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# Teenager Resource Pack

Information and strategies for carers to support teenagers with  
a neurodevelopmental condition:

Autism and/or ADHD



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# Introduction

Typically, the biggest time of growth in our brains is in the first three years of our life, before we are three years old. After this, the next time of big brain development is when we are teenagers. If your children are already teenagers, you may have noticed some differences in how they behave. As your teenagers hit puberty, and are coping with the changes in their bodies, they also have to cope with the changes in their brain.

Being a teenager with a neurodevelopmental disorder can be a very tricky time for your young person, you as carers, and the whole family. The resources in this pack aim to provide tools for managing those times as well as providing information on where you can find other support. Topics include:

1. Understanding a diagnosis.
2. What is Autism?
3. What is ADHD?
4. Understanding behaviours.
5. Communication is key.
6. Stress and anxiety.
7. Puberty, sexuality and intimate relationships.
8. Developing independence.

A list of useful links to other agencies that offer support and resources to young people and families.



## Understanding a Diagnosis

One of the most important things you can do is understand your young person's diagnosis and how it impacts on them. It is important to understand what a diagnosis means and how the associated needs impact on them. Understanding this will hopefully help you to understand your teenager, why they act in certain ways, the best ways to support them and the best places to get support.

This pack aims to guide you to understand more about a specific diagnosis. Remember, however, that the young person and the family are the experts when it comes to a young person, and it is important to **work together**.

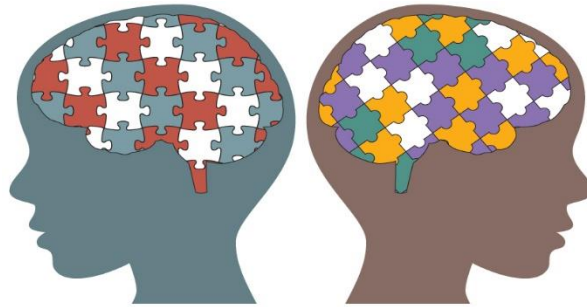
Understanding a diagnosis is a very important step when it comes to being a teenager. Understanding a diagnosis may provide:

- Acceptance.
- Understanding of themselves.
- Reassurance.
- Sense of self.

There are many different ways that you can support your understanding of a certain diagnosis and also where young people can access further information:

- The Neurodevelopmental Team can provide parent training sessions and intervention sessions. Sometimes intervention sessions can involve your young person meeting other young people with the same diagnosis. Talking to others about a diagnosis can be very useful.
- Social groups. Different local authorities may run support or social groups where families and/or young people can meet others with the same or similar diagnosis or needs. For more information on what is available in your area you can contact:
  - Your local Family Information Service
  - DEWIS Wales: [Dewis Wales](#)
  - National Autistic Society: [www.autism.org.uk/](http://www.autism.org.uk/)
  - ADHD Foundation: <https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/>
  - The Neurodevelopmental Team
- Charities such as the National Autistic Society and the ADHD foundation have lots of resources on their website. They also provide parent/ carer training sessions that you may find useful.
- Sessions to support an understanding of autism can also be provided by the North Wales Integrated Autism Service (IAS). Details on how to access this service will be at the "who can help" section at the end of this pack.

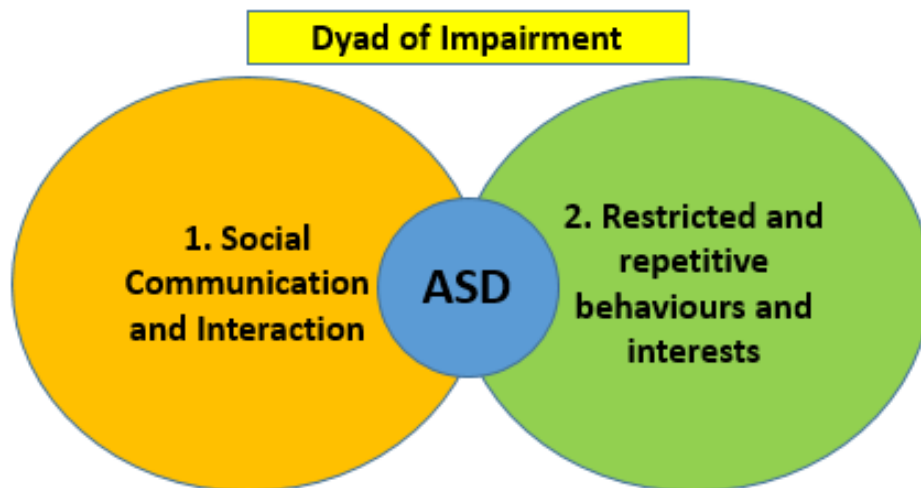
# What is Autism?



If your young person has a diagnosis of Autism, the first step is for you and them to understand what this diagnosis means.

## Autism.....

- Is a lifelong neurodevelopmental condition.
- Affects how people see the world and how people interact with others.
- Autism is not an illness or disease and cannot be 'cured'.
- Affects people from all nationalities and cultural, religious and social backgrounds.



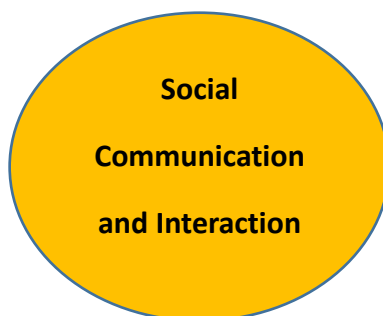
- Each person with Autism has their own different strengths and needs, just like everyone else! However, a diagnosis of ASD considers difficulties in two main areas, sometimes referred to as the “dyad of impairment”:

Over the years, different terms have been used for Autism; this is because the spectrum of Autism is so big and different terms were used to diagnose. Some **previously** used terms include: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC), Atypical Autism, Classic Autism, High Functioning Autism, and Asperger’s Syndrome. Because of changes to diagnostic manuals, **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)** is most widely used and recognised.



There are around 700,000 people with autism in the UK - that's **more than 1 in 100**. Figures show that more males are diagnosed with autism, however it is widely felt that this is more because autism is “under diagnosed” in females.

