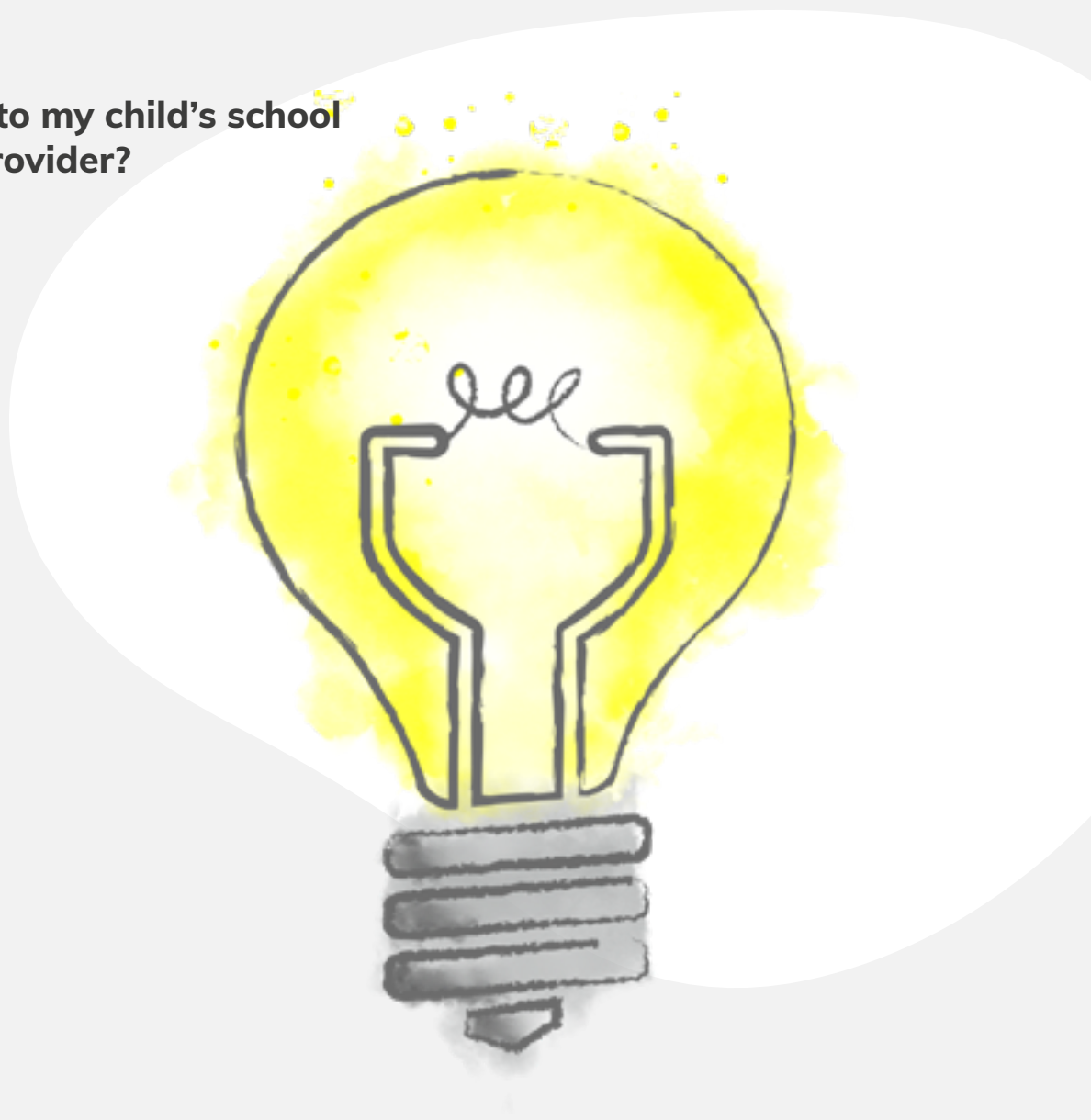


Help for parents

How do I talk to my child's school
or childcare provider?

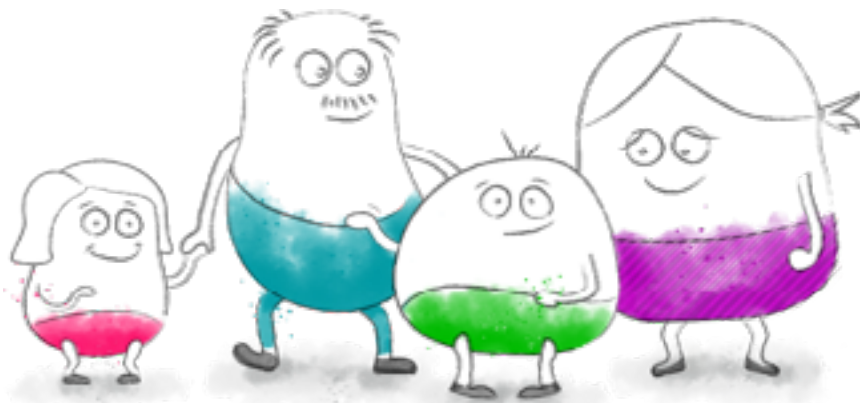


Talk to your child's school or childcare provider about how things are at home - and about the impact of mental health issues on your family

Why talking to teachers and childcare professionals about your family situation is beneficial:

Children are often very preoccupied with what is going on in their families – even if it's not obvious or if the child is not expressing it. Thoughts and worries about family members can sometimes dominate their everyday lives – also outside the home, where it can influence children's ability or desire to play and join in on activities.

It's a great comfort and support for children when one or more people know about the situation at home; this way, other adults who understand the ways your child reacts can give the child extra support. Teachers and childcare professionals are skilled in and used to assessing the needs of children, so talk to them about what the current and specific need for your child is.



How do I tell them?

Explain that your child is experiencing an unusual situation at home that you would like to share. That it is important to you that other adults in your child's life understand what is going on, so they can support your child the best way possible. And finally, that you don't want your child to bear the responsibility of having to explain things themselves.

You can use phrases or explanations like:

- Right now, I am suffering from stress (or other condition). It means that I am not currently working.
- My stress (or other condition) means that I'm not as active as I normally would be, and I tire easily (or describe the symptoms relevant to you).
- My son/daughter (or name) sometimes feels the difference in my behavior by me not being able to concentrate on play or join in activities and talks as much, or by me having to rest or retreat (describe the situation in your family).
- At home, we call my stress (or other condition): (use the words you use in the family when talking about what is affecting you. A word or phrase your child knows, e.g. that mum's/dad's thoughts are ...). Please can I ask you to use that word if you talk about the situation at home.
- My child knows I have told you. And he/she would like you to know (also say who else at school or nursery can know about the challenges you are facing)
- If anything is worrying my child or is difficult for him/her, it helps to: (describe what helps your child, maybe a hug, a break, a key word, or something else).

When do I say something?

It's never too late or irrelevant to tell your child's key contacts at school or nursery about the situation at home and how it may impact on the quality of life of your child. It's important that you feel comfortable and have enough time when explaining an important issue for you and your child. So, it's a good idea to ask for a meeting or agree on a time for a phone call, so that both you and the school or nursery have enough uninterrupted time to discuss. If you feel more comfortable sending a message, you can do that too.

Who do I contact?

Contact the person at school who you and your child know the best or have a good relationship with. It could be the class teacher or your child's assigned key contact at nursery. If you are unsure or don't have contact information on the person that you'd like to talk to, then you should be able to find a list of staff on the school or nursery website. Or ask at the school's office or secretariat. They will be able to help you.