

ADHD and autism help, support and information for children and young people, and their families and carers

Partner toolkit

November 2025 update



Please take action

Please review and update ADHD and autism signposting advice on your organisation's website using the information in this toolkit.

You will find versions for Brighton & Hove, East Sussex, West Sussex and pan-Sussex on pages 8 - 25.

Please email sxicb.comms@nhs.net for any help or advice.

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1. Why does ADHD and Autism signposting information need to be updated?

Introduction

Children, young people and their families have asked for clear, trusted information about mental health and neurodevelopmental (ND) support. They need to know what help is available, where to find it, and how to access it.

But across Sussex, signposting is often inconsistent and confusing. There is no single source of truth. Families face long waits for support – especially for ADHD and autism assessments – with little guidance on what to do in the meantime. This adds pressure, fuels anxiety and makes it harder for people to get the help they need when they need it. The impact of this is that some people are not getting the help they need at an early enough stage and, as a result, more people are experiencing mental health challenges.

Insight from children, young people, families and professionals tells us this must change. They want fewer, simpler access points. They want consistent advice. They want honest, clear, inclusive communication they can trust.

This toolkit brings that feedback to life. It aims to:

- Make it easier for people to find the right help, first time.
- Reduce confusion by unifying messaging across services.
- Support early access to care and reduce inequality.
- Help practitioners know what information to share when people are on a waiting list.

It forms part of a system-wide effort across Sussex to improve early help and access to support for emotional wellbeing, mental health and neurodevelopmental needs. It builds on learning from lived experience, best practice and strategic priorities.

Together, we can make it easier for children, young people and their families to feel supported, informed and in control of the support they choose to receive.

In January 2025, the Children and Young People Signposting ND Communications Subgroup was convened as a collaboration between NHS, Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE), local authority partners and people with lived experience. The group's aim was to develop clear and consistent ADHD and autism signposting information for children and young people, and their families, in Sussex.

The information in this toolkit has been co-produced by people with lived experience including members of the public and service providers. It is written in a way that will help people find the right support and services based on their needs, rather than a formal diagnosis, or how the system of services is structured.

To achieve consistency in online messaging, we are asking partner organisations in Sussex to update their websites with this new information by copying and pasting the provided best practice text.

Welcome from the Children and Young People Signposting ND Communications Subgroup

We're excited to present the signposting toolkit below as the result of a year of intense development.

Our subgroup members have brought decades of professional and lived experience insights, pored through thousands of data points, and incorporated active input from hundreds of people across Sussex to represent a wide variety of age groups, backgrounds, walks of life, and support needs.

The work comes at a pivotal time as the previous 'wild west' of quick-fire social media content is counteracted by a growing number of high-quality neurodivergent resources.

Still, information overwhelm remains the core challenge for people, which led us to the toolkit's organising principle of balance:

- Covering the full journey from interest, referral and assessment to context-based support
- Providing information for all levels of urgency.
- Demystifying jargon while retaining signposting clarity.
- Having clear entry points and quick access navigation to cater to information processing needs.
- Making language inclusive so that parent carers, as well as children and young people researching the topic for themselves, feel validated and heard.

Importantly, the toolkit remains a live document. We're keeping tabs on new and emerging resources as this field further develops and will be conducting quarterly reviews to make sure the toolkit is always kept up to date (if you come across new resources that should be included in the next version of the toolkit, please do let us know).

By being part of this project, you're helping the toolkit become a representative resource to serve local people for years to come.

On behalf of all of us here in the communications subgroup, thank you.

Adam Dobay, Chair of Sussex ND Lived Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP) and founder of [Weirdly Successful](#).



2. How to use this information on your website

Search engine optimisation (SEO)

As well as being informed by insights and co-produced with people with lived experience, keyword research has been undertaken to optimise the content to match what people are searching for.

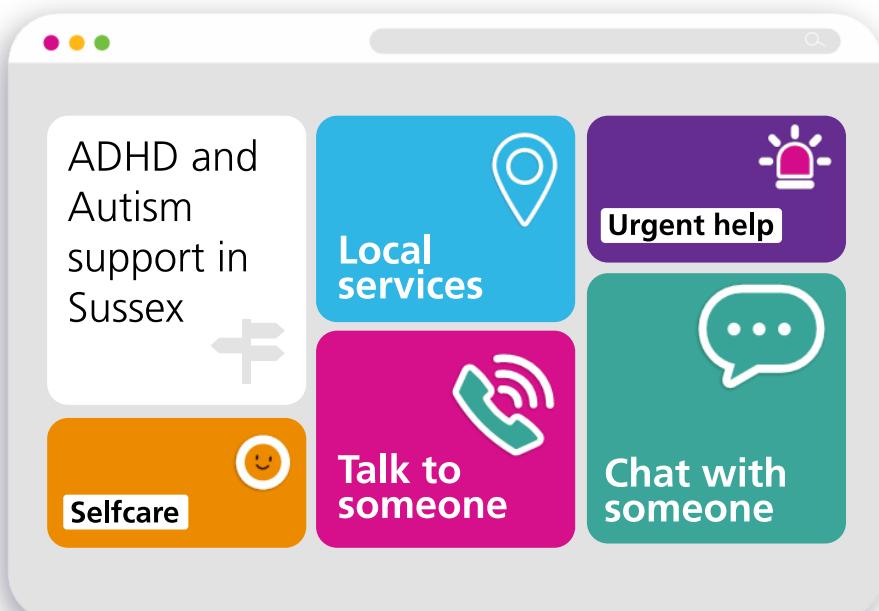
We understand that duplicate content across multiple websites can impact SEO rankings. However, this needs to be balanced with the need to present clear, consistent signposting information to make it as easy as possible for people to get timely help and support.

We strongly encourage you to use the headings verbatim as these have been co-produced by people with lived experience.

We have also produced some suggested [social media post text and graphics](#) gently promoting the new signposting information, which we encourage you to use on your own channels.

