

Warwickshire Child and Family Wellbeing

Part of hcrg Care Group

Warwickshire Family Health Newsletter

Supporting you and your family every step of the way

Welcome to our service

We're here to help children, young people, and families across Warwickshire stay happy and healthy. Our team brings together health visitors and school nurses to provide joined-up support from pregnancy through the school years and into young adulthood - up to age 25 for children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).

We offer advice and support on everyday topics such as feeding, sleep, emotional wellbeing, healthy lifestyles, and important changes like starting school or growing up. Whether you need guidance, reassurance, or extra support, we're here to help.

You'll see our team in schools, Family Hubs, clinics, and community settings, and sometimes through home visits. We work closely with schools, GPs, and other local services to make sure families get the right support at the right time, focusing on early help and prevention.

Our School Age Health Service supports children from starting school through secondary education. School nurses and health professionals work with families and schools to promote good health, spot concerns early, and support children's wellbeing. We also deliver health programmes such as the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) and health needs assessments to help us understand and support children's health across Warwickshire in partnership with Healthy Futures (Compass). Most importantly, we aim to help children grow into confident, healthy young people - ready to learn and thrive.

0300 247 0072

warkschildandfamily.co.uk

wcfw.contact@hcrgcaregroup.com

Family Health Newsletter

Edition: November 2026

Introduction

Welcome to the November edition of our Family Health Newsletter, created by Warwickshire's Child and Family Wellbeing service for children, young people and their families.

This newsletter is designed to keep you informed and connected with our service. Each month we'll share health advice, service updates, and insights from our team as we work together to help children and families in Warwickshire lead healthier, and happier lives.

Your feedback and ideas will help us shape future editions to ensure we're providing you with information that truly matters.



We want your feedback

Click here to help us ensure our newsletters are filled with information which is relevant to you and your family.

What's in this month's newsletter?

Communication and vision are important building blocks for children's learning, confidence, and wellbeing. In this month's newsletter, we share practical advice for supporting speech and language development in babies and young children through everyday conversations, reading, and play.

We'll also explore the importance of regular eye tests and digital eye strain, including ways to protect eye health in a screen-focused world, and provide a SEND spotlight on preparing children and young people for eye tests.

Whether you're supporting early communication skills, encouraging healthy eye habits, or helping your child feel confident about an eye test, you'll find useful tips and information for the whole family.

0-5 Years Health Focus

0-5 Years: Supporting Speech and Language Development

The early years are an important time for communication development. Babies and young children learn language through everyday interactions, play, and spending time with the people who care for them. Every conversations, songs, stories, and games help to build important speech and language skills.

Ways to Support Communication at Home

- Talk to your baby throughout the day about what you are doing, seeing, and hearing.
- Respond to your child's sounds, gestures, and attempts to communicate.
- Read together each day, even if it's just for just a few minutes.
- Sing nursery rhymes and action songs to help develop listening and language skills.
- Give your child time to respond when you ask questions or make comments.

Play Ideas to Encourage Language

Play is one of the best ways for children to learn. You could try activities like:

- **Pretend play** using toy kitchens, shops, dolls, or dressing-up clothes.
- **Construction play** with blocks and bricks while talking about size, shape, and colour.
- **Sensory play** using water, sand, playdough, or messy play activities.
- **Outdoor adventures** where children can explore, name objects, and describe what they see.
- **Singing songs and nursery rhymes**, to support listening, memory, and early language skills.

Need Further Support?
Remember, if you need any advice, you can contact a Health Visitor on our advice line - **03002470072** and our text service CHAT HEALTH on **07520615293.**

Parents and carers can play the most important role in supporting communication development.
You do not need specialist toys or activities. Small interactions throughout the day can make a big difference.

Reading Together

Reading is one of the most effective ways to support language development. Sharing books helps children learn new words, develop listening skills, and build their imagination.

When reading together you could:

- Let your child choose books that interest them.
- Talk about the pictures as well as the words and the story.
- Ask questions such as "What can you see?" or "What do you think happens next?“
- Read their favourite books again and again. Repetition helps children learn new words and concepts.
- Make reading a part of your daily routine, such as at bedtime.

Remember, storytelling, looking at picture books, and talking about images all count as reading experiences.