## 1. Difficulties with social communication and interaction

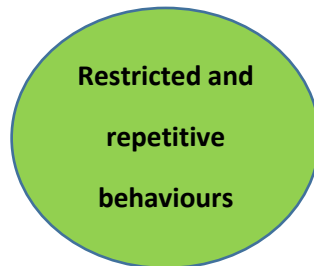


People with autism often have difficulties with understanding verbal (spoken language) and non-verbal language (i.e. body language or tone of voice). They can also struggle with understanding of literal language, for example, jokes and sarcasm, and think people always mean exactly what they say, which can be confusing.

People with autism also often have difficulty 'reading' other people - recognising or understanding others' feelings and intentions - and expressing their own emotions; this is what we refer to as “**social interaction**”. This can make it very hard for them to navigate the social world, for example, they may appear to be insensitive or seek out time alone when they feel overloaded by other people. They may not seek comfort from other people and they may appear to behave socially inappropriately.

Because of their difficulties with social communication, people with autism may find it hard to form friendships. Some may want to interact with other people and make friends, but may be unsure how to go about it.

## 2. Restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviours, activities or interests (including sensory sensitivities)



### Repetitive behaviour and routines

The world can seem a very unpredictable and confusing place to people with autism, who often prefer to have a daily routine so that they know what is going to happen every day. They may want to always travel the same way to and from school or work, or eat exactly the same food for breakfast.

The use of rules can also be important. It may be difficult for a person with autism to take a different approach to something once they have been taught the 'right' way to do it. People on the autism spectrum may not be comfortable with the idea of change, but may be able to cope better if they can prepare for changes in advance. Similarly, some may find it too much to know of any changes in advance so a “Now and Next” approach might be more supportive.



### Highly-focused interests

Many people with autism have intense and highly-focused interests, often from a fairly young age. These can change over time or be lifelong, and can be anything from art or music, to trains or computers. An interest may sometimes be unusual, for example, collecting rubbish. Interests can usually be turned into a positive, for example, this person may develop an interest in recycling and the environment.

People with autism often report that the pursuit of their interests is fundamental to their wellbeing and happiness.



## Sensory sensitivity



People with autism may also experience *over or under sensitivity* to sounds, touch, tastes, smells, light, colours, temperatures or pain. For example, they may find certain background sounds, which other people can ignore or block out, unbearably loud or distracting. This can cause anxiety or even physical pain. They may also seek sensory experiences to stimulate their senses, for example, being fascinated by lights or spinning objects.

It is important to remember that there is no 'cure' for autism. However, there is a range of *strategies and approaches to support difficulties your young person faces*.

Please see the “who can help” section at the end of this resource, where you can find information on different agencies who can support you to understand autism in more detail.

# What is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)?



ADHD is defined by the 'core' signs of **inattention**, **hyperactivity** and **impulsiveness**, and there are three presentations;

1. Combined ADHD, which includes inattention and hyperactivity and/or impulsiveness.
2. Predominantly inattentive, but not hyperactivity or impulsive. This is sometimes unofficially referred to as attention-deficit disorder (or ADD).
3. Predominantly hyperactive and/or impulsive, but not inattention

An ADHD brain works differently compared with someone who doesn't have ADHD, so young people learn in a different way, and they may sometimes behave differently. The development of the brain cortex (the surface area of the brain that plays a key role in memory, attention, thought and language) develops differently in children with ADHD. These areas are important for memory and for controlling behaviour. Therefore, young people with ADHD may have difficulties with:

- Getting and staying organised
- Managing emotions
- Following directions
- Shifting focus from one thing to another
- Remembering things (working memory)
- Thinking before saying or doing things
- Focusing on what is important
- Filtering out distractions/ background noise
- "Switching off" and therefore affecting sleep
- Managing time

You cannot 'cure' ADHD, but young people and others around them can **learn to manage it.**

Ways in which adults and young people can learn to manage symptoms include;

- ✓ Behaviour strategies that adults can implement in a young person's environment.
- ✓ Behaviour strategies that young people can adopt; for example, mindfulness.
- ✓ Classroom accommodations.
- ✓ ADHD medication can reduce some ADHD symptoms; however, medication is most effective when behaviour strategies are also implemented.



Please see the “Who Can Help” section at the end of this pack where you can find information on different agencies who can support you to understand ADHD in more detail

**Please also consider showing your young person this guide to ADHD:**

[ADHDfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Young-Persons-Guide\\_FINAL.pdf](https://ADHDfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Young-Persons-Guide_FINAL.pdf)

## Understanding Behaviours

Behaviour is often a form of communication; it is how we tell other people how we are feeling. All teenagers’ behaviour can be baffling, stressful, hurtful and often worrying. Surges of hormones, combined with body changes, struggling to find an identity, pressures from friends and a developing sense of independence, mean the teenage years are a confusing time.

To begin to understand, influence and try to manage teenage behaviour, it’s important to understand them and their strengths/ needs and **why** you’re young person is behaving the way they do. Also recognising **your own** thoughts and beliefs around behaviour is also very important. Your beliefs about why a behaviour has occurred can have a big impact on your emotions and how you process, understand and in turn respond to the behaviour.

