

Developing Continence Support at Level 1

In 2018 Bedfordshire Community Health Services reviewed how the 0-19 service might provide Tier 1 support for children with continence needs. This was in response to increasing referrals and long waiting lists for the nurse-led children's continence service, when children and families often needed simple measures and advice.

It was agreed that community nursery nurses (CNNs) and associate practitioners (APs) working within the 0-19 team could have two days training and shadowing opportunities in continence clinics. This enabled them to become continence "champions" offering early intervention to manage constipation, soiling, nocturnal enuresis and toileting difficulties.

The children's continence nurses developed local clinical care pathways, including clear criteria and timescales, as a framework for escalation and to ensure that a full continence assessment could be undertaken when necessary.

To promote accessibility to nursing support, encourage learning and safer care they have a WhatsApp group to share anonymised patient stories; offering a professionals helpline to seek timely advice and information. The champions also participate in bi-monthly clinical supervision to discuss caseloads and explore the wider health issues identified for children managing continence.

Parents/GP's can refer directly to the 0-19 team when continence issues are identified. All children's continence referrals are triaged and forwarded to the 0-19 team for:

- Simple measures if first line support has not been available for up to 4 weeks
- Ensure constipation is assessed for using NICE guideline tool
- Give parents ERIC Bowel and Bladder website information
- Inform parents of the poo nurses video which explains how to treat constipation with macrogols.

Continence champions then support for a further 8 weeks:

- Write to the GP to request they prescribe medication as appropriate for bed wetting and/or constipation if 'simple measures' do not work
- Support parents to administer medication effectively
- Write to the school to request they monitor fluid intake and encourage the child to visit the toilet
- Give parents toilet training strategies
- Give parents fluid in/out charts to monitor fluid intake and bladder capacity.

Children, their families and carers now have:

- Increased access to evidence based advice and support to manage continence difficulties in Bedfordshire
- Support closer to home to help them manage a continence issue

The benefit to the service and health economy is that waiting times for the nurse-led Children's Continence Service have been reduced, so that the children who need specialist assessment and support are getting this sooner too.

Right person, right place, right time is enabling us to work in partnership across primary and secondary care to improve the health and wellbeing of the child and their family.