

Created by Alis Rocca

Alis Rocca has over 20 years experience in the Education Sector. She has been a Head Teacher for 11 years and holds a Masters Degree in Education from Cambridge University. She has studied mental health in children and young people and runs Arise Wellbeing, a consultancy company with a focus on improving mental health through developing leadership, coaching and wellbeing strategies such as mindfulness and yoga.

Support Pack for Parents

Episode 1- Does my child need help?

All parents worry about their children and all children encounter problems or difficulties as they grow and develop. This can sometimes make them feel anxious or insecure. But what should you do if you feel your child is really unhappy, is struggling or just not fitting in with the other children around them? There is help available – from the school, from your GP, and from experts in child development.

Speak to your child

You might start by having conversations with your child to try to find out what is wrong. Clinical Psychologist Dr Bettina Hohnen has written a book, *How to Have Incredible Conversations With Your Child*, that explores what you can do at home – and when you should involve others.

Try to create a culture at home where talking about emotions and talking about difficult things is the norm. Modelling how to articulate your thoughts and feelings will help your child learn how to do the same. Ask follow-up questions, be curious and show that you are listening fully. Sometimes even paraphrasing, saying *'I think what you're saying to me is ...'* can really help with clear communications. As well as talking with your child, 'listen' with your eyes. What are the behaviours you see telling you about them? Children are very aware of when you are too busy to make time for them. You need to build trust to find out what's going on with them. What we recommend saying to a child who is really struggling to open up is: 'We are going to have some special time together, you and me, every single day.' It may only be 10 or 15 minutes, depending on what you can manage, but put everything else aside and ensure that the time is spent completely on their terms. It is all about creating space for them.

Recommended books to read with children

A series of books written by Dawn Huebner, called *What to Do When Your Brain Gets Stuck*, *What to Do When You Dread Your Bed* are well worth reading. One talks about anger and the other about anxiety. Both are excellent to share with your child in order to gain a better understanding of anxiety and emotions together.

Speak to your child's teacher

Working as a team together with the class teacher can be a great support to your child. Teachers will always be very helpful in getting children back into school, but also can be of help if you're struggling with something at home too. They can signpost you to helpful agencies, resources, websites and books. Keep a diary of events or behaviours that you notice so that you can share them with clarity with the teacher, and together you may see trends that begin to make sense over time.

And finally, look after yourself by being kind to yourself. Parenting is one of the hardest jobs in the world so seek support and talk to others.



Created by Alis Rocca

Alis Rocca has over 20 years experience in the Education Sector. She has been a Head Teacher for 11 years and holds a Masters Degree in Education from Cambridge University. She has studied mental health in children and young people and runs Arise Wellbeing, a consultancy company with a focus on improving mental health through developing leadership, coaching and wellbeing strategies such as mindfulness and yoga.

Support Pack for Parents

Episode 2 - Working with school to support your child

Support from school and the school SENDCO

If you feel you need more support than your child's class teacher can offer, the school will introduce you to their SENDCO - the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator. This person's role and responsibilities include the following:

- To keep a profile of children with special educational needs.
- To observe and support children on the special educational needs profile.
- To support and advise Parents, Key Workers, Learning Support Assistants (LSA) etc. in how to include children's needs in the setting.
- To liaise with other professionals from outside services and external agencies e.g. local SENDCOs, (also known as SENCOs) Family Centres, Educational Psychologists, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Speech and Language Therapists, etc.
- To arrange, organise and review support for individual children.

Support from specialists

Every Local Education Authority and some schools will have specialists who deal with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Different authorities may call these people by different names and it can be confusing at first, especially as the specialists themselves tend to use acronyms for these different roles. Our website has a fact sheet on acronyms which may help – but once you engage with your school these special educational needs terms should be explained to you. If not, don't be afraid to ask your school what they can offer through them.