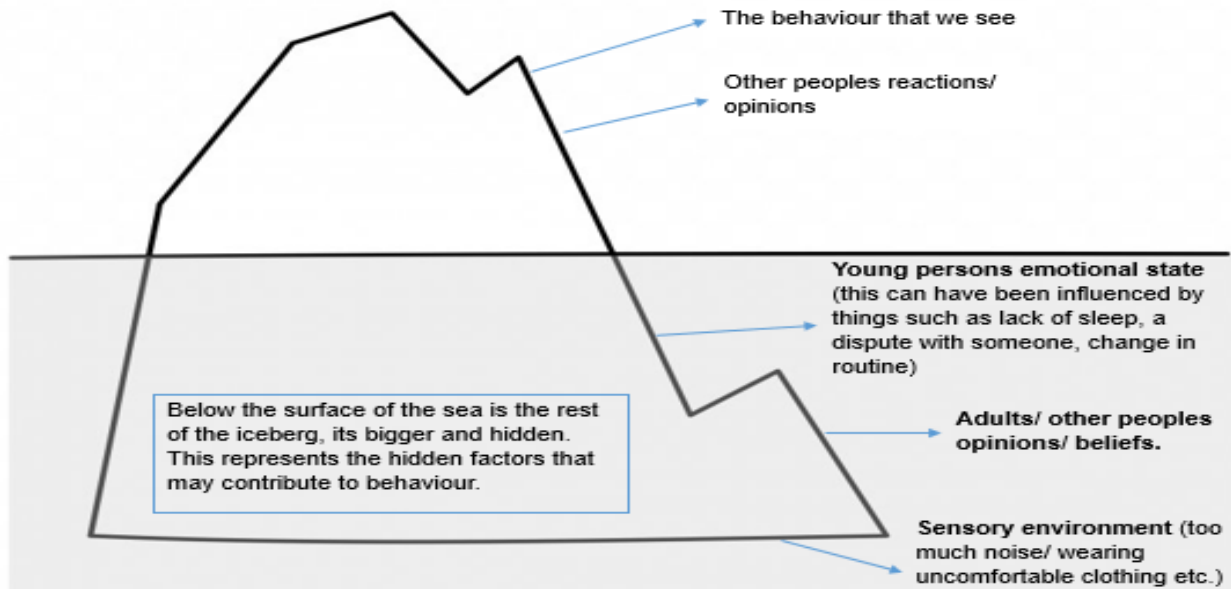


### Things to consider....

**Not every behaviour needs to be stopped or changed.** Some behaviours might be perceived as “challenging” because other people don’t understand the reason for the behaviour. If a behaviour is serving a useful purpose and it does not have a negative impact on anyone it may not need to be stopped or changed.

- **Consistency.** It is important to try and achieve consistency in responding to behaviour. Parents can sometimes have different approaches and this can often lead to confusion and frustration for your young person. Both parents need to agree on a consistent approach and also communicate these approaches with other carers and/or education teams.
- **Decide where to start.** It may be useful to have a discussion with everyone involved with your young person to decide which behaviours need to be addressed first. Some families have found that starting with a less difficult behaviour has been useful.
- **Remember that behaviours can get worse before they get better.** Some behaviours may take a long time to change, but that doesn’t mean that it’s impossible to change.
- When thinking about behaviour, it is useful to consider these **iceberg** analogies:

Above the line are the behaviours that we see.



What you see...

Am I safe?  
Am I loved?  
Do I matter?  
I feel angry.  
I feel sad.  
I feel scared.  
I feel hungry or tired.  
I am feeling overwhelmed.  
I have developmental delays.  
I can't communicate any other way!  
I feel overstimulated. I have sensory needs.  
I need understanding or help!

(What they're really saying)

# Communication is Key



When considering supporting approaches, communication is key! Communicating with a typically developing teenager can be difficult due to differences that are occurring physically, emotionally and socially. These changes are also occurring with a teenager with a neurodevelopmental condition, however, in addition they are also facing other difficulties associated with their condition.

Effective communication can have huge benefits to you as parents/carers, to young people and your whole family.

When communicating with young people with a neurodevelopmental need, these are some of the factors that you need to consider:

## Difficulties with understanding language, this includes;

- Difficulties understanding the words that you use, for example a young person may not know what the word “considerate” may mean, therefore the sentence “be considerate to others” would mean nothing.
- Difficulties understanding the length of sentences; for example, a young person may only understand the first or last part of an instruction.

## Difficulties with social communication, this can mean;

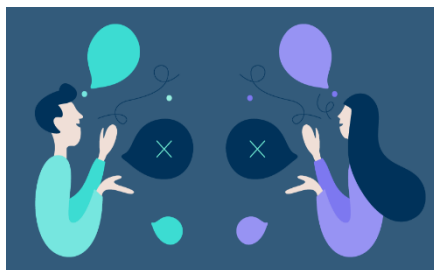
- Interpreting both verbal and non-verbal language differently to how it is intended (for example not understanding tone of voice or facial expressions)
- Taking language very literally, for example not understanding jokes, idioms or metaphors.

# Approaches to consider with your teen

When considering these approaches, it may be useful to **highlight** the strategies that you feel may work and try and work on a few at a time. If an approach is working for you at home make sure that you share this with others so they can use the strategy in other settings (other family settings/ education/ work, etc). It is important to share what works for your young person to ensure consistency across all settings.



## Adapting Language and Communication



One of the best ways to support young people to manage in situations they find tricky, is to change the way we use language and how we communicate with them.

Young people with neurodevelopmental profiles can struggle with many aspects of language and communication, which can be a huge source of frustration and misunderstanding. This may include difficulties:

- following longer instructions,
- understanding more abstract questions,
- working out what people mean,
- understanding when someone is joking,
- being able to find the right words for what they want to say,
- being able to hold a conversation,
- making sense of other people's tone of voice, and,
- making sense of other people's body language, e.g. when someone is angry or upset.

Below are some ideas about how you can adapt your language to make things easier:

### To support a young person's understanding:

- ✓ Be aware that some young people can become quickly overloaded with too much language.
- ✓ Ensure that you have the young person's attention before talking to them.
- ✓ Try to break down or 'chunk' longer instructions, and give one piece of information at a time...



For example:

Instead of saying: "Go upstairs and get your green jumper then come back down and put your new coat and shoes on".

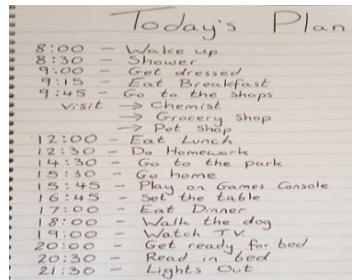
You could say: "Go upstairs" then once they are there "get your green jumper" then once that is done, "come down and put your new coat on" then once that is done "now put your shoes on".

Breaking down instructions into smaller chunks makes them much easier to understand, remember and follow.



- ✓ Allow the young person enough time to process what you have said. Language is complicated. People can benefit from a bit of extra thinking time to help them process what you have said and to decide what they want to say. Don't be afraid of silences! As a general guide, it can be helpful to wait for about 10 seconds before saying anything else – try counting to 10 in your head before repeating or re-phrasing.
- ✓ Support what you have said visually. Spoken language can be tricky to follow, as once it's been said, it's gone. Using visual reminders can be really helpful to support people to understand what has been said. There are lots of different types of visuals which can be used depending on what works best for each person. Here are a few ideas:
  - You can use pointing and gestures to help you to show the person what you are talking about.

- You can use pictures as part of a schedule to show what is happening in the day. Visuals can support people to know what is happening now and what is going to happen next.



