

Manchester's

# Little Book of Great Parenting

**Essential advice and tips from  
Manchester families with additional  
comments from leading professionals.**

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*The word 'parents' includes anyone in a parenting role, including mothers, fathers, carers, grandparents and foster carers.*

# Introduction

Manchester's annual 100 Days Challenge aims to make the city a great place to live. This year's campaign focused on parents and parenting – because we know good parenting gives children a great start in life and helps them grow up to be responsible members of the community.

We asked dads, mums, carers, grandparents, children and other residents to send their tips for great parenting – perhaps the best advice they'd ever received, or their own tried and tested tips and ideas.

We received hundreds of great ideas, and you can find a selection of the best suggestions and most frequent themes in this book.

Bringing up children can be the best job in the world – and also one of the hardest. If you are one of the thousands of Manchester parents and carers who work so hard to give their children a good start in life, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for everything you do and wish you and your children a happy future.

*Councillor Sheila Newman  
Lead Member for Children's Services*

# Editor's note

Perhaps not surprisingly, similar themes came up over and over again in our competition. What did surprise us was how closely those themes echo the latest research into positive parenting. A growing body of international evidence tells us that effective parenting is loving, firm and consistent, and that parents are the single biggest influence on their child's health, happiness, education and behaviour.

These ideas work. They are tested by Manchester parents and backed up by professional knowledge. Perhaps they are mostly common sense – but these simple ideas can make a big difference to children's lives.

There's no such thing as a perfect parent. Every family is different, and we all have to find the approach that works for us. But Manchester parents and international experts seem to agree – these ideas add up to a great start in life.

*Deborah Cox*  
*Editor*

# Ten great tips from Manchester parents:

- 1 Give your child love and affection**
- 2 Give your child time, attention and praise**
- 3 Give your child clear limits and teach them right from wrong**
- 4 Make time for play**
- 5 Get involved in your child's education**
- 6 Get children used to healthy food from the start**
- 7 Read with your child**
- 8 Try to be the kind of person you want your child to be**
- 9 Get outdoors and get moving**
- 10 Look after yourself**

# Tip one: Give your child love and affection

Perhaps not surprisingly, love, affection, cuddles and hugs were mentioned in a huge number of entries, making this our most popular tip. As one mum said: “I know it’s a cliché, but it’s got to be LOVE.”

“Love: this is the foundation of a child’s life.” *(FB, parent, M12)*

“What can be better for children and their parents than lots of hugs, cuddles, laughter and love?” *(AS, parent, M20)*

“Don’t shower your child in material things because at the end of the day it means nothing – support, friendship and love are the key things to being a great parent.” *(JM, resident, south Manchester)*

## What the professionals say...

**Pauline Newman,  
Director of Children's  
Services for Manchester  
City Council, says:**

“Of course this is absolutely right – children who are loved and valued get off to a great start in life. Hugs and smiles, genuine warmth and lots of positive attention will help your children build resilience and get them through the difficult times.”



# Tip two: Give your child time, attention and praise

Our second most popular tip was that what children want and need from parents more than almost anything else are our **time and attention**, and especially **praise and recognition**.

“Give your children quality time from the word go. They will grow up with confidence, believing that they can achieve anything, because they feel loved, appreciated and accepted. Compliment them often and there is no knowing how far they will go in life. The sky will be the limit!”

*(AC, parent, Gorton)*

“Always find the time to listen to your child and have time to play because in a blink of an eye they grow up. Housework is always there!”