Alternatively, you can repost from our SHCP channels

- [Facebook](#)
- [Insta](#)
- [TikTok](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)



A quick guide to web accessibility online

Why neurodivergent-friendly design matters

Some people process information differently. Clear, simple web design helps autistic and ADHD users focus, understand and take action. It reduces stress and makes content easier to use, especially if someone is experiencing a difficult time.

When you add the content to your website, follow these basic design tips to make it work for everyone.

How to make web content easier to access for autistic and ADHD users

- Keep the layout simple and free from clutter
- Use clear headings to break up the content
- Show one idea at a time
- Use bullet points or numbered steps where you can
- Avoid autoplay, flashing visuals or distracting movement
- Use plain backgrounds and high contrast text
- Let users change font size or colours if needed
- Make buttons and calls to action clear and easy to spot
- Avoid pop-ups or sudden changes in layout
- Let users take their time, no timers or time limits

These small changes can make a big difference. They help everyone, not just neurodivergent users.

Select your version of the online information

There are four versions of the content available

1. [Brighton & Hove](#)
2. [East Sussex](#)
3. [West Sussex](#)
4. [Pan-Sussex](#)

These can be selected according to the population your organisation serves.

Please copy and paste the information from one of the following sections into your own website.

Here is an example of how the information could be displayed (this is the pan-Sussex version) www.sussex.ics.nhs.uk/our-work/cyp/special-educational-needs-and-disability-send/waiting-neurodevelopmental/

3. Get help, support and information for Autism and ADHD in Brighton & Hove

Find services, advice and support if you or someone you care for has or might be Autistic or ADHD. (Add as a clickable table of contents)

For young people

1. What is Autism and ADHD?
2. Support for you
3. What to do in a crisis or urgent situation
4. Support and groups for young people
5. Trusted information - find out more

For parent carers

1. Understanding your child's needs
2. What to do in a crisis or urgent situation
3. Understanding diagnosis and assessments
4. Get local help and support
5. Parent groups and peer support
6. Trusted information and learning or training for parent carers

For young people

What is Autism and ADHD?

Autism and ADHD are ways your brain works differently. You might find some things harder or easier than others. Lots of people have these, and it is okay to ask for help. Everyone is different, and you might need help with more than one thing at the same time. For example, your mental health, learning, or how you feel at school or home. They may all be linked.

Some people are [autistic and ADHD](#) (sometimes called AuDHD). This might be diagnosed, or they might notice traits of both.

Support for you

You might want support if you:

- Find it hard to manage your feelings
- Have trouble with sleep or eating
- Struggle with friendships or social situations
- Feel overwhelmed by noise, lights, touch, or feelings
- Find it difficult to concentrate or organise tasks
- Need a lot of extra help with school or work
- Want to learn more about yourself

If this sounds like you, there is support available.

What to do in a crisis or urgent situation

If you feel unsafe or in crisis

Are you a young person feeling low, anxious, or unable to cope? Are you thinking about hurting yourself or someone else?

You are not alone. Help is available right now.

If you have a safety plan, follow it.

Get help straight away

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 999 or go to A&E.

Talk to someone today or tonight

You can speak to someone now or within a few hours. All these services are free, confidential and open 24 hours a day:

- Text the word [SUSSEX](#) to 85258 for support. **You'll chat via text message with a mental health professional who can help.** Messages won't show on your phone bill.
- Call [NHS 111](#) and choose the mental health option to **speak to a trained mental health professional.** They will ask you questions and offer help, or **guide you to the right service.**
- Call [Samaritans](#) on 116 123. **You can talk confidentially about anything that's on your mind.** This service listens and offers support but **does not give advice.**

Support and groups for young people

- For young people aged 14–25: Amazing Futures offers inclusive youth groups. These are safe, welcoming spaces to meet others and get support in [Brighton & Hove and East Sussex](#).
- For autistic children and young people, or those with disabilities or complex needs (aged 8–25, or 18–25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan): Aspens offer support in [East Sussex](#)
- [Ambitious about Autism](#) provides online peer support and a youth network for autistic young people aged 16–25.

Trusted information - find out more

About ADHD

- [Children's guide](#) to ADHD.
- [Teenagers' guide](#) to ADHD.
- For help with emotional wellbeing, mental health, and [ADHD: Young Minds](#) offer a helpline, resources, training, outreach, and publications.
- [Information, resources and top tips for young people](#) from Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SPFT).
- To learn words to describe your experiences and share with others: [Neurodivergent Glossary](#).
- ADHD [Resource Guide](#) by Healthline.
- Useful information and helpful activities for teenagers living with ADHD from [Janssen UK](#)

About Autism

- National Autistic Society [resources for autistic teenagers](#)
- For help with emotional wellbeing, mental health, and [Autism: Young Minds](#) offer a helpline, resources, training, outreach, and publications.
- [The Curly Hair Project](#) supports autistic people and those around them. It was founded

by autistic author Alis Rowe. They use animated films, stories, comic strips and diagrams to make their work interesting and easy to understand.

- To learn words to describe your experiences and share with others - [Neurodivergent Glossary](#)

For parent carers

Understanding your child's needs

If your child may be, or has been diagnosed as, autistic or ADHD you might have lots of questions. It is normal to feel overwhelmed. You and your child may also need support with more than one issue, or with needs that overlap and affect each other.

Some people are [autistic and have ADHD](#) (sometimes called AuDHD) - this might be diagnosed, or they might notice traits of both.

What to do in a crisis or urgent situation

Is your child struggling to cope? Does it feel like a crisis? You are not alone. Help is available.

If your child already has a safety plan, please refer to that.

Get help straight away

- If your life, or someone else's life, is in immediate danger - call 999 or go to A&E.

Speak to someone today or tonight

If you need support for yourself or your child, you can talk confidentially to someone now or within a few hours. All these services are free and open 24 hours a day:

- Text the word [SUSSEX](#) to 85258 for support. You or your child can text this number to chat with a mental health professional. Messages won't show on your phone bill.
- Call [NHS 111](#) and choose the mental health option. Speak to a trained mental health professional who will ask questions and offer help or guide you to the right service.
- Call [Samaritans](#) on 116 123. Talk confidentially about anything that's on your mind. This service listens and offers support but does not give advice.

