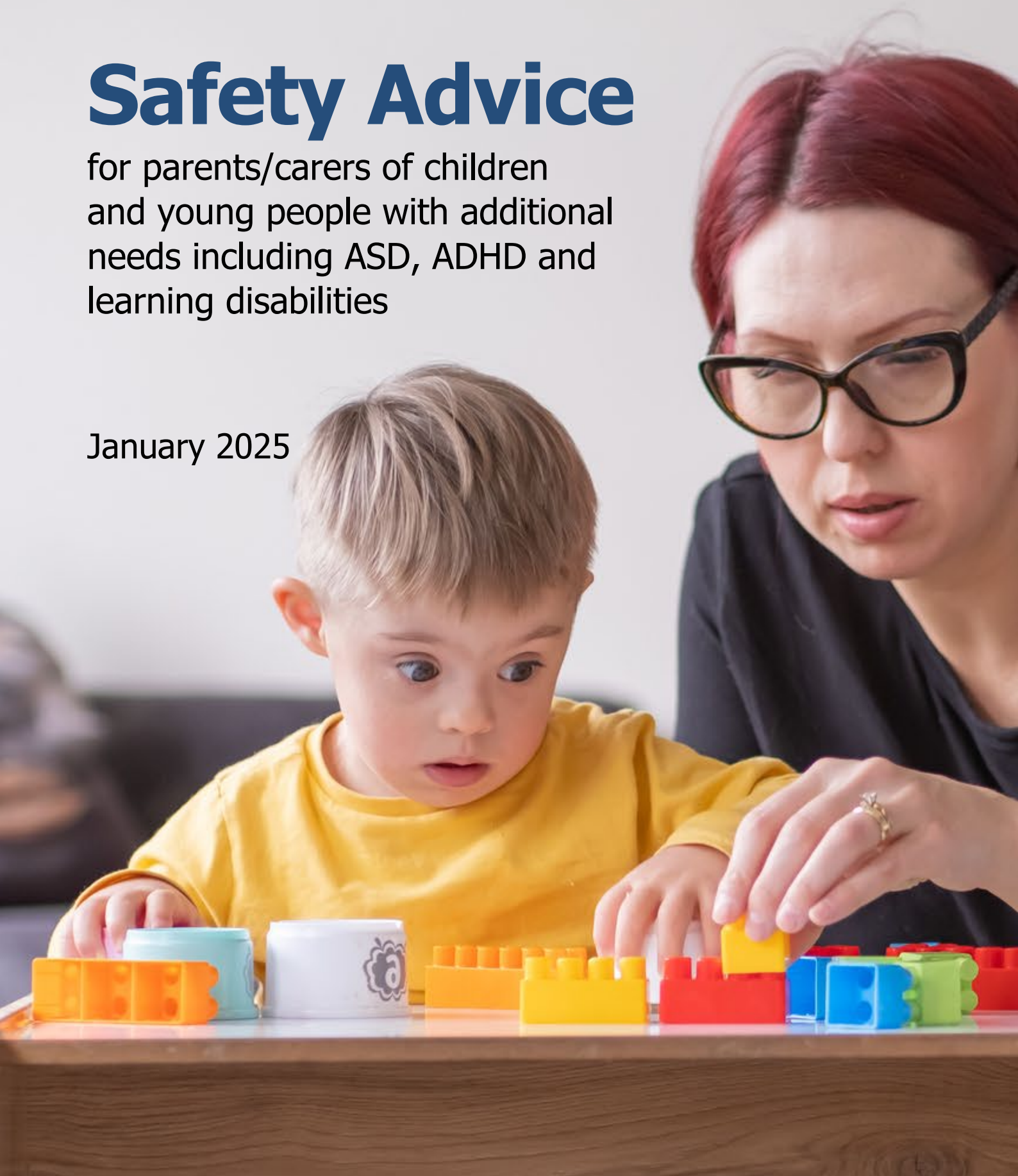


Safety Advice

for parents/carers of children
and young people with additional
needs including ASD, ADHD and
learning disabilities

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West
Northamptonshire
Council

NHS

University Hospitals
of Northamptonshire
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Basic home safety

It is important to ensure that your home is safe for all children and young people. Not only will this benefit the whole family but will also help you to identify what else you may need to do for a child with additional needs.

Guidelines & Useful Resources

If this is your first child, or if there is a gap after your last one, it may be worth working through a general home safety checklist.