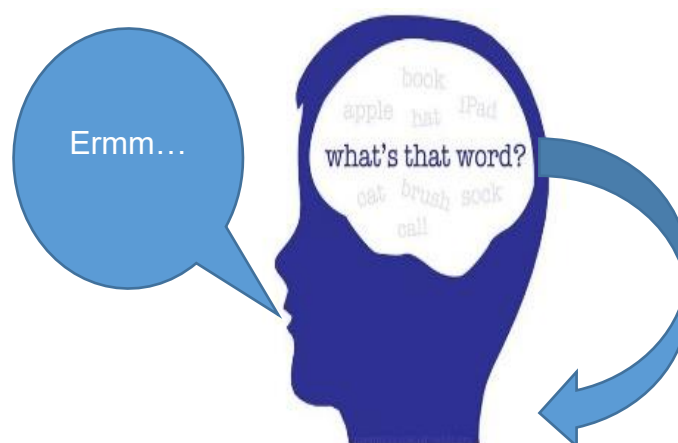
- Writing things down can be helpful for some young people. Some young people like to write lists to help them remember what they need to do. Others might prefer a text or an event reminder on their phone.

### To support a young person's expressive language:

Sometimes young people may find it difficult to find the words they want to say, which can be very frustrating. At other times they may want to find an exact word and no other word will do.

They may know what they want to say but find it much more difficult when they try to put this in to words. They may stop and start what they are trying to say and become frustrated or they may simply give up.

- ✓ **Remember that expressing yourself** will be much harder when they are upset, angry or anxious. These emotions will also impact the way you communicate. So be aware that when both of you are feeling angry, communication will likely be unsuccessful.
- ✓ **Give time to respond.** This might feel like an uncomfortable silence for you, but silence time will give your young person time to work out what they want to say.
- ✓ **Make it visual!** Sometimes words will feel too difficult and many need to find other, more visual ways, e.g. drawing, comic strips, symbols, pictures.





# Understanding what you mean:



Some young people can be very literal in their interpretation of language. This might mean that they become confused by language when it does not mean what it says e.g.

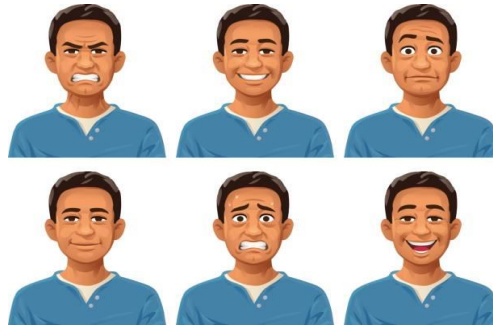
- Phrases such as “pull your socks up”, “give me a hand”.
- Aspects of humour such as sarcasm where people might say one thing and mean something else.
- Taking things to heart that were said in jest.
- Misinterpreting what someone meant and so taking them at their word, resulting in confusion.

You can help by:



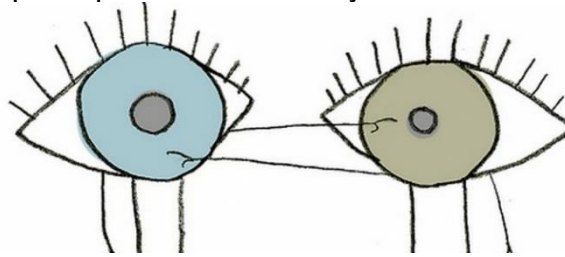
- ✓ Try and use short sentences and simple words. When people are having a tough time, using words they don't understand or too many words can make them feel worse.
- ✓ Say what you mean and think about what you say e.g. it is better to say “you need to walk”, rather than telling me “don't run”.
- ✓ You might need to make it clear to me when you are joking.
- ✓ Keep things as factual as possible and don't assume that they will automatically pick up meaning from your face or the way that you are talking.
- ✓ Use comic strip conversations to visually explain that people can say one thing and think another or to unpick misunderstandings.

## Making sense of non-verbal communication:



Many young people with neurodevelopmental needs may rely more on the words that people say rather than the way that they say them i.e. they may not pay as much attention to facial expression, tone of voice and body language. It's important that you are aware of this to prevent mis-communication.

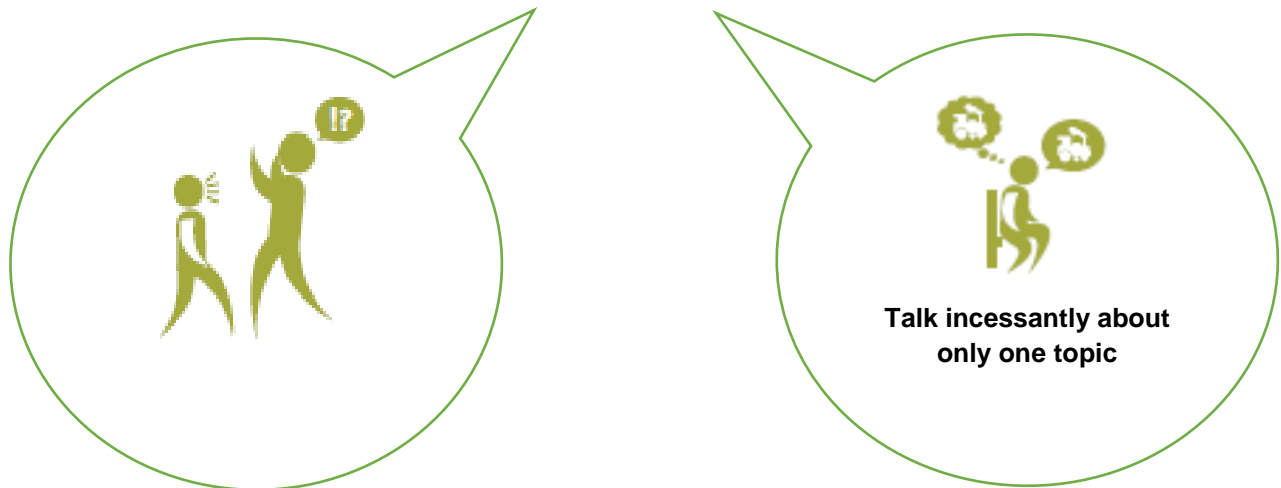
- ✓ Be specific in what you say as they may not be picking up on the 'subtext' from your tone or facial expression. So, make your facial expressions clear and obvious as it might be more difficult for them to pick up on these subtlety.



