Information for families with children on the Autism or ADHD Pathway in Worcestershire

Herefordshire and Worcestershire
Integrated Care System

We know that when your child is accessing healthcare services, going through assessments or waiting for appointments, it can feel like a challenging and stressful time. This booklet brings together the different information and advice offered across Worcestershire.

In part 1 we explain the clinical pathways for ADHD and Autism. This includes what happens before, during, and after an assessment. This will help you understand the process and to prepare.

In part 2 you will find details of helpful services and support. They are for

- Anyone diagnosed or who self-identifies as neurodivergent
- Anyone that cares or supports a neurodivergent child or young person

This is version one of the booklet, so we would welcome any feedback to improve it. Please send any comments to hwicb.cypteam@nhs.net. This booklet is published on the NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB) 'Resources and support if your child has neurodivergent traits' website page. If this is a printed version of the booklet, please check the webpage to make sure it is the current version.

Do you need this document in other languages or formats (i.e. large print)? Please contact the Communications team: hw.comms@nhs.net

Where to Start

With so much information out there, it can be hard to know where to start. In this section you'll learn about local services and support. You'll also find details on national organisations that also offer support. Please know, some services may have eligibility criteria or need a referral from professionals.

Click on the words to skip to the area that is of interest to you.

- Local Authority Services
- Education Services
- Health Services
- Community Support
- Peer Support
- National Support

Parent carers of neurodivergent children and young people have told us that it can be hard to find their way round all of the information available. Below are some of the common themes that parent and carers often want support with.

Click on the words to skip to the area that is of interest to you.

Feelings and self-control - Worrying and anxiety / Behaviour / Mood and enjoyment / Flexibility / Managing impulses and urges

Relating to People - Relationships with parents or carers / Social communication / Sexual or sexualised behaviour / Offending behaviour / Friendships / Family situation / Relationships with siblings

Body and Health – Eating / Motor skills and coordination / Sensory responses / Gender identity / Sleep / Using the toilet

Thinking and Learning - Attention and concentration / Education / Connection to reality

Introduction

Neurodivergent means that the brain functions, learns and processes information in a different way. A neurodivergent person is someone whose brain handles information in a way that is not typical of most people. The most common types of neurodivergence are:

- Autism
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Dyscalculia
- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia or Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD)
- Developmental Language Disorder

It is estimated that around 1 in 7 in the UK have some kind of neurodivergence.

The following are other examples of how the brain processes information differently. These are considered to come under the neurodivergence umbrella (though not everyone agrees).

- Dysgraphia
- Tourette's syndrome
- Misophonia
- Executive dysfunction or cognitive functioning difficulties

Some people will have more than one type of neurodivergence, which can often co-occur and overlap.

The Anna Freud charity has a resource on its website called 'A guide to neurodiversity in the early years'. The guide is for professionals but has lots of information you may find useful.

A guide to neurodiversity in the early years

Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. You can read more about neurodiversity on the Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust website below.

What is neurodiversity video

Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care System have produced short videos explaining more about neurodiversity:

Neurodiversity Awareness video series

About Autism

Autism is a lifelong developmental condition. It affects the way that people:

- communicate
- relate to others
- how they make sense of the world around them.

Like everyone, those with autism have their own strengths, differences and needs. While all autistic people share certain challenges, some will need little or no support in their everyday lives. Others may need high levels of care, such as 24-hour support in residential care. Some people may need help with a range of things. This may include:

- forming friendships
- coping at school
- managing at work
- getting out and about in the community

These differences are why Autism is sometimes referred to as a ‘spectrum condition’.

Not all autistic people see themselves as disabled, but some do. A person is described as disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities. Some autistic people find their autism does not affect them in this way, but many do.

Autistic people often see Autism as part of who they are, rather than something separate. Many prefer to be described as ‘Autistic’ rather than ‘someone with Autism’.

The video below from National Autistic Society explains what autism is. It also explains how autistic children and young people see the world.

What is Autism? video

Learn more about autism on the National Autistic Society website below. Topics include the difficulties autistic people may have.

National Autistic Society website.

Worcestershire County Council have made a series of eight podcasts. They feature a young autistic person talking about a range of topics. This includes masking, school assemblies and clothing. Mind-Boggling Conversations aim to share the experiences of young autistic people in Worcestershire.

Listen to Mind-boggling Conversations on YouTube

All-Age Autism Strategy

Herefordshire and Worcestershire's Autism Partnership Boards have made a new All-Age Autism Strategy for Herefordshire and Worcestershire. They worked with many different people and groups to co-produce the strategy including;

- carers
- autistic people
- professionals from social care, health, public health, police, support providers and advocacy services.

As part of priority four, NHS Herefordshire & Worcestershire have videos about autism sensory friendly environments.

Autism Assessment - Worcestershire

In this section we explain the steps towards an autism assessment in Worcestershire. Autism assessment and diagnosis is done by the Worcestershire Community Paediatric Service. This is also called the 'Umbrella Pathway' in Worcestershire.

What to do if you think your child might be Autistic

Getting support at the earliest stage without the need for a diagnosis is important to help you and your child. If you think your child may be Autistic, talk to a health, education or social care professional. They can help you think about if your child might be showing signs of Autism. Signs vary from one person to another but may include any of the following:

- Differences and some challenges with social communication
- Differences with social interactions e.g. eye contact, smiling directly
- Repetitive movements or behaviours
- Repetitive activities and interests since early childhood
- Disturbance of daily functions due to the above
- Differences in sensory processing and co-ordination
- Differences in processing information processing and other behaviours may be apparent

The professional should work with you to think about and put in place adjustments or strategies to help meet the needs of your child. These are made as part of a graduated response of support and are a combination of academic adjustments made in an education setting and strategies to try at home to help daily life. It may also involve small adjustments made to usual school processes that make the child's life easier, or onward referral to services that provide support. What this looks like is different for every young person. Read about the Worcestershire Graduated Response on the webpage below.

Worcestershire SEND graduated response

Help for you

Being a parent carer of a child or young person with additional needs can bring extra situations which are challenging to know how to handle. It can also be frustrating while you are waiting for your appointment, not knowing where to turn next. There are however a number of online resources, workshops and parent support groups that you can access while you are waiting. To help support parent and carers the resources and parenting workshops cover subjects other parents have found useful. You don't have to wait to have a diagnosis to access these workshops for parents and carers:

Starting Well offer some specific groups and workshops, all of these are free:

- Understanding your child/teen with additional needs
- Free online parenting courses in Worcestershire

Autism West Midlands offers free online autism & anxiety training for parents carers of children who have been accepted for assessment on the Autism diagnostic pathway or who have received a diagnosis of autism.

- Herefordshire and Worcestershire Community Hub, Autism West Midlands
- Autism Central offer 1:1 support, on-line workshops and podcast on useful topics.
- SENDIASS provide free training for parents and carers to increase knowledge of SEND law, guidance, local policy, issues and participation.

How a child or young person is referred for a diagnostic assessment

Worcestershire Community Paediatric Service undertake Autism assessment and diagnosis for children aged 0-17 years and 6 months. This pathway is also known as the Worcestershire Umbrella Pathway. A referral can be made for an assessment by a GP, school or school nurse. A referral should be made only once reasonable steps have already been made to support the young person and family in line with the Graduated Response for Neurodivergent Children & Young People. For practical purposes, referrals for those over 16 will be considered in terms of whether assessment by an adult service may be more appropriate.

It is not unusual for children to present differently at home and at nursery or school. To understand this the assessment team requires some detailed information to begin the process. The information provided forms part of the child/young person's assessment if they are accepted for the assessment pathway. The information consists of the following 4 parts and all of these need to be completed in full before the referral can be considered:

1. A referral form
2. An age-appropriate consent form (young people aged 16 and over only)
3. Questionnaire completed by parent / carer
4. Questionnaire completed by educational setting (as long as the child/young person is attending one)

Where a child/young person does not attend an education setting, it is useful but not essential, to get a report from another setting the child goes to such as an activity or sports club. This

helps the assessment team to understand how the child/young person presents in different situations.

What happens next …

The information provided will be assessed by a member of the assessment team. The assessment team consists of: Community Paediatricians, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists and Clinical Psychologists. A decision will be made to either:

1. Continue to a diagnostic assessment. An appointment will be sent to you for an assessment.
2. Ask for further information. Sometimes this happens if the information supplied by home or school is not detailed enough, in which case the team will ask for additional information.
3. Decline a referral if the information doesn't show a need for further assessment. In this case, the assessment team will suggest referral to other services that would better meet your child's needs.

