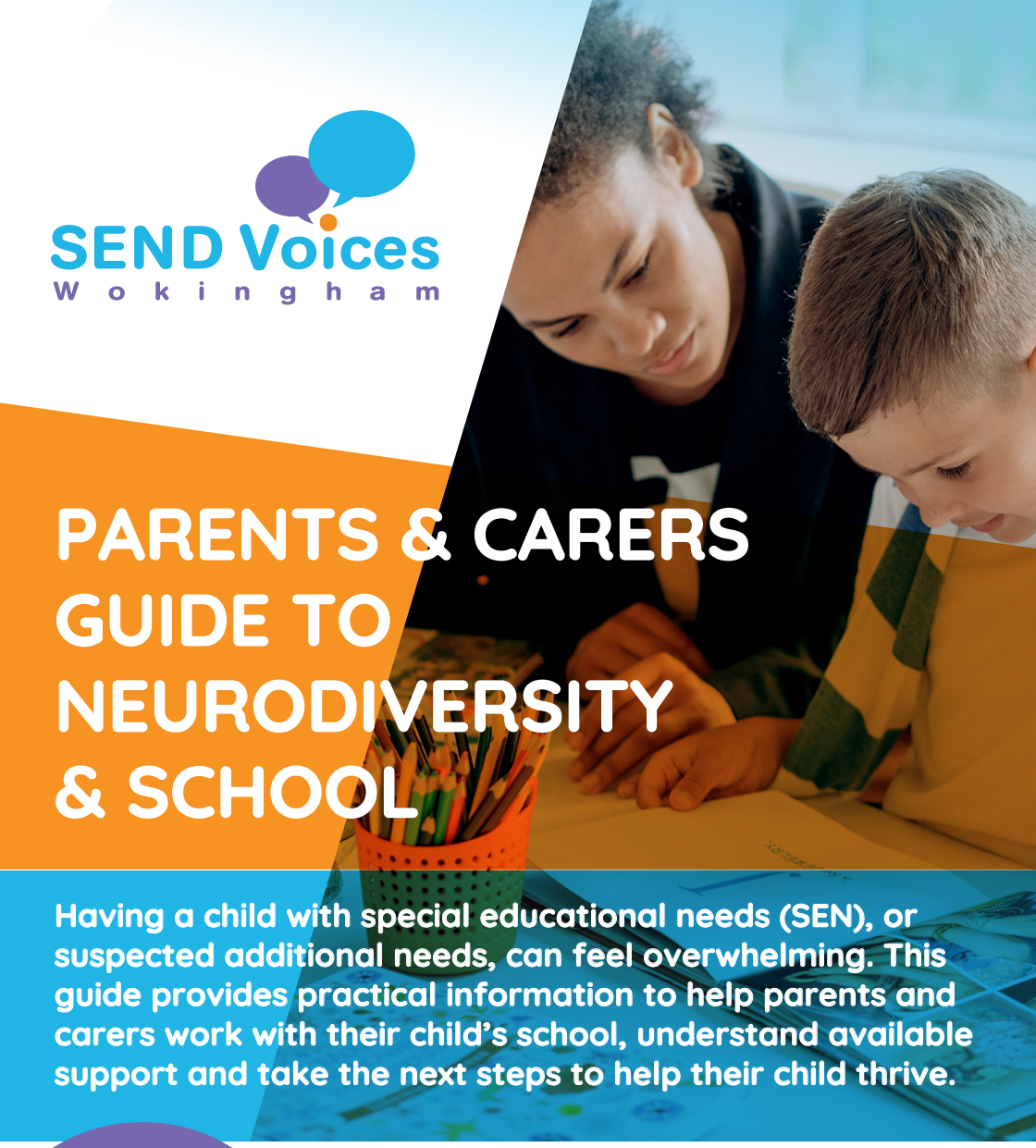
SEND Voices
Wokingham



PARENTS & CARERS GUIDE TO NEURODIVERSITY & SCHOOL

Having a child with special educational needs (SEN), or suspected additional needs, can feel overwhelming. This guide provides practical information to help parents and carers work with their child's school, understand available support and take the next steps to help their child thrive.

