

# HOW AUTISM AND ADHD CAN AFFECT YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

Having an autistic child or one with ADHD can put a lot of strain on you and your family. You might need to spend a lot of time helping your child get the support they need. This can be very stressful and exhausting.

It may be hard to make time for the rest of your family and can affect your relationships with each other. If you feel you need help, you can get support from lots of places.



## THINGS THAT CAN HELP YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

### DO

- ask friends and family if they can help with day-to-day things or just be there to talk to
- get advice from other parents of autistic children or autistic adults
- look at websites listed elsewhere in this handbook – like [www.kent.gov.uk/localoffer](http://www.kent.gov.uk/localoffer)
- listen to other parents' stories – the charity [www.healthtalk.org](http://www.healthtalk.org) has stories about living with autism and ADHD or you can search online for blogs, videos and books
- ask your local council for a Carer's Assessment – you might be able to get extra support and financial benefits **(see Rights and Benefits section of this handbook, pages 49-57).**

### DON'T

- feel guilty for taking time for yourself when you can – even just going for a walk on your own can help give you a break.

## TALKING TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT AUTISM OR ADHD

It's your choice when you want to tell your child about their autism or ADHD but you should seek advice about it from health professionals. Some parents do it straight away, while others wait until their child's a bit older.

### **When you tell your child, it may help to:**

- do it when they're feeling calm or relaxed
- talk to them in a place where they feel comfortable, with no distractions
- explain they do not have an illness, but they might need extra support to help them with some things

- explain they might find some things harder than other people, and some things easier
- bring them to a support group to meet other children.

The Autism Easy Read Guide from the National Autistic Society website might help you explain autism in a way your child will understand:

[www.autism.org.uk/about/what-is/asd/intro-easyread](http://www.autism.org.uk/about/what-is/asd/intro-easyread)

Some guidance from a parent about explaining ADHD to children can be found here:

[www.adhdkids.org.uk/explain-adhd-child](http://www.adhdkids.org.uk/explain-adhd-child)

**"So, You're Autistic?"** has a website containing resources and signposting for autistic young people.

[www.SoYoureAutistic.com/young-people-portal](http://www.SoYoureAutistic.com/young-people-portal)

## SUPPORTING YOUR OTHER CHILDREN

Some children can find it hard if their brother or sister is autistic or has ADHD. If you have other children, there are things you can do to help them.

### DO

- make time for them whenever you can – try to do some activities with just them
- talk to them about what's going on and ask if they have any questions or worries
- let them have time on their own or with their friends – for example, sleepovers at friends' houses
- check the advice from Sibs, a charity for siblings of disabled children [www.sibs.org.uk](http://www.sibs.org.uk) or the Kent young carers website [www.imago.community/Children-and-young-people/kent-young-carers](http://www.imago.community/Children-and-young-people/kent-young-carers)

### DON'T

- exclude them in things like meetings with health professionals – it can help them understand what's going on.

## AFTER YOUR CHILD'S DIAGNOSIS

An autism or ADHD diagnosis can be difficult to come to terms with at first. You might know very little about it while at the same time be trying to find new ways for everyone to live together and feel supported.

The National Autistic Society's website [www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk) has a wealth of information you may find useful, including for parents, partners and siblings, and includes real-life stories. It also provides information for grandparents, and for the children of autistic parents.

Here are some key areas of the website to look at:

- [www.autism.org.uk/about/family-life](http://www.autism.org.uk/about/family-life)
- [www.autism.org.uk/about/family-life/siblings](http://www.autism.org.uk/about/family-life/siblings)
- [www.autism.org.uk/about/diagnosis/children/recently-diagnosed](http://www.autism.org.uk/about/diagnosis/children/recently-diagnosed)
- [www.autism.org.uk/about/benefits-care](http://www.autism.org.uk/about/benefits-care)

Living with ADHD have resources for parents and teenagers that can all be accessed here: [www.livingwithadhd.co.uk/parents/resources.html](http://www.livingwithadhd.co.uk/parents/resources.html)

## LOCAL HELP FOR CARERS

### **Kent: Crossroads Care Kent**

- [www.crossroadskent.org](http://www.crossroadskent.org)
- 03450 956701

### **East Kent – Carers Support East Kent**

- [www.carersek.org.uk](http://www.carersek.org.uk)
- 01304 364637

### **North Kent – Imago Community**

- [www.imago.community](http://www.imago.community)
- 01992 530330

## **West Kent – Involve**

- [www.involvekent.org.uk/carers](http://www.involvekent.org.uk/carers)
- 0300 0810005

## **West Kent ASD Carer’s Support Group**

- [www.westkentmind.org.uk/what-we-offer/asd-carers-support-group](http://www.westkentmind.org.uk/what-we-offer/asd-carers-support-group)
- 01732 744950

A support group for parents and carers of autistic children – there is a referral procedure to join this group.

## **SELF-CARE**

Self-care describes an activity that we do to take care of ourselves mentally, emotionally and physically. Looking after ourselves is key to improving our mental health, increasing our ability

to cope as well as maintaining positive relationships. It could be as simple as having a nice bath or going for a walk, to keeping a mood diary or finding some “me-time”.

If you don’t look after yourself you will probably find it more and more difficult to look after your child.

## **Talking Therapies Providers**

Sometimes you may feel the need to speak to someone (who is not a member of your family or a friend) about how you are feeling. The Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme is a range of NHS evidence-based interventions and treatments, such as counselling, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), stress management, Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR), and sometimes group work.

Services are available for people aged 17 and upwards through your GP. You can self-refer if you want – type in IAPT and where you live into a search engine like google.

**If you are worried about yourself, or finding it hard to cope, please contact your GP or, if it is an emergency and out of normal working hours, Release the Pressure.**

## **Release the Pressure**

Release the Pressure has a highly trained and experienced team available 24/7 to provide expert advice no matter what you are going through. Phone **0800 107 0160** for free confidential support at any time, or visit the website for more details. [www.kent.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/health/release-the-pressure](http://www.kent.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/health/release-the-pressure)

Check this information is up to date by visiting [www.kent.gov.uk/localoffer](http://www.kent.gov.uk/localoffer) – this website explains what the Local Offer is for families with children with special educational needs. As a printed document this handbook can go out of date so it is always best to check online.

