

How to support a child with

EXPLORING GENDER IDENTITY & SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Useful Apps:

Unless stated otherwise, apps are not supplied by the NHS and the NHS is not liable for their use.



SAM



MoodTools



What's Up?



Fabulous - Daily
Routine Planner



In Hand



WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

- Changes in behaviour and body language.
- Appearing isolated, withdrawn and less communicative.
- Sleep difficulties.
- Appearing unmotivated and disinterested.
- Avoiding seeing friends or doing activities they ordinarily enjoy.
- Questions and curiosity around situations to gauge a reaction.
- For girls, acute distress around menstruation.
- Difficulties or distress around clothes shopping and gender expression (the way in which a person expresses their gender identity, typically through their appearance, dress, and behaviour).

Mental health and wellbeing cards

<https://hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk>

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

- Low self esteem.
- Discomfort with using biological sex pronouns.
- Discomfort around gender based school uniform.
- Distress around PE and changing in front of others.
- Questions and curiosity about hypothetical situations to gauge reactions.
- Using different terminology to describe their sexual orientation or preference.
- Frequent changes of emotion, more sensitive (e.g., irritable, upset, anxious, low).
- Thoughts or urges to self-harm.
- Substance misuse.

WHEN SHOULD I BE CONCERNED?

For some people, they know and feel certain about their gender and/or sexual orientation whereas for others it may not be as clear. For young people this is a period of significant physical, emotional and mental change and development.

It can take time to fully understand thoughts and feelings. Whether or not the young person is sure of their gender and/or sexual orientation it can cause worry and stress.

Whilst we hope that the world is becoming a more understanding and accepting place, we know that coming out or sharing thoughts and feelings about gender identity and/or sexual orientation may be a source of real worry, doubt, confusion or stress.

WHAT CAN I DO TO SUPPORT MY CHILD?

- Normalise that it's ok not to be sure or to be curious.
- Understand that coming out can cause high levels of anxiety.
- Be open to hearing a young person's thoughts, feelings and experiences and offer validation.
- Every young person's experience will be different so try not to compare to others.
- Listen, even if you are unsure of what to say it shows you are there for them.
- Allow the young person time and space to share what they feel comfortable to share.
- Respect and use a young person's choice of terminology for their personal pronouns or sexual orientation.
- Help facilitate your young person's access to safe information, advice and support if they want it.



Be kind to yourself and look after your own mental health.