Website links & information correct as of September 2026

We know website links may change.
Please contact SEND Voices Wokingham if you are having problems finding the information you need
Email: info@sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk

www.sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk
info@sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk

Dear Parents and Carers,

Following the success of the Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) Project, feedback from the participating schools highlighted that many families would welcome further information about neurodiversity and how to work with schools to best support their children.

Across schools in the Borough, there is some positive practice taking place within Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Creating a shared guide for schools and families to use together felt like a positive next step in helping everyone feel informed and supported on what can sometimes be a lonely or confusing journey.

This guide explores what neurodiversity may look like in children, where you can find information and support, and explains the roles of schools the Local Authority and other professionals.

The language and understanding around neurodivergence is continually evolving, and this guide aims to reflect current best practice and terminology as accurately as possible when written. The booklet contains examples of what each neurodivergence may look like, however none of these lists are exhaustive and are to be used as an initial guide on what to look for. It also contains some images created using AI and QR codes which link to websites.

We are extremely grateful to everyone who took part in the PINS Project, and for the honest and valuable feedback shared by families. We also thank the schools for welcoming this feedback and working collaboratively to ensure our children are supported and able to thrive.

For more information on **SEND Voices Wokingham** or the PINS project please visit our website at www.sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk or email us at www.sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk/

The SEND Voices Wokingham Team

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What is Neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity is an umbrella term for all the different ways human beings think and process the world.

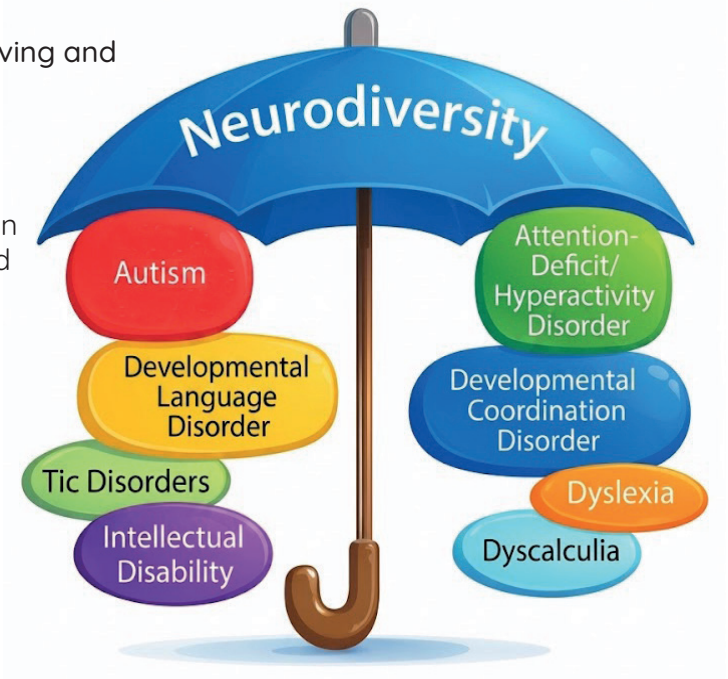
Most people are neurotypical, meaning their brains work in ways that are common. Some people are neurodivergent / neurodiverse, which means their brains work differently than the majority. This includes conditions such as Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, OCD, Tourette Syndrome, Bipolar Disorder and Global Developmental Delay.

Being neurodivergent does not mean something is wrong. These are natural differences in how people think, learn, and experience the world. Life can be harder at times because society is mostly designed for neurotypical people, but neurodivergent people also have many strengths.

With the right understanding, environment, and support, being neurodivergent can have many positives, including:

- Strong attention to detail
- Creativity and imagination
- Ability to focus deeply on interests
- Thinking in new and different ways
- Good problem-solving and analytical skills
- A strong sense of fairness and justice
- Acceptance of others
- Willingness to question outdated ideas and routines

Every child is unique, and with support, neurodivergent children can thrive and succeed in their own way.