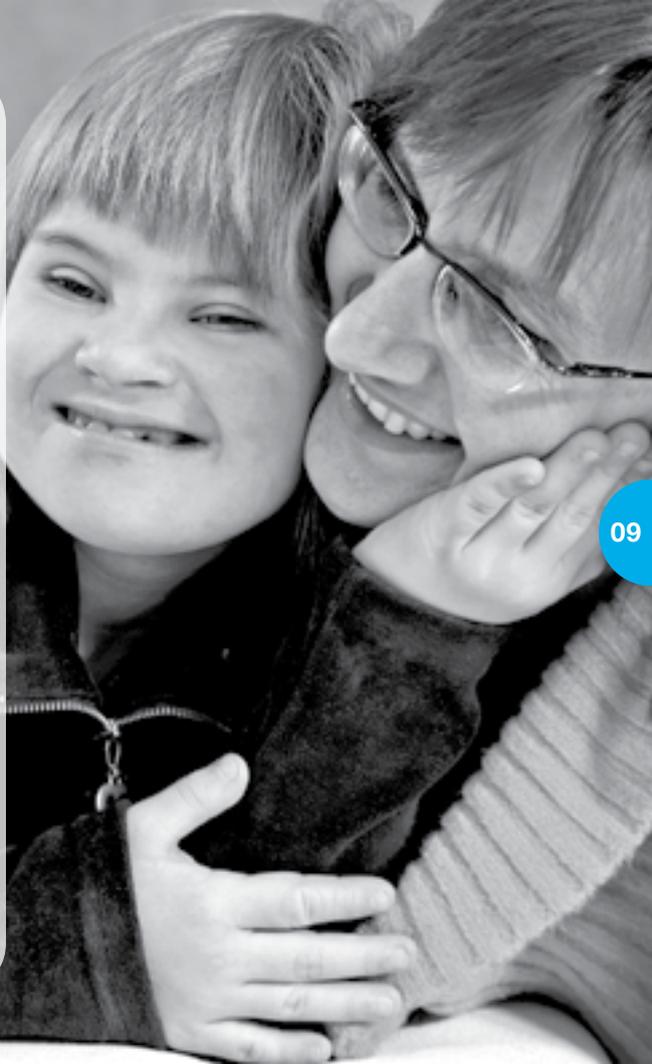
*(SB, parent, Withington)*

“Praise their efforts and good behaviour.” *(MKB, parent, Openshaw)*

## What the professionals say...

**Dave Chalk, Educational Psychologist and lead on Manchester's 'Parenting Your Teen' course, says:**

“It’s not always easy finding time to spend with your children, especially if you’re working or have a lot of family stress. But time and communication are key – for example, behaviour problems often reduce when parents give their children regular, positive attention. It’s worth making a special effort to notice and praise good behaviour – we sometimes tell parents to ‘catch them being good!’”



# Tip three: Give your child clear limits and teach them right from wrong

Both parents and children said that love without discipline isn't enough. The message came through loud and clear – children thrive on firm boundaries and consistent, loving approaches to discipline.

“Boundaries and discipline is one essential way to love and bring up well-rounded children who respect authority and themselves.”

*(JE, resident, Longsight)*

“There should be rules and good discipline in the house.”

*(AA, under 18, Cheetham Hill)*

“Lots of loving, discipline when they need it – don't hit them, talk to them like you mean it.” *(Mrs W, grandparent, south Manchester)*

“Love, firm discipline and clear standards – they always know what they can and can't do.” *(MA, parent, Whalley Range)*



## What the professionals say...

**Steve Mycio, Deputy Chief Executive of Manchester City Council, says:**

“Parents who set clear, consistent boundaries for their children, and ensure that bad behaviour is dealt with quickly and effectively, help children grow up into responsible adults who have self-respect and respect the rights of others.”

# Tip four: Make time for play

**Both parents and children said it was important to make time for play and fun times together.**

“Learn to play with your child. Play so they learn and love.”

*(MF, parent, New Moston)*

“Parents need to have fun playing with their kid.”

*(IH, pupil, Temple Primary)*

“Spend days out together, play with them, come on to their level.”

*(AK, parent, Whalley Range)*

“I play with them lots of the time so they know they are loved and wanted.” *(CS, parent, Moss Side)*



## What the professionals say...

**Caroline White, Consultant Psychologist at Booth Hall Children's Hospital, says:**

“If I could just give parents one message, it would be **Play with your child**, every day for just ten minutes if possible. This is a great way to give children attention and if you invest your time in play, they're less likely to seek your attention at other times—like when you're busy! When they're small, get down on the floor with them and let them be in charge. As they get older, keep trying to find things you can enjoy together, whether it's cooking, computer games, or even going shopping.”

