



# **SEND Children's Occupational Therapy Safety Booklet – advice, guidance and information for parents and carers of children and young people**



## **Contents**

Home Safety Introduction	2
Home Safety Strategies	3
Safety Gates	3
Door Security	4
Window Security	5
Wandering	6
Kitchen and Bathroom	6
Bedroom and Sleep	7
Other Safety Products	9
Garden Safety and Improvement	10
Car Safety	11
Resources	12
General Guidance	12
Other Contacts and Suppliers	12
Funding Safety Items	12

## Introduction – Home Safety

Ensuring a safe home environment for the entire family is an important consideration for parents and carers.

Children and young people should be curious and inquisitive about their surrounding environments - it supports learning, growth, and development.

However, this exploration can be very nerve wracking for those providing the care as some children and young people may not fully recognise or understand risk and danger, putting them in vulnerable situations.

Whilst there may sometimes be a need limit access to some environments and activities, it is important that all children and young people are supported to develop their understanding of risk and danger in a safe, positive, and proportionate manner.

Whilst strategies can be used and measures put in place to create a safer environment; a child or young person may still require a significant level of parental or carer supervision within the home and garden.

### **REMEMBER:**

- Often children and young people with additional needs require more supervision and can be more at risk of accidents.
- No environment is 100% free of risk, but risk can be significantly reduced with universal parenting checks and targeted adjustments to the environment.
- Risk reducing strategies should not be used instead of parental or carer supervision – children and young people should be appropriately supervised when exploring their environment.
- Please remember to re-evaluate any safety measures you put in place within your home as your child or young person grows and their needs change.

The information within this booklet is not exhaustive and is meant as a guide to assist you in making an informed parental and carer decision about safety items you choose to access/purchase.

It would be expected that appropriate commercially available solutions will have been explored before seeking specialist assessment.

If you have any questions or feel a further conversation would be helpful, please contact SEND Children's Occupational Therapy via Families First Children's Services on 01752 668000; Or email the OT Duty Desk – [OTDutyDesk@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:OTDutyDesk@plymouth.gov.uk)

## Home Safety Strategies

Any strategies put in place to reduce risk should be done so with full consideration of a child or young person's chronological age and development level (physical, psychological, and emotional).

You may need to consider limiting where your child can go within your home for safety reasons or to protect your property; This should only be considered and put into place if you have good reason.

And

The least restrictive option should always be adopted.

### REMEMBER:

- Whichever safety strategy/approach you consider, it should be used in a consistent manner.
- Set clear and consistent boundaries.
- Explain the risks & consequences of undesirable/unsafe behaviours.

The following sections cover some of the most common safety difficulties that parent's and carers may experience.

Suggestions are provided about how to overcome these and reduce the risks associated with the presenting challenges.

### Please Note:

- Where products and resources are highlighted, they are done so as suggestions offering guidance that will assist you in making an informed parental and carer decision about which safety items you choose to access/purchase.

### • Safety Gates

These can prevent children accessing certain rooms within the home.

If one is fitted to stop a child or young person who can climb the stairs moving from one floor of the house to another, then it is safer to fit a gate at the bottom of the stairs.

If a gate is used at the top of the stairs, it should be wall mounted, not pressure fixed.



**Suggestions:**

- There are several types of safety gates with a variety of fixings available.
- As a child grows, taller/higher and stronger gates may need to be considered.
- Some parents find safety gates designed for pets are the right size for older children and young people.

**Examples of Suppliers:**

- Stair gates are available from many local and online retailers including [Amazon](#) or [Argos](#).
- [REMAP](#) may be able to offer advice.
- You could also approach a local handy man or carpenter.

**IMPORTANT:**

- Remove stair gates when a child begins to attempt climbing them.
- Taller stair gates are available but may be considered as restrictive for older children – need and risk should thoroughly be considered with clarity around why a stair gate is the least restrictive and safest option.

• **Door Security**



If a child is at risk, if they choose to leave their bedroom at night, the bedroom door should not be locked.

