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Inverness Royal Academy

S1 Parents' Information Evening Report of pilot

“Bringing up the next generation is probably the most challenging job in the world, and one for which there is no training...”

Parents' Information Evening, press release

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1. Summary

An informal evening was held for parents of first-year pupils at Inverness Royal Academy on 7 September 2011. The aim was to pilot a simple format that offered key facts to parents whose child was new to secondary school and who would soon encounter the major physical, emotional and mental changes that take place in adolescence.

Nationally, the importance of taking action so that schools/pre-schools and parents/carers work well together to support children is embedded in the Curriculum for Excellence and the Early Years Framework. In the Highlands, we are developing a **Highland Parenting Support Framework** so that parents can access help with their childrearing responsibilities, at different stages and levels. This evening event focussed on professionals coming together to recognise and address the questions that parents might have about this stage in their child's life.

Three short sessions, delivered by professionals connected to the school, gave information about: 'Health & Wellbeing', Communication & Relationships' and 'Supporting Learning'. About 60 parents attended and their feedback was positive, with most scoring their sessions 8 or above, on a scale 1 (low) -10 (high). Parents showed particular interest in learning about the impact of sleep, changes in the teenage brain and how they could support homework.

This report outlines the planning process, the content of sessions, feedback of parents and session leaders and the costs of running the evening. We hope that others will use the format as a basis for their own parents' information evening.

2. Background

Work to develop a Highland framework to support parenting has been endorsed by the Joint Committee for Children and Young People. The framework aims to recommend a range of supports and interventions for parents of children pre-birth to 16 years plus, and for different levels of need.

As all parents are learning as their child grows up, each stage is new for them too. One method of supporting all parents is the provision of information about core topics that affect all children's development: emotional support, growth stages, nutrition, sleep, exercise. Alongside this journey into adolescence, parents and children must learn about the new expectations and systems in their secondary school.

While there is often more advice and support for parents of babies and very young children, less is available for them as their child grows up. The start of secondary education is recognised as an important transition point for children and it is for parents too. They may have developed contacts with parents and staff in the local primary school which may be difficult to replicate in the secondary school as their child becomes more independent and they are less likely to meet other parents with whom to share worries and triumphs. In most communities, the school is a trusted hub for families, so it seemed sensible to pilot a Highland format by working with a school's team.

Schools and parents

Schools have always worked in partnership with parents in order to support children's learning. This is articulated nationally in:

- Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006
Encouraging home/school partnership and establishing Parent Councils
- Curriculum for Excellence
Recognising the importance of the wider environment on children's learning
- Getting It Right for Every Child
Encouraging agencies to work together to help children and families
- Early Years Framework (Pre-birth – 8 years)
Promoting early intervention and community empowerment

While schools have a crucial role to play in children's lives, children's experiences at home have a strong influence on their development. The seminar proposal sought to extend the tradition of school-home partnership to explore how schools might provide a setting for developing parents understanding of child development.

This was not a completely new area of work in the Highlands: Education Psychological Services have been developing work on emotional literacy with parents; schools, health and social work services have collaborated to run parenting programmes in some areas; involvement in school activities has often helped to strengthen parents' confidence. Some schools have run sessions on 'keeping your child safe', looking at alcohol, substance misuse and digital safety.

This proposal built on these and took inspiration from the Triple P parenting seminars now running in Glasgow www.triplep-staypositive.net and the Parent Information Point Points that were piloted in England, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

3. Aim and Objectives

Aim: To pilot a parent seminar format as part of building universal support for parents.

Objectives

1. To plan and run a seminar which provides an opportunity for parents to discuss their experiences, share practical tips and gain information on child development and local resources.
2. To gauge and analyse the reaction of parents and professionals to the seminar format
3. To test the planning, funding and resources required to run a session
4. To use the findings to aid the development of the Highland Parenting Support Framework

4. What happened

The Early Years Health Development Officer took responsibility for forming a working group to organise the pilot, as part of the wider work on developing the Highland parenting support framework. Early in 2011 Inverness Royal Academy was approached and agreed to explore the idea.