Initial Appointment

Once accepted, an initial appointment will be held with you and your child and the clinician will decide if any further assessments are needed to help understand your child's needs better. If needed, further assessments would be carried out by the appropriate professionals and tailored to the individual needs of your child. These could include:

- A neurodevelopmental history
- Clinical Psychologist assessment
- Specialist speech and language assessment
- Observations in education settings

A follow up appointment with a professional not previously involved may also be recommended. In some circumstances, a specific evidence-based assessment for Autism such as ADOS will be recommended by the team.

The Diagnostic discussion

A minimum of two clinicians from the assessment team will evaluate the evidence collected and a diagnosis of Autism will be considered. The final decision will always include a Senior Clinician. A diagnosis of Autism may or may not be given.

Feedback Appointment

An assessment report will be produced detailing your child's strengths, areas of challenge and strategies to support daily life (home/education). Sign-posting information will also be provided.

A face-to-face appointment will be held with the child, young person and their family to go through the feedback and the assessment report.

Waiting Times

The assessment team understands that everyone wishes to be seen as soon as possible and it can be difficult to wait for appointment without an idea of timescale. Due to extremely high demands on the service, it is currently difficult to outline exact waiting times for your child's initial appointment. Please be reassured that your child will be offered an appointment as soon as one becomes available. NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire are working with the team to bring down waiting times and provide useful information while you wait.

Choosing A Different Provider

In England under the NHS, you now have a legal right to choose a different provider of Autism / ADHD assessments, this is called Patient Choice and sometimes Right to Choose. This means that, should you decide the waiting time for your assessment is too long, then you can choose to leave the NHS waiting list and go to an alternative provider. The provider must supply the service to the NHS somewhere in England. Your GP can advise you on which providers are able to offer Patient Choice assessments and refer you.

For more information, see the Right to Choose section of this booklet.

Planned Improvements to Diagnostic Services

Over recent years there has been a dramatic increase in referrals for paediatric diagnostic assessments for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD and Autism. Referrals for assessment have grown by over 250% from the pre-pandemic levels. Demand for local services currently exceeds capacity and steps are being taken to address this. NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire is working closely with:

- local providers to reduce the waiting times and
- with partners organisations, children, young people and families to re-design the care pathways for Autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

In the meantime, we know families need support while they are waiting for and following a diagnostic assessment. So, we are also improving information available on Autism and ADHD here through the Council's 'Local Offer' website and while people wait from an appointment. Visit the website using the link below or scan the QR code.

Worcestershire Send local offer and resources

About ADHD

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental difference. It is described through behaviour, inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity. While everyone will show these behavioural traits sometimes, someone with ADHD will present with one or more of these difficulties persistently. Someone with ADHD may find it hard to sit still, concentrate and can act on impulse, all of which impacts on their everyday life.

Like everyone, people with ADHD are individuals and their experiences will be different. However, it's important to remember that the characteristics have advantages as well as challenges. The Amazing Things project have produced a number of videos about neurodivergence. Learn about ADHD through the eyes of Molly, a young person with ADHD, in the video below.

Amazing Things Project - What is ADHD video

What to do if you think your child might have ADHD

Getting support at the earliest stage without the need for a diagnosis is really important to help you and your child. While ADHD-like symptoms are found in many people some of the time, in people with ADHD they are;

- severe
- constant over time
- lead to clinically significant impairments in daily functioning.

The patterns of behaviour are usually more extreme than seen in children at a similar age of development. Symptoms of ADHD will be present across multiple environments and settings, such as home and in education settings.

If you think your child may have ADHD, talk to a health, education or social care professional. They can help you consider if your child might be showing signs of ADHD. These are different from one person to another but may include any of the following:

- Hyperactivity - Unable to sit still, fidgety, fiddling with things and problems with sleep
- Inattention - Difficulties concentrating, disorganised, forgetful and struggle to complete tasks
- Impulsivity - Speaking out and acting without thinking, interrupting others, difficulties waiting their turn

The professional should work with you to put in place adjustments or strategies to help meet the needs of your child and help them focus more. These are made as part of a graduated response of support and are a combination of academic adjustments made in an education setting and strategies to try at home to help daily life. It may also involve small adjustments

made to usual school processes that make the child's life easier, or onward referral to services that provide support. What this looks like is different for every young person. Visit the websites below for more information on the graduated response for both Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

- Worcestershire Graduated Response for Neurodivergent Children & Young People.
- Herefordshire Graduated Response

Help for you

Being a parent carer of a child or young person with additional needs comes with extra challenges! It can also be frustrating while you are waiting for your appointment, not knowing where to turn next. There are however, online resources, workshops and parent support groups that you can access while you are waiting. To help support parent and carers the resources here on the Local Offer and parenting workshops cover subjects other parents have found useful. You don't have to wait to have a diagnosis to access these workshops for parents and carers:

- Starting Well Partnership parenting workshops and courses: Parenting workshops, course and groups
- Parenting groups and courses based in Herefordshire: Herefordshire parenting groups and courses
- A directory of support groups for parents and carers based in Worcestershire: Worcestershire groups for parents and carers
- SENDIASS provide free training for parents and carers to increase knowledge of SEND law, guidance, local policy, issues and participation

ADHD Assessment

In this section we explain the steps towards an ADHD assessment in Worcestershire. ADHD assessment and diagnosis is undertaken within Worcestershire Community Paediatric Service.

How a child/young person is referred for a diagnostic assessment

Referrals can be made by parents/carers, staff working in educational settings and health professionals. Parents/carers and professionals will need to work together to complete the same referral form. You can see a copy of this form using the link below:

Community Paediatrics ADHD Referral Forms

A referral should be made only once reasonable steps have already been made to support the young person and family in line with the Graduated Response for Neurodivergent Children & Young People. To refer a child into the Worcestershire Community Paediatric Service for an ADHD assessment, the child must meet the below criteria:

- Registered with a Worcestershire GP
- Aged between 5½ - 17 years and 6 months
- Showing core symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity or impulsivity for at least 6 months
- The symptoms must be persistent at home and in school
- The symptoms must be impacting the child's ability to carry out day-to-day tasks*

To understand this, the assessment team require some detailed information to begin the process. The information provided forms part of the child/young person's assessment if they are accepted for the assessment pathway. The information consists of the following parts and all of these need to be completed in full before the referral can be considered:

- A referral form with sections completed by parent/carer and education setting (or alternative setting if the child does to attend school)
- Last school report and educational psychology report if available.
- An age-appropriate consent form

Where a child/young person does not attend an education setting, it is useful but not essential, to get a report from another setting the child goes to such as an activity or sports club. This helps the assessment team to understand how the child/young person presents in different situations.

What happens next

The information provided will be assessed by a member of the ADHD Community Paediatrics Team and a decision made to either:

- Continue to a diagnostic assessment. An appointment will be sent to you for an assessment

- Ask for further information. Sometimes this happens if the information supplied by home or school is not detailed enough, in which case the team will ask for additional information. The team may also think a QB test would be helpful. A QB test is a computer-based test that combines attention and impulse control measurements with activity recordings collected by an infra-red camera. Your child's results are compared with a group of children of the same age and gender, who do not have ADHD
- Decline a referral if the information doesn't show a need for further assessment. In this case, the Team will suggest referral to other services that would better meet your child's needs

Initial Appointment

Once accepted, an initial appointment will be held with you and your child and the clinician will decide if any further assessments are needed to help understand your child's needs better. If needed, further assessments would be carried out by the appropriate professionals and tailored to the individual needs of your child. These could include:

- A neurodevelopmental history
- Standardised questionnaires

Not all these assessments / interventions will be required the clinician will decide which ones are most appropriate for your child.

This might also involve consideration of co-occurring or alternative explanations for the young person's areas of difference (e.g. medical/genetic needs, attachment, or the impact of difficult life events they may have encountered).

The Diagnostic Assessment

The Neurodevelopmental Team will consider the evidence collected and a diagnosis of ADHD will be considered. The final decision will always include a Senior Clinician. A diagnosis of ADHD may or may not be given.

Feedback Appointment

An assessment report will be produced detailing your child's strengths, areas of challenge and strategies to support daily life (home/education). A face-to-face appointment will be held with the child, young person and their family to go through the feedback and the assessment report. This will involve a discussion about the strategies most suitable to support your child at home and in an education setting. Medication options may also be discussed.

Choosing A Different Provider

In England under the NHS, you now have a legal right to choose a different provider of Autism / ADHD assessments, this is called Patient Choice and sometimes Right to Choose. This means that, should you decide the waiting time for your assessment is too long, then you can choose to leave the NHS waiting list and go to an alternative provider. The provider must supply the service to the NHS somewhere in England. Your GP can advise you on which providers are able to offer Patient Choice assessments and refer you.

For more information, see the Right to Choose section of this booklet.

Planned Improvements to Diagnostic Services

Over recent years there has been a dramatic increase in referrals for paediatric diagnostic assessments for ADHD and Autism. Referrals for assessment have grown by over 250% from the pre-pandemic levels. Demand for local services currently exceeds capacity and steps are being taken to address this. NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire is working closely with:

- local providers to reduce the waiting times and
- with partners organisations, children, young people and families to re-design the care pathways for Autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, bringing them into one Autism and ADHD Care Pathway linked to mental health support

In the meantime, we know families need support while they are waiting for and following a diagnostic assessment. So, we are also improving information available on Autism and ADHD here through the Council's 'Local Offer' website and while people wait from an appointment. Visit the websites using the link below.

Worcestershire Send local offer and resources

Right to Choose

What is Right to Choose?

Every patient in England has the right to choose an alternative NHS commissioned provider of health services:

- at the point of referral; or
- where the waiting list for the referred service is longer than 18 weeks.

However, a patient cannot use Right to Choose to obtain a second opinion.

Right to Choose applies to autism and ADHD assessments for children under 18s. Details of the national policy, including some exclusions, are set out in NHS Choice Framework - what choices are available to you in your NHS care - GOV.UK

How to Access Right to Choose?

Only your child's GP can make a Right to Choose referral.

You cannot refer direct, neither can a school or any other service. Any direct referral made will not be funded by the NHS.

Accredited Providers

The Integrated Care Board (ICB) has accredited some providers for ADHD and for Autism. Your child's GP has a list of these you can choose from.

Accredited providers are all required to:

- Conform to the ICB's agreed specification
- Be compliant with NICE guidelines
- Provide information to the ICB on who has been assessed
- Comply with the ICB's invoicing arrangements
- Take part in quality assurance audits

The following organisations recognise that accredited providers as providing assessments to the required standard. Accreditation is your guarantee of quality for your child.

- Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust
- Herefordshire Council
- Worcestershire County Council

Please note some websites (like ADHD UK) have their own lists. However, nearly all of these are not accredited by the ICB. So, please ask your child's GP.

Under 18s ADHD Accredited Right to Choose Providers:

The following providers are accredited by the ICB (as of January 2026) to undertake assessments for ADHD for children age 6 to 17. Please confirm with your GP if this list is still current.

(In alphabetical order):

- Medinet Minds
- Midlands ADHD Centre
- Oxford CBT
- The Family Psychologist
- The Owl Centre
- Vertis Health

Accredited providers must assess the child in person (face-to-face). This means they physically see the child. All providers are expected to make reasonable adjustments to ensure this can happen in the most appropriate and supportive way. **The ICB does not endorse any virtual assessment.**

Accredited providers are not allowed to start medication. This is because it's a significant and sometimes high-risk treatment for a child. As such, it should be overseen and managed by a multi-disciplinary team. If medication could be the right treatment for your child, the provider will refer them directly to Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust.

Please note that your child's GP will not take over prescribing of medication. This is on the advice of the Local Medical Committee. The NHS funds medication prescribed by Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust. If prescribed elsewhere, you will need to privately pay.

Under 18s Autism Accredited Right to Choose Providers:

The following providers are accredited by the ICB (as of January 2026) to undertake assessments for Autism for children age 5 to 17. Please confirm with your GP if this list is still current.

(In alphabetical order):

- Medinet Minds
- Oxford CBT
- The Family Psychologist
- The Owl Centre
- Vertis Health

Accredited providers must assess the child in person (face-to-face). This means they physically see the child. All providers are expected to make reasonable adjustments to ensure this can happen in the most appropriate and supportive way. The ICB does not endorse any virtual assessment.

Can I choose a provider who is not accredited?

You can, as it's your choice. You can choose any provider that has a 'qualifying contract' with another ICB. However, not choosing one that's accredited has two main risks (explained below). It is important you understand this before making your choice. If you have any questions, please ask your GP.

The assessment: The NHS or other partners may not accept the assessment as good enough quality. It needs to show evidence that your child has autism and or ADHD. However, this relies on a good quality assessment. If this does not happen, getting your child the right support will take longer. They may also need to go through the assessment process again.

ADHD Medication: ADHD assessments sometimes suggest medication as a suitable treatment choice. When this happens, accredited providers will refer children directly to Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust (HWHCT). This is because they cannot start children on medication, but HWHCT can. You can read more about why this is in the next section. HWHCT only accept assessments that suggest medication from accredited providers. Using a provider that is not will mean your child can't access this treatment.

In summary, it is better to choose an accredited provider for your child. This helps ensure a quality assessment and access to the right treatment, if needed.

Local Authority Services

Local Authority services are those services provided by local councils in Worcestershire.

SEND Local Offer

The SEND Local Offer brings together information about local services and support available across education, health and social care for families with children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This includes:

- childcare
- independent schools or colleges
- care placements
- apprenticeships
- transport arrangements between home and education settings (such as nurseries, schools and learning centres)
- specialist teachers
- therapy services
- other specialist support.

The offer should detail support for both those with Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plans and those without.

Worcestershire County Council SEND Local Offer

Education Services

Many neurodiverse children and young people go to their local mainstream school. A small number may need specialist provision and will go to a special school or autism resource base.

All schools in Herefordshire and Worcestershire should follow a graduated response to supporting autistic children and young people and those with ADHD. It describes the approach that schools and other settings should take when supporting a child or young person with Special Education Needs.

Worcestershire: The SEND Graduated Response

Schools also have to make reasonable adjustments under the Disability Discrimination Act. You can read more about this on the Department for Education website below.

Department for Education website

SEND Support in Education

Most neurodiverse children and young people will access education through a mainstream early years provider, school or college/post-16 provider. The SEND Code of Practice (2015) gives guidance on how SEND is identified and supported in Early years (Chapter 5), Schools (Chapter 6) and Further Education (Chapter 7). It also includes information about reasonable adjustments, "Preparing for Adulthood" and Education Health and Care plans (EHCP).

SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years

Education settings, including early years providers, schools, and colleges, all have a duty to identify and support children and young people who have or may have SEND. Much of this support will at first, come from teachers and staff in the school itself. This will be co-ordinated by a SENCO (Special Educational Needs' Co-ordinator). However, there may be times that settings need additional support to help them identify needs or provision.

Worcestershire Local Authorities offer specialist services to settings. Most of these are "traded" services, meaning that the settings pay for them to carry out their work. When discussing your child's SEND, it may be useful to find out if any of these services will be involved. Schools and colleges do not have to use these services as they can also source their own support from other specialist professionals or organisations.

Every school must also publish a "SEN Information Report". These must be published on the school's website and be available to parents.

Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC/EHCP)

An Education, Health and Care Plan is for children and young people who need extra educational support over and above what a mainstream setting is expected to provide.

If your child's school or setting can't meet your child's needs using the support they usually offer, the Local Authority may carry out a needs assessment for your child. This is called an Education Health and Care Assessment or EHC assessment. When your child's needs have been assessed a plan for meeting them may be drawn up. This plan is called an Education Health and Care Plan.

What is an Education, Health and Social Care Plan video

Find out more about applying for an EHCP for your child using the links below:

Worcestershire

EHCPs in Worcestershire

For further information contact Worcestershire County Council SEND Services directly on 01905 845579 or email: sen@worcestershire.gov.uk

Young people can undertake an Education Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA). The Local Authority will review this and decide if an EHC plan is needed based on the assessment findings. If eligible, the Local Authority will develop an EHC Plan. The plan will identify the educational, health and social needs and additional support needed. Young people aged 16 to 25 can ask for an assessment themselves.

- Department of Education Guidance on EHCPs
- Independent Provider of Special Education Advice (IPSEA) Guidance of EHCPs
- SENDIASS guidance for SEND Support and EHCPs | Worcestershire County Council

SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)

SENDIASS offers impartial and confidential Special Educational Needs and Disability information, advice and support for parents/carers, children and young people. SENDIASS does not take sides. They aim to offer a wide range of services to help families make informed decisions which enable them to take an active role in the education of their child/young person.

- SENDIASS Herefordshire and Worcestershire
- sendiass@worcestershire.gov.uk
- 01905 768153

Elective Home Education

All parents have the option to consider Elective Home Education. This is where a parent is responsible for providing education for their child. If you are considering whether this is the best solution for a child, a good place to start is the information provided by the Local Authority's Elective Home Education officer. SENDIASS also provide A Guide to Elective Home Education from SENDIASS

Please keep in mind there is no financial support available when you home educate.

Home education and flexi-schooling | Worcestershire County Council

Alternative Provision

Some schools can look at alternative provisions for some students. This might be on a short-term or longer-term basis. There are generally more options for secondary-aged pupils. Alternative provisions are normally used where a pupil cannot go to a mainstream school. This may be due to exclusion, medical difficulties or another reason.