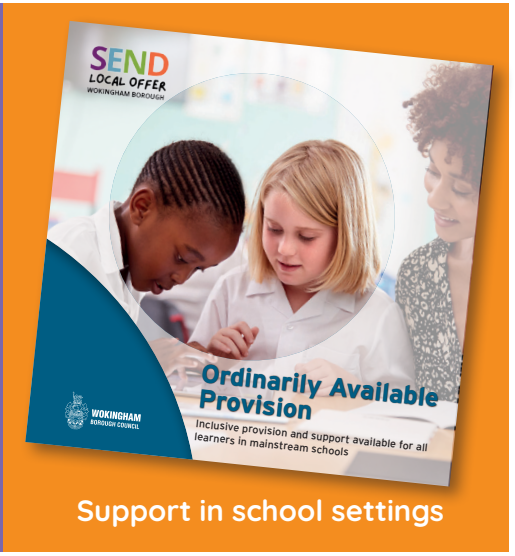
Support in Schools

Needs led support: Across Wokingham Borough, schools take a needs-led approach to supporting children and young people. This means that support is based on a child's individual strengths and needs, rather than on whether they have a formal diagnosis or not.

Mainstream schools must use the **Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP)** to put appropriate strategies, adjustments, and interventions in place, ensuring that all children are supported to access learning, feel included, and thrive within their school environment. This approach helps ensure the right support is provided at the right time, in partnership with families, so every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential



Support in early years settings



Support in school settings

More information and the OAP Guides are available here:
www.wokingham.gov.uk/children-families-and-young-people/send-local-offer/help-learning/ordinarily-available-provision

The guidance explains the support Wokingham Area expect all mainstream schools and early years settings to provide, using the resources they already have. This support is for all learners, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Understanding Different Types of Neurodivergence

Autism

Autism is a neurodevelopmental difference that affects how a child communicates, interacts with others, and experiences the world. Autism is a spectrum, meaning that every autistic child is unique, with their own combination of strengths, differences, support needs, and ways of learning.

Our understanding of autism and the language we use to describe it continues to evolve. Although autism has often been represented as a linear spectrum, it is now more commonly understood as a spectrum of traits rather than a scale from "less autistic" to "more autistic." A helpful way to think about this is as a circle or wheel, where different areas, such as communication, sensory processing, social interaction, emotional regulation, and daily living skills, can vary independently. An autistic child may have significant strengths in some areas while needing more support in others.

For this reason, terms such as "high-functioning" and "low-functioning" autism are used less often today, as they can oversimplify an individual's experiences and may not accurately reflect their abilities or support needs across different aspects of life.

Autistic children will typically have challenges in some of the following areas:

- Social interaction
- Communication differences
- Sensory Processing Differences
- Processing Information
- Special Interests

PDA (Pathological Demand Avoidance) is when everyday demands can feel overwhelming or scary. Even simple things, like being asked to get dressed or start homework can cause anxiety and a 'fight, flight, freeze or fawn' response. This can happen even if the person actually wants to do the activity. It happens because the body and brain feel like they are in "survival mode," as if there is a threat, even when there isn't one. Avoiding the demand is a way of coping with that anxious feeling. PDA isn't a stand-alone diagnosis and is generally considered to be a profile within Autism, though demand avoidant behaviours can also occur in ADHD or other neurodivergences.

How you can support your child with Autism

There are many ways you can support your child, with or without a diagnosis

- Working with professionals to understand your child's needs and helpful strategies at home, school and in everyday life.
- Accessing information, workshops and training from local and national organisations.
- Recognising and celebrating your child's strengths, interests, achievements and individuality.
- Creating routines and predictability where helpful, adapting them to suit your child and family.
- Understanding and supporting your child's sensory needs, recognising they may vary across environments and situations.
- Supporting regulation by helping your child understand and manage emotions and responses in ways that feel safe and supportive.
- Learning and adapting to your child's communication style, giving them the time and space they need.
- Exploring behaviour with curiosity, recognising it may signal an unmet need, overwhelm, anxiety or difficulty communicating.

How school can support your child

- Using the Ordinarily Available Provision and reasonable adjustments to support both learning and other aspects of school.
- Building positive, trusting relationships with your child, such as having 1 or 2 trusted adults who know how to support them.
- Working in co-production with you and keep communication channels open and honest.
- Sharing best practice and listen to ideas.
- Helping develop relevant plans to ensure your child has the required level of support for them to thrive.