The costs of the pilot were met by NHS Highland and Highland Council, as part of their commitment to developing integrated children's services and parenting support. The session leaders and other working group members were able to take part as part of their wider role and to produce and photocopy materials. The school was used as the venue, at no charge.

Once the pilot was agreed, a small planning group formed to steer the work, comprising:

Acting Head Teacher	Robin Fyfe
Health Promoting Schools Officer	Fiona Bing
Integrated Services Officer	James Moore
Youth Development Officer	Naomi Hyslop
Childcare & Family Resource Officer	Linsey Webster
Health Development Officer – EY	Julia Nelson

This was later augmented with session leaders:

Public Health Nurse	Jacquie Mackintosh
Primary Mental Health Worker	Steph Holden
Educational Psychologist	Carrie Yavuz

The Acting Head Teacher agreed to keep the Parent Council informed of progress. See Appendices A&B for planning timetable and costs.

Challenges

Why spend effort and resources on an event for parents who are already interested i.e. 'the worried well'?

Professionals are committed to prioritising their time to help those families most in need, so we discussed whether energy should be diverted to an event open to all parents.

One of the principles of the Highland Parenting Support Framework is that all parents of children and young people deserve access to basic information and advice. This principle signifies respect for the responsibilities of parents, recognises the importance of children's developmental stages and has potential to reduce the stigma associated with acknowledging that every parent has to learn from scratch. Those families already known to be struggling would hopefully be in touch with services and receiving support. For those perhaps at the start of difficulties, a generalised session might encourage them to seek help from the school's support team at a later date.

Familiarising parents with the resources available was seen as an important element of the evening and we decided that those professionals who work directly with the school should lead the sessions (rather than someone with a Highland-wide role).

Deciding on the focus

The planning group's experience of working in schools and with families led to three topics being identified, led by professionals connected with the school:

- **Health and Wellbeing**

*Jacquie Mackintosh Public Health Nurse,
Steph Holden Primary Mental Health Worker*

Physical and emotional needs of young teenagers, including sleep, food, exercise

- **Communication and Relationships**

*Fiona Bing Health Promoting Schools Officer
Carrie Yavuz Educational Psychologist*

The brain changes that occur during adolescence; impact on behaviour; importance of adjusting to this and keeping calm and maintaining communication

- **Supporting Learning**

Robin Fyfe Acting Head Teacher, Inverness Royal Academy

How parents can help their child's progress in secondary school; the purpose of homework and how it is managed

Making it easy for parents to attend

From experience of traditional parents' evening and other events, it was decided that 6.30 was the earliest parents would be likely to come and 8.30pm the latest.

The invitation offered a creche and included a flier that outlined the topics and gave reassurance that people did not have to speak (see Appendices C& D).

How to keep it short but cover the topics?

As we had three topics to fit in 6.30-8.30pm, this meant little or no time for questions or discussion of individuals' issues.

We recognised this went against the grain of social learning theory, which forms the foundation of much health behaviour change work, where participants are encouraged to be active partners in learning.

In recognition of this, we produced handouts for parents to take away, along with other written information, such as the Parenting Across Scotland booklets (Appendix F). <http://www.parentingacrossscotland.org/publications/top-ten-tips.aspx>

Also, to address the lack of opportunity to ask questions, a slip was included (Appendix F) showing how to contact the school and listing some key websites.

Will parents come?

Until the week before, we were not sure what level of interest the event would attract. We originally offered two dates to parents (7 or 28 September), taking the

optimistic view that we might have to accommodate more than 60. Most parents who replied to the invitation specified the first date. The remainder were invited to swap to the 7th and most did so, giving us a potential total audience of 61.

How will we know if parents find it useful?

We thought parents would be unlikely to want to complete a questionnaire at the end of the evening. Instead, at the end of each session, parents were asked to note on post-its:

'The most helpful thing was...' and to score it from 1-10 (low-high).

This was a simple method but broadly captured parents' reactions.

The evening

Four stalls were set up in the main foyer (promoting positive mental health, substance and alcohol information, Highland Council catering service promoting school lunches) and local couples relationship counsellor Colm Black (XplusY). The Catering Service provided hot and cold drinks and a spread of fresh fruit and home-baking.

