



Post-Diagnostic Support Pack for Secondary School Aged Children and Young People: Autism

Support and signposting for young people and their families following a diagnosis of Autism.



Contents

- **Introduction**
 - Introduction to the Post Diagnostic Support Pack.....Page 3

- **Support**
 - Where to start.....Page 4
 - Emotional and Mental Health Support.....Page 4-5
 - Urgent support.....Page 5
 - Local support for families.....Page 6-7
 - Parenting.....Page 7-8

- **School**
 - Who can support me?.....Page 9

- **Daily Life**
 - Sensory Processing.....Page 10
 - Sleep.....Page 10-11
 - Eating and Food.....Page 11
 - Neurodivergent friendly activities and days out.....Page 11-12
 - Shopping.....Page 12-13
 - Travel.....Page 13

- **What does Autism mean to me?**
 - Understanding Neurodiversity.....Page 14
 - Understanding Autism; resources and books.....Page 14-15
 - Your voice.....Page 15-17

- **Transition to adulthood**
 - Services to support transition to adulthood.....Page 18-19
 - Learning to drive.....Page 20
 - Sex and puberty.....Page 20 -21



Introduction

Introduction to the Post Diagnostic Support Pack

Welcome to the **Autism post-diagnostic support pack** for young people and their families! Getting a diagnosis of Autism can be a significant experience. For some people, this could be welcomed or a relief to have this diagnosis confirmed; for other families it might take a while to get used to this news.



It can be difficult to know where to go for support after a diagnosis - to start you on this journey, we have put together a pack **signposting resources and support available in Leeds**. This pack aims to help you learn more about your strengths and needs and see examples of how others understand and advocate their own needs.

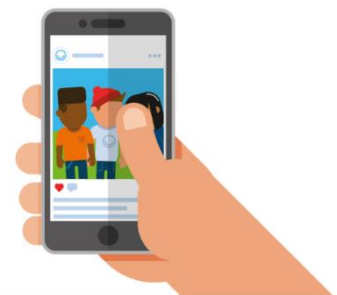
Many people come to view Autism as part of their **identity** - we hope this pack helps you on your journey of discovering what Autism might mean to you and help you understand the part it plays in your life.

A good place to start is the **Neurodiversity Information Hub** which provides information for all children, young people and families in Leeds around understanding neurodiversity and what further support is available in the community. This website has been developed in partnership with the Neurodevelopmental assessment team who would have undertaken your assessment.

Please access the Neurodiversity Information Hub through this link:

<https://www.mindmate.org.uk/nd/>

or by scanning the following QR code on your phone.



Support

Key websites for young people with Autism and their families

Where to start

- **Leeds Local Offer** provides information for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and their parents or carers. It shows families what they can expect from a range of local agencies including education, health and social care.
 - <https://leedslocaloffer.org.uk/#!/directory/suggestions>



Emotional and mental health support

As with neurotypical peers, some autistic young people may experience difficulties with their emotional wellbeing and mental health. There are some specific challenges that autistic young people might face - they could be more likely to experience anxiety and additional stressors with demands of everyday life and aspects of school. Everyone manages these things in different ways and many young people manage this through peer support from friends and family. If you need to access more support, it may be helpful to start by speaking to school or college. Support and help can come in many forms –



being Autistic, you might need help and advice about how to manage day to day demands or there may be changes that school or your family can make in how they support you to help life run more smoothly. You may benefit from a referral to a specific service for support or therapy.

- The **Every Mind Matters** website has some self-care advice videos as well as other information aimed at young people, parents and carers to support them to maintain their mental health.
 - <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/>
- You can also access information regarding emotional wellbeing and mental health on the **MindMate website**:
 - <https://www.mindmate.org.uk/>

*Mental Health support will often need to be **adapted to suit the specific needs** and challenges that present in Autistic young people. Below details a list of resources to support better understanding of neurodivergent mental health needs:*

- **Autism and Meltdowns – The Nest Approach**
 - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qWe5TjoLmTwCOAJSpwDeP7xUaXaKxTS9/view>
- **Understanding Autism and Trauma**
 - <https://www.barrierstoeducation.co.uk/autism-and-trauma>

- **Understanding Autism and Anxiety**
 - <https://www.barrierstoeducation.co.uk/anxiety>

Urgent Support

These are services to access if you are in crisis and they are offered to both autistic and non-autistic people. The services and information listed below can offer support with anxiety, depression and other mental health symptoms that are common in autistic young people.