Understanding diagnosis and assessments

- Find out more about [autism assessments](#) (NHS)
- Find out more about [ADHD assessments](#) (NHS)

Referral, diagnosis, and assessment information:

- **For ADHD**
 - For 6+ years old - [Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust](#)
- **For Autism**
 - For under 11 years old in East Sussex and Brighton and Hove: [East Sussex Healthcare child development clinic](#)
 - For under 11 years old in West Sussex and Brighton and Hove, or under 9 years old in Chichester: [Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust child development clinic](#)
 - For 11+ years old: [Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust](#)
 - For under 11 years old in West Sussex and Brighton and Hove: [University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust child development clinic](#)

The [NHS Right to Choose Framework](#) lets you select your NHS-funded healthcare provider, following a referral from a GP or professional.

Who can you speak to?

If you think your child may be Autistic or ADHD, speak to:

- Your GP
- A health visitor (for children under 5)
- Any other health professional you or your child see, such as another doctor or therapist
- Your child's SENCO (special educational needs co-ordinator) at school

Support before and after the assessment

The [Brighton and Hove Local Offer](#) provides information about all the local services for families, children and young people.

Get local help and support

- For guidance, training, and chances to connect with other parent carers
 - Amaze supports [families in Brighton & Hove and East Sussex](#).
 - [Brighton and Hove Parent Carers' Council](#) is a forum for parent carers of children with additional needs who work to help improve services and support.
- For parent carers of children and young people waiting for, undergoing, or after assessment, for autism, ADHD, and related conditions - the [Amaze ND Navigation Service](#) offers telephone support, information, resources, and workshops.

Managing behaviour, sleep, and health concerns

- Children's Speech and Language Therapy helps with speech, language, communication, and swallowing.
 - [West Sussex and Brighton and Hove](#): Sussex Community Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service.
 - [West Sussex and Brighton and Hove](#): University Hospitals Sussex Children's Speech and Language Services.
- [Sleep support services](#) can help if your child has trouble sleeping.
- [The Health and Care Passport](#) is a quick way to give health and social care staff important info about your child's needs.

Your child's sensory needs and environment

- [Amaze factsheets](#)
- [National Autistic Society](#) information
- [Think ADHD](#) information

Education and school support

Every school has a SENCo to help with special educational needs.

- **For help with school-related issues, contact [Brighton and Hove SENDIASS](#)**
- **Autism support in schools: [Autism Spectrum Condition Support Service](#)**
- **ADHD support in schools: [Inclusion Support Service](#)**
- **Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)** An [EHCP](#) provides extra support for children with higher needs. You can apply if your child needs more help than the usual services provide.
 - [Getting an EHCP in Brighton and Hove](#)
 - [Advice on EHCPs from Brighton and Hove SENDIASS](#)
- **Emotional and mental health support** If your child finds school hard because of anxiety or emotional reasons, support is available:
 - [Information for Brighton and Hove parents](#)
 - Children not in school [fact sheet on Emotional Based School Avoidance](#) for

- tips about coping with school avoidance, from Amaze.
- [School avoidance and mental health](#) information for parent carers from Young Minds.

Parent groups and peer support

Parent groups and peer support can connect you with others who understand what you're going through. They help you share ideas, feel heard and find support.

- Regular online and in-person support groups across Brighton & Hove and East Sussex, with [Amaze](#).
- Link with other parents of autistic children and young people, with [Mascot](#).
- Peer support for parents and carers, caring for someone with an Autistic mind, with or without a diagnosis across all of Sussex and Brighton and Hove, with [Autism Support Crawley](#)

Trusted information and learning or training for parent carers

- **Online training and awareness** for parents and carers covering a range of differences that young people may be experiencing, including Autism and ADHD.
 - [Amaze factsheets](#) and videos
 - [Autism Central workshops](#)
 - [Workshops for parents and carers from Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust](#)
- **Autism** specific websites
 - [National Autistic Society](#)
 - [Child Autism UK](#)
 - [Autistic Girls Network](#)
 - [Ambitious About Autism](#)
 - [Aspens](#)
 - [Autistic Parents UK](#)
- **ADHD** specific websites
 - [ADHD UK](#)
 - [ADHD Foundation](#)
 - [ADHD Girls](#)

2. East Sussex

4. Get help, support and information for Autism and ADHD in East Sussex

Find services, advice and support if you or someone you care for has or might be Autistic or ADHD. (Add as a *clickable table of contents*)

For young people

1. What is Autism and ADHD?
2. Support for you
3. What to do in a crisis or urgent situation
4. Support and groups for young people
5. Trusted information - find out more

For parent carers

1. Understanding your child's needs
2. What to do in a crisis or urgent situation
3. Understanding diagnosis and assessments
4. Get local help and support
5. Parent groups and peer support
6. Trusted information and learning or training for parent carers

For young people

What is Autism and ADHD?

Autism and ADHD are ways your brain works differently. You might find some things harder or easier than others. Lots of people have these, and it is okay to ask for help. Everyone is different, and you might need help with more than one thing at the same time. For example, your mental health, learning, or how you feel at school or home. They may all be linked.

Some people are [autistic and have ADHD](#) (sometimes called AuDHD). This might be diagnosed, or they might notice traits of both.

Support for you

You might want support if you:

- Find it hard to manage your feelings
- Have trouble with sleep or eating
- Struggle with friendships or social situations
- Feel overwhelmed by noise, lights, touch, or feelings
- Find it difficult to concentrate or organise tasks
- Need a lot of extra help with school or work
- Want to learn more about yourself

If this sounds like you, there is support available.

What to do in a crisis or urgent situation

If you feel unsafe or in crisis

Are you a young person feeling low, anxious, or unable to cope? Are you thinking about hurting yourself or someone else? You are not alone. Help is available right now.

If you have a safety plan, follow it.

Get help straight away

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 999 or go to A&E.

