

# Looking after YOU

Parent Carer Guide  
to Wellbeing



Being a parent carer is incredibly demanding, and prioritising self-care is essential for both your well-being and your ability to provide effective care.

Here's a breakdown of how as a parent carer, you can look after yourself:

### **Acknowledge Your Needs:**

- Recognise your limits: Understand that you can't pour from an empty cup. It's not selfish to prioritise your own needs.
- Identify your stressors: Pay attention to what triggers stress and anxiety, and find ways to mitigate them.

### **Prioritise Physical Health:**

- Sleep: Aim for adequate sleep, even if it's in short bursts.
- Nutrition: Eat healthy, balanced meals, even when time is limited.
- Exercise: Incorporate physical activity into your routine, even if it's just a short walk.
- Medical Check-ups: Don't neglect your own health. Schedule regular medical appointments.

### **GP Carers Register**

If your GP's surgery has a carers register, you could ask to be added. If your GP knows you're a carer, they can keep an eye on your health with you.



# Mental Health & Well-being

## Seek Support:

- Connect with other parent carers through support groups or online communities.
- Talk to a therapist or counsellor to process your emotions.
- Lean on trusted friends and family members.

## Practice Relaxation Techniques:

- Try mindfulness, meditation, or deep breathing exercises.
- Engage in activities you enjoy, such as reading, listening to music, or taking a bath.

## "Me Time":

- Schedule regular breaks, even if they're short.
- Pursue hobbies and interests that bring you joy.

## Set Boundaries:

- Learn to say "no" to requests that overwhelm you.
- Delegate tasks when possible.

## Seek Practical Support

### short break Care:

- Explore short break care options to give yourself a break from caregiving responsibilities.

### Ask for Help:

- Don't hesitate to ask for help from family, friends, or community resources.
- Accept offers of assistance with household chores, errands, or childcare.



# How do I speak to my friends and family about my child?

Sharing your child's disability or diagnosis with friends and family is a deeply personal decision, and how you approach it can significantly impact your support system and you. Start by considering who in your circle is most supportive and understanding, and begin with them. Be honest and straightforward, but tailor the information to their level of understanding.

Provide clear, honest information about the diagnosis, focusing on your child's strengths and needs. Be prepared to answer questions, address misconceptions, and offer resources for further learning. Emphasise that your child is still the same person they've always been, and that your family's love and support remain essential.

Talking to family about your child's disability or diagnosis can be a delicate process, demanding patience and understanding. It's important to recognise that everyone processes information differently, and some family members may need time to adjust.

## What if communication breaks down and you don't get the response you expected?

Understand that their response may stem from a lack of understanding about disability, coupled with their own personal anxieties; it's crucial to understand that however upsetting this may be, that you understand that it is not your fault.



# Finding a Support Network

Parent carer support groups are vital lifelines for those navigating the unique challenges of raising a child with disabilities or complex needs. These groups provide a crucial space for shared understanding and emotional support, where parents can connect with others who truly understand their experiences.

They can offer a sense of community, reducing feelings of isolation and validating the often overwhelming emotions that accompany caregiving. Beyond emotional support, these groups offer practical advice, information on available resources, and advocacy opportunities, empowering parents to navigate the complex systems and challenges they face.

Ultimately, parent carer support groups foster resilience and provide a sense of belonging, reminding parents that they are not alone in their journey.

## So how do you find the right group for you?

Think about your needs. Would you like:

- Emotional support or practical support?
- Practitioner run or Parent led?
- National Organisation or Local ones?
- Face to face or Online?

No matter what you need, remember, **you are not alone**. There is likely someone out there just like you, looking for the same safe space.



# How do I know what information about my child's diagnosis is reliable?

Have you been told NOT to google yet?

Yea, we were told not to, too. However, I didn't listen. This is my child, and I needed to know what was going on, and I learnt a lot I wanted to know, even more that I didn't from Google.

We advise that you always try to speak to a healthcare practitioner first as they will want to answer any questions you may have around your child's diagnosis. However, if you are going to search for answers, please consider the suggestions below.

General search engines such as Google are also popular when searching for information on the internet, and it is ok to use them as long as you bear the following in mind.

## **Is it a reputable site?**

Assess the information they are sharing, is it backed up by evidence.

## **Analyse the Website:**

Is the design well done and professional looking?

## **Be aware of potential bias:**

Be aware of your own biases and avoid seeking out information that only confirms your existing beliefs.



# Organising yourself and them

Organising and storing your child's appointments, letters and documents is crucial for efficient management of their care, and let's be honest, your sanity!

## Once storage is selected, you could consider:

- Categorise by theme, i.e hospital letters, therapy, etc
- Chronological order
- Label everything
- Regular review and purge!

## During the Appointment

Don't hesitate to ask questions, make notes, clarify any instructions, and be honest and open. This will build better relationships.

## Storing documents you could consider:

- Binders
- Folders & expanding files
- Filing cabinets
- Plastic storage boxes
- Lever arch files
- Scanning onto a PC
- Cloud Storage
- Secure folders on hard drives



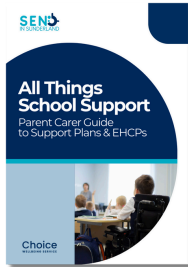
## Appointment Planning

Before the appointment: think about questions you want to ask, write them down alongside any points you may have that you want to discuss.

## After the Appointment

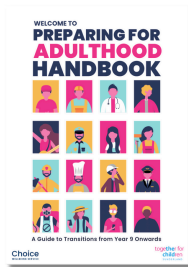
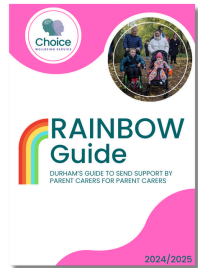
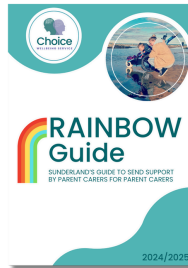
Review your notes, follow up on anything you were expected to do, organise your information, and document any changes to medications etc.

Here are just a few more guides we have available!



Guides on specific subjects

Rainbow Guides



Transitions Guides

# Your Child, Your Choice

Because one size doesn't fit all

Find our  
website here:

