



## Autism Support in Stevenage Schools

### The effect of a diagnosis of Autism on the family

An autism diagnosis can be difficult to come to terms with. You may be coping with a condition you know very little about, and trying to find new ways for everyone to live together and feel supported. This document created by the Schools in Stevenage aims to provide some useful information and clarity for all parents and carers who support a child with autism.

### Supporting your child

Try to remember that your child is the same person they have always been. The only difference is that you now know what condition they have and you can begin to help them to maximise their potential and to live life to the fullest.

### How to get the best out of School for you and your child

The Schools in Stevenage all work closely together and have staff trained and experienced in Autism support. They provide a positive environment for all children in their care and by working together with parents ensure that there is a continuity of expectations to support young people's learning. The following information is provided to help guide you through how School and Parents can work together most effectively for the benefit of young people.

The four stages of SEN support called the graduated response are

- Assess
- Plan
- Do
- Review.

**Assess:** Your child's difficulties will be assessed so that the right support can be provided. This will include, for example, asking you what you think, talking to professionals who work with your child, and looking at records and other information. This will be reviewed regularly so that the support provided continues to meet your child's needs.

**Plan:** Your school and you need to agree the outcomes that the SEN support is intended to achieve – in other words, how your child will benefit from any support they get. All those involved will need to have a say in deciding what kind of support will be provided, and decide a date by which they will review this so that they can check to see how well the support is working and whether the outcomes

have been or are being achieved. Home, school and the child should all be responsible for action points within the plan so that it is clear that all are working together towards positive outcomes.

**Do:** The planned support is put into place. In school the teacher remains responsible for working with your child on a daily basis, but the SENCO and any support staff or specialist teaching staff involved in providing support will work closely to track your child's progress and check that the support is being effective.

**Review:** The support your child receives will be reviewed at the time agreed in the plan. You can then decide together if the support is having a positive impact, whether the outcomes have been, or are being, achieved and if or how any changes should be made.



### Education Health Care Plan (EHC plan)

Sometimes a child or young person needs a more intensive level of specialist help that cannot be met from the resources available to schools and other settings to provide SEN support. In these circumstances, you or your child's school or other setting could consider asking your local authority for an Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment for your child. This assessment could lead to your child getting an EHC plan. An EHC plan brings your child's education, health and social care needs into a single, legal document. Your child must have special educational needs to be eligible for a plan. You can find out more about EHC needs assessments and plans, and Personal Budgets from Chapter 9 of the 0-25 SEND Code of Practice.

## The local offer

Each local area is also required to publish a local offer which is a resource where you will find information about services available in your local area for parents, children and young people aged 0-25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The Hertfordshire local offer can be found here

<http://directory.hertsdirect.org/kb5/hertfordshire/directory/localoffer.page>

## What can you expect in mainstream provision?

However we are conscious that a diagnosis does not necessarily make the change for your child, what makes the difference are the strategies used to support and enable your child to take their place in the world. Schools have a number of common strategies that they may offer to support your child including:

- Extra transition visits and support
- Lunch club
- Exit cards
- Traffic light support system
- Mentoring
- Learning plans
- Social stories
- After School homework club
- Visual timetable
- Buddies

The strategies used by your School will work best when School and home can agree on clear boundaries and expectations for the young people. We are enablers of children and when it comes to discipline, all young people regardless of diagnosis need the security of limits even if they don't seem to pay much attention to the ones you've set. Over and above those things they really can't help, your child needs to be held responsible for poor behaviour you know they can control – but you need to approach discipline carefully.

Keep the focus on helping your child be good rather than punishing them for being bad, and establish a brief set of house rules – **with consequences** – that you stick to. This will ensure that your child will be able to make the most of their time in School and go on to be able to make the most of the opportunities they will have in their future life. School and home together need to enable the child to develop the life skills that will enable them to be able to be an effective adult in society.

## Parents' survival guide

Parenting isn't always easy. Although it's often amazing and rewarding to watch your children grow, and to help them learn to be independent, it can also be really hard work.

If you think your child is unhappy or if you are worried about their behaviour, it's easy to be hard on yourself and think you aren't doing a good job.

