

# Information for Parents/Guardians of Children and Young People with Emotional and/or Behavioural Difficulties or Disorders

The aim of this pamphlet is to inform parents and guardians of supports and services available for children and young people with EBD and their families.



# **What is an emotional and/or behavioural difficulty (EBD)?**

There are a wide range of emotional and/or behavioural difficulties which can affect the learning and social development of children and young people. These difficulties range from milder behavioural difficulties and anxieties that fade over time, to difficulties that are more serious and affect children's relationships. A small number of children will have severe emotional and behavioural disorders that persist over time.

Children/young people with more serious difficulties or disorders may need to be referred for professional assessment and intervention.

## **The early days**

All children can be difficult from time to time. All children are anxious from time to time. This is a normal part of growing up. Difficult behaviour becomes a problem if it affects your child's development and relationships, is ongoing and persistent or doesn't respond to usual behaviour management strategies. Many children who do not have an EBD may show some of these behaviours at different times during their development. It is normal for a child to experience and to express different emotions.

## **Getting support**

If you are worried about your child's behaviour or anxieties you should seek help as soon as possible. It is very important for young children with EBD to receive support as early as possible in life to assist their development. If your child is at pre-school age, you may wish to speak to your public health nurse or pre-school leader. You could also speak to your public health nurse about parenting courses in your area. There are a number of different evidence based programmes available that parents find helpful.

## Assessment of Need

Parents of any child born after 1st June 2002 may apply to the HSE for an Assessment of Need under the Disability Act, if they think that their child may have a disability. Following the assessment, parents will receive an Assessment Report stating their child's needs and the services required to meet those needs if any. Where a need for supports is identified, a service statement is prepared which specifies the health services to be provided to the child, with reference to available resources.

If your child is at school, you may wish to raise your concerns with your child's teacher. The school may be able to support you and/or reassure you about your child's behaviour. If needed, your child's teacher/school will develop a plan with you to help manage your child's behaviour. If difficulties persist they may also suggest the involvement of a NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service) educational psychologist to assist with this plan. If problems are affecting your child's relationships and development at home and in the community, the NEPS psychologist might suggest referral to a Primary Care Clinical Psychology Service or a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) (see details below).

People nowadays often use the Internet as a source of information. Please bear in mind that sometimes information on the internet can be exaggerated, misleading or wrong. In matters concerning your child's health and education, you should seek information and advice from the appropriate professional sources.

## Your Child's Education

### Pre-school

The State funds a free pre-school place for all eligible children (ECCE Scheme) in the year prior to starting school. More details are available at [www.dcy.gov.ie](http://www.dcy.gov.ie). Children with an EBD who have additional needs may also be eligible to attend other HSE funded crèche or pre-school settings.

## Primary and Post Primary School

The vast majority of children with an EBD attend their local mainstream primary and post-primary schools, with support. The education system supports children and young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties in the following ways:

- The classroom teacher supports students with special educational needs and may adapt lessons or tasks to suit the individual, as necessary.
- Resource and learning support teachers are available to provide additional teaching, if it is required.
- Students who have significant care needs arising from a diagnosed emotional/behavioural disorder may have access to support from special needs assistants (SNAs). SNAs look after the care needs of children while the teacher is responsible for teaching the child. The circumstances in which SNAs are allocated for pupils with EBD are detailed in Circular 0030/2014 available on the DES website at: [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).
- Additional supports may also be provided where children are eligible. Information about these schemes is available on the DES website at: [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).
- Students with permanent or long-term conditions, including physical, visual and hearing difficulties or specific learning difficulties, which they believe will significantly impair their performance in the State examinations may apply to the State Examinations Commission for a reasonable accommodation(s) (RACE) to be made to facilitate them taking the examinations.

A small number of pupils, with complex needs, may attend a special school or special class for students with EBD. Special schools and special classes have smaller class sizes. Your SENO can advise you about special schools or special classes in your area.

## **Department of Education and Skills: Policy**

The Department's policy is focused on ensuring that all children, including those with EBD, can have access to an education appropriate to meeting their needs and abilities. The policy is to provide for children with special educational needs, including EBD, to be included in mainstream schools unless such a placement would not be in their best interests or the interests of the children with whom they are to be educated. Some children with more complex special educational needs may be supported in a special class in a mainstream school. These children have the option, where appropriate, of full or part-time integration and interaction with other children. Other children may have such complex needs that they are best placed in a special school.

