. Whether that means opting for a quieter gathering, choosing low-sensory decorations or spending the day doing something completely different, it's all completely valid. What actually matters is creating a festive experience that feels manageable and fun for the child. When we celebrate in a way that aligns with the child's needs, everyone benefits.



6. Remember, You're Not Alone

"Supporting a child with SEND during the Christmas period can be tough, but parents should remember they're not alone. Reaching out for advice, sharing concerns with close friends or family members and making minor, thoughtful adjustments can all play a huge role in making Christmas enjoyable for the entire family. Everyone deserves to feel adequately supported throughout this busy and demanding time of year."

Discover more information on how to prepare for a calm Christmas [here](#), including a **free downloadable pack** for parents with timely festive advice.

Many thanks to Fledglings



ANAPHYLAXIS – Would you know what to do?



By Lydia Scroggs, Head of Clinical Strategy and Policy at St John Ambulance

Would you know what to do if someone had a severe allergic reaction? St John Ambulance would like to share with you some advice on one of the scariest emergency situations you could find yourself in.

WHAT IS AN ALLERGY?

An allergy is any abnormal reaction of the body's immune system to an allergen or 'trigger' substance. One of the most common allergens is plant pollen, which often causes hay fever. Other allergens include animal hair, dusts, moulds, bee stings and some foods. Common symptoms of mild allergy may include sneezing, runny nose and mild itchy rashes.

If you have an allergy yourself, make sure you have antihistamines available and carry your auto-injector (epi pen) when you are out and about.

WHAT IS ANAPHYLAXIS?

ANAPHYLAXIS (sometimes called anaphylactic shock) is a severe allergic reaction that is a life-threatening medical emergency that can develop in

just seconds after someone comes into contact with an allergen. It can affect the whole body, and if it's not treated quickly enough it could be fatal. This situation needs immediate medical attention, and you need to act quickly and calmly. Common triggers of anaphylaxis include bee stings, some foods (commonly nuts), some medicines (most commonly penicillin) and some natural substances (e.g. latex). Someone at risk of anaphylaxis may know what they are allergic and carry medication with them to use in an emergency.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- a red, itchy rash, or raised area of skin (weals/hives) often around the neck and face
- red, itchy, watery eyes
- rapid swelling of hands, feet, or face (particularly lips and neck)
- abdominal pain, vomiting, or diarrhoea.

There may also be:

- difficulty in breathing with wheezing or noisy airway
- coughing
- swelling of tongue and throat with puffiness around eyes
- confusion and agitation
- signs of shock leading to collapse and unresponsiveness.

WHAT TO DO

1. If someone is having a severe allergic reaction, then they may carry medication to inject themselves - an auto-injector. This is a pre-filled injection device containing adrenaline which, when injected, can help reduce the body's allergic reaction.

2. Check if they have one, and if they do, help them to use it or do it yourself straight away following the instructions.

3. Pull off the safety cap and, holding it with your fist, push the tip firmly against the casualty's thigh until it clicks, releasing the medication (it can be delivered through clothing).

4. Hold in place for ten seconds (follow the instructions on the device), then remove.

5. Call 999 or 112 and tell ambulance control that you suspect ANAPHYLAXIS.

6. Help them to get comfortable and monitor their breathing and level of response by lying the casualty down with their legs raised. If they are having breathing difficulties, then sit them up.

7. Repeated doses of adrenaline can be given at five-minute intervals (do check this with the ambulance control centre, who will advise) if there is no improvement or the symptoms return.

If you want to find out more, St John Ambulance runs First Aid courses, which anyone can join through our website ([sja.org.uk](https://www.sja.org.uk)).

The charity also has loads of free resources online, including its YouTube channel ([a](#)), where anyone can learn how to save a life.





How to Talk to Children About Mental Health

Talking about mental health with children can feel daunting, but it doesn't have to be. In the UK, mental health in children and young people is an increasingly urgent topic. It's important to begin supportive conversations in the home, and not just through professional mental health services. In a 2023 report by the NHS, one in five children and young adults (aged eight to 25) has a probable mental disorder, showing the increased demand for mental health support amongst children.

Start Small

It all starts with small, everyday chats. Ask how your child is feeling and really listen to their answers. It's important to avoid rushing to fix things or dismissing worries, even when they seem minor. Children don't need perfect advice; they just need to know you're there. Keeping language clear and kind, and reminding them that everyone has mental health, just like physical health, are excellent starts to making mental health a more open conversation.

Explore New Emotions Through Experiences

Finding gentle ways to talk about emotions often works best when you're doing something together. Going on a walk, cooking a meal, or exploring a new place creates natural space for conversation without pressure. The Principle Trust witnesses firsthand how shared experiences and family breaks can bring people closer together, helping children feel more relaxed and open. Those moments of joy and togetherness often lead to the most honest talks.

Keep Consistent

Every child is different, so it's important to keep the conversation ongoing rather than one-off. You might talk about what helps them feel calm, what they do when they're sad, or who they can talk to at school. As children grow, these check-ins build resilience and trust. Even if you don't have all the answers, showing that you care and are willing to listen can really make a lasting impact.

Know When To Seek Help

There are so many incredible services that can provide lots of help and support to families. Whether it's a school counsellor, a local community group, a charity or a health professional, just checking in with that third-party expert can make all the difference in the world - even if it just reassures you that everything your child is feeling is perfectly normal. Parents shouldn't put pressure on themselves to have all the answers. It takes a village to raise a child, so lean on your village!