Worcestershire has six alternative provider settings. Go to the 'Alternative Provision' section of the webpage below for a list of these, and information.

Alternative provision in Worcestershire.

Specialist School Provision

Many autistic children and young people go to their local mainstream school. A small number may need specialist provision and will go to a special school or autism resource base. Specialist school provision is only accessible to those pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). This includes all maintained special schools and any non-maintained independent schools. There are also some Enhanced Resource Bases, which are attached to mainstream schools and support young people with speech and language needs, autism social and communication needs and hearing impairments.

Both counties have several specialist education establishments with specific entry criteria for children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP): Use the links below to find out more.

Worcestershire: Find a school or specialist education provision

See page 19 for information on Education, Health and Care Plans.

Transitions to primary school, secondary school and Further/Higher education

Moving from one educational setting to another can be a worrying time for children and young people and their parent carers. It is important that you talk to the staff at your child or young person's current setting to make sure that transition to the next phase of education is a positive experience for everyone.

You may find the following resources from the National Autistic Society useful.

Pre-school to primary transitions for autistic children

Preparing autistic children and young people to start or switch to a new school

For learners with complex communication needs, the Autism and Complex Communication Team at Worcestershire County Council have developed downloadable (and editable) resources to support transition between settings (Early Years to Primary, Primary to High etc.) and within settings.

These resources, though designed to help the settings, can be used at home to help support your children during transition. They can be adapted to suit you and help to make transition more planned and successful. The resources include Pupil passports, Sensory profiles, School information booklets, Calming strategies etc. You can find them halfway down the webpage below, under the **Resource: School Transition** section.

Communication and interaction

Exclusion

The Independent Provider of Special Education Advice (IPSEA) have a section on their website about exclusions. It has useful advice about what schools should do, what parents can do if their child is at risk of exclusion and information about the law. It is not specific to neurodiversity, but you may find it useful..

Independent Provider of Special Education Advice website.

Preparing for Adulthood

Planning or preparing for adulthood is a term used to describe the period of time in your life when you move from being a child to a young adult. It helps to start thinking about this transition early. If you have an education, health and care plan (EHCP), this preparation should be included in your annual review from year 9.

Worcestershire County Council Preparing for adulthood.

Health Services

Your child may have been recently diagnosed or is on the way to being diagnosed, and you are introduced into a new world of health services you didn't know existed. It can be confusing to know who all the different health professionals are. To help we have a created a list of the different services, with links to the relevant pages on websites.

The Herefordshire and Worcestershire NHS Health and Care Trust provide mental health and learning disability services across both counties. The trust works with a range of partners to support children, young people, and families.

Starting Well Worcestershire

The Starting Well Service brings together teams of staff who provide help and support to parents, families, children and young people across Worcestershire. We have six teams working out of our Family Hubs located in districts across the county. For more information, follow the links below.

Starting well website

Information about family hubs

Below are some of the staff that make up the Family Hub teams.

- Health Visitors
- Parenting Support Workers
- Community Nursery Nurses
- School Health Nurses
- Health Care Assistants
- Volunteer Coordinators
- Community Health Connectors
- Business Support Officers and Administrators

They provide support, advice and clinics from our Family Hubs, community spaces, schools and GP surgeries. Our teams include staff from Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust, Barnardos, Redditch and Bromsgrove District Councils and Action for Children. More information about the partnership and organisations can be found on the about us page at the link below.

Starting Well website

Community Paediatric Team

The Community Paediatric Team are Specialist Children's Doctors (Paediatricians) and Advanced Clinical Practitioners who have experience in child health between 0 to 18 years. They see children in a community setting and provide ongoing care if there is a clinical need. They complete clinical assessments for children and young people with long-term disability, developmental delay, neurodevelopmental conditions for example, ADHD and Autism.

Worcestershire

Read more about the Community Paediatric Team in Worcestershire

Read Community Paediatric Team frequently asked questions

You may find these resources for families and young people helpful: Useful resources

The best way to contact the team is using the online form: Community Paediatric Contact Request Form (office.com). The numbers below can still be used by parents, carers and professionals. They are open from 9am to 11am and 2pm to 4pm.

Medical Admin Team

Phone: 01905 520666

Email: whcnhs.commpaeds@nhs.net

Appointments Team

Phone: 01905 681071

Email: for queries about new referrals please contact: whcnhs.access.commpaeds@nhs.net. For queries about appointments please contact: whcnhs.commpaedsappts@nhs.net

School Nursing

School Nursing supports school age children, young people and their families. They deliver the Healthy Child programme 4-19, working to identify and meet the health and wellbeing needs of the school age population and encouraging them to take responsibility for their own health and to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Parents can call the School Nurses to discuss any child health concerns they may have.

School Nursing Service in Worcestershire

Health Visiting

Health Visitors work with families to improve health outcomes, and provide expert information, assessment and intervention for babies, children and families. Health Visitors are qualified nurses or midwives who have an additional degree or post-graduate diploma in Specialist Community Public Health Nursing. They have had specialist training in child development and health promotion and can support families to prevent illness and to promote good health.

Worcestershire

A member of the Health Visiting team carries out development checks when your child is aged 9 to 12 months old and then again when they are between two and two and a half. These reviews give you the opportunity to talk about any of your concerns. However, if you are worried about something, you don't have to wait until the next development check. You can contact your child visitor at any time until your child is five. Members of the Health Visiting team can make referrals to other health services, where appropriate.

Health visiting service in Worcestershire

01905 520032

Community Support

There are lots of local and national organisations that can provide information, advice and support for neurodivergent children and young people and their families.

Herefordshire and Worcestershire SENDIASS have a dedicated team of advisors offering legally based and easily accessible information and advice about special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). They offer support for parents, carers, children and young people with SEND and the service is impartial and confidential

Herefordshire and Worcestershire SENDIASS website

Information on support for SEND children, young people and their families can be found on the local council website:

Worcestershire: Support for SEND children, young people and their families | Worcestershire County Council

MIND

MIND have a variety of services to ensure everyone with a mental health problem gets the support they need and respect they deserve. This could mean having access to information, courses for you and your employer, a listening ear, or more specialist support and services to help someone to live and recover from their mental health problem.

Coventry, Warwickshire and Worcestershire (CWW)

CWW MIND website

01789 298615

enquires@swwmind.org.uk

Peer Support

Peer support groups available locally enable you to connect with people with similar experiences. You don't necessarily need to live in the area to join these.

Worcestershire

Search a directory of support groups for parents and carers. Some of these are aimed at parents and carers of neurodivergent children and young people.

Worcestershire Directory of Support Groups for Parents and Carers

Aurum Autism Support (girls only) is an organisation that provides support groups and mentoring for autistic women and girls.

Aurum Autism Support website

Autism Kids Worcestershire is a closed Facebook group. A friendly and welcoming group for parents and carers of children with autism spectrum disorders that live within Worcestershire.

Autism Kids Worcester Facebook group

DizzKidz is a sports club for autistic children and young people (aged between 5 and 18 years old) and those with dyspraxia.

Dizzkidz website

North Worcestershire Autism Support Group is a local, friendly support group for parents/carers living with Autism.

North Worcestershire Autism Parents Support Group Facebook page

South Worcestershire Additional Needs Support Group (SWANS) is a friendly parental support group for children with additional needs (diagnosed or undiagnosed).

SWANS (South Worcestershire Additional Needs Support) Facebook page

Worcester

Aspie is a social, support and therapy group for adults with Asperger's/autism (aspies). They provide a centre in Worcester where aspies feel welcome and accepted.

Aspie website

Monday Nite Club is a social club for adults with a learning disability and autistic people.

The Monday Night Club website

The Thursday Nite Club is a social club for adults with a learning disability and autistic people.

Thursday Nite Club information

Worcester Disability Football Club (5-17, 18+) provides opportunities for all those with special needs in Worcestershire to play football.

Worcester Disability Football Club Facebook page

Malvern

Sky Autism are a local charity based in Malvern which aims to help Autistic people and their families offering social groups and support. There is a 10-17 youth group and an 18+ group.

Sky Autism website

Malvern Special Families are a specialist provider of safe, stimulating, and fun social opportunities for children and young people with disabilities aged 5-18 years.

Malvern Special Families website

Redditch

Your Ideas A Non-Profit making youth and community organisation based in Redditch, Worcestershire.

Your Ideas website

Parent Peer Support

Information, support and online groups which have been recommended to Worcestershire County Council as ones which other parents and carers have found useful.