0-5 Years Health Focus

0-5 Years: Local Support For Speech, Language and Communication

Explore this local information for support:

Time to Talk Warwickshire

Time to Talk has information for families on what to expect at different ages and stages, advice on dummies, bilingual support and information videos. The site also lists the main organisations to contact for support. https://timetotalkwarwickshire.co.uk/families/

Warwickshire Speech and Language Pathway for Early Years

The Warwickshire Speech and Language Pathway brings together the organisations and provision available to support all children's speech, language and communication development. https://timetotalkwarwickshire.co.uk/warwickshires-speech-language-and-communication-pathway-for-early-years/

Warwickshire Libraries for Children

Warwickshire libraries provide a family-friendly environment with events for all ages including **Rhyme Time for babies and Story Stomp for pre-schoolers.** The library is free to join and has collections for all ages to encourage lifelong love of reading, including board books for babies, picture books, beginner reads, parent collections and much more.
https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/childrenunderfive

Boost your child's literacy through play with Family Learning

Family Learning is for parents, carers, and all the important adults in a child's life. Some sessions include your child, others are just for you – all designed to help you support learning at home through fun, everyday family activities.

The fun, play-based courses help you to help your child's learning, and Story Explorers, an evidence-based programme, specifically develops your child's literacy skills, including early reading, early writing and early speech, language and communication.
https://api.warwickshire.gov.uk/documents/WCCC-829341009-493

Click here to visit the Warwickshire website for more information and support.

5-11 Years Health Focus

Primary Aged Support: Looking After Your Child's Vision

Vision plays a vital role in learning, reading, sport, and everyday activities. Many vision problems can be difficult for children to recognise themselves, which is why regular eye tests are important.

Why Eye Health Matters

Around 80% of learning in school is thought to be visual. Children rely on their eyesight for reading, writing, using digital devices, and participating in classroom activities.

If a vision problem goes undetected, it can sometimes affect their learning, confidence, and enjoyment of school.

Many common vision problems can be successfully managed when identified early. These may include:

- Short-sightedness (difficulty seeing objects in the distance)
- Long-sightedness (difficulty focusing on nearby objects)
- Astigmatism (blurred or distorted vision)
- Squints (when the eyes point in different directions)
- Lazy eye (reduced vision in one eye)

Signs Your Child Might be Experiencing Difficulties

Children often adapt to changes in their vision and may not tell you that something is wrong. Look out for signs such as:

- Sitting very close to the television or digital devices
- Holding books close to their face
- Frequent headaches
- Squinting or tilting their head to see clearly
- Rubbing their eyes regularly
- Complaints of blurred or double vision
- Difficulties concentrating during visual tasks
- Reduced confidence with reading or schoolwork
- Becoming unusually tired during activities that require focused vision

If you notice any of these signs, it may be worth arranging an eye examination.

Early detection and treatment can help prevent longer-term difficulties and support children to reach their full potential.

Eye Tests for Children

Children should have regular eye tests throughout childhood, even if they appear to have no problems with their vision. Eye examinations can identify issues before they begin to affect learning or daily life.

The good news is that free NHS-funded eye tests are available for children under 16 years of age, and for young people aged under 19 who are in full-time education.



Many children use screens for learning and leisure. Encourage regular breaks and opportunities for physical activity away from devices.

11-19 Years Health Focus

Secondary Aged Support: Digital Eye Strain Awareness

Many teenagers spend several hours each day using different digital devices for education, socialising, and entertainment. Prolonged screen use can sometimes lead to digital eye strain.

What is Digital Eye Strain?

Digital eye strain describes a group of symptoms that can occur after prolonged use of digital devices such as smartphones, tablets, computers, and gaming consoles. When using screens, people tend to blink less often than normal. This can cause the eyes to become dry and tired, particularly during long periods of focused concentration.

Common symptoms of digital eye strain include:

- Tired, sore, or uncomfortable eyes
- Headaches
- Dry or watery eyes
- Blurred vision
- Difficulty focusing after looking away from a screen
- Sensitivity to bright light
- Pain or tension in the neck and shoulders due to poor posture

These symptoms are usually temporary but can become more frequent if healthy screen habits are not followed.

Follow the 20-20-20 Rule

Encourage your teenager to take a short visual break every 20 minutes by looking at something approximately 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds. This allows the eye muscles to relax after periods of close focus.

Take Regular Movement Breaks

Getting up, stretching, and moving around every hour can help reduce eye strain as well as muscle tension in the neck, shoulders, and back.

A typical day for a teenager might include using a laptop at school, checking social media on a phone, watching videos, completing homework online, gaming in the evening and watching TV. This can result in many hours of near-focus activity with little opportunity for their eyes to rest.



Looking Beyond Eye Health

Healthy screen habits can also support better sleep, concentration, physical activity, and overall wellbeing. Encouraging teenagers to take breaks and spend time outdoors. Balancing online and offline activities can help them stay healthy while continuing to enjoy the benefits of technology.