Alternatives may include a tall/high gate or a sensor alarm on the door providing time for parents and carers to respond.

**Suggestions:**

- Door 'Ajar' Clips  
Secure doors in an 'ajar' position, still allowing the parent or carer to communicate with the child.
- Fix suitable locks to the front door  
For example, Yale locks (automatic locking) and dead locks (for extra security).
- Cylinder Locks  
Quick use with a star shaped key to operate a bolt. If you lose the key, you do not have to replace the lock, and everyone in the house can carry a key with them if necessary.
- Key Safe  
Metal box fitted near the door for safe storage of your keys.

The code can be changed as required.

- Door Viewer Holes  
Usually have a 180-degree viewing range so your child can be checked on without disturbing.
- Door/Window Sensor and Security Alarms  
An opening door/window will activate an alarm notification via Wi-Fi to a smartphone and can be managed from an app on a mobile phone/device.

**Examples of Suppliers:**

- Door security items are available from most DIY stores, and from online suppliers including [Amazon](#) or [Argos](#).
- [Key Safe](#)
- [Med Page](#)
- [Security Hardware](#)
- You could also consider speaking to a local locksmith.

- **Window Security**

Window security may be required for children at risk of opening, falling, or escaping out of windows.

If your child is at significant risk, lock the window; otherwise, alternatives may include restrictors.



**Suggestions:**

- Window restrictors (cable, UPVC)
- Sliding window locks (also suitable for doors)

**Examples of Suppliers:**

- Window security items are available from most DIY stores, and from online suppliers including [Amazon](#) or [Argos](#).
- [Handlestore Ltd](#)
- [Ironmongery Direct](#)
- You could also consider speaking to a local locksmith.

**IMPORTANT:**

- When fitting locks on windows or doors, means of escape in the event of a fire or emergency must be considered.
- Internal doors should only be locked when rooms are not occupied, or where there is a risk to the child if they go into that room (for example the kitchen).

- Keys should always be kept in an easily accessible place so that doors can be quickly opened in an emergency – Systems with bolts that can be pulled back are preferable to keys.

- **Wandering**

If your child constantly tries to wander or leave the house on their own, and is vulnerable, considering daily family routines may help.



Perhaps use a back door which leads to a garden or side entrance if deemed a safer option, and providing time for parents and carers to respond.

Consider putting something on outside doors to remind those entering and exiting your home to keep them locked.

Make sure garden walls and fences are high enough, and there are no gaps, to minimise opportunity for escape; And consider fitting bolts and/or locks on garden gates.

For children who climb, particularly on window ledges, consider rearrange furniture so nothing is near window to climb on.

**Suggestions:**

- A 'wander alarm' will help you monitor where your child or young person is.
- Pressure mats can have vibrating pagers to alert the carer.  
The mat can go in bed or on the floor, under the carpet/rug, and they can be integrated with door contact sensors.

**Examples of Suppliers:**

- [Easylink UK](#)
- [Med Page](#)

- **Kitchen and Bathroom**

**Suggestions:**

- Magnetic cupboard locks
- Tap Strap  
For use with cross head taps only
- Put lockable covers on light switches and socket covers
- Gas Locking Cooker Valve



- Fitted to existing pipework and when locked, the gas supply is turned off.
- Cooker Covers
  - Can be fitted over the individual knobs on the oven/cooker to limit access to the gas and electric
- Cooker Guard
  - To prevent reaching gas or electric hobs
- Magiplug
  - Can replace a standard plug and has a built-in sensor that detects the pressure of the water and will open to let water out when level is too high.
- Nova-flo
  - Senses water level in bath/basin and turns off taps automatically to prevent flooding.
- Fridge Locks
  - Can be used to keep children out of fridges and freezers, and other kitchen appliances such as washing machines.
  - However, a heavy-duty fridge lock may be required instead.
- Handle Flex Locks
  - Fit onto cupboard doors with dual knobs/handles.
- Toilet Lid Locks