For more ideas - you can discuss home safety issues with your health visitor if your child is under 5.

Your local Children's Centre or Family Hub may also be able to provide you with general home safety advice.

Royal Society for Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) can give general advice about home safety - [RoSPA – The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents - RoSPA](#)

Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT) provides free child safety advice to parents and carers - [Child Accident Prevention Trust | A safer world for all our children](#)

In addition to the above general advice there is more specialist information available on home safety and equipment from:

The Challenging Behaviour Foundation (CBF) is a charity for people with severe learning disabilities whose behaviour challenges - [Homepage for the Challenging Behaviour Foundation](#)

The National Autistic Society (NAS) - [National Autistic Society](#)

Children and young people with additional needs can be more at risk if there is a fire in the home. Most fires in the home can be prevented by taking some basic and common-sense precautions. Many people are not aware that the Fire & Rescue Service will come and visit your home completely free of charge at a time that suits you to carry out a free home safety check. Parents/carers can organise a home fire safety visit: [Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service – Making Northamptonshire Safer for all](#)

A family with a child or young person with additional needs may have to carry on with these general safety measures throughout childhood, so it is important to keep reminding yourself.

Often children with additional needs can require more supervision than other children and can be more at risk of accidents. Safety equipment can help to create a safer environment for your child. It doesn't replace the need for supervision especially for a child with additional needs. **Your child may still require a high level of parental/carers supervision within the home and garden despite suitable safety measures being in place.**

Parents have to manage risk all the time and they are usually the best people to decide what is right for them and their families. With this comes the responsibility of knowing that sometimes accidents will happen. It is important for everyone not just families with a child with additional needs, to keep checking their home for risks as their children grow and change.

All you can do is your best in the circumstances - making reasonable adjustments to keep your child as safe as possible.

There are some environmental risks which can be overcome, some that can be managed and some that present an ongoing challenge. Here is an example of how two families managed:

Family Story 1

Maria makes her children's lunches in the morning before they go to school. Her youngest son, Thomas is fascinated by knives. He has grabbed a knife from the kitchen worktop.

Home Safety	Knives locked in a kitchen drawer using a child proof lock, but still a problem when making lunches.
Routines	Maria prepares the packed lunches the previous evening.
Around the house	As Thomas grows older stronger locks may be needed for the knife drawers.

Training	Maria is currently working on toilet training with Thomas. When this is finished she will target safety awareness around knives and seek professional advice.
Managing risk	Maria tried the above strategies for a couple of weeks and was satisfied that there was now a low risk. May review if Thomas works out how to open the child proof lock.
Outside advice	Not needed at moment but is aware where advice can be sought.

Family Story 2

Emily is vulnerable if she goes out of the house alone, she lives with her Mother, Father and has two older siblings. Emily has left the house several times when her sister has left the front door unlocked when going to play out with friends.

Home Safety	Front door keys are kept in a safe secure place, but still a problem when older sibling uses independently.
Routines	Family decide that they will use the back door as their main door and keep the front door permanently locked with the keys kept in a safe secure place. There is a gated rear garden which is more secure than the front garden, The back door keys will also remain in a secure place.
Around the house	A visual prompt is placed beside the door to remind family members to lock it.
Training	Family agreed to target this problem and use a system of rewards for Emily when she stays in the house.
Managing risk	The new routine worked well for several weeks so family are continuing to follow it.
Outside advice	Not needed at the moment.



Arranging your home

If you have taken all the usual safety measures, and if you have adjusted your family's routines, then you should now be able to notice if there is anything in your home that makes your child more stressed, and so more unsafe.

Low Arousal Environment

Many children behave differently in an environment that is "low arousal". This means that there isn't too much sensory stimulation.

- Plan your child's routine and make sure that where they go next is clear of clutter
- Try to keep the rooms that your child uses most tidy and uncluttered. Large plastic stacking boxes are handy for putting toys away quickly. Many children are calmer if they are only focusing on one activity at a time
- Consider the use of visual supports to help your child understand routines and to help your child remember what they are expected to do in different places
- Consider décor, gentle pastel colours can be calming
- Consider lighting, fluorescent lighting can be very harsh
- Have only one noise at a time (e.g. turn TV off/volume down when people are talking) and have some quiet times
- Try to arrange some "chill out spaces" where your child can take themselves for time out. This could be their bedroom, a small tent or a corner of a room. Comfy furnishings such as a bean bag, large cushions and blankets can make this a cosy space. Choose fabrics that your child likes the feel of.