Support groups for parents and carers

Worcestershire Parent Carer Forum uses parental voice to influence change through

events, discussion groups and working groups. We gather the views of local families and work with the council, educational settings, health providers and other agencies to highlight where local services are working well, or challenge when changes or improvements need to be made.

Worcestershire Parent Carer Forum

Worcestershire County Council: See the website below to find out what guidance and support if available if you look after someone or if you are a carer.

Looking after someone (Carer support)

National Support

Action for Children is a UK charity which has a website dedicated to supporting parents. They have a section where you can learn about different types of additional needs and disabilities in children. Read about autism, ADHD and executive functioning disorder.

Understanding additional needs

Family Carer Support Service (FCSS) is a free information and support service for family carers with an autistic relative or a relative with a learning disability. To access their service, the family carers relative must be aged 16 years or older and living in England.

Family Carer Support Service (FCSS)

Mind provides information and support for those experiencing a range of mental health problems. Their Infoline provides an information and signposting service. You can contact the Infoline by text. Opening hours are Monday – Friday 9am – 6pm (except for Bank Holidays).

MIND website

Phone: 0300 123 3393

Email : info@mind.org.uk

Childline will help children and young people when they are feeling overwhelmed and need to talk. Sometimes it helps to speak to someone outside the family and / or. Childline also provides an alternative of someone to talk to when other family members, teachers or friends might not be available. All calls are strictly confidential.

Childline website

Ask Sam webpage

Call 0800 1111

Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust has a wide variety of self-help leaflets for mental health and wellbeing. They are available in many formats (including translations, BSL, video, audio).

Mental Health Self-Help webpage

Family Lives can support families with family breakdown, challenging relationships and behaviour, debt, and emotional and mental wellbeing. The service offers support through a helpline, online chat and an email service.

Online chat is available Monday – Friday 1.30pm – 9pm. Helpline is open: Monday – Friday 9am – 9pm and Saturday/Sunday

Family Lives webpage

Family Lives Community Forum

Phone: 0808 800 2222

Email: askus@familylives.org.uk

Samaritans free, confidential service offering non-judgemental emotional support at any time of the day or night.

Samaritans webpage

Call 116 123

Email jo@samaritans.org

The Mix takes on the embarrassing problems, weird questions, and 'please- don't-make-me-say-it-out-loud' thoughts that young people have and provides support through its digital and phone services.

The Mix website

Phone: 0808 808 4994. Phone lines and chat are open 3pm-12am every day.

Crisis Messenger text: THEMIX to 85258

Young Minds provides support, information and advice for young people on mental health issues, including topics such as social media, racism, university, sexuality and gender and more. Helpline Monday - Friday 9.30am - 4pm.

Resources for parents: www.youngminds.org.uk/parent

Parent chat: www.youngminds.org.uk/parent

Phone 0808 802 5544

Helpful Websites

ADHD

The UK ADHD Partnership (UKAP) recognises ADHD as a complex but manageable condition, which can have a profound impact on individuals, families and society. They aim to support clinicians and allied professionals to identify and meet the needs of children and young people affected by this disorder.

The UK ADHD Partnership website

Autism

Ambitious about Autism is a national charity that stands with autistic children and young people, champions their rights and creates opportunities. They also deliver training and consultancy to a wide range of organisations to improve awareness and understanding of autism.

Ambitious about Autism website

Autistica is a charity which funds and campaigns for research to understand the causes of autism, improve diagnosis, and develop evidence-based tools, resources and information.

Autistica website

Child Autism UK is a charity which aims to help children with autism achieve their potential. They provide services to enable children to overcome difficulties with communication, learning and life skills and give families the techniques and strategies to cope with autism through the use of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

Child Autism UK website

National Autistic Society provide advice and guidance about autism and the challenges autistic people and their families face.

National Autistic Society website

Autism Support

These websites have lots of information about Autism which is relevant for people with or without a diagnosis. Autism Support has practical advice for managing various issues in life, at home, school and work.

- The National Autistic Society website
- Options Autism website
- Autism West Midlands website
- Autism Education Trust website
- Autistica website
- Ambitious about Autism website
- The Girl with the Curly Hair website

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

These websites are about ADHD, which is relevant for people with or without a diagnosis. ADHD Support has practical advice for managing various issues in life, at home, school and work.

- AADDUK website
- ADHD Information and Support Service (ADDISS)
- ADHD and You website
- Young Minds website
- ADHD UK website
- Adult ADHD UK website

Community Support Needs and Information

Parent carers of neurodivergent children and young people have told us that it can sometimes be hard to find their way round all of the information available.

Below are some of the common themes that parent and carers often identify as wanting support with, and links to further reading or sources of support.

You can access this information and resources, whether you have a diagnosis, you are seeking a diagnosis, identify as neurodivergent, or just exploring.

Feelings and Self-control

Worrying and Anxiety

Anxiety can feel overwhelming and can be triggered by simple things such as an unexpected change in your child's day or routine. Anxiety is made up of thoughts and feelings that can be manifested physically. Examples of this include feeling sick or crying or through observable behaviours such as stimming. Watch the video below for a very simple explanation of what anxiety is.

What is anxiety video

The following resources may help you to understand more about your child's anxiety and give you strategies to support them when they are feeling anxious.

Autistica explains signs and symptoms of anxiety and what you can do to help.

Signs and symptoms of anxiety

Anxiety UK is a charity formed for those affected by anxiety disorders. It is led by sufferers and ex-sufferers of anxiety disorders. The charity aims to respond to texts or email within one working day. Phone support is available Monday to Friday 9:30am to 5:30pm.

03444 775774 or 07537 416905

Support@anxietyuk.org.uk

Anxiety UK website

Childline has advice on anxiety, stress and panic.

Childline website

The Mix has information about anxiety, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and phobias.

The Mix website

The National Autistic Society has information about anxiety.

National Autistic Society website

The NHS has advice for parents about anxiety in children as well as talking to your children and/or teenager about feelings

.Advice for parents from the NHS

Child Mind Institute has information on autism and stimming. It explains what's behind this self-soothing behaviour and how parents can help children avoid stimming that might be harmful to them.

Childmind website

Ambitious about Autism explains repetitive behaviours and stimming and explain how this can be an essential way of regulating emotion.

Ambitious about Autism website

Behaviour

Behaviours often communicate a need. Children and young people with neurodevelopmental differences or emotional regulation difficulties may not always be able to understand or explain how they are feeling. They may express their feelings in ways that challenge us as parents and carers. We need to be able to take a step back to work out what they might be struggling with so we can best respond and help them.

The Newbold Hope is a small, parent-led organisation which was set up by Yvonne Newbold MBE. They offer training, support and resources for dealing with challenging behaviour.

Newbold Hope website

Lives in the Balance is the website of Ross Greene, the author of The Explosive Child. It has parent-friendly ways to manage difficult behaviours around change.

Lives in the balance website

Explosive kids video

The Explosive Child by Ross Greene

Cerebra has a parent's guide to emotional outbursts.

Cerebra website

The National Autistic Society provides a range of helpful advice and information about managing meltdowns.

National Autistic Society website

Ambitious about Autism publishes a guide to meltdowns and shutdowns and how to support someone when it happens.

Ambitious about autism website

Thriving with ADHD parent resources include minimising meltdowns, listening with empathy and fostering self-esteem.

Parental resources

Emotional self-regulation

Family Lives has information and a useful video about managing aggression in children and teenagers.

Challenging behaviour

Teen violence at home

Act for Autism has produced some videos to demonstrate calming techniques and relaxation strategies for children and young people with autism.

Strategies for children with autism video

Kids want to know has an animated video for children.

Why do we lose control of our emotions? video

Reading:

A Volcano in my Tummy is about learning to understand and manage extreme emotions, anxiety and anger through activities, stories, articles, and games.

Mood and Enjoyment

Some children who are neurodivergent may have difficulty in identifying and expressing their feelings. However, all children and young people will go through some big changes in their lives that can affect them in different ways. We may not realise how hard this can be for some children. If a child or young person has additional needs, they may find it difficult to express how they are feeling.

More information on looking after mental health can be found on the local websites below.

Melo :: Onside, Worcestershire & Herefordshire

CAMHS Resources contains resources for young people, carers and professionals to support mental health and well-being.

CAMHS resources website

Raising Children has published an online article on building confidence in autistic children and teenagers:

Raising children article

Kids Health explains what depression is, how to recognise it and ways to help.

Coping with Sad Feelings

Managing Sad Feelings

Understanding Depression

The Mix has information and advice about depression here:

The Mix website

Young Minds has published a guide to depression, which can be found here:

Young Minds guide to depression

Sweet Treats video is a short film for young children:

When I'm feeling sad video

Fixers for teens

Lies my anxiety tells me video

Reading:

Don't be sad, Sam: It's OK (You Choose) by Lisa Regan is aimed at younger children. This book is an illustrated story of Sam as he finds himself in situations that make him feel sad and there are three ways he can act in every situation.