It is important to remember every autistic child is different. Strategies and support should always be individualised around the child's strengths, needs, preferences, and experiences.

ADHD

ADHD is a developmental condition that affects a child's ability to focus, manage impulses, and regulate activity levels. Each child has their own strengths, needs, and ways of learning.

The 3 types of ADHD and their common signs

Inattentive	Hyperactive	Combined
• Difficulty focusing and staying organised • May appear distracted or forgetful (can only follow 1 instruction at a time) • Struggles with following instructions or completing tasks	• High energy and restlessness. • Difficulty sitting still or waiting their turn • May act quickly without thinking things through (Impulsive) or engage in risky activities.	• A mix of both inattentive and hyperactive-impulsive traits

How you can support your child with ADHD

There are lots of ways to support your child with ADHD:

- Working with professionals to understand how ADHD affects your child and identify helpful strategies at home, in education and everyday life.
- Accessing information, workshops and training to build your understanding of ADHD and ways to support your child.
- Recognising and celebrating your child's strengths, interests and efforts, using encouragement and positive reinforcement.
- Keeping communication clear and manageable, using one step at a time where helpful.
- Using visual supports and tools, such as visual plans, to make tasks easier to manage.
- Considering the environment, including noise, visual distractions and other demands that may affect focus or regulation.
- Noticing what helps your child regulate and succeed, including movement, breaks and enjoyable activities.

How school can support your child

- Following the Ordinarily Available Provision by using things like visual timetables, seating plan adjustments and allow regular movement breaks
- Using clear instructions, set expectations & have routines
- Adapting the environment to suit & use creative multi-sensory learning to support input.
- Use declarative language, for example: 'It's time for PE' rather than 'get ready for PE' as this can be triggering for a child with ADHD.
- Ensure teaching and support staff are aware of neuro-affirming language for example not using terms like a 'behaviour problem,' instead recognising the behaviours may be a 'distress communication'
- Adapt behaviour consequences so that break times and movement opportunities are not removed in response to poor choices. Instead, use alternative approaches that support regulation and positive behaviour.



Dyslexia & Dyscalculia

What Is Dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a learning difference that mainly affects reading, spelling, letter formation and how written language is processed.

What Is Dyscalculia?

Dyscalculia is a learning difference that affects understanding of numbers, patterns, and basic math concepts.

Neither have any link to intelligence and many children have strengths such as creativity and problem-solving.

Common signs of Dyslexia	Common signs of Dyscalculia
Difficulty recognising letter sounds	Difficulty recognising numbers or quantities
Slow or effortful reading	Trouble with place value
Trouble spelling	Difficulty remembering maths facts
Mixing up letter order or reading right to left	Confusion with maths symbols
Difficulty following written instructions	Difficulty with time, money, or measurement
Avoiding reading aloud	Feeling anxious or overwhelmed by maths
Sequencing difficulties	

How you can support your child with Dyslexia or Dyscalculia

Understanding how dyslexia or dyscalculia affects your child can help you find approaches that build confidence and make learning more accessible.

- Working with your child's school to understand their strengths and needs and agree appropriate support.
- Accessing information and training to build your understanding and support your child.
- Celebrating your child's strengths and achievements, recognising

that difficulties with literacy or maths do not reflect their intelligence or potential.
- Breaking tasks into manageable steps and using multisensory approaches and extra time where needed.
- Using tools and technology to make learning more accessible, such as audiobooks, visual aids and assistive technology.
- Supporting confidence and self-advocacy, helping your child understand how they learn and what support works for them.

How school can support your child

Schools must offer support to students with specific learning difficulties like dyslexia:

- Allowing calculators
- Breaking tasks down
- Praising effort & listen to the child's voice
- Following the principle of 'see the need, meet the need' – A diagnosis is not needed for support to be put in place for your child if it is believed they may be dyslexic
- Gaining training and support from specialists to support the child's style of learning.
- Ensuring worksheets use a dyslexia friendly font and remain uncluttered to support the learner.
- Early intervention during phonics teaching can lead to positive outcomes
- Supporting child with rhymes from very early on and look at awareness of sound.

Tic Disorders & Tourette Syndrome

What Are Tic Disorders?