- For immediate advice and support, contact the **CAMHS helpline** on 0800 953 0505 between 8am and 8pm every day.
- **West Yorkshire Night OWLS** (run by the Leeds Survivor Led Crisis Service) is a confidential support line for children, young people, their parents and carers who live in Bradford, Leeds, Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield. They can be contacted if a young person is in crisis and there are concerns regarding their emotional wellbeing.
 - **0800 1488 244**
 - **Text: 07984 392700**
 - <https://www.lslcs.org.uk/services/night-owls-helpline/>
- **Samaritans** offer immediate mental health support and information online for everyone. Their helpline is free, available 24/7 and available to all ages. **Call 116 123** or **email jo@samaritans.org**.
 - <https://www.samaritans.org/>
- **The Market Place** offers free and confidential one to one mental health support, counselling, group-work and drop-in sessions for 11-25 year olds in Leeds.
 - <https://www.themarketplaceleeds.org.uk/services/>
- **Teen Connect** is a helpline for Leeds based 11-18 year olds who are in crisis. They are available every night of the year. You can call (**0808 800 1212**), send a text (**07984355251**) or visit their website to access support.
 - <https://www.lslcs.org.uk/services/connect-helpline/teen-connect/>
- **Kooth** is an online counselling and emotional wellbeing platform for children and young people between 11-18 years old. You can chat 1-2-1 with counsellors, access self-help articles 24/7 and connect with peers through live moderated forums.
 - <https://www.kooth.com/>

Local support for families

Parents as well as siblings might need additional support to understand Autism and how to adjust their approach to support their family member who is autistic. Speaking to school is a good place to start as they can facilitate support to you as a family and direct you towards local services. Here are some services below that might be useful for families of neurodivergent children and young people (in addition to the groups listed earlier in this pack).



- **ZigZag Leeds Autism Support** is a group run by autistic parents of autistic children. They provide a range of services to support the family as a whole and aim to provide support to children with or without a diagnosis.
 - <https://www.zigzagautismservices.co.uk/>
- **STARS** is a team that works in education with autistic children and young people. They offer some support to families with training sessions and resources on their websites. They aim to build on families' understanding of autism, offer practical strategies that can be implemented at home and facilitate discussion between families to share ideas and empower each other.
 - <http://www.starsteam.org.uk/support-for-parents-of-children-with-autism>
- **Autism & ADHD Parent Support UK** have a Facebook group for parents/carers and autistic young people. They also have pre-diagnosis workshops for tips from fellow parents whilst you wait for your child's neurodevelopmental assessment.
 - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/autismadhdparentsupportuk/>
- **Carers Leeds** offer advice and support online, via telephone and face-to-face for friends and family members who care for someone with any illness, mental health condition or disability, including neurodevelopmental conditions.
 - <https://www.carersleeds.org.uk/>
- **Leeds Parent Carer Forum (PCF)** is an independent parent carer forum run by local parents. Parents in this group aim to improve the quality of life of SEND families in Leeds and encourage better outcomes through engagement and participation. They in partnership with the Local Authority, Education, Health and Social Care.
 - 07423436813
 - info@leedsparentcarerforum.co.uk
 - <https://www.leedsparentcarerforum.co.uk/>
- **Lotus Links Peer Support** offers sessions to families who have children with specialised educational needs and/or disability who experience anxiety-led distress behaviours. This fortnightly group provides a space for parents/carers to connect, share their worries and receive support.
 - <https://m.facebook.com/lotuslinkspeersupportleeds/>