## **National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)**

NEPS psychologists work with parents, teachers and children to help all children develop to their potential. In some individual cases teachers and parents will agree to seek support from the NEPS psychologist to address difficulties which are affecting the pupil's learning and socialisation in school.

A parent leaflet about the NEPS service is available on the NEPS website at: [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

NEPS guidelines for primary and post-primary schools in supporting students with emotional and behavioural difficulties are also available on this website.

## **Primary Care Clinical Psychology Services**

Primary Care Clinical Psychology Services are usually made up of a team of clinical psychologists and therapists. They provide psychological services for children aged 0-18 years and their families. Referrals are accepted from GPs, NEPS psychologists and other health professionals. Primary Care Clinical Psychologists work with children and families, where the child or young person is experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties arising, for example, from anxiety, trauma or attachment difficulties. Assessment centres on the child's emotional needs and interventions such as cognitive behavioural therapy, play therapy or family therapy are offered to address their identified needs.

## **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)**

This is a multi-disciplinary specialist service provided by the HSE for children and adolescents with serious emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties. The service caters for young people up to 16 years of age, although some CAMHS services extend to 18 years for young people in full-time education. CAMHS teams accept referrals from health professionals who are familiar with your child such as GPs, paediatricians and educational or clinical psychologists. Depending on the needs of the individual child/young person, therapies can include individual and group counselling and psychotherapy, family therapy, and parenting courses. In some situations medication may be suggested or prescribed. This happens only after a full assessment and discussions with parents. (Further information on HSE services is available from your local Health Centre and HSE website, [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)).

## **Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs)**

SENOs provide information directly to the parents of children/young people with special educational needs and to schools. SENOs approve additional teaching and SNA supports to schools, where necessary, to support students with special educational needs. SENOs also have a role in supporting and advising parents/guardians.

Your SENO can assist you in a number of ways by:

- Providing support and advice.
- Identifying possible school placements for your child.
- Liaising with the school, the HSE and other services.
- Assisting in planning the transition of children to school, between schools and onwards from school.

Your local SENO may be contacted through the school or from the NCSE website at [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

## **National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS)**

Some post-primary schools have access to the NBSS which provides short-term support for students with emotional/behavioural difficulties. More detailed information is available on the NBSS website at [www.nbss.ie](http://www.nbss.ie).

## Further information

Further information for parents/guardians can be found in the NCSE publications:

- ***Children with Special Educational Needs: Information Booklet for Parents***
- ***Choosing a School: A Guide for Parents and Guardians of Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs***
- ***Post-School Education and Training Information on Options for Adults and School Leavers with Disabilities***

Available at [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

## Useful Contacts

Your local **SENO** may be contacted through the school or from the NCSE website at [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

**Department of Education and Skills:** [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

**Local health centre:** [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie).

Information about other supports to which you may be entitled are available on the website of **Citizens Information** at: [www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie) or from the relevant Government Departments.

The following websites and support organisations may also be of assistance to you:

**Aware: Support for people with depression:** [www.aware.ie](http://www.aware.ie).

**Directory of accredited counsellors/psychotherapists:** [www.counsellingdirectory.ie](http://www.counsellingdirectory.ie).

**Eating Disorder Association of Ireland:** [www.bodywhys.ie](http://www.bodywhys.ie).

**Headstrong, National Centre for Youth Mental Health:** [www.headstrong.ie](http://www.headstrong.ie).

**Hyperactivity Attention Deficit Disorder:** [www.hadd.ie](http://www.hadd.ie).

**National Parents Council Primary:** [www.npc.ie](http://www.npc.ie).

**National Parents Council Post-Primary:** [www.npcpp.ie](http://www.npcpp.ie).

**Psychological Society of Ireland:** [www.psihq.ie](http://www.psihq.ie).

**St. Patricks Mental Health Services:** [www.stpatricks.ie](http://www.stpatricks.ie).

**Special Needs Parents Association:** [www.specialneedsparents.ie](http://www.specialneedsparents.ie).

*Please note that this list is not exhaustive and these organisations are listed only for information purposes. The National Council for Special Education may have had no involvement with these organisations and cannot vouch for them or their staff. Parents should always satisfy themselves regarding the appropriateness of providing any information concerning their child to any third-party.*



## **National Council for Special Education**

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