



ERIC (Education and Resources for Improving Childhood Continence) was set up by the current Director, Penny Dobson in 1988 and has grown steadily from modest beginnings to become an award-winning registered national charity that is committed to helping children and families who are coping with childhood continence problems.

Through its work, ERIC aims to reduce the suffering caused to children by bedwetting, daytime wetting and soiling and constipation. ERIC has become increasingly recognised by families and health experts worldwide, and by government bodies and other organisations in the UK, as a leader in the field of childhood continence.

In April 2007, ERIC was the overall winner of a national GlaxoSmithKline IMPACT Award, run in association with the King's Fund. This award recognises the work of small to medium-sized charities in managing the health of people in their communities. Chosen from over 300 charities, ERIC was proud to receive this prestigious recognition of its work.

ERIC's role

ERIC provides information and support to children, young people and their families as well as guidelines and training for healthcare professionals. ERIC also campaigns to improve access to water and toilet facilities for pupils in schools, as well as improving paediatric continence services. It actively lobbies politicians and those with responsibility for continence services, the latter in its capacity as chair of the national lobby group, the Paediatric Continence Forum.

ERIC also campaigns to increase public awareness of the conditions associated with continence and

strategies to combat them. ERIC's stated mission is: 'To reduce the suffering to children caused by bedwetting, daytime wetting, soiling and associated conditions and their prevalence within the UK by:

- ▶▶ Educating, informing and supporting
- ▶▶ Reducing stigma
- ▶▶ Increasing research
- ▶▶ Communicating good practice.'

Who is affected by childhood incontinence?

It is estimated that out of a population of 8.4 million children in the UK, approximately 500,000 experience bedwetting (Butler, 2001), 125,000 wet in the daytime (Swithinbank et al, 1998; Sureshkumar et al, 2000) and 100,000 experience regular soiling.

Many parents do not know where to turn to for help, or fear the stigma of having a child who is not toilet trained. ERIC can give these parents the confidence to seek advice and encourage them to contact healthcare professionals locally. Young people and families are reassured that they are not alone and that something can be done.

ERIC also provides support and information for the families of children with special learning or physical needs who may take longer to achieve bowel and bladder control. For others, bladder control might not be possible but with appropriate management of their continence needs they may be able to enjoy school and join in social activities.

How is ERIC addressing the problems associated with childhood continence?

ERIC provides a telephone helpline for children, parents and professionals, offering information, support and details of local specialist clinics. The helpline (0845 370 8008) is available from Monday to Friday between

10am–4pm. ERIC is a member of the Telephone Helplines Association.

The ERIC websites provide a wide range of useful resources, including downloadable leaflets, information about childhood continence, personal stories, frequently asked questions and message boards. The information is divided into individual sections for children, parents and professionals and access to relevant information can be sourced with ease at www.eric.org.uk or at the specially designed award-winning website for teenagers at www.trusteric.org

The telephone support groups are set up to provide a forum for parents and young people to share experiences and tips from the comfort of their home using teleconference facilities.

A wide range of resources, including bedding protection, enuresis alarms, books and leaflets, including guides for parents and guidelines on clinical practice and service delivery for healthcare professionals, are available to purchase from the ERIC webshop (www.ericshop.org.uk). A copy of the *Products Catalogue* can also be downloaded or requested on 0117 301 2100.

Health and social care professionals can update their knowledge of childhood continence by attending ERIC's series of one-day training seminars, which are held around the UK and cover a variety of topics including toilet training, the treatment and assessment of childhood soiling, nocturnal enuresis and daytime wetting. Bespoke training to suit service needs is also available. All training is continuing professional development (CPD) approved. Contact 0117 301 2102 for further information.

ERIC also publishes a quarterly magazine for families, healthcare professionals and companies, which is available on annual subscription to ERIC. Professional subscribers also receive a twice-yearly *Research Update* magazine giving details of new research and international practice.

A database of childhood continence research references is available to healthcare professionals for a nominal charge. ERIC and the University of Bristol are also involved in a collaborative study to increase the understanding of the psychological consequences of childhood incontinence. The Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC) is based upon the experiences of 14,000 families.

ERIC runs two high-profile national campaigns, the Water is Cool in School campaign (www.wateriscoolinschool.org.uk) and the Bog Standard campaign (www.bog-standard.org). These campaigns have been set up to improve the provision of and access to drinking water and toilet facilities for pupils in UK schools. Both campaigns have had an impact nationally, most recently they influenced the publication of the government document *Toilets in Schools: Standard Specifications, Layout and Design* (Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2007).

Big Lottery funding has also enabled ERIC to conduct a three-year outreach project, working with the families of children suffering with continence problems who also suffer disadvantaged circumstances. The project is currently working with over 70 families in the Bristol and South Wales area, and will begin to encompass the whole of the UK from 2008. Over half of the children and young people taking part in the project have learning or

physical disabilities as well as continence problems. The project is looking at how to establish ease of access to the resources provided by ERIC for disadvantaged families and to adapt those resources to enable this group to respond effectively to the effects of continence problems.

As well as supporting families, ERIC aims to support healthcare professionals working in the field of childhood continence as they strive to maintain and improve local services. For example, a business plan to help primary care trusts commission paediatric continence services is being finalised and will be piloted before being rolled out nationally.

Healthcare professionals can support ERIC by:

- ▶▶ Accessing ERIC's resources and training to maintain standards of practice and to share expertise
- ▶▶ Subscribing to the ERIC magazines *ERIC Says* and *Research Update*
- ▶▶ Informing families about the services provided by ERIC
- ▶▶ Publicising ERIC through the display of leaflets and posters in public areas (leaflets and posters are available on request from ERIC)
- ▶▶ Promoting and supporting ERIC's campaigns
- ▶▶ Providing details of local childhood continence clinics and advising of any changes to service provision – this will enable ERIC to maintain an up-to-date database of service provision.

Looking forward

ERIC's activities are always dependent upon the level of funding it can obtain. However, ERIC continues to evolve and we have some exciting plans for the future. ERIC's 5th international conference Challenging for Change in Childhood Continence: Engaging, Educating, Empowering' will take place

in York on the October 3–4 2007. Programmes and booking details are available from ERIC.

ERIC seeks to continually update its library of publications, incorporating new research findings and developing practical skills. A new look website will be available soon, which will allow ongoing refreshing of resources and provide up-to-date information. **CUK**

References

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- Swithbank LV, Brookes ST, Shepherd AM, Abrams P (1998) The natural history of urinary symptoms during adolescence. *Br J Urol* 81(Supp 3): 90–3

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