- The **Cygnets Programme** is offered in West Leeds (Armley, Holbeck, Kirkstall, Headingley, Horsforth, Meanwood, Farsley). It is a parenting support programme for parents and carers of children and young people aged 5-18 with an autistic spectrum condition. To access this service, your child must already have a diagnosis of autism.
 - <https://barnardos-parenting.org.uk/cygnets-programme/>
- The **YoungSibs** website provides information and advice for siblings of children with additional needs, through child-friendly articles and the 'ask a sibling advisor' feature.
 - <https://www.sibs.org.uk/youngsibs/>
- **Airedale and Wharfedale Autism Resource** offer peer support, supporting zoom sessions, events for parents/carers as well as activities for children and young people.
 - <https://aware-uk.org/>
- **Home Start** offers group and individual support to families with children who are going through challenging times. Volunteers who work for Home Start offer support including helping people access local services in their area and working with families to support parents aid the development of their child's emotional and social development.
 - <https://www.home-start.org.uk/>
- **SCOPE** has a range of family services including emotional and peer support, sleep support and family activities.
 - <https://www.scope.org.uk/family-services/>
- **Contact** is a charity for families with disabled children. They offer information, workshops, and emotional support for family members.
 - <https://contact.org.uk/>
- The **National Autistic Society** website has helplines for various topics including parent-to-parent emotional support, school exclusions, and support for the transition to adulthood. These can be found under 'phone and email services'.
 - <https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/help-and-support>

Parenting

This section aims to help parents of autistic young people better understand and support their child with their recent diagnosis.

Books:

- **Caring for a Child with Autism: A Practical Guide for Parents**
 - Martine Ives and Nell Munro (2001)



- This guide answers the questions commonly asked by parents and carers following a diagnosis of autism and discusses the challenges that can arise in home life, education and socialising.
- **Playing, Laughing and Learning with Children on the Autism Spectrum: A Practical Resource of Play Ideas for Parents and Carers**
 - Julia Moor (2008)
 - This resource demonstrates how to break down play activities into manageable stages, and looks at ways to gain a child’s attention and motivation and to build on small achievements.
- **A Practical Guide to Mental Health Problems in Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders: It’s not just their autism!**
 - Alvina Ali, Michelle O’Reilly and Khalid Karim (2013)
 - This book offers practical guidance to help parents recognise and handle comorbid conditions and dispels the myth that they are just a part of autism. The authors cover a wide range of common mental health problems experienced by autistic children, including Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), anxiety, eating disorders, psychosis, stress, tics and depression, and illustrate these issues with case studies. They also provide vital advice in an accessible format and suggest strategies to ease the difficulties which arise from these comorbid conditions.
- **Autism, Identity and Me: A professional and Parent Guide to Support a Positive Understanding of Autistic Identity**
 - by Rebecca Duffus
 - This informative and engaging guidebook provides parents, school staff and therapists with the tools needed to support children and young people as they develop a positive understanding of their autistic identity. Having a positive understanding of your autistic identity is an indicator of higher self-esteem and wellbeing as an adult. This guidebook supports the development of this and will be valuable for all adults working with autistic children and young people aged 10+.

School

Autistic young people will have **varying levels** of additional academic, social and environmental needs in school. Some young people manage mainstream education with minimal additional support whilst others may need a lot of support in school or even a specialist provision. Schools are responsible for meeting additional needs of all children **regardless of any specific diagnosis**. Some needs can be met universally within the classroom, and some require additional **targeted interventions** or some more **individualised support**. Any concerns regarding school should be raised with your teacher or the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO).



Who can support me?

- **SENCO's** are teachers who have additional responsibility as leaders of Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) in their school. They work with other staff in school, and external professionals as required, to ensure that individual children's needs are met through a graduated approach. This means that additional support is carefully planned, put in place and then regularly reviewed, to ensure that all children can continue to make progress. Please get in contact with your child's SENCO if you have any concerns.
- **Geeks Room Education Centre** in Leeds offers both online and onsite classes using educational based games focusing on core curriculum subjects in an autism-friendly environment, for individuals aged 8 years onward. This involves interactive gaming, one to ones, weekend clubs, school sessions and home education sessions.
 - <https://www.geeksroom.org.uk/services>
- **STARS** are a team of autism specialists who offer advice and training to mainstream settings. They work in early years settings, primary schools, secondary schools and post 16 provisions.
 - <http://www.starsteam.org.uk/>
- Leeds **SENDIASS** (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Services) support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and provide support to their parents and carers. They provide a free, impartial, and confidential service through their website and online resources. Self-referrals can be made on their website.
 - <https://sendiass.leeds.gov.uk/>
- **For further information regarding school, please visit the Neurodiversity Hub:**
 - <https://www.mindmate.org.uk/nd/education/>