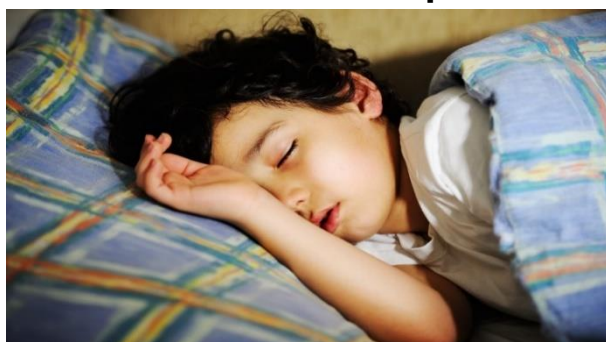
**Examples of Suppliers:**

- [Magiplug](#)
- [Nova-Flow](#)
- [Nova-Flo](#)
- Magnetic safety lock items are available from online suppliers including [Amazon](#) or [Argos](#).

**REMEMBER:**

- Supervise children in the kitchen or bathroom.
- Keep kitchen and bathroom cupboards locked that contain harmful items, such as knives and cleaning fluids.
- Consider keep doors locked if flooding is a real issue.

• **Bedroom and Sleep**



**Suggestions:**

- Alternative furniture can be purchased that is tough and durable, to replace existing, broken furniture.
- Tough, robust mattresses can be purchased which are tear and water resistant.

- Fit a durable plastic edging strip to wooden surfaces such as windowsills/chest of drawers, if they are being bitten or chewed.
- Fit strong, fireproof doors with heavy hinges to reduce risk of damage. Where possible, electric sockets should be located outside of the child's bedroom, or locked inside cupboards, enclosed in plastic socket covers or use a lockable socket.
- A television can be locked in a cupboard with a polycarbonate window.
- Use dome style lights, rather than pendant.
- Glass safety film is a self-adhesive clear film that can be fixed onto any flat glazing to make it shatterproof, helping protect your child from injury caused by broken glass if a window is smashed.
- Ordinary glass can be replaced with strengthened safety glass.
- Choose a floor covering that has the appeal of a textile floor with the practical and hygienic advantages of other resilient floorings.
- Velcro tab top curtains are an option to ensure the curtains release easily from the pole if they are tugged or pulled.  
This means that the pole is more likely to remain intact and reduce damage to the wall, and they can also be easily rehung without any damage.
- Install curtain rails pull apart under pressure and can be re-attached easily.
- Radiators can be boxed in to eliminate danger of burns and injury, replaced with low surface temperature radiators, or install underfloor heating as an alternative.
- Use washable paint, not wallpaper so it cannot be picked at/damaged. Consider magnetic paint or blackboard paint on one wall to enable a child or young person to personalise their own space.
- If a child or young person regularly licks or picks at walls, use non-toxic paint.
- Children and young people can be attracted to holes or rough patches in walls, so try to keep them smooth and undamaged.
- Use comfortable but adaptable nightclothes with a back zip; to make it more difficult for a child or young person to remove them - this may prevent or reduce smearing/soiling.

**Examples of Suppliers:**

- [Colourways](#)
- [Fledglings](#)
- [Flotex Flooring](#)
- [Sureguard Window Films](#)
- [Tough Furniture](#)

- **Other Safety Products**

Further assessment and advice by a medical professional should be sought to address behaviours and emotional need to ensure that any equipment being used is appropriate.

**Suggestions:**



- Protective headwear for children who display self-injurious behaviour such as head banging, may be effective at reducing injury.

**Example of Supplier:**

- [Ribcap](#)

## Garden Safety and Improvements

Some general information about making a garden and outdoor space safe for children and young people can be found at [child accident prevention trust](#)  
And the [Sensory Trust](#) gives ideas and advice around creating a sensory garden and outdoor space.

### Fences – useful information

How high can a fence be?

- Rear garden fences can be up to two metres without planning permission.
- Front gardens the maximum permitted height is one metre without planning permission.