Approximately 60 parents attended, roughly half of whom came in couples. We did not require parents to sign in, but are able to estimate the number from the attendance in sessions. Attendance could be considered to represent about 45 children, or just under a third of the S1 population.

Lists were on display to show parents which of the three groups they were allocated to. This dictated the order in which they visited the sessions.

Parents requiring a creche space completed a registration sheet before taking their child to the creche space.

In each classroom were: flip chart sheets, stickies, pens, pockets with handouts and some freebies from Energy Saving Scotland and the Highland Smoking Cessation programme.

Senior pupils were on hand to direct parents if required.

An interpreter was available.

IRA's Head Teacher, Alistair McKinlay, welcomed everyone: he noted the importance of parents' influence as their child's 'first teacher' and emphasised the school's desire to work closely with parents to benefit children.

Parents then went to each session in their allotted sequence, collecting information as they went.

For the Health & Wellbeing and the Communication & Relationships sessions, parents sat in a horseshoe of chairs and the leaders outlined key facts and tips. Parents received a pack of handouts.

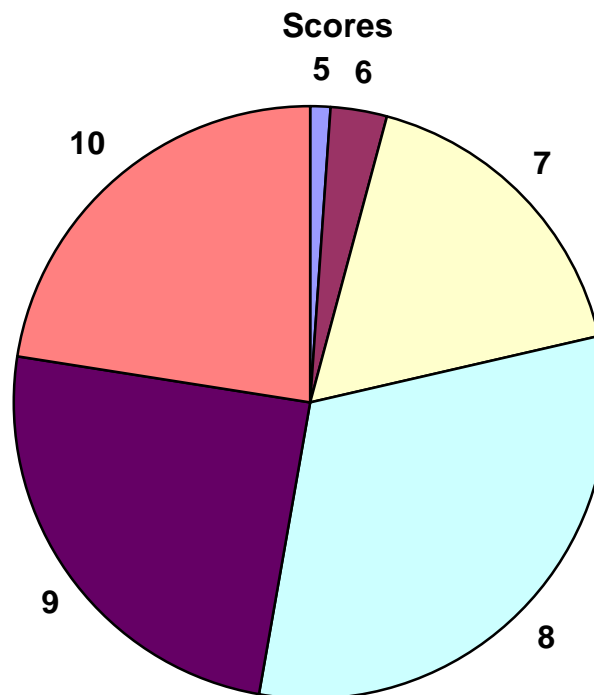
For the Supporting Learning sessions, parents sat behind desks, each with a homework diary.

Before leaving each classroom and collecting their freebies, parents were asked to leave a score and their comments.

5. Views of parents

From the post-it notes and flip charts, most parents had found the evening to be useful and gave positive comments and high scores. Over three-quarters of parents gave a score of '8', '9', or '10'.

Scores					
5	6	7	8	9	10
1%	3%	17%	31%	25%	23%



'What I found helpful...'

The most frequent comments related to:

- The **importance of sleep** for teenagers: effect on development, how much sleep is required how to avoid poor sleep

- The need for **plenty of fluids, preferably water and regular meals** not too late at night
- **Changes in brain chemistry** during teenage years and impact on behaviour
- Tips on **positive communication** and the value of staying calm as a parent
- **Homework** planning and how the homework diary is used

Four parents commented on the short time available and one suggested the 'Supporting learning' session would be useful to have again in S3 . A sample of comments is below:

Health & Wellbeing

Finding out about the scientific reasonings behind certain behaviours my child displays and they might be thirsty rather than hungry

Reinforcing key facts that as a parent you can sometimes forget

Changes affect all children! Reassuring

The importance of sleep to development

Communication and Relationships

Meeting other parents and hearing concerns

Teenage brain growth

Try to remain calm!

All beneficial, ta.

Supporting learning

Thought the homework diary was just homework and didn't realise about 'traffic lights'. Will now be spending more time each day going over this.

Knowing where to look for info re homework e.g. diary. No escape now!