Daily Life

Sensory Processing

*It can be really common for neurodivergent people to have differences in sensory processing. This can cause great **enjoyment** in some cases but can also be **challenging** at times. It may be harder for neurodivergent people to keep sensory systems in balance, and it may have an impact on how they go about **daily life**.*



- **The Humber Sensory Processing Hub** provides detailed resources and information to educate families about sensory processing in children across different environments.
 - <https://sensoryprocessinghub.humber.nhs.uk/what-is-sensory-processing/>
 - <https://sensoryprocessinghub.humber.nhs.uk/resources/>
- **There is a range of support on the Neurodiversity Hub around strategies and advice on sensory processing that you can access. This includes information about further support from other services:**
 - <https://www.mindmate.org.uk/nd/what-is-nd/sensory-processing/>

Sleep

Getting to sleep and staying asleep can be difficult for neurodivergent children and young people. There are a range of resources and websites that can provide further support and information.

- The **Scope UK** website provides information to help young individuals with their sleep. As a first step, we recommend reading the advice on the link below:
 - <https://www.scope.org.uk/advice-and-support/help-disabled-child-sleep/>
- If you require further support, you can contact their **Sleep Right Support Services** to access online or face-to-face sessions in Leeds where you will be linked with a Scope practitioner trained to help with sleep.
 - <https://www.scope.org.uk/family-services/sleep-right/>
- **The Sleep Charity** provides a useful sleep diary for teenagers.
 - <https://thesleepcharity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/The-Sleep-Charity-Teens-Sleep-Diary.pdf>
- The **Teen Sleep Hub** provides advice on how to sleep better, tips on adapting sleep routines and knowledge regarding the science around sleep patterns.
 - <https://teensleephub.org.uk/>
- **Sleepopolis** provides information regarding sleep (and sleep tips) for autistic individuals.
 - <https://sleepopolis.com/education/sleep-and-autism/>

- **For further information regarding sleep, please visit the Neurodiversity Hub:**
<https://www.mindmate.org.uk/nd/living-nd/support-with-sleep/>

Eating and food

A healthy, balanced diet is important for all young people but there are some specific issues related to diet and food for Autistic children and young people. Neurodivergent young people are also more likely to have issues relating to diet and eating relating to their sensory differences.

- The **National Autistic Society** has produced this guide on understanding your autistic child's challenges with eating, and how to support them with maintaining a healthy diet.
 - <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/behaviour/eating/all-audiences>
- **ARFID Awareness UK** has helpful information about ARFID and other eating disorders, and their relationship with neurodiversity.
 - <https://www.arfidawarenessuk.org/the-link-with-autism-1>

For further information regarding this, please visit the Neurodiversity Hub:

- <https://www.mindmate.org.uk/nd/living-nd/eating-nd/>

*There are helpful resources on the **Mindmate website** including general dietary advice for Autistic children and young people.*

Neurodivergent friendly activities and days out

Going out for the day or to an activity can be a challenge for neurodivergent children and young people. The Neurodiversity Hub provides information about local activities and days out which may be more accessible to neurodivergent children and young people.

- <https://www.mindmate.org.uk/nd/living-nd/activities-nd/>
- **Leeds local offer** provides signposting to SEND friendly activities and days out.
 - <https://leedslocaloffer.org.uk/#!/search/list?query=YPPlacestovisit&exact=1>

Some Autistic young people may enjoy engaging in activities with those who have similar interests to them (sometimes referred to as special interests). Engaging in activities of similar interest can support a sense of belonging and community.

- For example: **Spectrum Gaming** is an online community for autistic young people with an interest in video games. This community was created (by Autistic people) to



help autistic young people build friendships and increase self-acceptance through playing online games together and taking part in regular meetups.

- <https://www.spectrumgaming.net/>

Shopping

Neurodivergent children and young people may struggle with sensory overload when going shopping. Some shops now offer quieter shopping sessions where music and announcements are turned down. Visiting at these times may help you to feel less overwhelmed when going shopping.

