

Family Matters

in Warwickshire

Other professionals involved with children

There are a range of professionals who work with children and it can be confusing trying to work out who is best able to support you and your family. You will find additional expertise in education and social care settings, but the main professions you are likely to come across when thinking about the health of your child are:

Midwives – routinely involved during your pregnancy, the birth and for a short while afterwards. They may run antenatal groups and put you in touch with other pregnant women in your area. They are expert at monitoring and advising on the physical health of you and your baby. They may be able to advise you on breast feeding and other matters.

Health visitors – you may meet your health visitor before your baby is born, either at an antenatal group or in your home. They take over supporting you and your baby when the midwife is no longer involved. They monitor the health and development of your baby and can offer you support and advice on a range of issues, including feeding, sleeping, toileting and behaviour management. They can also put you in touch with your local **Children's Centre**. Although it does vary, health visitors can stay involved until your child starts school. They will probably be your first point of call.

School health advisors / nurses – routinely weigh and measure your child in their Reception year and year 6. They also offer sex education to schools. They can become involved in supporting and advising you, your child or the school, on a range of health issues (physical and emotional) but you (or the school) will need to contact them to arrange this. You are likely to be sent a screening questionnaire and leaflet about the service when your child starts school.

Child & Adolescent Psychiatrists – are not routinely involved with every child. They are medical doctors who then specialise in the mental health of children and adolescents. Some work independently in the private sector but most are part of the NHS in specialist Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Other team members are likely to include clinical psychologists, nurse therapists, family therapists, psychotherapists and art therapists. You will need a referral, probably

from your GP. As they are able to prescribe medication, psychiatrists are more likely to become involved if it seems your child may have ADHD or if they are highly anxious or very low in mood, amongst other things. Psychiatrists are less likely to be involved if your child is under the age of 6 years.

Paediatricians – are physical health doctors specialising in children. Some work privately; many are based in NHS hospitals. They may become involved if you are concerned about your child's development or physical health. They may work as part of a team when looking at a child's development, along with clinical psychologists, speech and language therapists and others.

GPs hold overall responsibility for coordinating your and your child's healthcare and are often an excellent source of long term support. They can signpost you to different professionals when they feel unable to offer enough expertise themselves.

Clinical psychologists are used to working both independently and alongside other professionals. They assess and develop a personalised understanding of you and your family's difficulties (a formulation). They then use this formulation to guide them in implementing evidence-based approaches to help resolve these difficulties.

Speech and Language Therapists work to improve the communication skills of your child, most often their enunciation. They often run groups for young children and provide exercises to do at home. With older children, they might work on a one-to-one basis in primary school. Speech and Language therapists are also often involved in the assessment of specific social communication difficulties, like the autism spectrum disorders.