

## Understanding Aspects of SEND: Childhood Psychosis

**1. What is Childhood Psychosis?** Childhood psychosis is a rare but serious mental health condition where a child experiences a disconnection from reality. This may involve hallucinations, delusions or disorganised thinking and behaviour. Psychosis in children can be a symptom of a broader condition, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or severe depression, or it may occur independently. The exact cause is complex, involving genetic, neurological and environmental factors. Early intervention is critical to managing the condition and improving outcomes.

**2. How can Childhood Psychosis present?** Childhood psychosis can manifest in various ways depending on the child's age, environment and underlying causes. Common signs include:

- **Hallucinations:** Seeing, hearing or feeling things that are not present (e.g. hearing voices).
- **Delusions:** Strong, false beliefs that are resistant to reasoning (e.g. believing they have special powers).
- **Disorganised speech:** Difficulty staying on topic, making sense or following a logical flow in conversations.
- **Erratic behaviour:** Sudden changes in mood, unusual actions or difficulties with daily functioning.
- **Emotional withdrawal:** Reduced interest in social interactions, play or activities they once enjoyed.
- **Cognitive difficulties:** Decline in academic performance, memory issues or trouble concentrating.
- **Paranoia:** Excessive distrust or fear of others, often based on delusional thinking.
- **Physical symptoms:** Changes in sleep, appetite or energy levels often accompany psychosis.

**3. Ways to help manage Childhood Psychosis** Managing childhood psychosis involves early diagnosis, medical support and a multidisciplinary approach. Key strategies include:

- **Seek professional help promptly:** Consult a paediatric psychiatrist or psychologist for an accurate diagnosis and treatment plan.

- **Medication:** Antipsychotic medications may be prescribed to help manage symptoms such as hallucinations and delusions.
- **Therapy:** Engage in individual, family or cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to help the child understand and manage their thoughts and feelings.
- **Create a structured environment:** Maintain predictable routines and minimise stress to provide a sense of stability.
- **Foster open communication:** Encourage the child to express their feelings in a safe and supportive environment.
- **Involve the family:** Work with the family to ensure all needs are understood and the condition can be managed more effectively.
- **Monitor for triggers:** Keep track of stressors or changes in the child's environment that may exacerbate symptoms.

#### 4. Where to find out more

- **Mind** ([www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)): Offers resources and guidance for managing mental health conditions, including psychosis.
- **YoungMinds** ([www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)): Provides information and support for children's mental health challenges.
- **National Institute of Mental Health** ([www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)): Shares research and treatment options for childhood psychosis and related conditions.
- Book recommendation:  
[Helping Kids in Crisis by Fadi Haddad](#)