The Local Offer

Every local authority and school has information on their website about their 'local offer'. This is a document that gives insight into what type of things you can get support for and how they are able to help. This will give you ideas about things that your school or authority might be able to provide for your child. The SENDCO will be able to talk this through with you and with the class teacher. Together you will all be able to think of ways to support your child, actions that can be put into place, and resources and interventions that may help your child to succeed and feel happier in school and beyond.

Services and Interventions

These services and interventions can vary widely from school to school, or district to district. They are often called by different names and run in different ways. Again, the class teacher and SENDCO will be able to help you to understand how things work in your school and how to plan for them to work for your child's needs. Remember, your child is not the first to have problems and education specialists have worked hard to find effective ways to support your child to be confident, happy, and to be the best they can be.

Created by Alis Rocca

Alis Rocca has over 20 years experience in the Education Sector. She has been a Head Teacher for 11 years and holds a Masters Degree in Education from Cambridge University. She has studied mental health in children and young people and runs Arise Wellbeing, a consultancy company with a focus on improving mental health through developing leadership, coaching and wellbeing strategies such as mindfulness and yoga.

Support Pack for Parents

Episode 3 - Getting professional help outside school

Speak to your GP or family doctor

Another avenue you might consider to gain support and advice is consulting your family doctor. Not every GP is a mental health specialist but many general practices have at least one staff member with a particular interest in the subject. If you do approach your GP, it is worth taking as much key information as possible to help the GP offer the relevant advice or direct you towards the most helpful agency for the help you need.

Information for your GP

It is helpful to keep a diary of events and behaviours so that you can share everything clearly with your doctor. In terms of information that you might bring to an appointment, think about key events or changes in behaviours that you have noticed. For instance, perhaps your child previously did not seem angry but over time you have witnessed changes. There may be increasing dysregulated episodes over relatively small things creating outbursts that do not fall within the traditionally accepted range of emotional reaction. Share your experiences and your knowledge of your child with confidence. As the parent, you know your child best.

Professional Diagnosis

Sometimes the greatest help a GP can offer is a way of achieving a professional diagnosis for your child. This will help you to get the best support going forwards. The Child and Young Person Mental Health Services (CYPMHS) can be referred to by your GP. Schools and social workers can also refer to this agency. Children and young people's mental health services (CYPMHS) is used as a term for all services that work with children and young people who have difficulties with their mental health or wellbeing.

(The previous term which may sound more familiar is Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). This is an older term for the main specialist NHS community service within the wider CYPMHS that may be available locally. For more information visit:

<https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/mental-health-services/mental-health-services-for-young-people/children-young-people-mental-health-services-cypmhs/>

Counselling Services

All GPs will have access to some NHS counselling services that may not be immediate but you can get a referral to them. There are different sorts of counselling services and they will vary from area to area and from school to school. Sometimes charities are involved in schools who may have commissioned counsellors who come into the school to work 1-2-1 with the child. Alternatively, your GP may signpost you to counselling support separate from school.

Created by Alis Rocca

Alis Rocca has over 20 years experience in the Education Sector. She has been a Head Teacher for 11 years and holds a Masters Degree in Education from Cambridge University. She has studied mental health in children and young people and runs Arise Wellbeing, a consultancy company with a focus on improving mental health through developing leadership, coaching and wellbeing strategies such as mindfulness and yoga.

Support Pack for Parents

Episode 4 - What is an EHCP and how do you help the school to get one for your child?

If you feel your child needs more help than the school can currently provide, then the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator and the Class Teacher can meet with you to consider applying for an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

What is an EHCP?

The Department for Education (DfE) clarifies that an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is for children and young people aged up to 25 who need more support than is available through special educational needs support.

EHC plans identify educational, health and social needs and set out the additional support required to meet those needs.

How do I get one?

As a parent who has concerns about their child and feels they need additional support to meet their needs, you can ask your school or local authority to carry out an assessment. A request for an EHCP can also be made by anyone who believes an assessment may be necessary to ensure the right support is in place. This includes doctors, health visitors, teachers and family friends.