# **Tip five:** Get involved in your child's education

Many people said that education is one of the most important things a parent can do for their child – from helping them learn when they are toddlers, to supporting them through school and exams.

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“Provide creative, social and physical activities from an early age to help promote and improve learning and development.” *(NA, parent, Cheetham)*

“Send them to school. If they can't read or write, there will be problems.” *(KT, resident, south Manchester)*

“If you can help a child study and get a good position at work, it will make her happy and realise her potential.” *(LN, parent, Cheetham Hill)*

“When we come home from school, our mum starts to ask us “how was it, what did you do?” *(SK, under 18, Cheetham)*



## What the professionals say...

**Kieran McDermott,  
Assistant Director  
(Education) for  
Manchester, says:**

“Children do best when parents are interested and involved in their education. You are really helping your child when you make sure they attend school regularly, listen to them read or make sure they do their homework. It also helps if you can get involved in the life of the school by attending parents’ evenings, assemblies and school events. If there are problems, try to work with the school to sort them out.”

# **Tip six:** Get children used to healthy food from the start

**Lots of people said that healthy food gives children a great start, improving mood and behaviour, even helping them to concentrate and learn at school.**

“Give them healthy food and let them have a small amount of junk food.”  
*(SM, under 18, Cheetham Hill)*

“Eat your vegetables, and eat meals with your children. Let them see you eating your veg.” *(HG, parent, Whalley Range)*

“Eat the main meal together as a family.” *(WB, resident, city centre)*

## What the professionals say...

**Jan Dawson, Registered Dietitian and Head of Manchester's Community Nutrition Services, says:**

“These parents are so right – a healthy diet gives children energy and helps their development. A good breakfast to start the day, fresh fruit for snacks, only having sweets and crisps occasionally, and giving water instead of fizzy drinks, all helps. And it’s great if the whole family can sit down together to eat – with the telly off!”



# Tip seven: Read with your child

**Many people stressed the importance of reading and encouraging a love of books right from the start.**

“Encourage your child to read books from when they are young.”

*(MH, under 18, Crumpsall)*

“Get family to buy books as Christmas and birthday presents, even when babies. Make sure they are accessible to the children all the time. Get them to pick the book and read with them at least once a day, no matter how busy you are. It’s the best start and introduction to reading you can do.” *(SL, parent, Gorton)*

“Join and use your local library. Supporting your child reading sets him/her for a life of opportunity. Share books with friends.”

*(RV, parent, St Margaret’s Primary)*



## What the professionals say...

**Nicky Parker, Head of Manchester Libraries, says:**

“Sharing books with your child from an early age gets them off to a great start. Children are never too young to start loving books! Your local library is free to join and has free books for under-fives so they can have their very own books from the start. And a story at bedtime makes a great end to the day, even when they’re a bit older – especially if you can find books you both enjoy.”

# Tip eight: Try to be the kind of person you want your child to be

**Both parents and children said that being a good role model was really important because children learn from what we do and who we are – as much, if not more, than what we say.**

“The parents are models for their children, so it is necessary to behave properly in front of kids because they pick things up very quickly.”

*(SD, parent, Whalley Range)*

“Children learn from copying their parents. Show them a good example and treat them with respect and reap the rewards.”

*(LM, parent, Didsbury)*

“Parents should be a good role model in front of their children and keep their child safe and secure so they don’t get affected by the bad people in the environment.” *(LK, under 18, Cheetham Hill)*

## What the professionals say...

**Marie Ettir, Family Support Worker, FWA (Family Welfare Association), says:**

“In our work with families, it’s very obvious how much children copy the important adults in their life. We all need to think hard about what our children see and what they are learning from us. As a parent, I try to be a positive model of what it is to be a competent adult in today’s society.”

# Tip nine: Get outdoors and get moving

Many parents said that getting children out of the house and doing some kind of physical activity is a daily essential, helping them burn off energy, get healthy, have fun and sleep well at night.