- **AccessAble** is a website which provides key and detailed information about different places, such as: health centres, shopping centres, tourist attractions, hotels, accessible toilets. Each place has an 'Access Guide' with information about how to get there, parking, what the building is for, and many pictures both inside and outside the building. This can be really useful if you'd like to know how accessible the place is for you, to help support you to find your way and reduce the anxiety of going to new places.
 - Visit the website here: <https://www.accessable.co.uk/>
 - Here is an example guide for one of the CAMHS health centres, Parkside Community Health Centre: <https://www.accessable.co.uk/community-health-partnerships/access-guides/parkside-community-health-centre>
- **Leeds Trinity shopping centre** has a quiet hour every Tuesday from 9am until 11am. In this time the music is turned down, lighting reduced, reduced amount of tannoy announcements, and limiting strong smells. On the first floor there is the Guest Services team which provide free hidden disability (sunflower) lanyards which can be used whilst visiting the store. Here they also have free access to 'sensory backpacks', which include the hidden disability lanyard, along with sensory toys and ear defenders.
 - You can contact the Guest Services team about anything either by email (info@trinityleeds.com) or phone (0113 394 2415).
 - You can email them to ask for specific requests, such as photos of the shops/restaurants to see before you go.
 - Visit the website here: <https://trinityleeds.com/accessibility-mobility-services>
- **Morrisons** offer a quieter hour every Saturday 9am until 10am. During this time, they turn the radio and music off, dim the lights, avoid tannoy announcements where possible, reduce movement of trolleys/baskets, and turn other electrical noises down such as checkout beeps. There is a sign up to show other customers it is a quiet hour.
 - Visit the website here for further information: <https://my.morrisons.com/blog/community/quieter-hour/>
- **Through the Maze** is a service which provides information and signposting for those who require information in an accessible format. It was originally made for those

with a learning disability, but it can be useful for anyone who needs an Easy Read format to learn about events or things there are to do in Leeds. The website has visuals, text to audio functions, and larger clearer text/information.

- Visit the website here: <https://www.through-the-maze.org.uk/>
- **For further information regarding this, please visit the Neurodiversity Hub:**
 - <https://www.mindmate.org.uk/nd/living-nd/shopping-nd/>

Travel

Travelling can be overwhelming for neurodivergent people, particularly those who have difficulties communicating, struggle with change, or experience sensory overload. Depending on the method of transport, there are a range of resources and information that can help.

- **Air travel**

Most airports offer advice and support ahead of your journey, as well as assistance when you arrive at the terminal. Check with the airport before you travel by looking at their website, where there is often lots of helpful information.

- **Rail travel**

You may be eligible for a Disabled Persons Railcard. For more information about whether you qualify and how to apply visit:

- <https://www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk/are-you-eligible/>

- **Bus travel**

First Bus and Arriva have both made some communication cards that may be helpful to print off and use when interacting with the bus driver and other passengers:

- https://www.firstbus.co.uk/uploads/node_images/Extra-Help-To-Travel-journey-assistance-cards-june-20-v2.pdf
- https://cdn1-originals.webdamdb.com/13953_123098735?cache=1623151186&response-content-disposition=inline;filename=Journey%2520Assistance%2520Cards%2520A4%2520-%2520UPDATE2021.pdf&response-content-type=application/pdf&Po

What does autism mean to me?

Understanding neurodiversity

The resources listed below are intended to help you to understand your Autism diagnosis, through information, advice, and personal experiences and testimonies.



- **Explaining Autism Spectrum Disorder - Book**
 - Clare Lawrence (2010)
 - Clare Lawrence provides a clear and concise introduction to explaining Autism.
- **For information regarding understanding Autism, please visit the Neurodiversity Hub:**
 - <https://www.mindmate.org.uk/nd/what-is-nd/>

Understanding Autism; resources and books

Getting a diagnosis can be a really big thing and it may take time to work out what Autism means to you and that's okay. We're all unique individuals so everyone will have different feelings about their diagnosis. It can be helpful to understand how others relate to being autistic. There are a lot of neurodivergent people sharing their stories on social media, websites and books. Here are a few that might help you get started.

