

## You can help your child to build their independence

Give your child enough time to do things for themselves. If it takes for your child 10 minutes to brush their own hair, start your morning 10 minutes earlier.

Use routines. Be clear in what the routine is for the day or activity. Explain what is expected of them before they start so they understand what they need to do.

Allow your child to practice skills. This could be carrying a tray, pouring a drink, opening packets, asking for help.

Forget perfection! If the wellies are on the wrong feet, that is okay...they will soon realise when they walk about. Help your child to recognise their things - lunch box, coat, wellies, their own belongings.

Have clothing, shoes, book bag where your child can access these independently. You could have clothing in the bedroom, shoes and book bags near front door.

Try and get clothes which are easier for them to do themselves – Velcro, elasticated waists.

Let your child choose what they wear and dress themselves.

The outfits may be a little odd sometimes, but that is okay.

Let your child help you – baking, folding washing, gardening, washing the car, shopping, for example.

Mealtimes – encourage your child to use a knife, fork and spoon at mealtimes. Let them pour their drink.

Try to be consistent, calm, understanding and kind when speaking to your child.



*“It is not what you do for your children, but what you have taught them to do for themselves, that will make them successful human beings”*

- Ann Lauders

## Support and Information

**Cumbria's Family Information Directory**  
[localoffer.cumbria.gov.uk/kb5/cumbria/fsd/home.page](http://localoffer.cumbria.gov.uk/kb5/cumbria/fsd/home.page)

### Child and Family Support Service:

#### Family action:

Carlisle - 01228 223417

Allerdale - 01900 66946

Copeland (including Millom) – 01946 64600

Barrow – 01229 821855

#### Barnardos, Eden

01768 899901

#### Action for Children, South Lakes

01539 734456

#### National Trust

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/days-out](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/days-out)

#### Active Cumbria

[www.activecumbria.org/behealthybeactive/activestart/](http://www.activecumbria.org/behealthybeactive/activestart/)

#### Home Learning and Time Together at Home

[www.cumbria.gov.uk/childrensservices/childrenandfamilies/cfis/homelearning/homelearningandtimetogetherhomepage/homelearningandtimetogetherhomepage.asp](http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/childrensservices/childrenandfamilies/cfis/homelearning/homelearningandtimetogetherhomepage/homelearningandtimetogetherhomepage.asp)

*“The greatest gifts you can give your children are the roots of responsibility and the wings of independence”* - Denis Wadley

# Steps to Independence



Giving our youngest children the gift of independence lets them know that we value, believe and love them, so that they grow up knowing that they can do anything they put their mind to.

Not only does this help our children grow and develop, but it will help them to be confident communicators, curious and resilient explorers, and creative thinkers with a positive can do approach.

Young children are curious to explore how things work and develop the resilience to keep trying. When given the opportunity to try themselves young children can often surprise us with what they can do on their own.

One of the most important things parents can do is to support their child to help them grow and be independent. Here are a few ideas you and your child can do together.



## Chat Together

Notice what your child is up to and chat to them, commenting on what they are doing. What are they seeing? What are they tasting? What are they touching? What are they feeling? What are they hearing? What can they smell?

Keep rules short, simple and consistent for all the family/house. Children love having an adult to play with. Enjoy some playful time together.

Name the feeling - Talk to your child about their positive and negative feelings and emotions. Explain how this is normal and how we all feel sad or angry sometimes.

Talk about these feelings explaining how hard it can feel but how this is normal and will get better.

Use specific praise and encouragement. Praise if your child managed to dress themselves (even if shoes are on the wrong way!). Praise if they shared with others or did something kind, if they managed their emotions. These are all important things for us to encourage.

Notice what interests your child. Chat and join them as they explore around them. To them filling an empty box with spoons can be as exciting as an expensive toy.

## Share Together

Share your day with your child. Slow down to hang out the washing, go shopping or do the washing up together. Your child may enjoy joining in. Things may take longer or need to be done in a different way to keep your child safe and interested.

Share books and chat about your favourite TV characters. Share songs and dance to your family's favourite tunes.

Behind every behaviour is a feeling. Try to understand the feeling behind the behaviour. You can then help them to find other ways to express that feeling together.

Making mistakes is okay. Turn these into a learning opportunities. Share your mistakes so your children understand that adults make them too and learn from them.

Have a daily bedtime and settling routine; bath, teeth, story, last minute wee, sleep!

Eating together, social time as a family, talking, playing games.

Tell them what you like about them

Let them join in with small household tasks, but let them do it by themselves!

## Play Together

Children love having an adult to play with. Enjoy some time together to play, be silly, laugh, mess around.

Encourage activities that stimulate your child's social and emotional skills in the wider world. Make sure your children have the time and the freedom to play and explore, indoors and outdoors.

Have fun - get outdoors. What does your child enjoy doing outside?

Family walks, play games, jump in puddles, skipping, make a den, get muddy, chase, look at the world around you, touch, feel, smelling, exploring – you don't need to be an expert, just have fun and look at what's around you – make it up. Help them form relationships with other children. Having a friend to play with is always fun and helps them to share, communicate and have fun!

Play can be exhausting. Sleep helps us understand what we have seen, heard and felt during the day and make sense of the world.

Getting the right amount of sleep for all ages is very important. It helps keep us physically and emotionally healthy. A child between 1 and 5 years old needs 12 -14 hours sleep per day.