“Don’t leave them to their own devices – try swimming and all kinds of sport.” *(ML, grandparent, Alexandra Park)*

“On a warm day, pack a picnic and a ball and head for the local park. It’s a cheap day out and it gives you and your children time together outdoors and they love it.” *(SB, parent, Withington)*

“Swimming, riding – keep them busy. Do things together.” *(CW, parent, Hulme)*

“Take them to things they want to see. Manchester has lots of free events. Take their friends.” *(KO, parent, Chorlton)*

## What the professionals say...

**Neil Fairlamb, Head of Sports Development for Manchester Leisure, says:**

“Manchester has a great range of sporting activities for children and families – and you don’t need to be super-fit to join in. Physical activity helps you and your child get healthy and deal with stress – whether it’s a run round the park or an organised swimming or football session.”



# Tip ten: Look after yourself

**Some parents emphasised the importance of taking good care of yourself as well as your kids – children need parents who are happy and healthy too.**

“Ten minutes to yourself each day, helps to make stress go away.”  
*(TL, parent, Blackley)*

“Make time for yourself – whether it’s a walk, shopping, reading or exercise or educational class.” *(SB, parent, Withington)*

“Try and get help to resolve any unresolved problems of your own – you will see a difference in yourself and this will give you more energy to parent your kids in a positive way.” *(PW, parent, Rusholme)*

“The child needs to be brought up in a happy and stable environment. If the parents are happy, the child is too.” *(KK, parent, Crumpsall)*

## What the professionals say...

**Pam Tideswell, Head of Sure Start in Manchester, says:**

“Bringing up children can be one of the most satisfying and enjoyable experiences in the world – but it can also be frustrating and stressful. If you’re finding life a struggle, chances are your kids are too. It’s really important that you look after yourself and get the support you need. That might be from grandparents, family and friends, from your GP, health visitor or school nurse, or from services like your Sure Start Children’s Centre or local voluntary or community groups.”



# The best of the rest

**We received hundreds of great ideas, and we're sorry we can't print them all here, but you can find many more on our website.**

- “Talk to your child about everything you are doing, from when they are a baby, because it will help them develop.” (*JS, parent, Levenshulme*)
- “Get them to socialise and mix with other races and religions so they are aware of different races and religions within society.” (*SS, under-18, Fallowfield*)
- “No watching TV for more than one hour in the evening.” (*BS, parent, south Manchester*)
- “I always write my mobile number on paper in my child's pocket or on their hand in case they get lost when we're out.” (*GN, parent, Moston*)
- “Give as much positive attention as possible so that when you do have to discipline your kids they respect your wishes without affecting their self-esteem.” (*AC, parent, Rusholme*)
- “Make sure your children are early to bed and early to rise to face a day of learning at school, as a tired child will have no concentration.” (*JW, parent, Openshaw*)
- “Give kids freedom, but at the same time, limitations. Let them make their own mistakes but protect them from bad influences.” (*JT, under-18, Moss Side*)

# A Parenting Strategy for Manchester

A 'strategy' is a statement of what we are trying to achieve and how we think we are going to achieve it.

Manchester's Parenting Strategy aims to make sure that every parent in Manchester has the confidence and skills they need to give their child the best possible start in life.

The Strategy has been agreed by partners working together to support parents in the city, including Manchester City Council, Manchester Primary Care Trust, and key partners from the voluntary and community sector. It includes details of how we will support parents at all different levels of need, including:

- Access to information, involvement and opportunities
- Support for parents
- Intensive family support
- Statutory intervention.

**Visit our website to find out more or to download a summary and full version of the Strategy.**

## Find out more

**Our website** includes more helpful ideas and advice on parenting, details of parenting courses in Manchester, and links to useful parenting sites.

[www.manchester.gov.uk/children/parents](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/children/parents)

**Manchester's Children's Information Service** is open from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday, and can give you up-to-date information on parenting courses, childcare, Sure Start and Extended Schools service and other support for families in Manchester.

**Freephone 0800 083 7921**

**ParentlinePlus** offer a free 24-hour helpline for parents

**Freephone 0808 800 2222**



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