

Working Effectively with Children with Continence Issues



What do you need to know about children with continence issues?

- Having control over continence is a developmental skill, and like other skills, children will attain it at different ages.
- Bedwetting (also known as nocturnal enuresis) is common and very few children will wet the bed on purpose.
- Bedwetting and daytime continence issues can have a significant impact on a child's behaviour and wellbeing. It can also be stressful for the parents or carers.
- Treatment and care should take into account the child's needs and preferences. Children and young people with this issue and their parents and/or carers should have the opportunity to make informed decisions about their care and treatment, in partnership with their healthcare professionals where the issue is sufficiently serious to need such input.

As practitioners, how can we work effectively with children with continence issues?

- When supporting the child and their family, the emphasis must be on normalisation, no blame, no shame and strictly no punishments
- Children should not be held responsible for their continence issues - rewards for dry nights are therefore unhelpful
- NICE guidelines make it clear that maltreatment should be considered if a child is consistently reported to be deliberately wetting themselves, or the parents or carers are repeatedly punishing the child for their continence issues despite professional advice that it is involuntary
- Seek reassurance that the parents and carers are following professional advice they've been given to support the child with continence issues

- There is a specialist continence service for children in Nottingham. This is delivered by CityCare - for further information about the service and how to make referrals please visit this website - <http://www.nottinghamcitycare.nhs.uk/find-a-service/services-list/continence-advisory-service/>
- Where a child is attending specialist continence services it is important to ensure that the work of that service is incorporated into wider multi-agency planning and reviewing. This helps to avoid mixed messages.

Further reading...

- Signpost children and families to ERIC (Education and Resources for Improving Childhood Continence) - <http://www.eric.org.uk/> - who provide support for children and families with continence issues

Suggested activity

- In a group or within a team meeting, identify a case with a child with continence issues and discuss whether or not the NICE guidelines have been followed appropriately.