Understanding the 'learning intention' and homework planner

Very helpful - have been getting a different impression of the planner from my child.

As parents met briefly in the corridor between sessions, there was lively discussion with people exchanging their experiences and their reactions to the sessions. Some parents had not met before, as their children were from various feeder primary schools.

6. Reflections

The organiser and session leaders met after the event to look over the parents' feedback and to reflect on the experience and outcomes.

All agreed that to hold an event at the start of S1 had been worthwhile as a way of connecting positively with 'new' parents and that the idea of a similar session should be recommended to other areas

The objectives (see p.4) were all met to some degree, although the time available for parents to share experiences was restricted. Overall the leaders thought that the response from parents justified the time that they had committed to the event.

Highland Council Catering Service commented:

'We felt having a stand at the information for parents night was really useful. We had a lot of interest from parents about what food and drink options were available, both at morning break and lunchtime and it is a good way of promoting our service. It also assists in getting the support of parents of secondary aged pupils which is really valuable in the fight to stop pupils heading to alternative unhealthy outlets.'

More time was needed to enable parents to discuss the topics and ask questions

This could be achieved by reducing the programme to have one session on Health & Wellbeing and one on Supporting Learning & Study Skills, running parallel. There could be a short refreshment break and the change-over period. The only drawback is that it might mean larger groups e.g. for the IRA pilot, there would have been 30 adults in each session.

The cost of approx. £300 was considered a reasonable outlay for the event

However, these costs could be reduced if necessary, for example with simpler refreshments managed by school students. But we agreed that a creche should be offered if at all possible, so as not to exclude parents who had no-one to babysit. Providing attractive snack and offering a creche also signified respect to parents.

The most important ingredient was the willingness of the school and associated practitioners to devote time to planning, promoting and running the session

The planning group met three times and the session leaders worked out their content separately. The timetable (see Appendix A) outlines the tasks involved.

An alternative method of offering advice was proposed: to hold a session in P7 on health & wellbeing/development

The more familiar primary school setting might be more likely to attract vulnerable parents. It could pave the way for a Study Skills session at the start of S1, which might also have displays/professionals available to talk about health etc.

Other suggestions:

A live performance could be an effective way of engaging parents – by acting out scenes and different ways for parents to tackle situations. If this could be devised, then other possibilities could be:

- the script used by students to tell the stories
- a recorded performance could produce a DVD

There are some similar DVD materials available: further work is required to check on this.

Thanks go to everyone involved in this pilot
for giving enthusiasm and energy to trying out a new format.

Julia Nelson, Health Development Officer, NHS Highland

Planning timetable

2011	Task
January	Inverness Royal Academy approached and agreed to be involved; suggested S1 parents as target group
February	Planning group members invited
March	Planning group meets: session aims and roles agreed
April	Planning group meets; Seminar format devised and facilitators identified; costs identified
June	Format finalised: speakers & displays confirmed Creche booked provisionally Catering booked Parents at their introductory meeting with IRA are alerted to the forthcoming Parents' Information Evening.
July	Invitation letter and flier finalised Freebies sought
August	Planning group meet to finalise plans, including how to capture feedback from parents. Session leaders work out their content and produce handouts Start of term: Invitations and fliers sent to parents for return by end August Press release issued Handouts and freebies for parents assembled
September	Attendance and creche requests confirmed Catering numbers confirmed Interpreter booked Wed 7th EVENT
End Sept.	Leaders meet to reflect on parent feedback and own experiences
October	Summary report compiled and circulated

Costs

Creche	£131
Refreshments x 82 (parents, staff, helpers and creche) Tea/coffee/juice/homebaking/fruit	£123
Total	£254*

* Does not include interpreter fee, as this was unavailable at time of writing

Plus:

- Free use of school foyer and 4 classrooms (3 sessions + creche)
- Professionals' time
- In-kind contributions: photocopying, plastic pockets, post-it pads, freebies
- School mailbag used to distribute invitations



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ALASTAIR MCKINLAY Rector

INVITATION TO: ALL PARENTS OF S1 PUPILS

Dear Parents/carers

You are warmly invited to come to our **Parents' Information Evening** on either:

Wednesday 7th or 28th September
6.30-8.30pm at Inverness Royal Academy,
Free of charge - light refreshments

Bringing up the next generation is probably the most challenging job in the world – and one for which there is no training! This is a relaxed, informal evening, where you can find out key facts and tips about this stage of your child's development and how to support them. Please see the enclosed flier for more information.