- ✓ Just because a young person is not looking at you, does not automatically mean that they are not listening. Looking at others faces might feel very uncomfortable. Telling a young person to look at you does not automatically help them listen. In fact, **sometimes it makes it harder**.
- ✓ Understand that they don't mean to be rude in the way that they say things, they may just 'say it as they see it'.
- ✓ Check back, or confirm, with your young person first before jumping to conclusions as they may not be aware of how they have come across. For example, "*I am just checking, did you mean that to sound .....?*" This gives them the chance to repair the situation and can often prevent an argument developing.
- ✓ Use comic strip conversations (developed by Carol Grey) These are drawings which consist of stick people, talking bubbles and thinking bubbles to help young people to understand how they could manage situations differently next time.

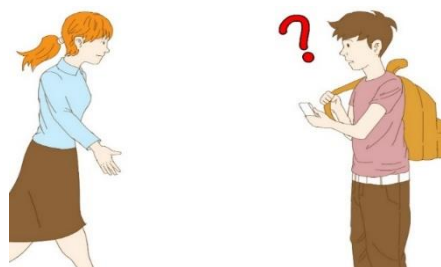
# Managing conversation

Conversation, 'chat' and 'banter' can be tricky for lots of different reasons. For some young people it may be that they find it very difficult to express any interest in topics outside of their own interest. For others, it might be hard to know what to say and how to start an interaction with peers. It also could be confusion around waiting their turn during conversation and not knowing when to stop talking, that they find most difficult.



Here are some helpful tips:

- It might be useful to provide a cue or give a sign to when your young person has said enough and it is someone else's turn to talk.
- It might be important to your young person that you have simply **acknowledged** their viewpoint, even if you do not agree with.
- Visuals can help your young person to understand the rules, e.g. when it is someone else's turn to talk.



- It might help to have an agreed specific talking time(s) in the day, so that your young person knows when they are able to talk about what is important to them, e.g.: their intense interests.
- Provide with feedback to help them understand what they did right. For example: "That was a great question! It really showed me that you had listened to what I said". Or, "that was brilliant waiting, now it's your turn to talk"

- It might be helpful to practice parts of a conversation with your young person. For example, this could include phrases and sentences that they can use to begin a conversation, if this is something that they find hard to do. Or, if ending/ leaving a conversation in the right way, if it is becoming too difficult, practising safe phrases they can use, as opposed to them simply walking off when they have had enough.

## Coping with Stress and Anxiety

Everyone experiences stress from time to time. However, high levels of stress and anxiety can impact a young person's life, particularly when they have a neurodevelopment condition to manage too. As discussed above, the difficulties that a young person with neurodevelopmental needs has with communication can significantly impact on their ability to manage stress and communicate their thoughts and feelings.

Stress and anxiety for your teenager may not seem like a stressful situation to you. Some examples of stressful situations for your young person might include:

- A person in a shop asking a simple question.
- Thinking ahead about a change in routine, for example, a swimming lesson being cancelled.
- Talking on the phone.
- Getting on a bus.
- Busy and loud shopping centres.

Some young people with neurodevelopmental needs experience increased stress, either consistently or intermittently. They are also more likely to not recognise their personal stress indicators.

If your teenager is experiencing heightened stress and anxiety, it is important to speak to someone about the support they can receive. The support offered may depend on how long your young person has experienced their stress/anxiety, severity, frequency and where you live.

Please consider the following options:

- **School based support.** Often schools have school support groups/ councillors/ trained members of staff.
- **Charities.** Organisations, such as Young Minds, NAS and the ADHD Foundation, have a lot of information around mental health. More information on supportive agencies can be found at the end of this document.
- **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)** may be able to offer specialist support if required.
- **The Neurodevelopmental Team** may be able to offer support.

# Developing Independence Skills

Developing independence skills may be a very anxious time for you as parents and for teenagers. Teenagers with neurodevelopmental needs mature at different stages. For example, they may mature physically, but may be immature in their social, sexual and/or emotional skills.

Teenagers with neurodevelopmental needs may not learn independence skills “automatically”, like their peers, therefore, are likely to need additional support with this.

Here are some tips on developing independence skills:

- ✓ As previously discussed, **communication is key**. It is important that you break things down into small steps by using visual systems and prompts.
- ✓ Repetition and reminding of correct behaviours is important.
- ✓ Modelling, e.g. demonstrating the behaviour you want to see.
- ✓ Teenagers will learn from mistakes that they make **when they have support**, this is part of the learning process. Ensure that you reward all positive behaviours.
- ✓ Include your teenager in household chores, as part of their daily and weekly tasks.

Remember its ok to have small goals, for some teenagers their goal may be to be completely independent, where as some may be to be able to make beans on toast.

Here are some examples of what we mean by independence skills:

- Self-Care: showering, bathing, brushing teeth independently, and knowing when to do these things.
- Care for belongings: organising their swimming or school bag.
- Household tasks: for example, meal preparation or cleaning their room weekly.
- Being able to use public transport.
- Managing money.
- Managing sexuality and relationships.
- Managing risks, such as cigarettes, drugs and alcohol.

## Self-Care



Explain the importance of hygiene and self-care as many teenagers with neurodevelopmental needs struggle with hygiene if not prompted. This is not due to “laziness”, it can be because they have limited understanding of why it is important to be clean and groomed each day. A starting point might be explaining why you might have to wash more as a teenager.

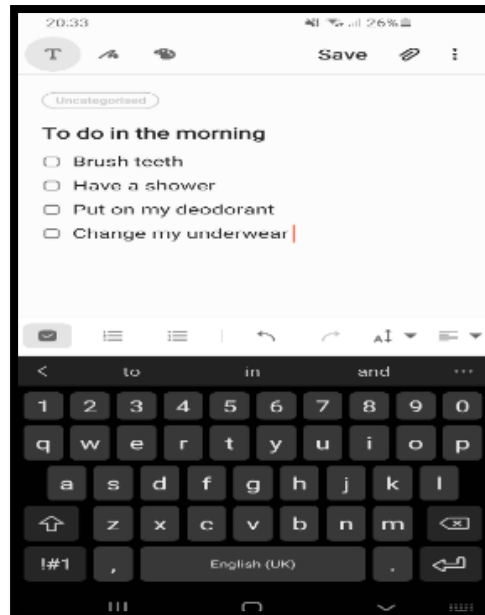
Be factual and honest. For example, “*due to hormones you start to sweat more and this can be smelly*”. Teach and reinforce the basics of hygiene and self-care throughout the day.