Talk to someone today or tonight

You can speak to someone now or within a few hours. All these services are free, confidential and open 24 hours a day:

- Text the word [SUSSEX](#) to 85258 for support. **You'll chat via text message with a mental health professional who can help.** Messages won't show on your phone bill.
- Call [NHS 111](#) and choose the mental health option to **speak to a trained mental health professional.** They will ask you questions and offer help, or **guide you to the right service.**
- Call [Samaritans](#) on 116 123. **You can talk confidentially about anything that's on your mind.** This service listens and offers support but **does not give advice.**

Support and groups for young people

- For young people aged 14 – 25 years: [Amazing Futures](#) offers inclusive youth groups. These are safe, welcoming spaces to meet others and get support in East Sussex.
- For autistic children and young people, or those with disabilities or complex needs (aged 8–25, or 18–25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan): [Aspens](#) offer support in East Sussex.
- [Ambitious about Autism](#) provides online peer support and a youth network for autistic young people aged 16–25.

Trusted information - find out more

About ADHD

- [Children's guide](#) to ADHD.
- [Teenagers' guide](#) to ADHD.
- For help with emotional wellbeing, mental health, and [ADHD: Young Minds](#) offer a helpline, resources, training, outreach, and publications.
- [Information, resources and top tips for young people](#) from Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SPFT).
- To learn words to describe your experiences and share with others: [Neurodivergent Glossary](#).
- ADHD [Resource Guide](#) by Healthline.
- Useful information and helpful activities for teenagers living with ADHD from [Janssen UK](#)

About Autism

- National Autistic Society [resources for autistic teenagers](#)
- For help with emotional wellbeing, mental health, and [Autism: Young Minds](#) offer a helpline, resources, training, outreach, and publications.
- [The Curly Hair Project](#) supports autistic people and those around them. It was founded by autistic author Alis Rowe. They use animated films, stories, comic strips and

diagrams to make their work interesting and easy to understand.

- To learn words to describe your experiences and share with others - [Neurodivergent Glossary](#)

For parent carers

Understanding your child's needs

If your child may be, or has been diagnosed as, autistic or ADHD you might have lots of questions. It is normal to feel overwhelmed. You and your child may also need support with more than one issue, or with needs that overlap and affect each other.

Some people are [autistic and have ADHD](#) (sometimes called AuDHD) - this might be diagnosed, or they might notice traits of both.

What to do in a crisis or urgent situation

Is your child struggling to cope? Does it feel like a crisis? You are not alone. Help is available.

If your child already has a safety plan, please refer to that.

Get help straight away

- If your life, or someone else's life, is in immediate danger - call 999 or go to A&E.

Speak to someone today or tonight

If you need support for yourself or your child, you can talk confidentially to someone now or within a few hours. All these services are free and open 24 hours a day:

- Text the word [SUSSEX](#) to 85258 for support. You or your child can text this number to chat with a mental health professional. Messages won't show on your phone bill.
- Call [NHS 111](#) and choose the mental health option. Speak to a trained mental health professional who will ask questions and offer help or guide you to the right service.
- Call [Samaritans](#) on 116 123. Talk confidentially about anything that's on your mind. This service listens and offers support but does not give advice.

Understanding diagnosis and assessments

- Find out more about [autism assessments](#) (NHS)
- Find out more about [ADHD assessments](#) (NHS)

Referral, diagnosis, and assessment information:

- **For ADHD**
 - For 6+ years old - [Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust](#)
- **For Autism**
 - For under 11 years old in East Sussex and Brighton and Hove: [East Sussex Healthcare child development clinic](#)
 - For under 11 years old in West Sussex and Brighton and Hove, or under 9 years old in Chichester: [Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust child development clinic](#)
 - For 11+ years old: [Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust](#)
 - For under 11 years old in West Sussex and Brighton and Hove: [University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust child development clinic](#)

The [NHS Right to Choose Framework](#) lets you select your NHS-funded healthcare provider, following a referral from a GP or professional.

Who can you speak to?

If you think your child may be Autistic or ADHD, speak to:

- Your GP
- A health visitor (for children under 5)
- Any other health professional you or your child see, such as another doctor or therapist
- Your child's SENCO (special educational needs co-ordinator) at school

Support before and after the assessment

The [East Sussex Local Offer](#) provides information about all the local services for families, children and young people.

Get local help and support

- For guidance, training, and chances to connect with other parent carers, [Amaze supports families in East Sussex](#).
- [East Sussex Parent Carer Forum](#) for parent carers of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in East Sussex.
- For parent carers of children and young people waiting for, undergoing, or after assessment, for autism, ADHD, and related conditions - the [Amaze ND Navigation Service offers](#) telephone support, information, resources, and workshops.

Managing behaviour, sleep, and health concerns

- Children's Speech and Language Therapy helps with speech, language, communication, and swallowing: [East Sussex Children's Integrated Therapy and Equipment Service](#).
- [Sleep support services](#) can help if your child has trouble sleeping.
- [The Health and Care Passport](#) is a quick way to give health and social care staff important info about your child's needs.

Your child's sensory needs and environment

- [Amaze factsheets](#)
- [National Autistic Society](#) information
- [Think ADHD](#) information

Education and school support

Every school has a SENCo to help with special educational needs.

- **For help with school-related issues, contact [East Sussex SENDIASS](#)**
- **Autism support in schools** includes the [Communication, Learning and Autism Support Service \(CLASS\) in East Sussex](#). This provides support, training and guidance to schools and families of children with special educational needs
- **ADHD support in schools includes the [Communication, Learning and Autism Support Service \(CLASS\) in East Sussex](#)**. This provides support, training and guidance to schools and families of children with special educational needs
- **Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)**
 - An [EHCP](#) provides extra support for children with higher needs. You can apply if your child needs more help than the usual services provide.
 - [Getting an EHCP in East Sussex](#)
 - [Advice on EHCPs from East Sussex SENDIASS](#)
 - **Emotional and mental health support** If your child finds school hard because of anxiety or emotional reasons, support is available:
 - [Information for East Sussex parents](#)
 - Children not in school [fact sheet on Emotional Based School Avoidance](#) for tips about coping with school avoidance, from Amaze.
 - [School avoidance and mental health](#) information for parent carers from Young Minds.