Whether this is your first time with a child in S1 or if you already have experience, I hope you can join us and look forward to meeting you. We may be able to provide childcare if necessary - please let us know on your reply slip.

Please complete the **reply slip** below and return it to the school with your child by 26 August.

Yours sincerely

Robin Fyfe, Depute Rector

----- ✂ ----- ✂ -----

I/ We will attend the Parents' Information Evening on 7th / 28th September*

* *please delete as appropriate*

Name(s): _____

Child's Name: _____ Class: _____

Tel. No. _____ or email _____

I require childcare for children aged _____

For all S1 parents/carers
*Everything you wanted to know about pre-teens,
but were afraid to ask....*

**An informal evening of short sessions for all parents/carers
of S1 pupils, looking at:**

◆ **Health & wellbeing**

Getting ready to become an adolescent...

Sleep and food: what does an S1 need?

Staying safe

◆ **Communication & Relationships**

Talking and listening

Building friendships

Managing new independence

◆ **Study skills**

What you can do to support learning in school

Dealing with homework


Who to contact

PLUS: Get to know who's who in the school team

Information displays and leaflets

How will the evening work?

When you arrive, you will be given your own programme,
showing the order of your sessions.

All you need to do is move to each session – students will be
there to guide you.  *more overleaf*

Do I have to speak?

Not if you don't want to! Discussions are very welcome and we hope parents will share their experiences if they would like to. But you can just come along and listen to the experts.

Each session lasts about 25 minutes and will cover:

◆ **Key facts**

◆ **Top Tips**

◆ **Opportunity to ask questions**

◆ **Information to take home**

Sessions will be led by the local team:

School guidance staff

Public Health Nurse

Health Promoting Schools Officer

Educational Psychologist

Primary Mental Health Worker

P R O G R A M M E

6.30 – 6.45	Doors open Time to browse information displays
6.45 – 7.00	Welcome by Robin Fyfe, Acting Head
7.00 – 8.30	Topic sessions

Free refreshments available throughout the evening

TO BOOK YOUR PLACE, PLEASE RETURN YOUR REPLY SLIP

*This event is supported by NHS Highland and Highland Council as part of developing a new local parenting framework
For more information, please contact Health Development Officer tel. 01463 711176*

PRESS RELEASE**SUPPORT AND ADVICE FOR PARENTS AT A VITAL STAGE IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT.**

Inverness Royal Academy is set to launch a pioneering new initiative to support parents in their handling of their children's development at a vital stage in the process of growing up. On Wednesday evening (September 7th) the school is to host a two hour seminar with input from a variety of health and education professionals to offer advice and information to parents of First Year pupils on parenting and child development.

Following an introduction and time to browse various information displays, school staff along with health professionals such as the Public Health Nurse, an educational psychologist and health promotion specialists will hold 25 minute sessions within their specialist fields. Areas covered will include general Health and Wellbeing which is an integral part of the Curriculum for Excellence, Communication and Relationships and Study Skills with a range of literature also available.

The initiative not only fits in with the Curriculum for Excellence but also corresponds with current Scottish Government thinking on child development and care.

"Bringing up the next generation is probably the most challenging job in the world, and one for which there is no training," said Depute Rector Robin Fyfe who is coordinating the effort. "Here we hope to start to provide some advice and support within a relaxed and informal evening where parents of our new First Year pupils can find out the key facts and tips about this stage of their child's development and how to offer support."

The seminar, for which the school also hopes to provide childcare if required, runs from 6:30 - 8:30pm on Wednesday 7th September at Inverness Royal Academy.

Further information from Robin Fyfe (01463 222884)

Health & Wellbeing

Adolescence broadly refers to young people (YP) aged 11-20 years old. Young people starting secondary school are in-between childhood and adulthood, which brings a mixture of vulnerability and potential.