Tic disorders involve sudden, repetitive movements or sounds that a child feels an urge to do. They are not deliberate and may become stronger with stress, excitement or tiredness.

What Is Tourette Syndrome?

Tourette Syndrome involves both motor tics and vocal tics for at least one year. It does not affect intelligence. Many children have strengths such as creativity, humour and problem-solving.

Common Signs of Tics

- Repeated movements (blinking, jerking, shrugging)
- Repeated sounds (sniffing, throat-clearing, humming)
- Tics may change over time
- Tics may come and go in waves
- Children may feel a build-up sensation before a tic

How you can support your child with Tics or Tourette Syndrome

Learning about tics and understanding how they affect your child can help you provide reassurance, reduce pressure

- Working with professionals to understand your child's tics and identify helpful support.
- Accessing information, support and training to understand tics and their impact.
- Helping your child understand that tics are not deliberate and do not need to be hidden or apologised for.
- Avoiding drawing attention to tics, recognising they may increase with stress, excitement, anxiety or tiredness.
- Creating an accepting and supportive environment where your child feels comfortable being themselves.
- Supporting your child to explain their needs at school and in social situations.
- Recognising and celebrating your child's strengths, interests and individuality, rather than focusing on their tics.

How school can support your child:

- Creating a supportive school plan, in co-production with parents/ carers
- Ensuring staff are aware of tics but try to avoid drawing attention to them.
- Seeking advice on how best to support if tics affect daily life.
- Ensuring all neurodivergence is discussed and celebrated within school to reduce stigma and potential bullying.



Developmental co-ordination disorder (DCD) and Dyspraxia

Developmental co-ordination disorder (DCD) is a neurological condition which a person is born with and can cause problems with movement and co-ordination that often continue into adulthood.

Dyspraxia is a broader term for movement and co-ordination difficulties, including those that develop after birth because of damage to the brain. Children may find everyday physical tasks harder, even though their intelligence is typical.

Common Signs of DCD & Dyspraxia

- Difficulty with coordination (running, jumping, catching)
- Struggles with fine motor tasks (buttons, handwriting, cutlery)
- Clumsiness or frequent bumps/falls
- Slow to learn new physical skills
- Difficulty organising belongings or planning tasks
- Fatigue after activities requiring coordination

How you can support your child with DCD / Dyspraxia

Understanding how DCD / Dyspraxia affects your child can help you find practical ways to make everyday more manageable while building their confidence and independence

- Working with professionals to understand your child's needs and identify helpful strategies and adjustments.
- Accessing information, workshops and training to build your understanding of DCD and dyspraxia and ways to support your child.
- Understanding the impact on coordination, movement, handwriting, self-care, organisation and energy levels.
- Breaking tasks into manageable steps, allowing extra time and reducing pressure where needed.
- Using practical and visual supports, such as checklists, visual timetables and reminders.
- Supporting your child to develop skills at their own pace, adapting activities and focusing on progress rather than how things are done.
- Recognising fatigue and effort, understanding that everyday tasks may require additional concentration and energy.
- Recognising and celebrating your child's strengths, interests and achievements, including creativity, problem-solving and determination

How school can support your child

- Working in co production with parents and other specialists who are involved in the childs care to ensure the correct support is in place.
- Making reasonable adjustments from within the Ordinarily Available Provisions, for example: allowing more time to get ready for PE and adapting those lessons, or providing visual timetables.

Local Autism & ADHD support and information

The Berkshire West Autism and ADHD Support Service, run by **Autism Berkshire** and **Parenting Special Children**, provides support for families whilst waiting for assessment and/or child diagnosed with autism or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). They also offer other services for families with SEND.

Autism Berkshire
contact@autismberkshire.org.uk
01189 594 594
www.autismberkshire.org.uk

Parenting Special Children
admin@parentingspecialchildren.co.uk
0118 9863532
www.parentingspecialchildren.co.uk

FIRST Wokingham Borough Council Family Intervention Resources and Support Team) provides information, workshops and courses around sleep and distressed behaviour.

