

Supporting Your Autistic Child: A Simple Guide for Families

Getting the right support for your child can feel overwhelming at times. You are not alone, and there are trusted organisations and resources that can help you understand your child and access the support your family needs.

Understanding Autism

Learning more about autism can help you better understand your child's strengths, differences, and needs.

- National Autistic Society: A trusted starting point for information about autism, including behaviours, diagnosis, and support. www.autism.org.uk
- NHS: Clear guidance on autism, including signs, assessment pathways, and what support may look like. www.nhs.uk

Getting Support and Diagnosis

If you are concerned about your child's development, support is available.

- Speak to your **GP, health visitor, or school SENCo** to discuss next steps and possible referrals.
- Contact: Supports families of children with additional needs and explains your rights and options. www.contact.org.uk

Communication and Interaction

Every child communicates in their own way, and your child may communicate in nonverbal ways, but this does not mean they are not communicating. Some children with autism acquire language in a different way referred to as Gestalt Language Processing. Some children benefit from additional support to develop communication. AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) includes tools such as symbols, communication boards, and speech-generating devices to support their total communication. A speech and language therapist can guide you through understanding your child's unique communication profile of needs.

Helpful organisations:

- Communication Matters: Information about AAC and how it can support your child's communication. www.communicationmatters.org.uk
- Meaningful Speech: Guidance for parents on Gestalt Language Processing and how to support your child's language development. www.meaningfulspeech.com

If you're unsure what support your child needs, a Speech and Language Therapist can help guide you.

Education and Your Child's Rights

Your child is entitled to support in their educational setting.

- Speak with your child's nursery or school about **SEN (Special Educational Needs) support**.
- You may hear about an **EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan)**, which provides additional support if your child needs it.
- IPSEA-Independent advice on education rights, EHCPs, and navigating the system. www.ipsea.org.uk
- National Autistic Society also has helpful guides on education and support in schools.

Support for Parents and Families

Looking after yourself is just as important as supporting your child. Connecting with other parents can be incredibly reassuring. Many families find comfort in shared experiences. Scope: Provides support, online communities, and information for families of disabled children. www.scope.org.uk. The National Autistic Society also runs parent support groups and helplines.

Financial and Practical Support

You may be entitled to financial support to help meet your child's needs. **Disability Living Allowance (DLA)** – Financial support for children who need extra care or supervision. <https://www.gov.uk/disability-living-allowance-children>

Where to Start

If you're feeling unsure, make sure you share your concerns with someone you trust. You are not alone. Speak to your child's nursery, school, GP or other professionals to help you get the right support and guidance. Small steps are enough. You don't need to do everything at once.