Normal development and behaviour:

YP experience a rapid spurt in brain development, which effects their physical and emotional development. At this stage the frontal lobe, which is responsible for reasoning, is not fully developed. This can cause the YP to have difficulty making decisions; misinterpret facial expressions causing irrational / unexpected responses; unable to recognise others' emotions, and generally makes them self-centred. The good news is that this usually disappears by age 18.

YP increasingly seek independence in their choices and how they spend their time, i.e. going into town; choosing their own clothes and hair styles; going to parties, and trying out cigarettes and alcohol.

Some of the things that YP worry about include: bullying, friendships, "fitting-in", family, parental separation, bereavement, illness, and parental job security. At this age and stage YP are very aware of the above but this is not always matched by their understanding and logic.

YP have an increasing need for privacy, which can make parents feel shut out. Girls in particular start to depend more on their own friends for emotional support, which means that any fall-outs have a greater impact on them.

Role of parents/guardians:

The role of being a parent changes to meet the developmental stage of your child; therefore, it is important to talk, have mutual respect, and learn to compromise, i.e. "meet in the middle". Most importantly, how you behave and respond is how your child learns to model their own behaviour and responses to situations, making you, the parent, your child's most influential teacher.

In order to promote your child's need for increasing independence and help keep them safe, it is important that parents / guardians / partners take time to talk and decide on a shared "world view" around setting boundaries. For example: discipline, values, acceptable behaviour, safety, health, etc. This will help avoid conflict between parents and prevent the YP "playing" one adult against the other; in turn this will provide the YP with consistency and security.

An important part of this is being able to apologise as the adult when you are wrong, have behaved inappropriately, or been unfair. Again, this will help your child to understand that nobody is perfect and that give and take is needed by all. If you can pre-empt stages in your child's life and discuss related issues first this will help the young person to make better informed decisions and hopefully avoid difficult situations arising and / or reduce risk to them. For example: being asked to stay over at someone's house where you don't know the family; being offered cigarettes or alcohol; wanting to stay out late on school nights.

You may want to talk with your child about subjects which they find embarrassing, i.e. body changes and functions and / or sexual health and relationships. A lot of young people do not want to talk about these subjects with their parents but may find it acceptable for you to tell them things without them having to respond. You can then leave a leaflet for them to read backing up what you have said and inviting them to ask you anything at a later date.

Sleep:

Getting a good night's sleep is important for optimum physical and mental health. The amount of sleep a person needs varies; young people should aim to get 9-10 hours every night. Sleep prepares the brain to take in new information and strengthen our memories.

Hormones affect the sleep pattern and the amount of sleep needed. Melatonin is the hormone responsible for sleep. In young people this starts to be produced later at night and for a longer time making it difficult to settle before 11pm with many not getting to sleep until 1-2am; they can then easily sleep for 12 hours; they are not being lazy; this is a biological change. Unfortunately, getting up early for school becomes harder; therefore, establishing a good routine during the week makes for an easier life for YP, parents and teachers.

Things that will help include:

- Try to finish your evening meal by 7pm
- Finish exercise classes / clubs by 8pm if possible; this allows for winding down time; exercising early produces stress busting hormones and gives time for the body to metabolise adrenaline; exercising late gives you a burst of adrenaline making you feel over alert
- Avoid processed foods as much as possible as they over stimulate the brain
- Avoid caffeine / alcoholic drinks for the same reason; they also make you need to pee more, which means getting up to the toilet in the middle of the night
- Eating rice, oats and dairy products produces sleep inducing chemicals; so granny's advice about that well known bedtime drink was absolutely right but most milky drinks –apart from hot chocolate- and /or oat biscuits will do
- Finish watching TV; stop using computers, games consoles and mobile phones by 9pm. The light that comes from these devices prevents the production of melatonin which is needed to induce sleep; they also over stimulate the brain tricking the brain into thinking it is day time
- Agree bed and getting up times for during the week; this can be relaxed at the weekend but try to keep as close to the agreed times as possible as it will just make Monday mornings harder
- Your bedroom should be a relaxed comfortable place to chill out and prepare your body and mind for sleep; ideally computers, TVs etc. should be in another room
- The bedroom temperature should be neither too hot nor too cold