Limiting access

Because children and young people with additional needs may have little awareness of danger, they may abscond from home or access rooms where they could be in danger e.g. the kitchen and bathroom.

You may need to limit where your child can go for safety reasons or to protect others and property. You may need to keep your child from accessing exits.

Only do this if you have a good reason, and there is a clear risk. Check on your child regularly and do not leave your child alone in a room for longer than necessary.

Your child may still require a high level of supervision despite safety measures being in place.

General Considerations:

- Before fitting any extra locks to windows or doors, fire safety should be taken into consideration. Organise a home fire safety visit by contacting Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Services: [Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service – Making Northamptonshire Safer for all](#)
- If doors are locked with keys, it is important that keys can be found quickly in the event of a fire.

Examples of Possible Solutions:

Safety gates prevent children from getting into certain rooms and moving from one floor of the house to another.

- Different types of safety gates with a variety of fixing methods are available from standard retailers. Standard safety gates tend not to be suitable for children aged over approximately 2 years. As your child grows you may need to fit higher

and stronger gates. Other parents have found that safety gates designed for pets are more robust and suitable for older children.

If you are using a gate to stop a larger child who can climb the stairs, it may be safer to fit the gate at the bottom of the stairs.

If you use one at the top of the stairs, it may be safer to use a wall fixing model rather than pressure fixed design. If in doubt external advice should be sought.

- Keep front and back doors of your property locked if necessary and ensure keys are not accessible to the child if they can use them to open a door.
- Keys can be kept safe on a lanyard round your neck, in an internal key safe or cash tin or even on a high ledge if your child can't access this. Ensure everyone in the family is aware of the location of your keys in the event of an emergency.
- Even a simple door chain can sometimes be enough of a deterrent.
- Many parents use a "cylinder lock" which uses a star shaped key to operate the bolt. If you lose the key, you do not have to replace the lock and everyone else in the house can carry a key or one can be kept in a safe place.
- Products can be purchased that can be attached to the door and secure it into position ("door ajar clip" and "door monkey door lock and pinch guard"). These may meet your needs and be simpler and safer than locking doors.
- Products Magnetic window alarms that can alert you to the fact that your child is wandering are also available
- Look at family routines, could you all use a back door which leads to a garden or another side entrance?
- Place something on the outside doors to remind others to keep it locked (it doesn't have to be a big sign – a decorative key is a visual reminder).
- Some parents have changed the door handle to a type that the child or young person cannot use such as doorknob that needs to be turned to open the door.
- A key guard prevents children from unlocking doors/locking themselves inside a room. The key guard can be used with most types of cylinder and household keys and is designed to not draw attention.
- Biometric locks that read fingerprints to access a room are now more readily available. They are available from Locksmiths or Security Firms.



Kitchen safety

Children and young people with additional needs may have a reduced awareness of danger and may need ongoing supervision and protection from harmful substances and hazardous items.

You may need to alter cupboard and door locks and handles of doors and cupboards in the kitchen for your child's safety.

General Considerations:

- Lock away dangerous items in the kitchen, for example knives, medicines and dangerous liquids.
- Store dangerous items out of reach of children.
- Electric cookers or induction hobs are safer than gas cookers.
- Consider standard child proof safety cupboard/drawer locks.

Examples of Possible Solutions:

- A stair gate or stable door at the kitchen door may be a good option so that you can keep an eye on your child whilst working in the kitchen.
- Products can be purchased that can be attached to the door and secure it into position ("door ajar clip" and "door monkey door lock and pinch guard"). These may meet your needs and be simpler and safer than locking doors.

- Magnetic locks are child proof locks for cupboards and drawers. They are secure and concealed and impossible for the child to open without the magnetic key. They can be useful if your child is likely to fiddle with a standard child proof lock.
- Appliance locks prevent children from opening appliances such as the fridge, microwave and oven.
- Cooker top guards prevent access to the cooker hob and are often useful for smaller children.
- Oven guards keep your child from touching hot oven doors.
- Lockable covers are available for sockets and switches.



Water safety

Children with additional needs may enjoy water but may use water inappropriately in the home, causing flooding and damage to property.

General Considerations:

- Ensure that your child has adequate access to drinking water throughout the day and make sure you don't stop your child from getting to the toilet.
- You may need to consider other family members and their access to and use of the bathroom.