The following tips are for any parent who is worried about their child, or their own parenting skills:

### **You and your child**

- Make sure they know you love them and are proud of them. Even when things are busy or stressful, and it feels like you are in survival mode, a word or a hug can reassure them a huge amount. Praise them for what they do well, and encourage them to try new things
- Be honest about your feelings – you don't have to be perfect. We all get things wrong and shout or say unkind things from time to time. If this happens, say sorry to your child afterwards and explain why it happened, They will learn from you that it's OK to make mistakes and that it doesn't make you a bad person
- Be clear about what is and isn't acceptable – and tell them why. Children need to know what is OK and what isn't, and what will happen if they cross the line. Follow through on what you say as otherwise they may get confused or stop respecting the boundaries
- Own your own role – you are the parent, so don't be afraid to take tough decisions. If your child sees you are scared of their reaction and always give in to them, it can make them feel very powerful, which can be frightening. Children need to know that you are there to keep them safe.

### **Looking after yourself**

- If your child is having problems, don't be too hard on yourself or blame yourself. Although it can be upsetting and worrying if your child is having a bad time, and it makes your relationship with them feel more stressful, you are not a bad parent. Children often take it out on those closest to them, so you might be feeling the effect of their very powerful emotions
- If you had a difficult time growing up yourself, or have had emotional problems or mental health problems, it can be very worrying to think that the same thing might happen to your child. But the love and care you show them and the fact that you are trying to help will protect against this. Getting help for them and perhaps for yourself too can give them the best chance of feeling better
- If things are getting you down, it's important to recognise this. Talk to someone you trust and see what they think. Many people go on struggling with very difficult situations because they feel they should be able to cope, and don't deserve any help
- Friends and family can often help – don't be afraid to ask them to have your child for a bit if you need some time out to sort out your own stuff. You can repay them when things get better for you!
- It's easy to say take some time for yourself but in reality this may not feel possible. You might be too busy, exhausted or hard up for exercise or hobbies. But even a night in with a friend, a DVD box set or your favourite dinner can help
- Go to your GP if things are really getting on top of you. Asking for some support from your doctor or a referral to a counselling service is a sign of strength. You can't help your child if you are not being supported yourself. Some people worry their parenting will be judged and their children will be taken away if they admit they are struggling to cope. This should only

happen if a child is being abused or neglected and the role of professionals is to support you to look after your child as well as you can.

### **Support for you**

It may help to talk about your experiences with people who have been in a similar situation.

- The National Autistic Society offer a [Parent to Parent Service](#) confidential telephone service. Leave a message on 0808 800 4106 or [www.autism.org.uk/P2Pform](http://www.autism.org.uk/P2Pform) and one of the trained volunteers, a parent of a child or adult with autism, will call you back.
- [Autism Helpline](#) can talk through any issues you're facing. Contact them on 0808 800 4104 or [www.autism.org.uk/enquiry](http://www.autism.org.uk/enquiry)

### **Hertfordshire Additional Needs Database (HAND)**

**If you are the parent or carer of a child or young person with an additional need or disability aged 0-19 e.g.**

- Physical disability
- Visual or hearing impairment
- A chronic physical illness
- Autism (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) and communication disorders
- Learning disability
- Significant pre-school delay

[Join the Hertfordshire Additional Needs Database \(HAND\)](#)

**What can HAND do for you?**

- [A newsletter](#) each term
- Concessions on leisure facilities
- Information on benefits, activities, support groups, and much more
- An opportunity to influence planning of future services

If you have any queries about HAND please contact us at [hand@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:hand@hertfordshire.gov.uk) or by ringing the Additional Needs Information Officer on 01992 556984

**SENDIASS** is an impartial information, advice and support service funded by Hertfordshire County Council for parents, carers, young people (0-25) and professionals.

Their expertise and training in special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and disagreement resolution helps them to help you.

They offer a personalised confidential service to help you understand how special educational needs are assessed and managed, so that you can make informed educational choices.

Contact details for your SENDIASS Team:

**SENDIASS Information Officer** - 01992 555847 [sendiass@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:sendiass@hertfordshire.gov.uk)

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