If the decision is made by the local authority to carry out an assessment you may be asked for the following pieces of information:

- any reports from your child's school, nursery or childminder
- doctors' assessments of your child
- a letter from you about your child's needs

The local authority will tell you within 16 weeks whether an EHC plan is going to be made for your child.

What to expect

When the EHCP is finalised, the information collated and the support agreed, a document will be produced that clearly outlines your child's needs as well as their strengths. It will usually clarify what the child needs to learn and how to make progress as well as where the child will be educated and what resources/interventions should be utilised. Throughout the protracted process of creating an EHCP, emotions can be put to the test. It is important to remember that the best outcomes are always those where communication between school and home is friendly and open. The more you can work together with your child's school, and all professionals involved in helping, the better it is for the child. Remember everyone wants the best for your child too.

Created by Alis Rocca

Alis Rocca has over 20 years experience in the Education Sector. She has been a Head Teacher for 11 years and holds a Masters Degree in Education from Cambridge University. She has studied mental health in children and young people and runs Arise Wellbeing, a consultancy company with a focus on improving mental health through developing leadership, coaching and wellbeing strategies such as mindfulness and yoga.

Support Pack for Parents

Acronyms Explained

- ADD - Attention Deficit Disorder
- ADHD - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- ALN – Additional Learning Needs
- ALNCO - Additional Learning Needs Coordinator
- AAP – Average Attaining Pupil
- ABA - Applied behavioural analysis
- AR - Annual Review
- AWPU - Age-Weighted Pupil Unit
- BEST – Behaviour and Education Support Team
- BSP - Behaviour Support Plan
- CAMHS - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
- CAF – Common Assessment Framework
- CIN – Child in Need
- CYPMHS - Children and Young People's Mental Health Services
- DBS – Disclosure and Barring Service (formerly CRB)
- DfE - Department for education
- EAL - English as an Additional Language
- EBD - Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties
- EWO - Education Welfare Officer
- ECT - Early Careers Teacher
- ECF - Early Careers Framework
- EFA - Education Funding Agency
- EHCP - Education, Health and Care Plan
- EP - Educational psychologist
- EWO - Education Welfare Officer
- EYFS - Early years foundation stage
- EYSP - The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile
- FE - Further education
- FGB - Full Governing Body
- FSM - Free School Meals
- HMI - Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools
- IASS – Information, Advice and Support Service
- IBP - Individual Behaviour Plan
- IPP - Individual Pupil Profile
- KS - Key Stag





Created by Alis Rocca

Alis Rocca has over 20 years experience in the Education Sector. She has been a Head Teacher for 11 years and holds a Masters Degree in Education from Cambridge University. She has studied mental health in children and young people and runs Arise Wellbeing, a consultancy company with a focus on improving mental health through developing leadership, coaching and wellbeing strategies such as mindfulness and yoga.

Support Pack for Parents

Acronyms Explained

- LA - Local Authority
- LAC – Looked After Child (Children)
- LEA - Local educational authority
- LO - Local Offer
- LSA / TA - Learning support assistant / teaching assistant
- MAT – Multi-agency team
- NC - National Curriculum
- OT - Occupational Therapist
- OCD - Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- ODD - Oppositional Defiant Disorder
- OFSTED - Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
- PAN – Published Admissions Number
- PECS - Picture Exchange Communication System
- PEP - Personal Education Plan
- PRU - Pupil Referral Units
- PSP - Pastoral Support Plan
- PT - Physiotherapists
- SALT / SLT - Speech and Language Therapists
- SEAL - Social & Emotional Aspects of Learning
- SEN - Special Educational Needs
- SEND - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- SENCO/SENDCo -Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator
- SLD - Severe Learning Difficulties
- SLT - Senior Leadership Team
- TA - Teaching Assistant
- TAC - Team around the child
- TAF – Team Around the Family