Parent groups and peer support

Parent groups and peer support can connect you with others who understand what you're going through. They help you share ideas, feel heard and find support.

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- Link with other parents of autistic children and young people, with [Mascot](#).
- Peer support for parents and carers, caring for someone with an Autistic mind, with or without a diagnosis across all of Sussex, with [Autism Support Crawley](#)

Trusted information and learning or training for parent carers

- **Online training and awareness** for parents and carers covering a range of differences that young people may be experiencing, including Autism and ADHD.
 - [Amaze factsheets](#) and videos
 - [Autism Central workshops](#)
 - [Workshops for parents and carers from Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust](#)
- **Autism** specific websites
 - [National Autistic Society](#)
 - [Child Autism UK](#)
 - [Autistic Girls Network](#)
 - [Ambitious About Autism](#)
 - [Aspens](#)
 - [Autistic Parents UK](#)
- **ADHD** specific websites
 - [ADHD UK](#)
 - [ADHD Foundation](#)
 - [ADHD Girls](#)

3. West Sussex

5. Get help, support and information for Autism and ADHD in West Sussex

Find services, advice and support if you or someone you care for has or might be Autistic or ADHD. *(Add as a clickable table of contents)*

For young people

1. What is Autism and ADHD?
2. Support for you
3. What to do in a crisis or urgent situation
4. Support and groups for young people
5. Trusted information - find out more

For parent carers

1. Understanding your child's needs
2. What to do in a crisis or urgent situation
3. Understanding diagnosis and assessments
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5. Parent groups and peer support
6. Trusted information and learning or training for parent carers

For young people

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Some people are [autistic and have ADHD](#) (sometimes called AuDHD). This might be diagnosed, or they might notice traits of both.

Support for you

You might want support if you:

- Find it hard to manage your feelings
- Have trouble with sleep or eating
- Struggle with friendships or social situations
- Feel overwhelmed by noise, lights, touch, or feelings
- Find it difficult to concentrate or organise tasks
- Need a lot of extra help with school or work
- Want to learn more about yourself

If this sounds like you, there is support available.

What to do in a crisis or urgent situation

If you feel unsafe or in crisis

Are you a young person feeling low, anxious, or unable to cope? Are you thinking about hurting yourself or someone else? You are not alone. Help is available right now.

If you have a safety plan, follow it.

Get help straight away

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 999 or go to A&E.

Talk to someone today or tonight

You can speak to someone now or within a few hours. All these services are free, confidential and open 24 hours a day:

- Text the word [SUSSEX](#) to 85258 for support. **You'll chat via text message with a mental health professional who can help.** Messages won't show on your phone bill.
- Call [NHS 111](#) and choose the mental health option to **speak to a trained mental health professional.** They will ask you questions and offer help, or **guide you to the right service.**
- Call [Samaritans](#) on 116 123. **You can talk confidentially about anything that's on your mind.** This service listens and offers support but **does not give advice.**

Support and groups for young people

- For autistic children and young people, or those with disabilities or complex needs (aged 8–25, or 18–25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan): [Aspens offer support in West Sussex](#)
- [Ambitious about Autism](#) provides online peer support and a youth network for autistic young people aged 16–25.

Trusted information - find out more

About ADHD

- [Children's guide](#) to ADHD.
- [Teenagers' guide](#) to ADHD.
- For help with emotional wellbeing, mental health, and ADHD: [Young Minds](#) offer a helpline, resources, training, outreach, and publications.
- [Information, resources and top tips for young people](#) from Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SPFT).
- To learn words to describe your experiences and share with others: [Neurodivergent Glossary](#).
- ADHD [Resource Guide](#) by Healthline.
- Useful information and helpful activities for teenagers living with ADHD from [Janssen UK](#)

About Autism

- National Autistic Society [resources for autistic teenagers](#)
- For help with emotional wellbeing, mental health, and Autism: [Young Minds](#) offer a helpline, resources, training, outreach, and publications.
- [The Curly Hair Project](#) supports autistic people and those around them. It was founded by autistic author Alis Rowe. They use animated films, stories, comic strips and diagrams to make their work interesting and easy to understand.
- To learn words to describe your experiences and share with others - [Neurodivergent Glossary](#)

For parent carers

Understanding your child's needs

If your child may be, or has been diagnosed as, autistic or ADHD you might have lots of questions. It is normal to feel overwhelmed. You and your child may also need support with more than one issue, or with needs that overlap and affect each other.

Some people are [autistic and have ADHD](#) (sometimes called AuDHD) - this might be diagnosed, or they might notice traits of both.

What to do in a crisis or urgent situation

Is your child struggling to cope? Does it feel like a crisis? You are not alone. Help is available.

If your child already has a safety plan, please refer to that.

Get help straight away

- If your life, or someone else's life, is in immediate danger - call 999 or go to A&E.

Speak to someone today or tonight

If you need support for yourself or your child, you can talk confidentially to someone now or within a few hours. All these services are free and open 24 hours a day:

- Text the word [SUSSEX](#) to 85258 for support. You or your child can text this number to chat with a mental health professional. Messages won't show on your phone bill.
- Call [NHS 111](#) and choose the mental health option. Speak to a trained mental health professional who will ask questions and offer help or guide you to the right service.
- Call [Samaritans](#) on 116 123. Talk confidentially about anything that's on your mind. This service listens and offers support but does not give advice.

Understanding diagnosis and assessments

- Find out more about [autism assessments](#) (NHS)
- Find out more about [ADHD assessments](#) (NHS)

Referral, diagnosis, and assessment information:

- **For ADHD**
 - For 6+ years old - [Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust](#)
- **For Autism**
 - For under 11 years old in West Sussex and Brighton and Hove, or under 9 years old in Chichester: [Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust child development clinic](#)
 - For 11+ years old: [Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust](#)
 - For under 11 years old in West Sussex and Brighton and Hove: [University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust child development clinic](#)

The [NHS Right to Choose Framework](#) lets you select your NHS-funded healthcare provider, following a referral from a GP or professional.

