

# Childhood Mental Health: Signs & Triggers

Working with children with mental health challenges and emotional instability following life changing injuries.

## Trauma affects the whole family

The child you are supporting should be the centre of every decision made and intervention put in place but trauma affects the whole family. Make some time to check that parents and carers are coping too. Children take their guide from their care givers so they need to be protecting their own emotions and mental health to be resilient, healthy and strong.

Encourage them to reach out to support networks, their GP and take time out.



## Early intervention is always the right thing to do

Understand the child you're working with and look out for changes in their usual behaviour. Encourage parents and carers to look out for the tell-tale signs such as changes in mood and behaviour, eating patterns, performance at school etc.

When you spot signs that their mental health is suffering, engage everyone supporting that child, including the school. Find one key person to liaise with in the school and start regular dialogue about the child, their needs and where additional support is required. Key roles within a school to speak to would be the head teacher, the SENCO, teaching assistants and heads of year or a particular subject. Make sure follow up meetings are in place too.

## Encourage routine

As much as possible try to make sure that the child's daily routine is healthy, good habits are being formed and they are having fun.

Help the family to spend time together as a family, placing just as much importance on siblings too. Show families how to still play and learn together.



## Speak to the child

You will know just by talking to the child you are supporting if they are struggling. Ask questions that will help them explain how they are feeling and actively listen for key words that may demonstrate vulnerability, anxiety, worry and feelings of disappointment.

Keep doing this! It's easy to 'forget' when things appear to be going well but it's good to revisit thoughts and feelings and keep talking.

## Rely on therapies if needed

Talking therapies and Child and Adult Mental Health Services (CMAHS) should be approached if early intervention isn't enough and people are struggling. On these occasions psychology support is more important in the beginning.

### Trigger milestones for mental health challenges:

- Moving from primary to secondary school
- Exams
- Parents not getting on
- Moving house
- Falling out with friends
- Having to stop usual hobbies and interests

### What can be put in place at school in the short term:

- Part time timetable
- Home schooling
- No homework/reduced homework
- A quiet area to let off steam
- 1-2-1 support

## Written by our Case Manager, Julie Stannard

Julie is an adult and children's nurse with 30 years' experience working with children, and young people with complex health needs, disabilities, life limiting and life threatening conditions.

Julie has first hand experience of the damaging effects that poor mental health of injured children and their siblings can cause. Hopefully this fact sheet will equip you with the tools to help address these emotional challenges.

Talk to us about working with Julie or any of our experienced case managers, email [enquiry@cbirs.co.uk](mailto:enquiry@cbirs.co.uk)



## The Child Brain Injury Trust

The charity has a whole host of support and information for schools and parents to access from of charge including a guide for schools, Child and Family support Coordinators and a number of factsheets.



[www.childbraininjurytrust.org.uk](http://www.childbraininjurytrust.org.uk)