Banish Your Self-Esteem Thief: A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook on Building Positive Self-Esteem for Young People by Kate Collins-Donnelly, has activities and real-life stories to help children and young people to understand self-esteem and build positive self-esteem.

Flexibility

Coping with change can be hard for some children and young people, which may create heightened anxiety where feelings are expressed physically and emotionally.

The National Autistic Society offers useful advice on dealing with changes to routines.

Dealing with change

Going on holiday

CBeebies offers great tips on helping young children deal with change.

CBeebies tips on helping children deal with change

Raising Children has guidance on helping children and teenagers with planning and preparing for a change in routine, which can be found here:

Raising Children website

Autism West Midlands has some useful visual resources which you can access below.

Travelling through Birmingham Airport

Visual resources

Too much information and Us explains the problems experienced by some autistic people Useful for parents, carers and to help teenagers to start a discussion about their own problems.

Unexpected Change video

Managing Impulses and Urges

Impulses are often involuntary and can be difficult to control. Impulses and compulsions can become obsessive and at times, your child may act on these impulses in order to feel some relief.

In the case of self-harm, there is often a bigger, underlying reason that prompts the self-harm. This can be very concerning for parents, carers and the child themselves. In these situations, we would encourage you to seek additional support. The links below may be able to support you with this:

Kids want to Know animation for children.

Why do we lose control of our emotions? video

Childline has information on self-harm, which can be found here:

Childline website

Harmless offers support to people who self-harm, their friends, families and those supporting them.

Harmless website

National Self-Harm Network is a survivor-led organisation offering an online support forum and information about self-harm.

National Self-Harm Network website

The Mix provides information and advice around self-harm for young people.

The Mix website

Stem4 is an organisation that supports positive mental health in teenagers.

Stem4 website

Calm Harm is an app designed to help people resist or manage the urge to self-harm. It's private and password protected.

Calm Harm website

Young Minds has a series of videos to help people understand self-harm better.

Responding to self-harm video

A parent's journey video

Things can change video

You Tubers Luke Cutforth and Evan Edinger talk about self-harm, health and happiness.

Coping with self-harm video

It's okay to be NOT okay video

Tourette's Action supports children and adults with Tourette's syndrome.

Support for young people

Support for co-occurring symptoms

Tourette's Hero celebrates the humour and creativity of Tourette's syndrome.

Tics

Letter to a teacher

Videos on Tourette's

A day with my Tourette's

More self-help information for anxiety and anger can be found earlier in this section.

Relating to People

Relationships with Parents or Carers

Some children may struggle with separation anxiety. While this is quite normal in young children, neurodivergent people may continue to struggle with this as they get older. This can be due to several factors including their desire for routine, predictability and familiarity.

MindEd for Families offers comprehensive information about what attachment is, how to sport the issues, how it may present and tips on how to cope when your child presents with attachment issues.

MindEd for Families website

The NHS outlines why separation anxiety occurs and provides tips for separation anxiety, particularly for young children.

NHS website

Anxiety Cananda has information about separation anxiety and how it can affect children of different ages. They also have audio stories.

Anxiety Canada webpage on separation anxiety

Anxiety Canada webpage on separation anxiety disorder

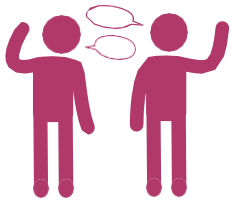
Reading: Attachment books are useful to help your child's teachers understand more about attachment and learning.

Teenagers and Attachment. Helping adolescents engage with life and learning Edited by Andrea Perry.

Attachment in the Classroom: The links between children's early experience, emotional well-being and performance in school: A Practical Guide for Schools by Heather Geddes.

Inside I'm Hurting: Practical Strategies for Supporting Children with Attachment Difficulties in Schools by Louise Bomber.

Social communication



Neurodivergent children can often struggle with their social interaction and communication. This means they may find it difficult to understand facial expressions, body language and maintain eye contact. They may also struggle with understanding social cues and maintaining or initiating conversation with their peers or adults.

The Friendship Circle has 12 activities to develop social skills such as eye contact, idioms, interpreting facial expressions and staying on topic. These can be found here:

12 activities to help your child with social skills

Everyday Speech has lots of videos on how to relate to other people and understand interactions. There are games and quizzes as well as video explanations.

Everyday Speech Channel

Think it or Say it video

TED Talk

Autism Playlist

10 ways to have a better conversation video

Brain in Hand is a subscription service which has an app to promote independence and to offer personally designed support to the user. It is more suited to older children and young people.

Brain in Hand website

Sexual or Sexualised Behaviour

Neurodivergent children can often struggle with their social interaction and communication. This means they may find it difficult to understand facial expressions, body language and maintain eye contact. They may also struggle with understanding social cues and maintaining or initiating conversation with their peers or adults.

Worcestershire County Council have a page on the SEND Local Offer about puberty. Even if you live in Herefordshire, you will find a number of resources on there to help you explain about puberty, self-care and sex.

Worcestershire County Council webpage on puberty

Think U Know has information and advice for parents who are concerned about their child, and presents information about sexual abuse, sex, relationships, and internet use.

CEOP Education website

Respect Yourself has information suitable for children, teenagers and parents, with advice and support to deal with issues that arise from sexting incidents.

Respect Yourself website

The National Autistic Society has useful information for people with autism and their carers.

National Autistic Society website

The NHS offers a range of contraception and sexual health services including pregnancy testing and testing for sexually transmitted diseases.

Worcestershire Integrated Sexual Health Service (WISH) work with young people who cannot or aren't able to access mainstream services. They currently only accept professional referrals - https://www.hacw.nhs.uk/knowyourstuff/

Reading:

10 tips to support children with autism through puberty, adolescence and beyond. A blog by Davida Hartman.

An exceptional children's guide to touch by Hunter Manasco. A child-friendly picture book that explains how to tell the difference between acceptable and inappropriate touch.

Making sense of sex: A forthright guide to sex, puberty and relationships for people with Asperger's Syndrome by Sarah Attwood. This is a good book with information about relationships and sex that would suit people who need very clear information.

Offending behaviour

Neurodivergent children may experience high levels of frustration and may struggle with impulse control, which sometimes can result in impulsive and violent behaviour. This may include violence towards family members or damaging property, which can be very distressing for them and those around them.

Neurodivergent children can also sometimes be more vulnerable to negative influences including becoming involved in offending behaviour, or for example, substance misuse.

Yvonne Newbold provides advice and courses for parents on special educational needs and disabilities, as well as violent and challenging behaviour:

Newbold Hope website

The NSPCC provides useful information for parents and carers about how to keep your child safe from drugs and alcohol and protecting them from gangs:

Drugs and alcohol

Gangs and young people

Autism West Midlands offers an Autism Alert Card recognised by West Midlands, West Merica and Warwickshire Police. It alerts people in authority that the individual is autistic and may has communication difficulties:

Autism West Midlands website

The Mix has information and support for older children including how to break free from crime, how to get legal aid and your rights. This can be found here:

Crime and safety

How to break free from crime

The Youth Justice Services help young people who are referred to them by the justice system with their offending behaviours.

Youth Justice Service website

Fixers

Behind the scenes of youth offending video

Urging young people not to get involved in crime video

Music helped me break away from crime video

Friendships

Neurodivergent children may find it difficult to initiate and/or maintain social relationships with their peers. This is an area that many neurodivergent children struggle with because of difficulties with following social cues, maintaining eye contact, staying on 'topic' and seeing things from others' points of view. This can be very challenging for them and may feel isolating.

There are a number of community peer support groups in Herefordshire and Worcestershire which can be found in Section 2: Peer support

Ambitious About Autism have tips about making friends as an autistic child or young person.

- Top tips about making friends as an autistic child or young person.
- Top tips about making friends as an autistic child or young person (Easy read version).

The Prince's Trust offers courses for young people up to 30 years old, with the aim of empowering them to get into jobs, education and training:

- Princes Trust website

Kidscape supports children with social communication difficulties who find it hard to make friends, as well as help determining who their friends are and what is a healthy friendship.

- Kidscape website

Raising Children has information and advice about supporting your child to make friends.

- Raising children website

ChildLine has lots of advice about friends and dealing with friendship problems.

- Childline website

The Mix offers information and support for loneliness.

- The Mix website

Young Minds provide support on friends and friendships.

- Young Minds website

Family situation

While many children struggle with changes to the family environment and dynamics, children who are neurodivergent may find this even more challenging. This can be due to struggling with flexibility and adapting to changes in environments and relationships.

