



# HJ Trauma Support

Understanding • Connection • Change

TRAUMA SUPPORT



## When Personal Hygiene Feels Like a Battle

This is rarely about laziness or defiance.  
For many children—especially those who have experienced trauma—personal hygiene can feel:

**Overwhelming • Uncomfortable • Unsafe**

Understanding the reason behind the behaviour helps us respond in a way that supports change.



## WHY IT CAN BE DIFFICULT



### Control and autonomy

This may be one of the only areas that feels like it belongs to them.



### Sensory sensitivities

Water temperature, pressure, smells, and textures can feel intense or distressing.



### Trauma and vulnerability

Bathing and self-care are vulnerable experiences and may link to past unsafe situations.



### Shame and self-worth

Some young people may not feel “worth” caring for, leading to avoidance.



## UNDERSTANDING THE BEHAVIOUR

What looks like refusal may actually be:

- Feeling overwhelmed by the task
- Avoiding discomfort or distress
- Struggling with transitions
- A need to feel in control



*Behaviour is communication.*



## WHAT HELPS

- ✓ **Be curious, not corrective**  
“I wonder what makes this hard?”
- ✓ **Reduce pressure**  
Shift from instructions to collaboration
- ✓ **Offer choice**  
Build safe control into the routine
- ✓ **Start small**  
Focus on manageable steps, not perfection
- ✓ **Stay connected**  
Relationship first—change follows



**This is not about “won’t”  
It is often about “can’t yet”**

With support, understanding, and patience, these skills will develop.



Hayley Jones BA (Hons), MASW  
Social Work England Registered  
ACCPH Accredited Member



07435 780079



hayleyjones@hjtraumasupport.com



www.hjtraumasupport.com