

## **HEARING VOICES AND SEEING THINGS**

Children often see or hear things that may upset or scare them. For example, the wind making a window creak or a shadow on the wall.

Children could have an imaginary friend whom they speak to and insist is involved with day to day things in the home. This is normal development in children and part of growing up.

### **HALLUCINATIONS:**

Hallucinations are where someone sees, hears, smells, tastes or feels things that don't exist outside of their mind.

The most common of these is hearing voices. The voices can be critical, complimentary or neutral.

Hallucinations can make you feel paranoid, nervous and frightened. They can give commands which could be potentially harmful. They can even engage you in conversation.

Hallucinations can be caused by many different things and they can be part of a child's normal development.

Some things that can cause hallucinations are:

- High fever
- Drug and substance misuse
- Sleep issues e.g. narcolepsy
- Epilepsy
- Trauma experiences e.g. abuse
- Bereavement
- Neurological conditions
- Severe emotional stress
- Adverse drug reactions
- Mental Illness

The content of the hallucination may help us understand what type of illness the child is suffering.

It is important that causes of hallucinations are explored in order to determine the correct treatment required for the child or young person. For example, scans or tests to rule out physical causes.

Children under the age of 12 who report hearing voices have generally find that these voices fade out and disappear as they get older.

Anyone hearing voices persistently after this age may have an underlying mental health issue.

Traumatic life experiences are a significant trigger for children to begin hearing voices or experiencing other types of hallucinations.

### **PSYCHOSIS**

Sometimes hearing and seeing things is referred to as psychosis and is a symptom of a mental illness.

Psychosis can be treated very effectively with medication. It is important that other factors e.g. physical illness are excluded when considering a diagnosis of a mental illness.

### **WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU ARE WORRIED?**

If you are worried about the symptoms you or someone you know is experiencing. Your GP can give you advice and signpost you to services including CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services).