- **Debunking Autism Stereotypes & Autism Myths**
 - <https://www.themix.org.uk/your-body/learning-disabilities-syndromes/debunking-myths-about-autism-45645.html>
- **I See A Black And White World | Living With Autism**
 - https://www.themix.org.uk/your-body/learning-disabilities-syndromes/i-see-the-world-in-black-and-white-27207.html?gclid=Cj0KCQjw1_SkBhDwARIsANbGpFsXGbkT8KRutjKtJ3zUWxFpxU89TFMcVWbnSJJixpvnXE4HmaNqUIaAqOIEALw_wcB
- **Autism Traits in Girls**
 - https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLfWrZJc_ITDCKsfwEtLNWq96OgYHqA-b

Books

Some of the books we recommend include:

- **Freaks, Geeks and Asperger Syndrome: a User Guide to Adolescence**
 - Luke Jackson (2002)
 - This book provides the reader with a unique insight into the mind of an adolescent with ASD through the author's self-reflection and commentary.

- **The Reason I Jump**
 - Naoki Higashida (2013)
 - The author of this utterly charming book is a 13-year-old blogger in Japan who communicates by choosing letters on a grid and forming them into sentences. This book offers poignant first-person insights into such basic questions as why some autistic people ask the same questions over and over, flap their hands, or avoid making eye contact.

- **I am Aspiengirl**
 - Tania Marshall (2014)
 - This inspiring book about a superheroine with Asperger’s syndrome featuring radiant artwork and quotes from autistic girls, their family members, and teachers — it explores the special gifts and challenges faced by “Aspiengirls” as they make their way to adulthood.

- **Uniquely Human: A Different Way of Seeing Autism**
 - Barry Prizant (2015)
 - Autism is usually portrayed as a checklist of deficits, including difficulties interacting socially, problems in communicating, sensory challenges, and repetitive behaviour patterns. This perspective leads to therapies focused on ridding individuals of autistic traits. In *Uniquely Human*, Dr. Barry M. Prizant suggests a major shift in understanding autism: Instead of classifying "autistic" behaviours as signs of pathology, he sees them as strategies to cope with a world that feels chaotic and overwhelming. Rather than curb these behaviours, it's better to enhance abilities, build on strengths, and offer support that will lead to a better quality of life.

- **Ways To Be Me**
 - By Libby Scott and Rebecca Westcott
 - Appropriate for age 9+
 - This fictionalised portrayal of a young autistic girl is written by Rebecca Westcott, in close collaboration with 12-year-old autistic author Libby Scott, making it a truly original and inspirational book that will give readers of all ages a deeper understanding of what it's like to be autistic.


Your voice

Along your Autism journey, you may find you have learnt things about yourself and might continue to do so. You may become interested in advocating for yourself and others using your own experiences and thoughts. Below you can find some groups that support young people in promoting their voice and influence.

- **Leeds Youth Council - voice and influence for 10- to 18-year-olds**
 - As a young person growing up in Leeds it's important that you have the right to say what happens in the city and to be able to let people know when you

think things could be improved. From your streets to your schools, parks, youth activities, health and support services and much more - if you think you can help make things better then Leeds Youth Council can support you and give you platforms to do this.

- <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/children-and-families/leeds-youth-voice/youth-council>
- **YouthWatch Leeds - youth voice in health**
 - Young people aged 14-25 can volunteer with Youth Watch Leeds to share their views on how services like doctors, dentists and social workers could be made better for them.
 - <https://healthwatchleeds.co.uk/youthwatch/>
- **Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust Youth Board**
 - The Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust Youth Board is for young people 14 to 24 years old who are interested in being involved in developing children's services offered by Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust. The Youth Board meet regularly to discuss ideas, give their feedback and develop new skills.
 - <https://www.leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk/patient-experience-and-engagement/get-involved/youth-board1/>
- **West Yorkshire Neurovoice** work with ADHD and Autistic young people to encourage advocacy and sharing of lived experience. Being collaborative and inclusive in their work, they use their collective expertise and your lived experience to further inform ADHD / Autism services going forward. They have a particular focus on addressing any social inequalities that neurodivergent individuals may face.
 - <https://touchstonesupport.org.uk/clinical-services/west-yorkshire-autism-and-adhd-deep-dive-coproduction/>
- The **Advonet Group** and **Leeds Autism AIM** provide free accessible self-advocacy resources and tools.
 - <https://advonet.org.uk/resources/self-advocacy-resources/> - **Advonet Group** link to resources such as; Self-Advocacy pack, Phone Call Planner, Advocacy