Who can you speak to?

If you think your child may be Autistic or ADHD, speak to:

- Your GP
- A health visitor (for children under 5)
- Any other health professional you or your child see, such as another doctor or therapist
- Your child's SENCO (special educational needs co-ordinator) at school

Support before and after the assessment

The [West Sussex Local Offer](#) provides information about all the local services for families, children and young people.

Get local help and support

- For guidance, training, and chances to connect with other parent carers, [Reaching Families supports people in West Sussex](#).
- [West Sussex Parent Carer Forum](#) provide information, support and training for parent carers
- For parent carers of children and young people waiting for, undergoing, or after assessment, for autism, ADHD, and related conditions - the [Reaching Families ND Navigation Service](#) offers telephone support, information, resources, and workshops.

Managing behaviour, sleep, and health concerns

- Children's Speech and Language Therapy helps with speech, language, communication, and swallowing.
 - [West Sussex and Brighton and Hove: Sussex Community Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service](#).
 - [West Sussex and Brighton and Hove: University Hospitals Sussex Children's Speech and Language Services](#).
- [Sleep support services](#) can help if your child has trouble sleeping.
- [The Health and Care Passport](#) is a quick way to give health and social care staff important info about your child's needs.

Your child's sensory needs and environment

- [Reaching Families factsheets](#)
- [National Autistic Society](#) information
- [Think ADHD](#) information

Education and school support

Every school has a SENCo to help with special educational needs.

- **For help with school-related issues, contact [West Sussex SENDIAS](#)**
- **Autism support in schools: [Autism and Social Communication Team](#)**
- **ADHD support in schools: [The Learning and Behaviour Advisory Team](#)**
- **Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)**
An [EHCP](#) provides extra support for children with higher needs. You can apply if your child needs more help than the usual services provide.
 - [Getting an EHCP in West Sussex](#)
 - [Advice on EHCPs from West Sussex SENDIAS](#)
 - [Reaching Families has a factsheet for West Sussex parent carers on EHCPs](#)
- **Emotional and mental health support** If your child finds school hard because of anxiety or emotional reasons, support is available:
 - [Information for West Sussex parents](#)
 - Children not in school [fact sheet on Emotional Based School Avoidance](#) for tips about coping with school avoidance, from Amaze.
 - [School avoidance and mental health](#) information for parent carers from Young Minds.

Parent groups and peer support

Parent groups and peer support can connect you with others who understand what you're going through. They help you share ideas, feel heard and find support.

- Peer support for parents and carers, caring for someone with an Autistic mind, with or without a diagnosis across all of Sussex, with [Autism Support Crawley](#)
- Parent groups and peer support in West Sussex, including relaxed, non-judgemental spaces to share advice and experiences, with [Reaching Families](#).
- Parenting peer support, with online and face-to-face meetings to help you build strategies and meet others, with [West Sussex MIND](#).
- Link with other parents of autistic children and young people, with [Mascot](#).

Trusted information and learning or training for parent carers

- **Online training and awareness** for parents and carers covering a range of differences that young people may be experiencing, including Autism and ADHD.
 - [Reaching Families factsheets](#)
 - [Autism Central workshops](#)
 - [Workshops for parents and carers from Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust](#)
- **Autism** specific websites
 - [National Autistic Society](#)
 - [Child Autism UK](#)
 - [Autistic Girls Network](#)
 - [Ambitious About Autism](#)
 - [Aspens](#)
 - [Autistic Parents UK](#)
- **ADHD** specific websites
 - [ADHD UK](#)
 - [ADHD Foundation](#)
 - [ADHD Girls](#)

4. Pan-Sussex

6. Get help, support and information for Autism and ADHD across Sussex

Find services, advice and support if you or someone you care for has or might be Autistic or ADHD. (Add as a *clickable table of contents*)

For young people

1. What is Autism and ADHD?
2. Support for you
3. What to do in a crisis or urgent situation
4. Support and groups for young people
5. Trusted information - find out more

For parent carers

1. Understanding your child's needs
2. What to do in a crisis or urgent situation
3. Understanding diagnosis and assessments
4. Get local help and support
5. Parent groups and peer support
6. Trusted information and learning or training for parent carers

For young people

What is Autism and ADHD?

Autism and ADHD are ways your brain works differently. You might find some things harder or easier than others. Lots of people have these, and it is okay to ask for help.

Everyone is different, and you might need help with more than one thing at the same time. For example, your mental health, learning, or how you feel at school or home. They may all be linked.

Some people are [autistic and have ADHD](#) (sometimes called AuDHD). This might be diagnosed, or you might just notice traits of both.

Support for you

You might want support if you:

- Find it hard to manage your feelings
- Have trouble with sleep or eating
- Struggle with friendships or social situations
- Feel overwhelmed by noise, lights, touch, or feelings
- Find it difficult to concentrate or organise tasks
- Need a lot of extra help with school or work
- Want to learn more about yourself

If this sounds like you, there is support available.

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- Call [Samaritans](#) on 116 123. **You can talk confidentially about anything that's on your mind.** This service listens and offers support but **does not give advice.**

Support and groups for young people

- For young people aged 14–25: Amazing Futures offers inclusive youth groups. These are safe, welcoming spaces to meet others and get support in
 - [Brighton & Hove and East Sussex](#).
- For autistic children and young people, or those with disabilities or complex needs (aged 8–25, or 18–25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan): Aspens offer support in:
 - [East Sussex](#)
 - [West Sussex](#)
- [Ambitious about Autism](#) provides online peer support and a youth network for autistic young people aged 16–25.

Trusted information - find out more

About ADHD

- [Children's guide to ADHD](#).
- [Teenagers' guide](#) to ADHD.
- For help with emotional wellbeing, mental health, and ADHD: [Young Minds](#) offer a helpline, resources, training, outreach, and publications.
- [Information, resources and top tips for young people](#) from Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SPFT).
- To learn words to describe your experiences and share with others: [Neurodivergent Glossary](#).
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to make their work interesting and easy to understand.