Examples of Possible Solutions:

- Inflatable tap covers.
- Sure stop water switch – a control for your water supply.
- Magi plug for the sink or bath – the pressure of the water above opens the plug when the sink or bath is full.
- Sensor operated taps.
- Anti-vandalism taps
- Check that your water supply isn't too hot. Water in boilers and tanks needs to be hot to guard against diseases particularly in the kitchen however you may be able to turn the thermostat down. Check with a plumber or check your instructions.

- Thermostatic locks on taps to prevent water reaching scalding temperatures.
- A thermostatic mixing valve can control the temperature coming out of taps.
- Toilet cisterns can be boxed in behind a wall.
- Child proof lock for the toilet seat.
- Locks on the outside of bathroom doors such as slide bolt or a star lock.
- Where towel and shower curtain rails are pulled off the wall, magnetic rails are available commercially. The rail pulls apart from the brackets under pressure and can be easily reattached.
- Remove plugs and only use when needed and under close supervision. This will not stop the water being wasted but will prevent flooding.
- Push taps (like they have in service stations). Children usually become bored with these.



Electrical safety

Children with additional needs may have a reduced sense of awareness of danger. If electrical appliances or sockets are tampered with there is a risk to your child's health and safety.

General Considerations:

- Any electrical work should only be undertaken by a qualified competent electrician.
- National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting (NICEIC) maintains a register of qualified competent electricians - [NICEIC Home](#)

Examples of Possible Solutions:

Lighting

- Stainless steel light switches with lockable fronts are available from most electrical suppliers. Stainless steel is more robust than plastic. Covers are also available for a plug socket.
- Dome type ceiling light covers instead of pendant lights are safer.
- Light switches can be located outside of the room, if necessary

Electric Sockets

- Child proof plug in socket covers are readily available.
- Plastic covers that fit over the entire electrical fittings of a light switch or socket are available. It is then impossible to switch on the light or the electrical appliance without opening the cover.
- Plug sockets can be recessed into the wall by a certified electrician.

Electrical Products

- TV screen protectors can protect your TV from sticky fingers, crayons and damage from items being thrown at it.
- Strong lockable TV cabinets with unbreakable front panels can house your TV and other units to keep the buttons, wires and electrics safely away from inquisitive children. Some can also be wall mounted.
- Children may be fascinated or distracted by trailing cables. A cable tidy is a protective sheath that is designed to encase wires and cables. This prevents children from being able to chew or pull on wires
- A cable bridge is a range of ridged plastic cable bridges that can be fixed to floors, walls or desks using screws or double-sided tape.



Window safety

Children with additional needs may have little awareness of danger and measures may be needed to protect children from cuts and injuries sustained through falls.

General Considerations:

- It's advisable to keep the area below windows clear of furniture to prevent your child from climbing.
- Before fitting any extra locks, fire safety should be taken into consideration. Organise a home fire safety visit by contacting Northants Fire Service on their website - [Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service – Making Northamptonshire Safer for all](#)

Examples of Possible Solutions:

- Glass safety film can be fitted onto windows. It strengthens glass against breakage and broken glass sticks to it.
- Windows may need to be kept locked while your child is in the room and opened for air ventilation when your child is safely away from the room.
- Windows can be locked by fitting a lockable handle with a key. The key will need to be kept in safe place, and stored in accordance with any fire safety advice received.
- Windows can be locked by fitting window restrictors. These will allow you to open your windows for ventilation if required whilst remaining locked. Window restrictors are available commercially and come in a variety of designs. Some are more discreet than others if your child would be tempted to tamper with one. Some are more robust than others if your child is very destructive.

- If it's not possible to lock windows, an alarm can be fitted to alert you if your child opens the window.
- For children who have a tendency to pull on curtain rails curtains can be held up with Velcro attachments. Alternative curtain rails are available that are magnetically attached so can easily be reattached.
- If it is not possible to keep curtains or blinds in place, plastic adhesive window covering to give privacy whilst letting in light is available commercially.



Gas, radiators and exposed pipes

Children with additional needs may have a reduced awareness of danger. They may be at risk injuries from heat and sharp corners. The family may be exposed to noise when radiators or pipes are hit. Pipes can be easily damaged if they are continuously banged over a period of time.

General Considerations:

- Any gas or electrical work should be undertaken by a qualified competent person.