Poor sleep patterns can lead to chronic sleep deprivation, which can cause:

- poor concentration
- impaired memory
- impaired judgement
- irritability
- mood swings
- decreased confidence
- accidents
- affect school performance
- lack of energy
- increased risk of getting infections
- wanting to stay in bed all weekend
- during sleep up to 80% of growth hormone is released, therefore, sleep deprivation can also stunt growth

During late teens hormones are reprogrammed making it easier to get to sleep and get up earlier in the morning, i.e. an adult pattern

Nutrition:

Fluid intake

Water consumption has an immediate alerting and revitalising effect. Not drinking enough water reduces a person's mental performance and learning ability. Symptoms of mild dehydration include light-headedness, dizziness, headaches and tiredness, as well as reduced alertness and ability to concentrate.

9-13 year olds daily intake:

- girls 1.6 litres per day
- boys 1.8 litres per day

14-18 year olds daily intake:

- girls 1.8 litres per day
- boys 2.6 litres per day

Water intake should be increased in warm weather or when exercising.

Dehydration has been linked to obesity. Studies suggest that a low fluid intake makes the body want high fat foods. Dehydration can also contribute to health problems such as urine infections, bed-wetting, daytime wetting and constipation.

Drinking enough water can help to protect the body against certain chronic diseases. Individuals who maintain good hydration levels have been shown to have a reduced risk of developing the following diseases:

- breast, colorectal, and urinary tract cancer
- cardiovascular disease
- gallstones
- kidney and bladder stones

Food and Nutrition

Fruit and vegetable consumption protects against cancer and heart disease in adulthood. Studies show that YP aged 11–15 years do not eat the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables per day. Further, evidence suggests that good nutrition is just as important for our mental health.

The most commonly eaten foods in the 11 to 18-year age group are pizzas, burgers, sausages, chips and carbonated soft drinks. Over 40% consume them once or more a week. Carbonated soft drinks are consumed by 95% of YP in this age group and are a major source of added sugar in the diet. Excess intake of these foods is linked to the development of obesity.

Obesity increases the risk of developing type II diabetes, cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, liver disease and some cancers. Furthermore, up to 79% of obese adolescents remain obese in adulthood.

You should try to eat:

- 3 meals each day
- 2-3 healthy snacks, e.g. fruit, nuts and cereals
- Aim to eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, e.g. 1 glass of orange juice or ½ grapefruit for breakfast, a banana or apple for a mid morning snack, salad at lunch time and then two types of vegetable (a portion is roughly two serving spoons) and piece of fresh or baked fruit for your evening meal.

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- Eating breakfast raises our blood sugar in the morning and helps to avoid low mood, irritability and tiredness: choose high fibre, low sugar types e.g. wholegrain / bran cereals or porridge
- Bread: wholemeal and granary bread help to stabilise blood sugar levels as the energy is released more slowly than from white bread
- Rice and pasta: brown rice and wholemeal pasta; this has the same benefits as wholemeal bread
- Potatoes: best served boiled or baked; potato wedges are a lower fat alternative to chips and roast potatoes. A tasty alternative is sweet potatoes or yams
- Include protein at every meal, i.e. meat, fish, eggs, milk, cheese, nuts, beans or lentils. This helps to maintain our skin, organs, muscles and immune function
- Fish: 2-4 portions a week helps to improve concentration; oily fish is beneficial to having a healthy heart

Try **not** to:

- Miss meals, especially breakfast; this leads to low blood sugar and can cause low mood, irritability and fatigue
- Overcook green vegetables as much of the vitamin content will be lost
- Have too much sugar, i.e. sugary drinks, cakes, sweets and puddings. These are loaded with calories, have little nutritional value, and cause dental decay; they are also responsible for causing mood swings by giving a “sugar rush” which is quickly followed by a “sugar crash”
- Eat too many pies, sausage rolls, crisps and cakes, these are high in saturated fat and have little nutritional value
- Have too many caffeine drinks; limit this to 3–4 cups per day and drink other fluids such as water, fruit juice and non-stimulant herbal teas. Coffee, colas, some energy drinks and tea all contain caffeine, which can: increase blood pressure, anxiety, depressive symptoms, and sleep problems, especially if taken in large quantities and later on in the evening
- Chocolate also contains caffeine and should be limited to an occasional treat

REFERENCES

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PROMOTING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Building a positive relationship is the best way to help your child develop positive emotional wellbeing.