More information regarding home building adjustments can be found at [Homebuilding & Renovating](#)

#### **Please Note:**

- We are unable to help with fencing repairs.
- Once a fence has been installed, it is the family's responsibility to arrange and pay for any damage.

### Garden Improvements

Grants may be available to contribute towards the cost of garden improvements or to support safe access to the garden and outdoor space.

- [Disabled Facilities Grant](#)

A grant from your council if a child or young person has a disability and changes to the home environment are required to support access and management of daily living activities safely and appropriately (where other appropriate minor adaptations and equipment have been tried).

Application will require an assessment of need by Plymouth City Council's SEND Children's Occupational Therapy to determine eligibility.

- [Family Fund](#)
- [Gardening with Disabilities Trust](#)
- [WellChild](#)

## Car Safety



We are unable to assess for or provide car seats/travel safety items; However, many stores and online suppliers have a good range of accessible travel safety items.

The [In Car Safety Centre](#) provides further advice which will assist you in making an informed parental and carer decision about car seat and travel safety items you choose to access/purchase.

If you have a Motability vehicle, you should request that a specialist car seat for your child is included.

There are several precautions you can take to improve safety in the car.

### Suggestions:

- Seatbelt safety clips and buckle guards fit over the seatbelt buckle to prevent it being undone.
- A variety of car safety harnesses are available to meet the differing needs of passengers and to fit a range of vehicles.
- Unisafety Easy Travel Magnet Harness have a special magnetic key which is required to release the button. Examples of suppliers:
- Crelling Harnesses
- Plastic Engineering Solutions
- Windmill Special Needs

If further information is required regarding car safety, please view the specific Travel and Car Safety information booklet.

## Resources

### General Guidance

General guidance and useful resources can be found at:

- [RoSPA – The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents](#)
- [Child Accident Prevention Trust](#)

In addition to the above, there is more specialist information available on home safety and equipment from:

- [The Challenging Behaviour Foundation](#)
- [National Autistic Society](#)
- Fire Safety – [UK Fire Service Resources](#)

### Other Contacts and Suppliers

- [Bladder and Bowel UK](#)  
Offers advice and information on all bladder and bowel issues in children and young people including those with additional needs. They have a range of information and resources that will help parents, carers, professionals, and schools cope with incontinence in children and young people.
- [Enuresis Resource and Information Centre \(ERIC\)](#)  
A helpline is available on day and nighttime wetting and soiling. They also sell bedwetting protection and alarms.
- [Fledglings](#)  
A charity who seeks out appropriate and fair value items to help parents and carers looking after children with a disability. They collaborate with parents to identify products. Profits from sales are used to fund research and development of new products.

### Funding Safety Items

It is usually the case that home safety items will be accessed and funded by parents and carers, even if recommended via a professional.

However, you may be able to access additional financial assistance via allowances and charities.

The links below are not exhaustive, but will provide some initial guidance:

- [Disability Living Allowance \(DLA\)](#)  
If you are looking after a child with a health condition or disability who is under the age of 16 years, they may be entitled to DLA.  
This can help towards the extra costs of bringing up a disabled child.
- [Family Fund Trust](#)  
Is a charity that provides grants to families raising disabled and seriously ill children aged 17 years and under.
- [Charities in Plymouth](#)
- [Caudwell Children](#)  
They help disabled and autistic children by providing diagnosis, equipment,

services and support to help them lead a full and active life.

- [Cerebra](#)  
Offer a range of free services that enrich the lives of children with cognitive conditions and support their families and carers.
- [Contact](#)  
Charity for families with disabled children, offering an information and advice service on practical matters.
- [Newlife](#)  
Provide specialist equipment for disabled children.
- [REMAP](#)  
Design and custom-make equipment to help people with disabilities live more independently.
- [turn2us](#)  
A national charity providing practical help to people who are struggling financially.
- [Disability Grants Search](#)  
Useful website to search for disability grants.