Examples of Possible Solutions:

Radiators

- Rearrange furniture to reduce access to the radiator.
- Extra strong brackets are needed if your child pulls radiators off the wall.
- Radiators covers and guards can be purchased. These are made from padded material that protects children from the heat of the radiator and from sharp edges.
- Radiators can be boxed in with purpose made radiator covers (metal or wooden) to reduce the danger of burns and to limit the amount of noise if they are hit.
- Low surface temperature radiators are now available from many suppliers to replace standard radiators.

Water Pipes and Cisterns

- Water pipes can be boxed in by a tradesperson.
- Toilet cisterns can be concealed to prevent your child from opening and accessing the cistern water.
- This can also help to hide the toilet pipes.

Gas

- Gas isolation switches enable you to switch off the gas with a key. This stops the flow of gas through the appliance, for example the cooker or fire when not in use.
- A locking cooker valve can be fitted free. This is a simple safety device that is fitted to existing gas cooker pipework and stops the gas supply. These can be fitted free regardless of your gas supplier.

Fire Guards

- Fire guards can be fitted wherever there is an open fire. Fire place guards are simple to fit and come in a variety of sizes to fit most fireplaces.

Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms

- These provide vital early warning and extra time to escape in the event of a fire or gas leaking. Ensure that the alarms and batteries are in working order. A free home fire safety visit can be requested from Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue service. Advice will be given regarding smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.



Garden safety

Children with additional needs may have a reduced awareness of danger and may be at risk of absconding from home garden areas.

Your property may need additional or altered fencing and secure gates to enable your child to play safely in your garden, under appropriate adult supervision. The garden can be a useful outlet for extra energy.

General Considerations:

- Your child may still require a high level of supervision in the garden despite suitable safety measures being put in place.
- Positive distraction techniques e.g. sensory play equipment and toys may distract your child from climbing the fence or trying to abscond.
- Suitable door locks to external doors may resolve difficulties in order to ensure that your child is only in the garden when closely supervised.

Examples of Possible Solutions:

Fencing

- Consider having large plants along the fence to deter your child from climbing the fence.
- Large wooden boards could be fixed to the inside of the fence to cover up arris rails (horizontal fencing support rails) to reduce climbing risks.
- Fencing that generally helps to prevent children from leaving a garden needs to be around 2 metres or 6 feet high with the arris rails on the outside. This reduces the chance of your child using the rails to climb over the fence.

- Planning permission may be required for rear garden fencing higher than 2 metres or 6 feet. There are also limitations on the height allowed for front garden fencing. To find out if planning permission is needed you can contact Development control at your local council.
- Trellis on top of fencing may increase the height of the fence.
- Bamboo and wicker fencing can be used to cover up the horizontal rail that connects the wooden posts and beams on a wooden fence.

Garden Gates

- Where there is a risk that your child will leave through the garden gate ensure that the gate has a lockable form of security that your child cannot access. For example a sliding bolt with a padlock.
- You may be able to secure a large wooden board across the gate to cover the arris rails where your child may be using them to climb over the gate.



Outdoor safety

Children with challenging behaviour may have little awareness of danger and may need a form of safety restraint to protect them when outdoors.

General Considerations:

- Children with challenging behaviour should be closely supervised at all times when outdoors.
- Restrictions should be proportionate to risk.

Examples of Possible Solutions:

- Walking reins or wrist strap.
- The National Autistic Society (NAS) has some useful advice on its website in relation to road safety and awareness of danger for people on the autism spectrum - [National Autistic Society](#)
- Reins may not be sufficient for some children who could be safer using a buggy or wheelchair and the child may also have some mobility difficulties. Wheelchair services require a referral from a health professional.
- You may be able to apply for a blue badge parking concession so that your child doesn't have to walk too far. Further information on eligibility criteria and how to apply is available online at [Blue Badges | West Northamptonshire Council](#)



Getting outside advice

We do hope that you have found something in this pack to help you plan for your child and family's safety in the home.

If you are worried that the risk is too high in some areas, then you will need to get professional advice and support.

Please contact your Educational Setting, Health Visitor or School Nurse to discuss potentially starting an Early Help Assessment to support this further.

You will find more information on this by accessing [Early Help – Professionals | Northampton Children's Trust](#) or emailing CFSS@nctrust.co.uk and a Partnership Coordinator will get back to you to offer advice and guidance.

This information is issued by:
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