When a young person is stressed or anxious, they may need further gentle reminders about their self-care.

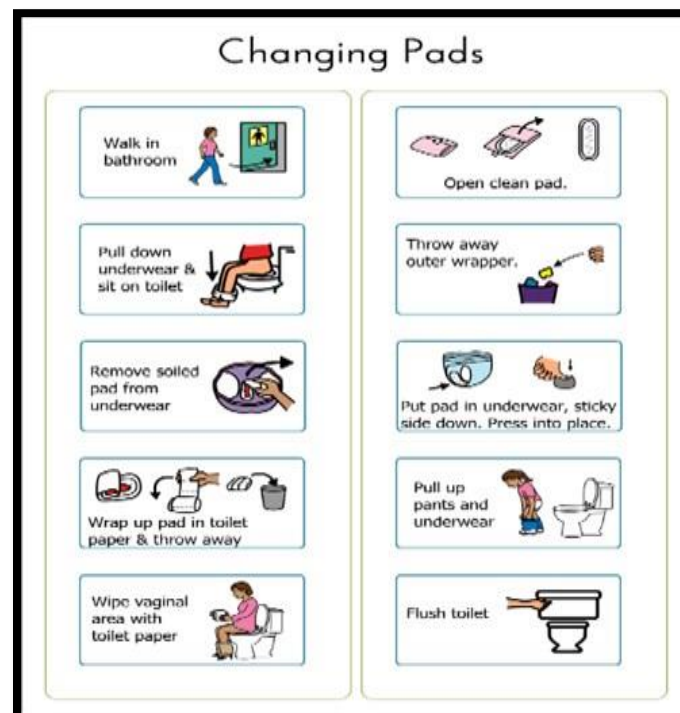
## Visual Schedules

Using visual schedules and/ or electronic reminders can help with teaching and prompting their independence skills. This is where we need to break down the tasks. One of the benefits of using visual or electronic prompts is that it can reduce the reliance on verbal prompts.

Visual schedules can be a simple to do list on a phone. These can also be added to a young person's daily diary on their phone so each day they can tick off their morning routine.



You can add symbols, pictures and/or photos, and stick to their bedroom or bathroom door:





	Brush Teeth
	Have a shower
	Put on deodorant
	Change underwear

## Managing Money

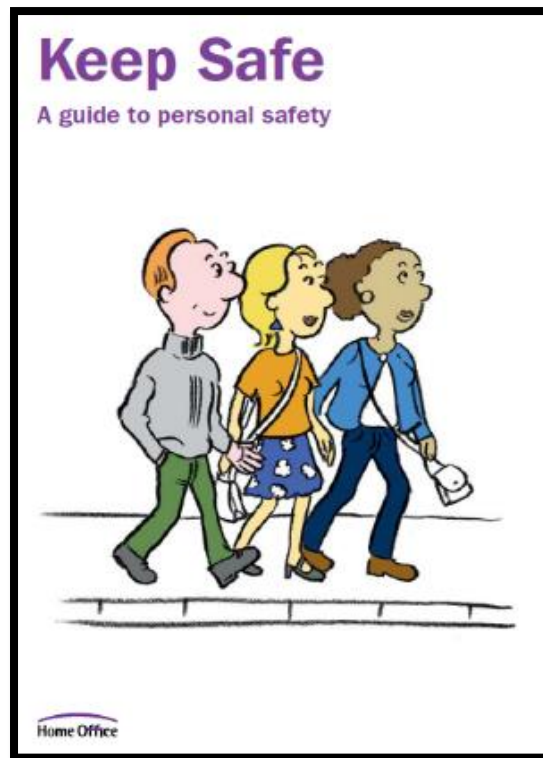


A good starting point is to help them have some awareness of how much things cost, particularly things they like to own. Be aware of when you feel giving them extra responsibility is appropriate. This will depend on your young person.

It is important that teenagers recognise the value of money and understand that it is not an unlimited resource. For many people, pocket money is a good way of introducing financial responsibility. Providing your teenager with a regular, set amount of money and the responsibility of paying for something **they want** gives them their first opportunity to practice how to stay within a budget.

One way to get teenagers to take responsibility for their money is to give them a set budget for a specific task. For example, you could plan with them when they are going to spend money (again use visual schedules or diaries). You could also give them a task where they manage your family's weekly shopping with a budget. Again, plan this task in lots of detail with your young person.

# Keeping Safe



Here is link to a guide about Keeping Safe, published by the UK Office:

[Keep safe booklet](#)

It is an easy-read printable that covers being safe at home, out and about, at the cash machine and more....

## Puberty, Sexuality & Relationships

Puberty is a challenging time for most teenagers. It is important to understand the differences between young people with neurodevelopmental needs in understanding puberty, sexuality and relationships compared to that of their peers.

Typically developing young people learn about these topics from their peers, what they see in magazines, books, films, TV shows or on the internet. Often learning and understanding these topics involves a certain degree of social skills. For example, being able to pick out what is appropriate, what is not, and being able to understand “banter”, jokes and sarcasm.



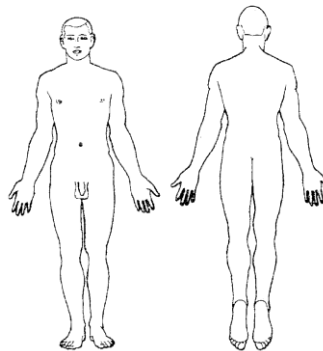
## Things to consider....

- Difficulties around their language and learning. A lot of the language used around these topics are non-literal, for example, “doing it” instead of having sex, or “that time of the month”, instead of period. A young person with a neurodevelopmental condition may take things very literally, and this may result in some inappropriate or embarrassing behaviour.
- In terms of relationships, they may struggle to pick up on subtle cues, such as, body language, tone of voice or facial expressions.
- They may struggle with changes in their body and/or changes of the expectations of others as they begin to look older. For example, you would expect a 16 year old to hold a door open for a stranger in a shop, however, a younger child of 5 years would be not be expected to do this.
- Many skills that typically developing children learn need to be specifically taught to young people with neurodevelopmental needs.

