Carers First

Parent Carers Checklist

Caring for your child with additional needs can bring a mix of emotions, ranging from pride to a profound worry about the future. Many parent carers describe feeling unsure where to start, how to balance caring with parenting or how to access the right support. This checklist has been created to help you feel more confident in your role, understand the steps you can take and ensure both you and your child have the best and most suitable support system in place.



Your caring role

Understand your child's needs and how they may change over time

Taking time to understand your child's health, developmental or emotional needs can help you plan and advocate effectively. As children grow, their needs often evolve, and your role may shift as well, from providing hands-on care to supporting them in building independence.

Explore support available for your child

Understanding the types of help available, whether through health services, education settings, early-help teams or specialist support, can give you more confidence when making decisions. Learning what each service offers, how to access assessments and what your child may be entitled to can help you feel more informed and better prepared to support their needs. You can find out more by exploring our range of articles.

Involve your child in decisions where possible

As your child grows, involving them in discussions about their care, interests and aspirations helps them build confidence and independence. This is especially important during the transition to adulthood, where choices about health, wellbeing and independence become key.





Put an emergency plan in place

When caring for your child, it can be extremely stressful to think what would happen if you are unable to care due to an emergency. You can use our emergency plan template. This can help you prepare by outlining essential information such as their preferences, medications and a simple guide to their daily care needs.

Sign up for the Caring Confidently course

This course has been designed to help you understand the basics of caring for someone. It includes topics such as your wellbeing, finances and self-advocacy. For more information see our course page.

Looking after yourself

It is really easy to get caught up in your caring role and forget to look after yourself. But looking after your wellbeing is key – for both you and the person you care for.

Register as a carer with your GP

By registering with your GP as a carer you will get access to an annual health check and annual vaccination programmes like the flu vaccination. Your GP will also be aware of your situation and will be able to support you in other areas such as your mental wellbeing.

Consider a Parent Carer Needs Assessment

If you are responsible for the ongoing care of a child with additional needs, a Parent Carer Needs Assessment can help identify support that may benefit you. Understanding when and how to request an assessment can make it easier to access practical help and guidance.

Acknowledge the emotional impact of your caring role

Balancing everyday parenting with additional caring responsibilities can feel overwhelming at times. It is important to recognise your own emotions and give yourself permission to seek help. Talking with a counsellor or other professional can help you make sense of these feelings and find strategies that support your wellbeing.

Build a strong support network

Connecting with other parent carers, friends, family members and professionals can help reduce isolation and reassure that you are not alone. Sharing experiences and advice can strengthen your coping strategies and help you feel more supported in your role.



Make time for yourself

Try to prioritise regular time to look after yourself. This could be something which relaxes you, brings you joy or connects you with other people. It could be helpful to take a look at our online wellbeing sessions and consider joining a peer support group or events in your local area. These groups are a great way to create a support network of people around you who understand the challenges of being a carer.

Take a break

Taking a break from your caring role will enable you to recharge. Regular respite breaks, either a few hours or even few days will support you and your own well being, You could ask for friends and family or look into finding replacement or respite care for a short while.

Managing at home

Create routines that work for your child and family

Predictable routines can make daily life feel steadier for both you and your child. Gradually introducing structure, preparing for transitions and adapting the home environment can help reduce anxiety and support smoother days.

Plan for attending appointments and accessing services

Children with additional needs may require frequent appointments or specialist input. Planning ahead, such as arranging transport, gathering information or requesting home-based visits when appropriate, can reduce stress and help ensure your child receives the support they need.

Use helpful technology to support your child's needs

Technology can make caring tasks easier, whether using reminder tools, communication apps, visual schedules or digital organisers. These tools can help your child follow routines, communicate their needs and build independence in small but meaningful ways.

Arrange a Safe and Well Check

A Safe and Well Check consists of members of your local fire and rescue service visiting your home, to carry out an inspection and ensure maximum safety. Arrange a visit by contacting your local fire and rescue service.



Managing finances



Get a benefits check

Using the easy tool provided by Turn2us, complete a quick and easy assessment to see what benefits or support you may be eligible to apply for. Check if you're eligible for a reduction on household bills. If you are in receipt of benefits such as Attendance Allowance or a Personal Independence Payment, you may be eligible for a reduction on some household bills such as your utility bills.



Check if you're eligible for utility bills reduction

If you are in receipt of benefits such as Attendance Allowance or a Personal Independence payment, it may be worth exploring if you are eligible to a reduction on some household bills, such as electricity, gas or council tax.



Plan ahead as your child grows older

As your child approaches adulthood, their financial needs, support arrangements and eligibility for services may change. Preparing early and understanding what support continues into adulthood can help make the transition smoother for both of you.

Notes

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