First@wokingham.gov.uk
www.wokingham.gov.uk/children-families-and-young-people/send-local-offer/social-care-children-send/send-social-care-support-services/family-intervention-resources-and-support-team

Local Autism Support and Information

ASSIST (Wokingham Borough Council Autism Spectrum Service for Information, Support and Training) supports families & professionals with autism training & advice, both before and after diagnosis.

They offer National Autistic Society training programmes, autism-specific workshops, and groups for parents and children.

Parent programmes and drop-in sessions are available pre- and post-diagnosis, with no referral needed.

assist@wokingham.gov.uk
www.wokingham.gov.uk/children-families-and-young-people/send-local-offer/social-care-children-send/send-social-care-support-services/assist-team

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ASD Family Help provide support, connection and activities for children and young people with ASD, dyslexia, ADHD, PDA and other neurodivergence.

They also run training and information sessions for families and professionals.

www.asdfamilyhelp.org

Information from the NHS about Autism

www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/conditions/autism

Promise Inclusion (PINC) offers a family support service for children and adults with learning disabilities in the areas of social care, housing, benefits, health & transition from child to adult services.

admin@promiseinclusion.org
0300 777 8539
www.promiseinclusion.org

National Autism Support and information

National Autistic Society, national organization offering information and support including information on demand avoidance.

www.autism.org.uk

PDA Society website has some useful information on Pathological Demand Avoidance.

www.pdasociety.org.uk

Local ADHD support and information

Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust
Information from the NHS about ADHD

www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/conditions/adhd

National ADHD Support and information

ADHDUK

www.adhduk.co.uk

Dyslexia and Dyscalculia support and information

The Dyslexia Association

www.dyslexia.uk.net

British Dyslexia Association
(covers dyslexia and dyscalculia)

www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

TIC disorder and Tourette's support and information

Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust
Information from the NHS on Tics and Tourette Syndrome

www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/conditions/tics-and-tourette-syndrome

Tourettes Action UK

www.tourettes-action.org.uk

Dyslexia and Dyscalculia support and information

NHS Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust
Information from the NHS on dyspraxia

www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/conditions/developmental-co-ordination-disorder-and-dyspraxia

DYSPRAXIA FOUNDATION
Incorporating Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD)

Dyspraxia Foundation

www.dyspraxiafoundation.co.uk



Social, Emotional Mental Health (SEMH)

Mental Health and Neurodivergent Children

All children experience worries or nervousness at times, that's a normal part of growing up. However, children and young people who are neurodivergent are more likely to experience anxiety, emotional distress, and other mental health challenges. This isn't the child "choosing" it; it's a recognised pattern seen in research and clinical observations.

If you are concerned about your child's mental health: early support can make a real difference. Consider speaking to your GP, your child's SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator), or your child's teacher. These professionals can help point you toward appropriate support, assessments, referrals or strategies.

You don't have to manage this alone

Mental health support for your child:

SEND LOCAL OFFER WOKINGHAM BOROUGH

Wokingham **SEND Local Offer** has lots of information about mental health support for children and young people with SEND

www.wokingham.gov.uk/children-families-and-young-people/send-local-offer/health-and-wellbeing/health-conditions/mental-health-support-children-and-young-people-send

NHS Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust provides information on additional **mental health support**, NHS services & resources for a wide range of mental health conditions.

www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/conditions-and-services/mental-health-conditions

Anxiety

Anxiety is the body's natural response to stress; it prepares us to cope with challenges or danger. Everyone feels it sometimes.

In neurodivergent children

Anxiety can be more frequent, more intense and can affect behavior, learning, sleep and relationships. Research shows children with autism and/or ADHD are more likely to have higher levels of anxiety than their neurotypical peers. It can look like:

- Worry that seems more than expected for the situation
- Avoiding situations
- Physical symptoms (e.g., tummy ache, headaches)
- Difficulty concentrating, relaxing or sleeping

Masking

Masking is when a neurodivergent person hides or changes their natural behaviour to fit in with other people or to meet social expectations. It is often developed to feel accepted, avoid getting into trouble or to reduce the risk of bullying. This can be done consciously or unconsciously. A child who is masking may appear to be coping well, particularly at school or in social situations, while using considerable energy to manage or hide their difficulties. Masking can look like:

- Very different behaviour at school or in social situations compared to at home.
- The 'coke bottle effect' - Holding emotions and feelings of overwhelm in through the day then releasing them when they reach a place they feel safe.
- Becoming exhausted following social situations.
- Appearing to be a perfectionist, highly compliant, very quiet or eager to please or becoming increasingly withdrawn or avoiding situations they previously could have managed in.