## Things to consider....

- ✓ Information given needs to be clear and easy to follow; consider the language strategies already discussed in this resource. Remember to use visual communication where possible. A list of resources has also been recommended at the end of this section.
- ✓ Be clear in your mind about what you want to teach. Think about your own values and beliefs, and **be prepared** for those “awkward questions”.
- ✓ Be honest, straight to the point and literal in what you are teaching your young person.
- ✓ If questions are being asked at inappropriate times, ensure that family members respond consistently with a neutral phrase, for example “that’s a good question, we can talk about that at home.”
- ✓ Conversations will likely be needed to be repeated. For example, when discussing hygiene, a teenager may not understand the need to have a shower regularly, but regular reminders in a neutral way will help reinforce your message and the routine.
- ✓ Talk to school about what they are teaching, as you will be able to reinforce that information at home.
- ✓ Be aware of your young person’s language limitations in terms of literal understanding as well as understanding words and sentences. If you are describing that your young person’s voice is “breaking”, this can be confusing and worrying for a teenager, instead you could say that their voice is “changing and likely to become deeper”.
- ✓ Explain that there are many different words and phrases for things, for example body parts, e.g. boobs are sometimes referred to as melons, breasts.

- ✓ Explain physical changes, you could use visuals to support this. Start by showing them their own baby and toddler photos to highlight body changes at different ages. Or use a body outline; labelling parts and highlighting how each body will change, for example sweat glands, semen, vaginal discharge. It might be embarrassing at first, but the more you cover this material, the easier it will become.
- ✓ **Periods:** Prepare and educate your daughter as much as possible for this, as this will reduce anxiety and stress when it inevitably comes. Consider having a plan about who she would go to in school if she starts her period at school (e.g. a teacher she feels comfortable with). Visual information will also be useful to explain what to do (often tampon and sanitary towel companies will have 'teenage starter kits' that include visual aids). Use a calendar to help her understand when her period is due or use a period tracking app on her phone to promote independence.
- ✓ **Masturbation:** Some teenagers can develop anxieties around what they are doing or they may start displaying inappropriate behaviour, for example masturbating in front of people. It is, therefore, important to have an honest conversation about masturbation. Do this by reassuring them that this is a normal activity and support their understanding on where (e.g.: in their bedroom only) is it appropriate. Support them also to understand personal hygiene after masturbating, for example, cleaning themselves and bedsheets.
- ✓ **Personal hygiene;** Address personal hygiene as soon as your teen approaches puberty. Make sure they have the appropriate things, such as deodorant, shaving foam, etc. Prepare them that they will have to wash more regularly and why. You can use visual schedules/ written weekly diary to support their daily routine. Social stories may also be beneficial. Contact the Neurodevelopmental Team if you would like more information on Social Stories.



- ✓ **Safety:** Consider conversations such as “who can see and touch my body” and “public and private behaviours” and consider using visual strategies to reinforce this message
  - ➔ Using these body charts by highlighting where others cannot touch. Also, discuss the difference between trusted and non-trusted people, for example carers/ doctors, verses peers/ strangers.
- ✓ **Sexuality & Sexual orientation:** Some young people have a clear understanding of their sexuality, others find it confusing. As with other advice here, use visuals and to the point strategies to be open and honest about sexuality. Keep to factual information, for example, “you do not have to have sex”, “you can say no”, “masturbation won’t make you

go blind". Being factual and straight to the point is very important. You could also discuss sexual orientations, for example, heterosexual, homosexual, etc.





- ✓ **Boundaries and rules of intimate relationships:** It is important to teach these skills as many young people with neurodevelopmental needs will need support when understanding romantic relationships and close friendships. Talk about who it is appropriate to have a romantic relationship with, e.g. a boy from school in your year. Explain the rules around the law and sex, this can give more concrete reasoning, rather than just beliefs or opinions about what is okay.

### Be approachable



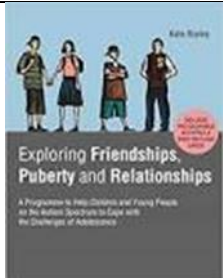


Although this may be embarrassing for you and your teenager, it is important for them to know that they can come and seek support from you. The more you talk about awkward topics, the easier it will become!



## Additional Resources

	<p>Brooke has a helpful tool to help you understand more about the different stages of sexual development in children and what to expect at different ages</p>	<p><a href="http://www.brook.org.uk/training/wider-professional-training/sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool/">www.brook.org.uk/training/wider-professional-training/sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool/</a></p>
	<p>The NSPCC have some useful information and advice for parents on healthy and unhealthy sexual behavior in children and teenagers, including what to do if you are worried;</p> <p>The NSPCC also has some good information about talking to young people about PANTS – a way to explain the underwear rule.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/sex-relationships/sexual-behaviour-children/">www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/sex-relationships/sexual-behaviour-children/</a></p> <p><a href="http://nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/underwear-rule/">nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/underwear-rule/</a></p>
 the sexual health company	<p><b>JIWSI;</b></p> <p>FPA's Jiwsj project delivers sexual health and relationships education in community settings to groups of vulnerable young people.</p> <p>Vulnerable young people often miss out on relationships and sex education (RSE) that meets their needs. This leaves them at increased risk of unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections or other sexual health problems.</p> <p>The Jiwsj project in North Wales is funded by Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.fpa.org.uk/project-jiwsj">www.fpa.org.uk/project-jiwsj</a></p>
 THE ASEXUAL VISIBILITY & EDUCATION NETWORK	<p>The Asexual Visibility and Education Network. AVEN hosts the world's largest online asexual community as well as a large archive of resources on asexuality. AVEN strives to create open, honest discussion about asexuality among sexual and asexual people alike</p>	<p><a href="http://asexuality">asexuality</a></p>



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	<p>The Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS) is a highly specialised clinic for young people presenting with difficulties with their gender identity. The website includes some useful information and resources around gender identity.</p>	<p><a href="http://gids.nhs.uk">gids.nhs.uk</a></p>
	<p>BOOK: Exploring Friendships, Puberty and Relationships: A Programme to Help Children and Young People on the Autism Spectrum to Cope with the Challenges of Adolescence Paperback (2014) Kate Ripley.</p>	

## Other Support Agencies

	<p><a href="http://asdinfo.wales">asdinfo.wales</a></p> <p>The Integrated Autism website has a lot of information for parents, carers and young people. The integrated autism service (IAS) has information about local support as well as national updates.</p> <p>Whilst not working directly with children and young people, the service will work in partnership with other organisations to support parents and carers.</p> <p>Parents and carers are able to self – refer to the service, if your young person has received a diagnosis of Autism you will be able to access training and advice from the Integrated Autism Service.</p>
	<p><a href="http://autism.org.uk/about/what-is/asd">autism.org.uk/about/what-is/asd</a></p> <p>The NAS are the UKs leading autistic charity. The website has many resources and links to help parents/carers and young people in many different ways. Through the charity you can access online</p>



[asdinfo.wales](http://asdinfo.wales)

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training courses, find out about social networks in your area and also use the advice line.