Show your child you are listening to them. Show them that you understand that they are trying to communicate with you (even if it is through grunting or screaming).

Both you and your child may feel overwhelmed with feelings at times. By taking care of your own emotions, you may feel better able to help your child with theirs. Regaining a sense of calm can make a seemingly unmanageable situation seem less difficult.

Try to look beyond your child's behaviour and try to think about how they may be feeling. Remember that behaviour is a form of communication.

Helping your child to calm down can help them eventually learn to calm themselves, which is an important skill for life. It can help them to tolerate frustration and cope with strong emotions in a positive way.

It is not the severity of the sanction which changes behaviour, but more often the certainty of it. Keep sanctions small but certain. The most effective boundaries are those that are age appropriate for your child.

Consistency of boundaries is important and it can be helpful to have a degree of flexibility, as there may be occasions when you need to be flexible (e.g. when your child is ill).

Avoid making decisions at the height of an argument or in anger. Talk calmly together about why new boundaries are planned and children are likely to cooperate more readily.

Children respond far more positively towards loving, predictable strategies that have clear boundaries.

Giving children a way of saving face and an opportunity to change their behaviour is important in helping them to learn that relationships are about how both people feel.

Share time with your child to develop a positive relationship.

STEPS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION (aka discussion without too much argument!)

- ❖ Use a calm expression
- ❖ Have relaxed body language
- ❖ Be aware of timing - when is a good time to talk about things?
- ❖ Show empathy by saying e.g. "I understand you are upset/angry..."
- ❖ Encourage by saying e.g. "Tell me more...."
- ❖ Reflect back by saying e.g. "So you...(repeating back last few words)"
- ❖ Affirm by saying e.g. "Thank you for telling me, I appreciate it that you can talk to me about this."

THINGS TO AVOID

(Communication blockers and escalators)

- Ordering - "You must...../Don't you....."
- Threaten - "You had better...../If you don't....."
- Preach - "When I was your age...../If I were you....."
- Judge - "You obviously don't care about....."
- Analyse - "I don't think you are really facing up to this"
- Provoke - "So what do you say to that then!?!"

DRAFT

Other handouts included in the parent packs:

From 'The Solihull Approach: The School Years' resource pack

- *Emotional and developmental milestones, 11yrs and 12-13 yrs*
- *It's not just the hormones....* Article by Vivienne Parry about adolescence

Teenage Food sheets from Great Ormond Street Hospital

Note on Inverness Royal Academy school team contacts – see below

Parenting Across Scotland: 3 booklets – see below.

Contacts for parents/carers

Concerned about your child?

There is a team that you can turn to who can offer information, advice and help:

School guidance staff

Public Health Nurse

Educational Psychologist

Primary Mental Health Worker

Health Promoting Schools Officer

Call the main school number for all enquiries:

01463 222884

email: ira@highland.gov.uk

www.invernessroyal.highland.sch.uk

see over for useful websites > >

Websites and helplines

www.parentingacrossscotland.org

You can select topics for 5-12yr olds or Teenagers. Good links to other sites

www.ltscotland.org.uk/parentzone

Information about how to support your child's learning at home and in school

www.parentchannel.tv

Parents share their experiences, plus tips from experts. You choose your age range and topics, from a wide selection of clips

www.handsonscotland.co.uk

Helpful responses to encourage young people's emotional wellbeing, with a section for parents & carers

Free from landlines, mobile charges vary:

ParentLine Scotland 0800 028 2233

Lone Parent Helpline 0808 801 0323

