

# PARENT/CARER NEWSLETTER

E: [cnwl.mhst@nhs.net](mailto:cnwl.mhst@nhs.net) T: 01908 725691

No: 4  
Feb 2025

Welcome to the Fourth Edition of the Parent and Carer Newsletter!

Welcome to the latest edition of the MHST Newsletter, designed to support your child's mental well-being. As parents and carers, you play a vital role in helping children and young people navigate life's challenges, and we're here to provide guidance, reassurance, and practical strategies to make that journey a little easier.

In this issue, we'll share advice, useful resources, and tips on supporting emotional well-being at home. Whether it's managing anxiety, building resilience, or encouraging positive communication, we're here to help.

## WHY EARLY SUPPORT MATTERS: THE POWER OF EARLY INTERVENTION IN CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH

As parents and carers, we all want our children to be happy, resilient, and confident as they grow. But just like physical health, mental health needs attention and care from an early age. The good news? Early support can make all the difference in helping children navigate life's challenges and build emotional strength for the future.

At the Mental Health Support Team (MHST), we're here to provide that early support—working in schools to help children and young people thrive, offering advice, and giving direct help when needed.

### How MHST Supports Your Child's Well-Being

We work in schools in several ways to promote positive mental health and ensure children have the support they need:

- **Building Resilience** - Through workshops, assemblies, and activities, we teach children practical strategies for managing emotions, handling stress, and staying mentally strong. Some children saw us during Children's Mental Health Week, where we shared tools like breathing techniques, grounding exercises, and ways to boost self-esteem.
- **Supporting School Staff & Families** - We regularly meet with school teams to offer advice and guidance on how to support children's emotional well-being. If we're not the right service for a child, we help connect families to the best support available.
- **Providing Direct Help** - For children who need extra support, we offer goal-based interventions to help them manage challenges like anxiety, low mood, or emotional difficulties. Schools or families can identify children who might benefit from this, and we always ensure schools seek consent before a referral is opened to our team.



## Why Acting Early is So Important

Did you know that half of all lifetime mental health conditions develop before the age of 14 (Kessler et al., 2005)? This means that the earlier we notice and address concerns, the better the outcomes for children.

Signs that a child might need extra support can include:

- Sudden changes in behaviour or mood
- Struggling with attendance or school participation
- Concerns from teachers, family, or friends
- 

Ignoring these signs won't make them go away—but taking action early can prevent small worries from turning into bigger challenges. Research shows that early intervention reduces the risk of long-term mental health issues and helps children build skills that set them up for success (NIMH, 2022).

## Investing in Your Child's Future

Children's brains are still developing, which makes early support incredibly effective (Centre on the Developing Child, 2016). Learning how to manage emotions, cope with stress, and ask for help should be as normal as learning to read or ride a bike.

By talking about mental health openly and early, we help children:

- Develop confidence in expressing their emotions
- Build healthy coping skills for life
- Strengthen their social and academic success
- 

## Let's Work Together to Support Your Child

We're here to work alongside you to help your child thrive emotionally and mentally. If you have concerns about your child's well-being reach out to your child's school and ask about MHST support. Together, we can make sure that every child gets the tools and support they need to grow into a happy, resilient young person.

# THE ROLE OF PLAY AND CREATIVITY IN MENTAL WELL-BEING

Creativity and play are not just fun—they are essential for children's emotional well-being. Through art, music, and play, children learn to express their emotions, build resilience, and strengthen their relationships with others. Here's how you can use these powerful tools to support your child's mental health.

## ART AS EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION

Children often find it difficult to put their emotions into words. Creative activities can help them recognise, express, and manage their feelings in a safe and engaging way.

### Encourage Emotional Expression Through Art

Set up an art activity where you model drawing different emotions and link them to behaviours.

- For example, "When I feel happy, I draw bright colours; when I feel sad, I use soft shapes."
- Try junk modelling, clay, or role-playing with puppets—these activities help children explore different perspectives and emotions.

### Build Connection Through Creativity

Making art together strengthens attachment and connection, which are key to emotional resilience.

The process is more important than the end result! Collages, mask-making, or "drawing your day" can spark meaningful conversations.



# BOOST YOUR MOOD WITH MUSIC

Music has the power to lift our spirits, calm our minds, and help us focus. Whether it's dancing in the kitchen or relaxing with a soothing tune, music can become a valuable tool in your child's daily life.



## Make Music a Family Experience

- Create a "Mood Playlist" together: one for calm, one for energy, and one for focus.
- Encourage small children to explore improvised instruments—wooden spoons and saucepans make great drums!
- With older children, explore music lessons, concerts, or sharing favourite songs—a great way to stay connected as they grow.

## Incorporate Music into Daily Routines

- Use uplifting music to energize mornings.
- Play soft instrumental music to create a calm atmosphere during homework or bedtime.
- Music can be a bridge for communication—asking your child about their favourite songs can open up meaningful conversations



# STAY PLAYFUL—AT ANY AGE!

Play isn't just for toddlers! Playfulness strengthens relationships, builds resilience, and helps children develop vital social skills—no matter their age.