[www.adhdfoundation.org.uk](http://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk)

The ADHD Foundation Neurodiversity Charity is an integrated health and education service offering lifespan - strength based service, for people who live with ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia and Tourette's syndrome.

The foundation has a lot of information for parents and for young people. For example: links to you tube clips where other young people talk about their diagnosis, documents which may support understanding of medication and understanding mental health needs.

**YOUNG**MiNDS

[youngminds](http://youngminds)

YoungMinds is a UK based charity championing the wellbeing and mental health of young people. The website includes a lot of information and advice about supporting young people's mental health for parents, carers, professionals and young people.

Parents and young people can also contact the charity directly through text messaging services and an advice line.



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[www.meiccymru.org](http://www.meiccymru.org)

Meic is a helpline service for children and young people up to the age of 25 in Wales.

From finding out what's going on in your local area to help dealing with a tricky situation, They aim to help young people by providing useful advice and support needed to make positive changes.

This service is available in Welsh and English. You can contact Meic by phone, text message or online chat. Meic is confidential and you don't have to give your name. It is a free service for everyone.



[www.childcom.wales.org.uk/coronavirus](http://www.childcom.wales.org.uk/coronavirus)

**The Children's Commissioner for Wales** – the website provides an information hub for children, young people, and families in Wales and has lots of useful information and links.



[www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)

The Mix is a charity website providing lots of information for ages 25 and under around various subjects such as mental health, sexual relationships, keeping safe and crime.

Young people can access support through the helpline, 1-2-1 chat or crisis text message service.



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They also provide a counselling service: [/get-support/speak-to-our-team/the-mix-counselling-service](http://get-support/speak-to-our-team/the-mix-counselling-service)



[kim-inspire.org.uk/kim-betweeners-mental-health-support-for-young-people-flintshire-and-wrexham/](http://kim-inspire.org.uk/kim-betweeners-mental-health-support-for-young-people-flintshire-and-wrexham/)

Kim aims to support young people who want to be better able to manage their own emotions and wellbeing. They can offer 1-1 support and a whole range of activity groups that are safe and friendly.

KIM-inspire are based in Flintshire and Wrexham and also have community projects.



[www.standnw.org](http://www.standnw.org)

**STAND North Wales** – support families with children and young people with speech, language and/or communication needs, additional needs and disabilities. They have slots available for telephone calls for parents with any concerns or questions.

STAND aim to work with families to offer impartial advice and support. They aim to work with families to ensure they have better understanding and skills to meet the needs of children and young people and to empower parents to access relevant services. STAND also bring parents together to create networks of families to support each other and where needed be a mediator between families and services. STAND also offers activities, training and family days.

Facebook: Standnwcic



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[familylives](http://familylives.org.uk)

0808 800 2222.

**Family Lives** – offer a free and confidential service for parents with any worries or concerns on any aspect of parenting or family life.



[wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/861/page/slt](http://wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/861/page/slt)

Some young people with neurodevelopmental needs may have additional specific difficulties understanding and using language. The following link will take you to the Betsi Cadwaladr Speech and Language Therapy Service webpage for more specific advice.



**Dewis Cymru**  
**Have Choice and Take Control**

[www.dewis.wales](http://www.dewis.wales)

Dewis Cymru is a central location for information or advice about well-being.

Search Dewis for local information on services which you may find helpful for parents and/or young people.





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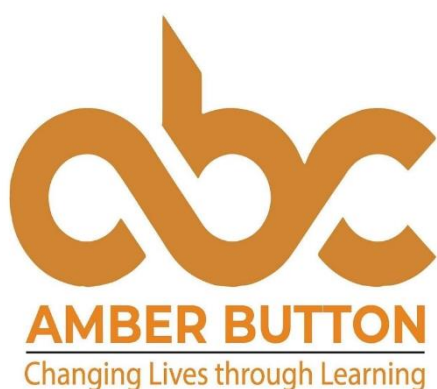
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<https://www.snapcymru.org/>

SNAP Cymru provides information, independent advice and support for a range of educational issues including assessments, statements of special educational needs, bullying, school attendance, exclusion, health and social care provision and disability discrimination. They also provide independent advocacy for children and young people, disagreement resolution and training for young people, parents and professionals.



[amberbutton.co.uk/](http://amberbutton.co.uk/) (Wrexham families)

Amber Button is funded by **Wrexham Families First** to provide a range of parenting support aimed at local families. The purpose of this funding is to offer early intervention and prevention services to families who are not open cases to social care services, in order to promote resilience. Parents of teens could benefit from courses such as;

- Time Out for Parents
- Understanding Challenging Behaviour
- The Relationship Course
- Pathways to Change
- Strengthening Families Programme – Train the Trainer

To access these programmes, parents can self-refer or can ask to be referred by their GP, Family





[asdinfo.wales](http://asdinfo.wales)

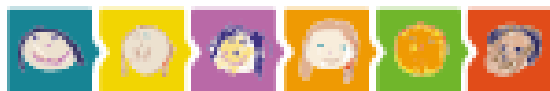
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Support Worker or another agency with whom they are already working.

#### UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD



#### SOLIHULL APPROACH



Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol  
Betsi Cadwaladr  
University Health Board

[www.inourplace.co.uk](http://www.inourplace.co.uk)

#### Understanding your teenagers brain

**Solihull Courses** - Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board Public Health Team have invested in a multi-user licence for 4 award winning, quality marked, evidence based online courses by the Solihull Approach (a national NHS organisation). These courses are for ALL parents-to-be, parents, grandparents or carers of any child from the antenatal period to age 18 years. These courses are relevant for parents of all children, including those with special needs, autism, ADHD etc. These courses are **FREE** to all residents of North Wales with the access codes below. The licence is valid until 30 November 2022 so please take advantage of this fantastic resource while you can. Once you have accessed the courses using this code you will have non-expiring access. Go to [www.inourplace.co.uk](http://www.inourplace.co.uk) and apply the **NWSOL** access code.