- To learn words to describe your experiences and share with others - [Neurodivergent Glossary](#)

For parent carers

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- Text the word [SUSSEX](#) to 85258 for support. You or your child can text this number to chat with a mental health professional. Messages won't show on your phone bill.
- Call [NHS 111](#) and choose the mental health option. Speak to a trained mental health professional who will ask questions and offer help or guide you to the right service.
- Call [Samaritans](#) on 116 123. Talk confidentially about anything that's on your mind. This service listens and offers support but does not give advice.

Understanding diagnosis and assessments

- Find out more about [autism assessments](#) (NHS)
- Find out more about [ADHD assessments](#) (NHS)

Referral, diagnosis, and assessment information:

- **For ADHD**
 - For 6+ years old - [Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust](#)
- **For Autism**
 - For under 11 years old in East Sussex and Brighton and Hove: [East Sussex Healthcare child development clinic](#)
 - For under 11 years old in West Sussex and Brighton and Hove, or under 9 years old in Chichester: [Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust child development clinic](#)
 - For 11+ years old: [Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust](#)
 - For under 11 years old in West Sussex and Brighton and Hove: [University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust child development clinic](#)

The [NHS Right to Choose Framework](#) lets you select your NHS-funded healthcare provider, following a referral from a GP or professional.

Who can you speak to?

If you think your child may be Autistic or ADHD, speak to:

- Your GP
- A health visitor (for children under 5)
- Any other health professional you or your child see, such as another doctor or therapist
- Your child's SENCO (special educational needs co-ordinator) at school

Support before and after the assessment

The Local Offer offers information about all the local services for families, children and young people.

- [Brighton and Hove Local Offer](#)
- [East Sussex Local Offer](#)
- [West Sussex Local Offer](#)

Get local help and support

- For guidance, training, and chances to connect with other parent carers, Amaze supports [families in Brighton & Hove and East Sussex](#).
- For guidance, training, and chances to connect with other parent carers, Reaching Families supports [families in West Sussex](#).
- Parent Carer Forums are groups of parents and carers of children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). They work with councils, schools, health services and other organisations to make sure services meet the needs of children and families. You can join your local forum by signing up as a member and getting involved.
 - [Brighton and Hove Parent Carers' Council](#)
 - [East Sussex Parent Carer Forum](#)
 - [West Sussex Parent Carer Forum](#)
- For parent carers of children and young people waiting for, undergoing, or after assessment, for autism, ADHD, and related conditions - the ND Navigation Service offers telephone support, information, resources, and workshops.
 - Brighton and Hove and East Sussex: [Amaze](#)
 - West Sussex: [Reaching Families](#)

Managing behaviour, sleep, and health concerns

- Children's Speech and Language Therapy helps with speech, language, communication, and swallowing.
 - [East Sussex](#): Children's Integrated Therapy and Equipment Service.
 - [West Sussex and Brighton and Hove](#): Sussex Community Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service.
 - [West Sussex and Brighton and Hove](#): University Hospitals Sussex Children's Speech and Language Services.
- [Sleep support services](#) can help if your child has trouble sleeping.
- [The Health and Care Passport](#) is a quick way to give health and social care staff important info about your child's needs.

Your child's sensory needs and environment

- [Amaze factsheets](#)
- [Reaching Families factsheets](#)
- [National Autistic Society](#) information
- [Think ADHD](#) information

Education and school support

Every school has a SENCo to help with special educational needs.

- **For help with school-related issues, contact:**
 - [Brighton and Hove SENDIASS](#)
 - [East Sussex SENDIASS](#)
 - [West Sussex SENDIAS](#)
- **Autism support in schools includes:**
 - Brighton and Hove: [Autism Spectrum Condition Support Service](#).
 - East Sussex: [Communication, Learning and Autism Support Service \(CLASS\)](#)
[East Sussex only](#) - support, training and guidance to schools and families of children with special educational needs
 - West Sussex: [Autism and Social Communication Team](#)
- **ADHD support in schools includes:**
 - Brighton and Hove: [Inclusion Support Service](#)
 - East Sussex: [Communication, Learning and Autism Support Service \(CLASS\)](#)
[East Sussex only](#) - support, training and guidance to schools and families of children with special educational needs
 - West Sussex: [The Learning and Behaviour Advisory Team](#)
- **Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)**
An [EHCP](#) provides extra support for children with higher needs. You can apply if your child needs more help than the usual services provide.
 - [Getting an EHCP in Brighton and Hove](#)
 - [Getting an EHCP in East Sussex](#)
 - [Getting an EHCP in West Sussex](#)
 - [Advice on EHCPs from Brighton and Hove and East Sussex SENDIASS](#)
 - [Advice on EHCPs from West Sussex SENDIAS](#)
 - [Reaching Families has a factsheet for West Sussex parent carers on EHCPs](#)
- **Emotional and mental health support** If your child finds school hard because of anxiety or emotional reasons, support is available:
 - [Information for Brighton and Hove parents](#)
 - [Information for East Sussex parents](#)
 - [Information for West Sussex parents](#)
 - Children not in school [fact sheet on Emotional Based School Avoidance](#) for tips about coping with school avoidance, from Amaze.
 - [School avoidance and mental health](#) information for parent carers from Young Minds.

Parent groups and peer support

Parent groups and peer support can connect you with others who understand what you're going through. They help you share ideas, feel heard and find support.

- Regular online and in-person support groups across Brighton & Hove and East Sussex, with [Amaze](#).
- Parent groups and peer support in West Sussex, including relaxed, non-judgemental spaces to share advice and experiences, with [Reaching Families](#).
- Peer support for parents and carers, caring for someone with an Autistic mind, with or without a diagnosis across all of Sussex, with [Autism Support Crawley](#)
- Parenting peer support, with online and face-to-face meetings to help you build strategies and meet others, with [West Sussex MIND](#).
- Link with other parents of autistic children and young people, with [Mascot](#).