Childline provides useful information and advice to support with family situations, including divorce and separation. They also have a message board.

- Family relationships
- Feelings and emotions
- Issues at home and with family

The Mix is a support service for young people.

- Family life
- Housing

Talk to Frank can support young people who are worried about their parent's drug use. There is also general information about drugs and drug use. It has a 24-hour helpline that is open 7 days a week and can be contacted on the number below:

- 0300 123 6600
- Talk to Frank website

Use the search tool on the Frank website to search for drug and alcohol support in your area.

- Talk to Frank search tool

Winston's Wish has information and support for families bereaved by and coping with a serious illness.

- 08088 020 021
- Winstons Wish website

Young Minds can help young people to find the right type of support for dealing with death and loss.

Young Minds website

Our Time has information and support for children looking after a parent with a mental illness. There is also a several activities and videos which may be helpful.

Our Time website

When a parent has a mental illness video

Relationships with Siblings

We understand that siblings may find living with someone with additional needs challenging. Below are some links that may help you and your family with this:

Young Sibs provides support for brothers and sisters of disabled children and adults.

SIBS website

The National Autistic Society provides a guide for siblings of autistic people.

National Autistic Society website

Young minds has information about what young carers do, how to spot if it's getting too much and what to do about it. The site can be accessed here:

Young Minds website

Contact for families with disabled children has an article that highlights issues that may crop up for siblings of a disabled child and give tips to respond to them.

Contact for families with disabled children website

The Centre for Siblings provides useful tools and resources to support siblings.

Centre for Siblings website

Body and Health

Eating

It is common for children and young people with Neurodevelopmental differences to have difficulties at mealtimes. These difficulties include not wanting to eat the same food as others, struggling to try new and different foods, as well as limiting the amount of food they eat. There can be a variety of reasons for this including sensory differences, the need for routine, underlying anxiety, and many other more complex factors.

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust has useful tips food and eating:

Eating and drinking advice

The National Autistic Society has guides to understanding issues with eating and diet in people with autism:

National Autistic Society website

ARFID Awareness has information about Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID) and two Facebook communities to offer support:

ARFID Awareness UK website

BEAT (Beat Eating Disorders) has information on eating disorders including avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID) and Pica, a feeding disorder, in which someone eats non-food substances that has no nutritional value, such as paper, soap, paint, chalk or ice. Information can be accessed here:

ARFID

PICA

Ted-Ed has animations about food and eating:

How the food you eat affects your brain

How you know when you're full

Beyond Autism have lots of helpful information about when to be worried about your child or young person's issues around eating and how parent carers may be able to help.

Beyond Autism website

Motor Skills and Co-ordination

Neurodivergent children and young people often experience difficulties with day-today tasks that require motor skills and co-ordination such as dressing, learning to ride a bike, handwriting and sports. Difficulties with motor skills and co-ordination may not require an assessment and/or diagnosis but helping to develop these skills can really help the child or young person's self-esteem, confidence and engagement in activities.

Local Occupational Therapy Teams Advice Lines Both counties have occupational therapy teams with advice line. The service offer information, practical strategies and advice relating to difficulties in areas of self-help, play and leisure.

Occupational Therapy Advice line Worcestershire: 0300 247 0017

Tree Fu Tom is a CBeebies programme that was co-created with an occupational therapist and can help children with Co-ordination difficulties:

Cbeebies website

OT with apps provides a list of apps that can help with handwriting, a common problem for people for coordination difficulties.

OT with apps website

Sensory Responses

We all have our own sensory preferences, but we can usually manage these with strategies and choice of environment and activity. However, some sensory preferences can be overwhelming and children and young people with neurodevelopmental differences can often experience sensation more intensely and/or struggle to make sense of it and respond as expected, some people also seek out intense or unusual sensory input. It is important that people are aware of a child or young person's sensory preferences and if needed, use strategies to change the environment or task, allowing them to fully engage in everyday tasks.

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust have developed a range of videos to support your child's physical and sensory needs.

Sensory Integration Education explains sensory integration on their website below:

Sensory Integration Education website

Sensory Differences - NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde has useful resources to help you understand sensory processing and how you can support your child or young person: Joining in with Sensory Differences

Here are other useful resources about sensory processing:

- Joining in with Sensory Differences videos
- Sensory-friendly resource pack from NHS England
- Sensory processing videos from Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust

Gender Identity

Gender identity describes how a person feels about their gender. Neurodivergent children and young people may experience issues related to discomfort with gender. The following information may help you support children and young people with this.

You may find an article in Additude magazine about gender identity and ADHD interesting:

- Gender Identity and ADHD article

Mermaids supports children and young people up to 20 years old who are gender diverse, and their families, and professionals involved in their care,

- Mermaids UK website

The National Autistic Society has information about gender identity on their website, including interviews with autistic people about their gender identity.

- National Autistic Society website

Young Stonewall provides advice and support around issues of sexuality and gender.

- Stonewall website

The Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIRES) has lots of articles that could be useful to parent, carers, teachers and young people. They can be found here:

- Gender Identity Research and Education Society website

There are number of useful talks and programmes to watch on this topic:

- The gender machine video
- Just a girl video
- Becoming a trans man video.
- How I can help transgender teens become who they want to be video

Reading

- The Boy in the Dress by David Walliams
- Parrotfish by Ellen Wittlinger (teenage readers)
- 10,000 Dresses by Marus Ewert (child / teen)

Sleep

Neurodivergent children and young people can often have trouble getting to sleep and suffer with disturbed sleep. There are a range of reasons for this, including difficulties relaxing or winding down and irregular melatonin (sleep hormone) levels.

The NHS recommends keeping a sleep diary as this can identify any unusual patterns of sleep.

Cerebra's Sleep Advice Service offers support and resources for sleep difficulties.

- Cerebra website

The Autism and Complex Communication Team at Worcestershire Children First have produced a document on supporting sleep for children with ASD which you may find useful.

- Supporting sleep for children with ASD

Childline has useful advice for children and young people.

- Childline website

Health for Teens has some very useful information and advice about ways to get better sleep.

- Health for Teens website

The Mix has information and support for older children on sleep.

The Mix website

The National Autistic Society have advice for parent carers on their website.

National Autistic Society website

Young Minds provides support, information, and advice for young people under the age of 25 on sleep.

Young Minds website

Ted Talk has lots of useful videos on sleep.

What would happen if you didn't sleep? video

Why do we sleep? video

Sleep is your superpower video

What causes insomnia? video

Reading

Sleep Fairy by Janie Peterson and Macy Peterson is a children's book which teaches your child to go to sleep in their own bed. It includes explanatory notes for parents.

Using the Toilet

Establishing an independent toileting routine can be difficult for all children, however for children and young people with neurodevelopmental differences it can take longer and there may be other challenges.

The National Autistic Society has lots of useful information on toileting and smearing for parents and carers.

Toileting

Smearing

Toilet Training

Eric, the children's bowel and bladder charity, gives advice and information about tackling the challenges of bowel and bladder conditions.

Eric website

Cerebra can help if your child has difficulties with the toilet as a result of their physical, behavioural, or sensory differences.

Cerebra website

I communicate has visuals and a useful story about using the toilet.

I communicate online PDF

Contact has advice on potty/toilet training.

Potty/toilet training PDF

Family Fund gives grants to low-income families for washing machines, tumble driers or money towards the cost of bedding and clothing.

Family Fund website

Thinking and Learning

Attention and Concentration

A child or young person with ADHD is likely to struggle with self-organisation, following instructions, time awareness, attention and concentration, as well as impulse control. You may find some of the links below useful. Please note a number of these websites are about ADHD, but they are also helpful to people without a diagnosis as they have practical advice for managing various issues at home school and work. These strategies would help many young people that are struggling in these areas, whether they have a diagnosis of ADHD or not.

ADDitude has information and tips for parents across a range of topics including attention and concentration.

ADDitude website

ADHD and You has a range of practical resources to help both at home and elsewhere around planning and organisation.

ADHD and You website

The OT Toolbox has activities and courses to help with a wide variety of needs including concentration, planning and organisation.

The OT Toolbox website

Young Minds provide information for those who want more details about ADHD.

Young Minds website

St Louis Children's Hospital has videos that give advice for parents.

How to get your child's attention video

Method to get your child to listen and behave video

Audio files of relaxation techniques

Hello Psychologist

Ten ways to improve your child's concentration video

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) has produced a document to support children and young people, and their parents, with strategies around road safety. This can be accessed via the weblink below.