## Why Play Matters

- Play helps children process emotions, practice problem-solving, and develop social skills like turn-taking and resilience.
- Research shows that play reduces stress and strengthens emotional regulation well beyond early childhood.

## Make Play a Daily Habit

- Play can be big or small—from Lego and board games to a spontaneous Nerf war in the garden.
- Keep it light! Humour and small playful interactions—like tossing balled-up socks to a teenager—can help build connection.
- Let your child lead the play—this is their time to be in control and feel valued.

## Tips for Meaningful Playtime

- 15 minutes a day of focused play with primary-aged children can strengthen attachment and trust.
- Choose a time when you can be fully present—no distractions, just connection.
- Let them know how long play will last and what will happen afterward to help them feel secure.

By embracing art, music, and play, you're not just having fun—you're investing in your child's mental well-being, confidence, and emotional resilience. Let's make creativity and play a daily habit!



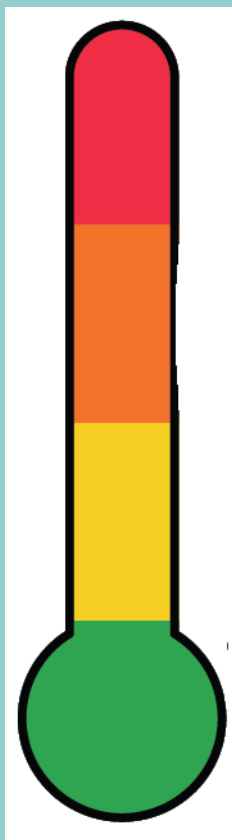
# PARENTAL WELL-BEING: USING THE EMOTIONAL THERMOMETER TO SHAPE YOUR INTERACTIONS

Parenting is one of the most rewarding—but also the most emotionally demanding—roles we take on. Research shows that when parents effectively manage their emotional responses, their children are more likely to develop strong emotional regulation skills—essential for resilience, relationships, and overall well-being (Gottman, 1997).

But how can we become more aware of our emotions and respond in a way that supports our children? One simple yet powerful tool is the Emotional Thermometer.

## Understanding the Emotional Thermometer

Think of your emotions as a thermometer:



**7-10 (RED ZONE) – DYSREGULATED, OVERWHELMED, IRRITABLE, OR EMOTIONALLY DRAINED.**

**4-6 (YELLOW ZONE) – SLIGHTLY DISTRESSED, DISTRACTED, OR ANXIOUS.**

**0-3 (GREEN ZONE) – CALM, IN CONTROL, AND RELAXED.**

Recognising where you are on this scale can help you pause, regulate, and respond thoughtfully, rather than reacting in frustration or stress.

## STEP 1 CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF

Before responding to a challenging situation, take a moment to reflect:

- Where am I on the thermometer?
- What has brought me here?
- How am I feeling right now?

If you find yourself in the Yellow or Red Zone, it's time to pause and regulate before reacting.

## STEP 2: REGULATE BEFORE YOU RESPOND

When emotions run high, taking a short break to reset can make a big difference. Try these strategies:

- **Step Away:** If it's safe to do so, remove yourself from the situation for a few minutes.
- **Breathe It Out:** Try deep breathing exercises (e.g., inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4, exhale for 6).
- **Process Your Emotions:** Write in a journal or talk to a trusted friend
- This helps shift you back to the Green Zone, where you can respond with patience and clarity.

## STEP 3: MODEL EMOTIONAL REGULATION FOR YOUR CHILD

Children learn emotional regulation by watching us. By using the thermometer openly, you teach them valuable skills for life.

**Make it Visible:** Place a drawing of the thermometer in your home and invite discussions about it.  
**Use it in Conversations:** Try saying:

"I'm at a 7 on my thermometer right now. I'm going to take a moment to do my breathing exercises so I can regulate."

**Avoid Blame:** Instead of "You're making me frustrated," try "I'm feeling frustrated right now, and I need a moment to calm down."

**Create a Family Coping Plan:** Brainstorm a list of regulating activities together and display it near your thermometer.

### Shaping a Calmer, More Connected Home

Taking care of your own emotions isn't selfish—it's essential. When you use the Emotional Thermometer to regulate your reactions, you not only strengthen your own well-being, but you also equip your child with the skills to manage their emotions.

By making this a daily practice, you'll foster a calmer, more emotionally connected home—one where both you and your child can thrive.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT OUR NEWSLETTER?

We would love to hear your thoughts on our newsletter, we have completed three of these now and want to make sure they are hitting the mark! Scan the QR code to the right and fill out our short feedback form!



**The Mental Health Support Team (MHST) is an NHS service. A referral to the team will result in a mental health episode of care being opened in your/ the child's shared NHS electronic records and may include an assessment of need and subsequent clinical documentation being saved there.**