Trusted information and learning or training for parent carers

- **Online training and awareness** for parents and carers covering a range of differences that young people may be experiencing, including Autism and ADHD.
 - [Amaze factsheets](#) and videos
 - [Reaching Families factsheets](#)
 - [Autism Central workshops](#)
 - [Workshops for parents and carers from Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust](#)
- **Autism** specific websites
 - [National Autistic Society](#)
 - [Child Autism UK](#)
 - [Autistic Girls Network](#)
 - [Ambitious About Autism](#)
 - [Aspens](#)
 - [Autistic Parents UK](#)
- **ADHD** specific websites
 - [ADHD UK](#)
 - [ADHD Foundation](#)
 - [ADHD Girls](#)

7. Development of this information

Insights and recommendations

Research tells us that young people and families feel overwhelmed by the amount of advice and signposting available online, particularly because it is inconsistent. It also shows that trust in the source/accuracy of information and age-appropriateness (including visual appeal and user-friendliness) of the content is important for accessibility and user experience.

The **Pan-Sussex Children and Young People's (CYP) Mental Health Digital Review 2021** found that young people wanted

- A simplified self-referral process
- Visibility of diversity and inclusion
- More awareness raised in education settings
- Better awareness of how to access services, and when
- Simplified, fewer points of access

The solution-focused youth-led consultation, **Ready, Set, Connect**, delivered in partnership with Sussex NHS Commissioners and Young Healthwatch Brighton & Hove in 2021, highlighted barriers to young people (aged 16-25) accessing online video and telephone mental health appointments. These included communication and trust; privacy and confidentiality; lack of confidence and anxiety; technology; and stigma and fear of being judged.

A co-produced qualitative study on young people's experiences of searching for mental health information online - **What do they look for and what do they find?** - published by University of Bath in October 2024 found that:

- Participants initiated their online search by Googling symptoms.
- They trusted NHS websites for basic medical information, while charities provided more detailed content. Despite skepticism, social media offered validation.
- Findings often disappoint, prompting credibility assessment based on source reputation, professionalism, and relevance.
- Online resources should prioritise visual appeal, user-friendliness, age-appropriate and personalised content, and peer insights.
- Codesign is imperative if we want to ensure high-quality, impactful research

The **East Sussex PCF Parent Carer survey 2023-24 findings** reported:

There is a lack of communication and information on how long the wait is likely to be. Systems are complicated; information is either lacking, difficult to find, or overwhelming and confusing, and services and professionals are not working together. Parent carers want greater clarity and openness about navigating the system.

An informal online exercise

We conducted an informal desktop exercise to see how easy it is for children, young people and families to find help online for neurodevelopmental (ND) needs across Sussex.

Key findings include:

- Inconsistent results across Sussex and organisations: Search results vary by location. There's no clear, single-entry point for families looking for help.
- Trusted sites feature most: NHS and CAMHS pages rank well. Amaze is a consistent and helpful source, especially around waiting times.
- Local authority content is patchy: Some Local Offer sites rank well (East Sussex), but others do not appear at all (West Sussex).
- Support information is limited: Most pages explain services, not how to get help or what to do while waiting.
- Private services feature heavily in Brighton: Private providers appear in some Brighton searches, likely linked to long waits and gaps in NHS support.

This research backed up other anecdotal sources and research shows that families face a confusing mix of information. Signposting is fragmented and varies by area. While some trusted sources perform well, gaps remain – especially around what to do while waiting for support.

It confirmed our priorities as:

- Make online information easier to find
- Align messaging across Sussex
- Prioritise clear support during waiting times
- Explain the system and access routes simply, from a person-centred perspective
- Work together to create a joined-up experience

How this information was produced

The Children and Young People Signposting ND Communications Subgroup sits alongside a similar working group focused on children and young people's mental health signposting communications, and feeds into the Getting Help and Advice Task and Finish Group. This in turn reports into the Children and Young People's Mental Health Delivery Group. These are all system-wide groups with co-production approach at the heart of their work.

Two other groups focus on Access and the Service Offer.

The task

- Review current online signposting across NHS, local authority and VCSE websites
- Map what support is pan-Sussex vs local to help shape what we promote
- Co-produce a shared script for clear, consistent messaging across all sites.

People with lived experience and service providers from the NHS, local authorities and the voluntary sector across Sussex worked together to co-produce new online ND signposting information.

It categorises support under distinct headings based on need, to help identify support.

For young people

Heading	Definition
What is Autism and ADHD?	Simple, honest information about what autism and ADHD are, how they might affect you, and how to understand your brain better.
Support for you	Help with how you're feeling, what support is available now, and where to go if you need to talk to someone.
What to do in a crisis or urgent situation	Know what to do and who to contact if you or someone else needs urgent help with mental health or safety.
Support and groups for young people	Find safe spaces to meet others, share experiences, and get involved in local groups that understand you.
Trusted information – find out more	Links to websites, videos and tools made for young people. Everything here is safe, age-appropriate and easy to use.

For parent carers

Heading	Definition
Understanding your child's needs	Learn more about how autism, ADHD and other neurodevelopmental needs may affect your child and how to support them.
What to do in a crisis or urgent situation	Clear advice on where to get urgent help if your child is in crisis or at immediate risk
Understanding diagnosis and assessments	What to expect from the ND assessment process, how referrals work, and what happens next.
Get local help and support	Find local services and organisations that can offer practical help, advice or support for your family.
Parent groups and peer support	Connect with other parent carers who understand what you're going through, share advice and get emotional support.
Trusted information and learning or training for parent carers	Explore useful websites, local training and learning opportunities to help you feel more confident and informed.

Group membership

The following organisations were members of the group and contributed to the development of the signposting information.

- Amaze
- Brighton and Hove City Council
- East Sussex County Council
- East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust
- NHS Sussex
- Reaching Families
- Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust
- Sussex ND Lived Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP)
- Sussex Parent Carers Forums (PCFs)
- Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust CAMHS participation
- University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust
- Weirdly Successful
- West Sussex County Council

Contact us

To find out more about this project or to join the group membership for ongoing work, please email sxicb.comms@nhs.net