

## EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE INFORMATION FOR EARLY YEARS PRACTITIONERS

### Helping young children with initial toilet training

Toilet training can be a stressful time for parents and carers often resulting in many failed attempts. It is important to understand that each child is unique and that they may be ready for toilet training at different ages.

Most parents usually begin to think about potty/toilet training their child when their child is two to two and a half years old. It is not always helpful to compare your child to others but one can expect an average typically developed child will be able to be dry on most days at the age of three. By four years old, we would hope that a child would generally be dry during the day and night with infrequent accidents.

#### Top tips:

- When children learn to use the toilet, they will benefit from having a clear and consistent routine. The adults should aim to keep the sequence of behaviours the same each time the child uses a toilet – if the child can anticipate the routine, there is less chance that they will resist it. It may be more helpful to try toilet training in the summer when the child is usually in far less clothing.
- The addition of visual cues will be beneficial to support the development of a routine. It is helpful to keep these pictures simple and clear. Make sure that any visual sequences/pictures are not misleading (e.g. having a child standing in the pictures if the sequence is for a little girl).
- Those around the child should look out for any behaviour that suggests the child is aware that they need to go to the toilet. Is the child restless, able to stay dry for at least one hour, holding their private parts, looking uncomfortable when wet/soiled or voicing their needs. It is important that the child has developed a sense of awareness of their own toileting needs.
- It may be easier to go straight from nappies to using a toilet in order to minimise the level of change for some children. Including a 'potty' stage may be too much for them.
- Toileting activities should always be done in the toileting area in order to build up an association for the child. For example, if a child's nappy is changed, this should be done in the toileting area so that they associate this function with the appropriate room. If a 'potty' stage has been included, it would be helpful for the child to sit on the potty in the toileting area. Remember to take the potty out with you when you and your child leave the house – this will continue to reinforce the expectation that the child is expected to use the potty for all toileting experiences.
- Creating a timetable of when the child goes to the toilet/has an accident will enable toilet training to be more successful. In doing so, the adults will begin to anticipate the child's needs by taking them to the toilet prior to any accidents (e.g. particularly after lunch or dinner times).

- Each time the child is taken to the toilet, a picture/symbol of a toilet could be shown to them to help to reinforce what has been said and always praise them on successful attempts.
- Even if the child has wet themselves, attempt to get them to a toilet as quickly as possible so that hopefully some urine will go into the toilet – reinforcing the weeing in the toilet stage.