

Carers First

Learning Disabilities and Autism Carers Checklist

Caring for someone with a learning disability or autism can be a lifelong role, often involving a mix of practical tasks, emotional support and advocacy. As the person grows and their needs change, you may find yourself navigating a range of services, adapting communication approaches and balancing the needs of the whole family. This checklist has been created to help you feel more confident in your caring role and to support you in looking after yourself while meeting their needs.



Your caring role



Understand the communication needs

Learning disabilities and autism each affect people differently, which means no two caring roles look the same. Taking time to understand how the person communicates, processes information and expresses their feelings will help you provide support that works for them.



Learn about their strengths and challenges

Those with learning disabilities or autism may face unique challenges with social situations, daily tasks or unexpected changes. Understanding their individual needs can help you plan ahead, reduce stress and support them to feel more comfortable and confident.



Explore the support available

Support can include health services, education support, communication tools and specialist community organisations. Understanding what is available and how to access it can help you make informed decisions and feel better equipped to advocate for their needs. You can find out more by exploring our [range of articles](#) that explain different types of support and how to use them.



Involve them in decisions wherever possible

Whether the person is a child or an adult, involving them in discussions about their care, preferences and routines helps build their independence and confidence. This becomes especially important during times of transition into adulthood, when their priorities and needs may change.





Put an emergency plan in place

When caring for someone who is at the end of their life, 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, such as 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.



Recognise the emotional impact of your caring role

Caring for someone with a learning disability or autism can bring emotional highs and lows. You may experience frustration, worry, pride or exhaustion, sometimes all in one day. Recognising your own emotions and seeking support if you feel overwhelmed can help you cope more effectively with the demands of caring.



Build a strong support network

Caring for someone with a learning disability or autism can continue for many years, making it important not to carry everything alone. Connecting with friends, family, professionals or local support groups can give you reassurance, reduce isolation and provide both emotional and practical help when you need it.



Build a balanced family dynamic

Caring responsibilities can affect the whole family, especially when routines, sensory needs or behaviours make outings or plans more complex. Finding ways to share tasks, spend time together and maintain balance can help reduce stress and strengthen relationships.



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 wellbeing. You could ask for friends and family or look into finding replacement or respite care for a short while.

Managing at home



Create supportive and predictable structure

Consistency can help someone with learning disability or autism feel more secure. Clear routines, visual schedules or gradual transitions between activities can reduce anxiety and make daily life smoother.



Use helpful technology and tools

Technology can help support communication, routines and independence. This could include visual timetable apps, communication tools, reminder apps or devices that help the person express their needs more easily. Simple tools like timers or visual cues can also help with managing activities or understanding time.



Support them in social situations

Social environments can sometimes feel overwhelming. Planning ahead, preparing the person for what to expect and using strategies that help them feel safe and comfortable can make outings and interactions more positive.



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 of your home (or the home of the person you care for) to ensure maximum safety. Arrange a visit by contacting your local fire and rescue service.





Create a home environment that supports their needs

Making small, thoughtful adjustments at home can help the person you care for feel calmer, safer and more able to manage daily routines. This might include reducing noise or clutter if they are sensitive to sensory input, creating a quiet space they can retreat to when they feel overwhelmed, or using visual prompts around the home to support understanding and independence.



Manage changes and transitions thoughtfully

Unexpected changes can be challenging. Offering reassurance, giving information in advance and using strategies that help them process transitions can create a calmer experience for both of you.

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 are 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 they grow and their needs change.

As children with learning disabilities or autism move into adulthood, new responsibilities and opportunities emerge. Planning early for changes in services, support, education or employment can help make transitions smoother.

Notes

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