Vision can change gradually, and young people may not always realise their sight has changed. Regular check-ups help ensure any problems are identified and managed early.

SEND Spotlight: Preparing For Eye Tests

For some children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), visiting an optician can feel unfamiliar or overwhelming. Some preparation steps might help make the experience more positive and comfortable.

Why are Eye Tests Important?

Some children and young people with SEND have a higher likelihood of experiencing vision difficulties.

Sometimes behaviours that appear to be linked to concentration, learning, communication, may actually be influenced by difficulties with vision.

Early identification can help families access the support they need both at home and in educational settings.

Before the Appointment

Talking about the appointment ahead of time could help reduce uncertainty and build confidence. You could:

- Explain what an eye test is and why it is important.
- Use language suited to your child's level of understanding.
- Discuss what they might see, hear, and do during the appointment.
- Look at photos of the optician's practice online.
- Watch videos that show what happens during an eye test.
- Create or use a social story to explain the visit step by step.

Some children benefit from having a visual timetable showing each stage of the appointment, helping them understand what to expect and when the visit will finish.

Communicating Your Child's Needs

Parents and carers know their child best. Sharing information in advance can help the optician provide the best possible experience.

Consider Sensory Needs

You could consider booking appointments at quieter times of day, asking whether the practice offers longer appointments, bring noise-cancelling headphones, or taking comfort items such as fidget toys, or sensory aids.

Letting staff know in advance about any sensory sensitivities or communication needs can help them to make reasonable adjustments and understand what support they can offer.

During the Eye Test

It's good to remember that eye tests do not always involve reading letters from a chart. Opticians use a range of methods designed for children and young people of different ages and abilities.



Service and Public Health Updates

Your Health Visiting Service in Warwickshire – What to Expect

Dear Warwickshire Families,

We are making some changes to how our Health Visiting Service is delivered to ensure families can access support when they need it most.

A Team Around Your Family

Rather than being allocated a named Health Visitor, families will now be supported by a Health Visiting Team approach. This means that, while your records and care remain coordinated, you may see or speak to different members of the team depending on your needs and who is available. This approach helps us provide timely support and ensures you can access advice and guidance when you need it.







A Team Around Your Family

All families receive the five universal mandated health visiting contacts as part of the Healthy Child Programme:

- Antenatal contact (during pregnancy)
- New Birth Visit (shortly after your baby is born)
- 6-8 Week Review
- 9-12 Month Development Review
- 2-2½ Year Development Review

These contacts provide an opportunity to discuss your child's health, growth and development, as well as any support you may need as a parent or carer.

Service and Public Health Updates

Your Health Visiting Service in Warwickshire – What to Expect

Additional Support Available

Alongside these routine contacts, families can access support whenever they need it through:

ChatHealth Text Service

Text: 07520 615293

- Available for parents, carers and expectant parents.
- Messages can be sent at any time, with responses provided during working hours (Monday to Friday - 9am-5pm).

Single Point of Access (Advice Line)

Telephone: 0300 247 0072

Email: wcfw.contact@hcrgcaregroup.com

- Monday to Friday - 9am-5pm.
- Families can speak to a member of the Health Visiting Team for advice, support or to discuss concerns.

Health Visiting Clinics

- Families can also access support through local Health Visiting clinics across Warwickshire.
- Clinics offer a welcoming space to provide families with advice, reassurance, and support around health and wellbeing concerns.

For more information about clinic venues and locations, visit our LinkTree:
https://linktr.ee/WarwickshireHealthVisitingInfo







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Thank You for Reading

Thank you for taking the time to read our family health newsletter. Each month we will share health and wellbeing advice around a chosen topic to help you and your family lead healthier and safer lives.

Need support, or have questions?

If you'd like to contact our service for support for your child or for any additional information about what we can offer to your family, please use the contact details below, or visit our website: warkschildandfamily.co.uk

0300 247 0072

wcfw.contact@hcrgcaregroup.com

Health Visiting Text Messaging Service

If you need support or have questions relating to your child under 5 years old, you can contact the Health Visiting Team using our text messaging advice service: **07520615293**

Visit our LinkTrees for Further Support

Did you know that many of our Family Health and Wellbeing resources are available online through our Linktrees?

Our Linktrees bring together trusted information, local support services, advice, and useful resources all in one place, making it easier for parents and carers to find the help they need, when they need it.

https://linktr.ee/WarwickshireHealthVisitingInfo