Many thanks to The Principle Trust



Talking about mental health doesn't need to be a formal sit-down or a one-off discussion. It's about small, honest moments that help children feel heard and supported. Whether it's during a car journey, a walk, or quality time spent at home, being present and open can make a real difference. Every conversation helps build understanding, resilience, and trust and the foundations for positive mental wellbeing that can last a lifetime.



The benefits of Private Tuition

Private tutoring can have so many benefits for your child in their education journey. Whether they're struggling, falling behind or even need an extra challenge, we'll work with your child to develop a learning plan just for them.

Let's take a look at some of the benefits private tutoring can have for your child.

Focus on their Individual Needs

Every child has different strengths when it comes to their learning and understanding of a subject. At school, teachers need to focus on a full class of students and making sure everyone has an understanding of the subject, but a tutor can get to know your child's individual learning style and needs. They can play to your child's learning strengths to help them in areas they need extra help with.

Limit Distractions

When a tutor can teach your child in small groups, individually or with online private tutoring, your child will have fewer distractions that most classrooms will have like other classmates. So your child will have a much easier time focusing and concentrating on their learning.

Getting to Know Your Child

Tutors can really get to know your child on an individual level. They can learn where your child is struggling, where their strengths are and their best learning style. By getting to know what works best for your child's learning, a tutor can adapt their learning style to help your child achieve their learning goals.

Providing Challenge

Tuition isn't just to help children if they're struggling in school. Some children may find that they're not being challenged enough by what they're learning in school, and that can be a great opportunity for a tutor to provide more challenging learning that compliments their school learning. This can help your child really enjoy a subject that they might've stopped engaging with as much through lack of challenge in school.

Filling in Knowledge Gaps

Sometimes children can fall behind in their learning for many reasons that are beyond their or your control. That's okay though, it happens, and a tutor can help fill in the learning your child has missed out on or didn't quite understand in class. This can really help your child with their confidence in learning, enabling them to perform to the best of their ability without worrying about being too far behind.

Building Confidence

A lack of confidence in a subject they're struggling with can really hold your child back, which can have a knock-on effect to other areas of learning and their overall confidence. With a helping hand from a tutor your child's confidence in a subject they were struggling in can get a real boost and enable them to keep learning to the best of their ability.

Develop Exam Techniques

Whether they're preparing for their 11 Plus exams or GCSE maths, a private tutoring can help your child develop their exam techniques. Private tutoring can help your child focus specifically on areas they're struggling with before their exams, so they can revise in a way that works best for them.

Homework Help

Homework can be a real sticking point for some children in their education journey and can get really overwhelming. Homework is supposed to be independent learning, and so children won't have the

help of their teachers. Sometimes the fear of getting answers wrong can make homework a little anxiety inducing for them. A tutor can help your child with their confidence when it comes to independent learning, like their homework. With private tuition your child can learn the benefit of making mistakes as a learning opportunity and start to let go of the fear of getting the answers wrong.

Many thanks to Explore Learning





Benefits of Returning to Education

Returning to education as an adult can be a daunting prospect, with many things to consider before you can make a decision.

There are challenges to overcome, such as your existing responsibilities, financial considerations and time management. However, you won't be alone, research show just over one half (52%) of adults have taken part in learning in the last three years*.

Although the challenges can be nerve wracking, these can be outweighed by the numerous potential benefits.

BELOW, WE EXPLORE SEVEN OF THE TOP BENEFITS OF RETURNING TO EDUCATION AS AN ADULT.

1. Gain relevant skills and qualifications

Returning to education as an adult, when you may have more of an idea about your dream career, allows you to acquire new skills (including soft skills and hard skills), knowledge and qualifications that align with your career goals. In an ever-more competitive job market, this demonstrates your commitment to professional development and gives you an edge over other candidates.

2. Improve your earning potential

By returning to education to gain new or additional qualifications, you may be able to command a higher salary, improving your earnings potential and financial stability. Achieving higher qualifications can also provide you with stronger leverage during salary negotiations or job offers.

3. You're more experienced

The skills you've acquired in your adult life, both work and personal, will stand you in good stead when returning to education. Compared to when you were at school or college, you'll be more disciplined, have better teamwork skills, and have more experience in setting and working towards goals.

4. Flexibility

A major factor in your decision to return to education may be around balancing the course against your other commitments such as work and family life. However, education providers understand that adult learners have extra responsibilities and will therefore look to accommodate your needs whenever possible.

5. Improved mental stimulation

This mental stimulation can help prevent cognitive decline and maintain mental agility throughout life. Also, the intellectual stimulation of learning can provide a sense of purpose and fulfillment, improving overall well-being and mental health.

6. Improved confidence

Returning to education empowers individuals, providing them with a sense of accomplishment and personal growth. Successfully navigating academic challenges builds resilience and problem-solving skills, leading to a significant boost in self-esteem.

7. Improved quality of life

Higher education can significantly improve an individual's quality of life. Increased earning potential, enhanced job security, and greater career satisfaction all contribute to a more comfortable and fulfilling lifestyle.

Also, as mentioned earlier, education can positively impact overall health and well-being. Engaging in learning can reduce stress levels, increase social interaction, and promote a more active and fulfilling lifestyle.

**Survey by The Adult Participation in Learning Survey*

THANKS FOR READING

**NEXT EDITION
OUT IN SPRING 2026**

Hope you all have a fantastic winter!