The poster for WY Neurovoice features logos for Touchstones, Leeds Community Healthcare, and West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership. It includes a QR code and a list of four actions: 'Come to our online meetings', 'Invite us to your groups (we'll get some snacks in)', 'Tell us your ideas for change and work with us to make it happen', and 'Influence how the future looks for neurodivergent people in your area'. Each action is accompanied by a small icon. At the bottom, contact information is provided: 'For more information contact: Rhiannon@touchstonesupport.org.uk or call / text / whatsapp 07825438319'. A smartphone icon is also present.

factsheets (regarding; council housing, debt, universal credit etc.),
Speak4Yourself cards,

- <https://leedsautismaim.org.uk/resources/self-advocacy-tools/> - **Leeds Autism AIM** link to resources such as: Communication Profiles, Social Profiles, Weekly Planner, Autism Health Passport, and so on.
- **National Children’s Bureau** help young people by working in partnership with organisations and support to improve services and change policies, putting children at the heart of decision making. See their Involving Children and Young People page to find out more: - <https://www.ncb.org.uk/what-we-do/involving-children-young-people>
 - See their **‘Our Turn To Talk’ Podcast** where young people are advocating for and sharing their differences and needs: <https://www.ncb.org.uk/what-we-do/involving-children-young-people/listen-our-turn-talk-podcast>

Transitions to adulthood

Approaching adulthood and independence can throw up a new range of challenges. Some autistic young people manage this transition with minimal additional support whilst others may need a lot of support. Below are a few services that can help you feel well supported during this time period.



Services to support transition into adulthood

- **Mindwell Leeds** is a **mental health** website for adults in Leeds. The website provides a range of useful information from practical advice about money to understanding common mental health problems and taking care of your wellbeing. It signposts to the support available in the city, as well as the crisis and emergency support contact details for adult services.
 - <https://www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/>
- **Leeds Autism Aim** is a free service for autistic adults who receive little or no funded support. They provide services including mentoring, autistic-led peer groups and 1-1 peer support.
 - <https://leedsautismaim.org.uk/>
- **GIPSIL** offers a **Wellbeing Outreach Service** for young people aged 16-25 across the Leeds district. This includes up to 18 support sessions to help with mental health, involvement in positive activities, making connections to the local community and meeting new friends, finding services to help with housing, benefits and more, accessing employment or education and improving physical health.
 - Referrals from practitioners and self-referrals are welcomed. To make a referral or to discuss this service further please contact Becky Jones on **0113 391 8000** or email **becky.jones@gipsil.org.uk**.
 - Please visit the GIPSIL website for further insight on the support they provide: <https://gipsil.org.uk/>
- **Leeds Mental Wellbeing Service** supports individuals to manage everyday problems such as feeling low, anxious or stressed, or struggling with sleep. They offer a range of support, including phone support, instant access online resources, group classes and 1-1 'talking therapies'.
 - <https://www.leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services-a-z/leeds-mental-wellbeing-service/home/>
- **Women's Counselling and Therapy Service** is currently offering phone or zoom counselling for Leeds women and girls. They can also offer support for wider health issues. There is no charge for services.
 - <https://www.womenstherapyleeds.org.uk.>

- **Live Well Leeds** is a Leeds city-wide service based in the community to provide support for people with mild to moderate support needs to manage and/or recover from their mental health whether they are diagnosed or not.
 - <https://livewellleeds.org.uk/>
- **Specialist Autism Services: The Employment Hub** provides employment support for autistic young people aged 15 to 24 from across Leeds and Bradford who are not in education, employment or training. This support is tailored to their individual needs. Their Employment Hub features autism support and workshops which are delivered via Zoom and face to face. This includes advice & guidance, initial job search, CV completion, confidence building & finding work, right through to helping you to remain in employment. Please go to the bottom of the website page to find out more details about the Hub and how to contact them.
 - <https://www.specialistautismservices.org/employment-support/>

Groups available in Leeds:

- **The THRU group with Leeds Mind** is a group for people aged between 18 and 25 which offers peer support and skill building around mental health difficulties. They are currently running two weekly support groups – face to face on Monday and via zoom on Thursday. You can self-refer at: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/MBNH3RV>.
 - Check out the website at www.leedsmind.org.uk/our-services/peer-support to find out more about the group – you will attend an introductory appointment first to find out more about the group and how it all works online.
- **Leeds Mind** also run some other online workshops on topics including coping with change, coping with crisis, coping with isolation, coping with panic, improving mental wellbeing, managing mood and managing anxiety. Check out the same website as above to find out more about these workshops or to book on if you are interested.
- **Andy's man club** is a support group specifically for men who have experienced mental health difficulties. They want to give men the place and space to talk about whatever is going on for them. They have online groups available, every Monday at 7pm. You can look at their Facebook page just by searching Andy's Man Club Leeds, and can see lots of content without having to like or follow their page. There are videos, podcasts and lots to read on there. If you want to join the Monday group or have any questions, you can email them at:
 - info@andysmanclub.co.uk.
- **Getaway girls** have different peer support groups for young women in Leeds. These tend to be quite creative in nature, looking at poetry, creative writing, music and song as a way of expressing and making sense of your mental health.
 - <https://getawaygirls.co.uk/>

Learning to drive

As you reach adulthood, driving may be on your list of priorities. Learning to drive can be exciting but also nerve racking for some. Below are some resources to help you kickstart your journey to driving, while keeping your recent diagnosis in mind.



- Before beginning to learn to drive, ensure you are up to date with requirements in relation to your Autism diagnosis:
 - <https://www.gov.uk/asc-and-driving>
- **Laugh n Pass** and **1st Drive Forward** have instructors who are competent in teaching any person who may struggle with communication and socialising.
 - <http://www.laughnpass.co.uk/driving-lessonsautistic-adults/>

Sex and Puberty

There is a lot of information out there when it comes to learning about puberty and sex. This can be quite overwhelming and make it hard to know where to begin. Below are a few websites and books that might be helpful in supporting your understanding. Some of these are general websites about puberty and sex and others are related to neurodivergence.

- **Planet Puberty** is a website for parents of neurodivergent children/young people that has lots of advice, ideas and information about how to discuss puberty. They have real life experiences from parents, links to further resources and information and interactive activities for children/young people to do. Aswell as covering the practical and biological aspects of puberty they also discuss the emotional impact.
 - <https://www.planetpuberty.org.au/>
- The **Occupational Therapy Helping Children** website have a page for parents/carers of neurodivergent children offering information about how to provide support to them through puberty. They discuss how to prepare your child for puberty and give tips on how to talk about subjects that might be sensitive.
 - [Supporting Neurodiverse Adolescents Through Puberty - Occupational Therapy Helping Children.](#)
- The **Bodytalk** website has a puberty section which is aimed at young people. It is very interactive and full of different activities to help explore and understand puberty. It deals with puberty in a sensitive way and the viewer can choose the level of clothing which body images wear, e.g. full clothing, underwear, no clothing, when showing the bodily changes that occur during puberty. The website also covers social and emotional changes and the use of technology.
 - bodytalk.org.au

- The **SECCA** website has a range of unique resources to help people of all abilities learn and teach about relationships, sexuality, health and rights. These resources are picture-based and written to ensure access and understanding.
 - <https://www.secca.org.au/resources/>

- **“What’s happening to Ellie” by Kate E. Reynolds- book**
 This book helps parents and carers teach neurodivergent girls about puberty. It covers changes they will experience including emotional aspects (feelings) and physical aspects (periods).

- **“What’s happening to Tom” by Kate E. Reynolds- book**
 This book helps parents and carers teach neurodivergent boys about puberty. It covers changes they will experience including emotional aspects (feelings) and physical aspects (wet dreams).

This is a general guide to Autism resources – please note that these resources contain information that is created and maintained by other public and private organisations.

Inclusion within this pack should not be taken as a recommendation or endorsement of their information, products or services, and be aware that information quickly becomes outdated.

We are always looking to improve these post-diagnostic support packs; therefore, **sharing any feedback is highly welcomed**. Please email nd.cypmhs@nhs.net if you wish to do so.

Leeds Community CYPMHS, Neurodevelopmental Team; Dr Jenny Perry (Clinical Psychologist), Amber Wilkins (Assistant Psychologist), Narjes Froozani (Psychology Intern), Abbie Lowe-Smith (CYPMHS Assistant), Katharine Rice (CYPMHS).

Last updated: December 2023.