Teaching road safety skills to children with additional needs (PDF)

Reading

Driven To Distraction: Recognizing and Coping with Attention Deficit Disorder from Childhood Through Adulthood. By Edward Hallowell and Jogn Ratey

Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key by Jack Gantos and the other Joey Pigza stories are really entertaining and funny. Joey has ADHD and will help children to understand what it is.

Education

The Independent Provider of Special Education Advice (IPSEA) have a section on their website about exclusions. It contains useful advice about what schools should do, what parents can do if their child is at risk of exclusion and information about the law. It is not specific to neurodiversity, but you may find it useful nevertheless:

(IPSEA) Independent Provider of Special Education Advice website.

The National Autistic Society offers useful advice on dealing with change:

Transitions

Difficulties at lunch and break times

Less structured times

Different behaviour between home and school

What can I do if my child won't go to school?

Young Minds has strategies and resources on school anxiety and refusal, which can be accessed here:

Young Minds website

Anna Kennedy Online has a range of education resources and information, which can be accessed here:

Anna Kennedy Online website

Ambitious About Autism has a toolkit for young people to help autistic young people prepare for the transition to higher education or employment:

Toolkit for young people

Independent Provider of Special Education Advice (IPSEA) has information about the duties education settings to support children and young people including help in exams:

IPSEA website

Contact offers information and advice on topics across education:

Contact webpage on education in England

The Mix has information and support for under 25s on studying, which can be found here:

The Mix website

The Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) has provided information about exam stress here:

The Calm Zone website

Reading

Going Up!: The No-worries Guide to Secondary School by Jenny Alexander addresses many common anxieties that children have when moving from primary to secondary school.

Connection to Reality

Children and young people can have unusual experiences that can lead to feeling perplexed, confused and hearing voices. It is important to talk to your child to determine whether the voice your child is hearing is inside or outside their head.

This could also include seeing things, jumbled thoughts, and not feeling as though their thoughts are their own. Children and young people may also have thoughts and/or feelings that people are out to harm them or has difficulty working out what is real. This may be due to the individual ruminating to try to process what has happened in the day and replaying certain situations to make sense of them.

Psychology Today has an article about imaginary friends, which can be found here:

Psychology Today article

The Guardian has an article about children who hear voices or has visions. It is called Childhood Hallucinations are Surprisingly Common – but why?

The Guardian website

Headspace provides information and guidance about voice hearing in young people:

Headspace website

NHS CAMHS North Derbyshire has information on hearing voices in Autism:

CAMHS North Derbyshire website

Mind suggests a number of self-help techniques that may help children and young people deal with the overwhelming feeling of experiencing a loss of connection with reality. These can be found here:

MIND website

The National Autistic Society has support on obsessions and repetitive behaviours.

Autism UK website

SciFri has an easy-to-watch 'Real Guide to Imaginary Companions' where psychologists explain research tells us about imaginary friends. The videos can be accessed here:

Episode 1 video

Episode 2 video

Episode 3 video

Glossary

Language used in the booklet	Definitions
ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a condition that affects people's behaviour. People with ADHD can seem restless, may have trouble concentrating, and may act on impulse. NHS webpage on ADHD
Assessment	This is where a person meets a Health Professional, and they listen and ask the person about their current difficulties. They may also ask about their history. They will tell the person if they need to talk to other professionals, before offering something that may help them. This could include arranging for the person being assessed to see someone else who is more specialist.
Assistive Technology	Assistive technology is often used to describe products or systems that support and assist people to perform functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible
Autism	A lifelong neurodevelopmental condition that affects how a person communicates with and relates to other people, and the world around them. Being autistic means your brain works in a different way to other people's. Although there are common characteristics, each person's experience of autism is different. Autism is not a medical condition with treatments or a “cure”, but some people need support to help them with certain things. For more information read about the All-Age Autism Strategy using the link below: All-Age Autism Strategy.
Autism Spectrum Disorder	Autism is also referred to as autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Other terms used for autism include autism spectrum condition (ASC) or Asperger’s (this used to be a diagnosis but is now categorised as autism). Use of the term ‘disorder’ makes many autistic people feel like there is something wrong with them or that they need fixing. The preferred term to use is Autism.
Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD) or Dyspraxia	A condition which can affect movement, balance and coordination skills. It can also cause difficulties with planning and organising and may make everyday tasks more difficult to do. NHS webpage on developmental coordination disorder and dyspraxia

Diagnosis	A decision about what a particular illness or condition is, made by a clinician after an assessment.
Diagnostic	The process used to identify a particular illness, using a combination of signs and symptoms.
Districts (geographical areas)	Worcestershire is subdivided into 6 districts, for which there is an independent district council responsible for local services. These are Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch, Worcester, Wychavon and Wyre Forest.
Eligibility Criteria	A set of requirements that must be met for someone to be considered eligible for something.
Emotion regulation	Emotion regulation is a term generally used to describe a person's ability to effectively manage and respond to an emotional experience. Thriving with ADHD webpage on emotional dysregulation
Exclusion (school)	School exclusion is when a child is removed from school, either on a temporary or permanent basis for disciplinary reasons. For more local information, see the webpage below. Worcestershire County Council website
Impartial	Someone who is impartial is not directly involved in a particular situation and is therefore able to give a fair opinion or decision about it.
Interoception	Interoception is the feeling of knowing what is going on inside our body, like recognising hunger, body temperature and pain.
Intervention	An intervention is a short-term focused teaching approach that will typically have a specific set of outcomes that have been planned for a child with additional needs.
Mainstream	A mainstream school is any school that principally meets the needs of pupils who do not have special educational needs.
Masking	Hiding or minimising autistic traits to appear less autistic. National Autistic Society webpage on masking
Meltdown	A meltdown is an intense response which happens when a person's mind or body becomes overwhelmed by their current situation, and they temporarily lose control of their behaviour. National Autistic Society webpage on meltdowns
Multidisciplinary Team Meeting (MDT)	A meeting where relevant healthcare professionals, who may have different expertise, will review all the evidence obtained from the assessments. A decision will then be made as to whether a person meets the criteria needed for a diagnosis.
Neurodivergent	Having a brain that is built significantly differently from most others. This term is used to describe a range of conditions and differences, including autism, ADHD, developmental Coordination disorder (Dyspraxia) etc.

Neurodiverse	All brains, autistic or not, are neurodiverse, as all brains have subtle differences.
Neurodiversity	Neurologies that exist in the world are included and valued equally. “Below are a few different website links and videos explaining some of these views and definitions. Please choose the ones you feel are most relevant for you. Webpage on understanding terminology Explanation for children video Explanation for Adults video Explained by a Clinician video
Neurotype	Neurotypes are groupings of similar brain structures. OR A type of brain, in terms of how a person interprets and responds to social cues, etc.
Paediatrician	Paediatricians are doctors who specialise in medical conditions affecting children and young people
Peer Support	Peer support is when people use their own experiences to help each other.
Personalised	Means that something has been created to meet the individual needs of a specific person
Pica	"Pica is defined as an abnormal craving for non-food substances such as dirt, grass, paint, or clay.”
Provider	A person or thing that is giving a service.
Psychiatrist	Psychiatrists are medical doctors who are experts in mental health. They specialise in diagnosing and treating people with mental illness.
Reasonable Adjustment	Changes that can be made that allow people with disabilities or health conditions to access the same opportunities and services as everyone else, where possible.
Self-harm	Self-harm is when somebody intentionally damages or injures their body.
Self-referral	Self-referral means people are able to refer themselves to a health service without having to see their GP first.
Sensory Response	A sensory response is how we react to the signals our senses send to our brain. Neurodivergent people often over or under react to these signals.
Shutdown	Shutdowns are a response to a person feeling overwhelmed. Their brain goes into a protective mode, where it ‘shuts off’ for an undetermined amount of time. Individuals experiencing shutdown may not feel able to move and can appear completely still, may struggle to communicate, and may withdraw to somewhere away from the cause of their shutdown. Autism Parenting Magazine webpage on managing autism shutdown

Social Enterprise	Social enterprises are businesses that put the interests of people and the planet ahead of profit.
Special education needs and disabilities	The difficulties and disabilities that can affect a someone's ability to learn.
Spectrum	A spectrum in the context of autism refers to the broad range of different characteristics and experiences relating to being autistic. Every autistic person's experience is different; they're likely to show some, but not all of the characteristics associated with autism, and may show them to very different degrees.
Stimming	An action that gives sought after sensory feedback, and often helps a person to regulate how they are feeling or is used as a way of managing a situation which may be stressful. Examples include; listening to the same songs repetitively, hand flapping, tapping, rocking, or repeating words or noises.
Traded services	Education settings pay for traded services to carry out work for them.
Webchat Functionality	A webchat allows people to communicate with other people online, often on their websites and in real time.

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