It is important to look beyond how a child appears in one environment. A child who seems settled or successful at school may be using significant effort to cope, impacting their mental health, wellbeing and ability to learn. This can be very tiring and stressful, and over time it can affect mental health and self-esteem of a child. Parents, carers, professionals

and schools working together to create inclusive environments, open communication, appropriate adjustments, reducing the pressure to conform and providing safe opportunities for children to communicate and regulate as well as focusing on wellbeing and positive relationships can support a child to feel able to be themselves.

Burnout

"Burnout" describes deep and prolonged exhaustion, physically, mentally and emotionally, that happens when a child has been under long-term stress or demand without enough support or recovery time.

Burnout often comes from coping with environments that aren't adapted to their needs (e.g., sensory overload, social stress, masking).

It can look like:

- Extreme tiredness or shutdown
- Heightened anxiety or emotional overwhelm
- Loss of interest in things they normally enjoy
- Reduced ability to cope with everyday tasks

Burnout isn't failure or laziness; it's a physical response to chronic stress.

Emotional-Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

EBSA refers to difficulty attending school due to significant emotional distress. This is not simply "not wanting to go"; it's often driven by overwhelming anxiety and fear.

It can look like:

- Distress about school before or during the day
- Physical symptoms (tummy aches, nausea) related to school
- Withdrawn behaviour or refusal to leave home
- Sudden or worsening absences

EBSA can impact learning and wellbeing, and understanding the underlying causes, including anxiety, sensory stress or past negative experiences, helps schools and families work together on supportive strategies.

Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria (RSD)

Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria is intense emotional pain caused by real or perceived criticism or rejection. It is not a formal medical diagnosis, but many clinicians and families use the term to describe a common experience for some children with ADHD or autism.

It can look like:

- Feeling devastated by mild criticism
- Anxiety about making mistakes or disappointing others
- Withdrawal after social setbacks
- Emotional outbursts linked to feeling rejected

Because it's not an official diagnosis, it's often best described as an emotional trait or pattern that can help families understand and support a child's experience.

ODD (Oppositional Defiant Disorder)

ODD is more of a behavioural defiance, when a child regularly struggles with anger, arguing, and refusing to follow rules, more than what is typical for their age. It is not just occasional standard misbehaviour; it's a consistent pattern that affects daily life. It usually comes down to difficulty managing emotions, not bad behaviour. ODD is a diagnostic label in itself however can show alongside autism or ADHD. It is rarely diagnosed any more however has been previously and still occasionally is.



Getting Support for Your Child's Mental Health

If you're worried about your child's mental health or school attendance:

- Talk with the SENCO, pastoral lead or school nurse.
- Some schools in the borough are supported by the **Mental Health Support Team** (MHST) and can support your child.
- Non MHST schools can contact the **CAMHS Common Point of Entry** (CPE) for appropriate support through the 'Getting Help' offer.
- Speak to your GP about anxiety, school avoidance or emotional distress.
- Consider referral to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) or local support, if recommended.
- Ask about school-based adjustments, including sensory breaks, quiet spaces, lowered demand tasks or emotional regulation support.

Mental health support for your child is available from Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust:

NHS
Berkshire Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust:

Mental Health Support Team

www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/services/mental-health-support-team-for-children-and-young-people

CAMHS Getting Help Team

www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/services/getting-help-service-wokingham-for-children-and-young-people

Diagnosis Options - Understanding the Pathways

Families may choose to explore a formal diagnosis for their child, though it is important to remember that support in school is needs-led and does not depend on a diagnosis. Below are the main diagnosis pathways available, an overview of the process and key considerations for each.

Neurodiversity Assessment & Support

Details about NHS Autism and ADHD assessments can be found on the Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust website.

Autism Assessment

Current information on autism assessments is available here:

www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/services/autism-assessment-service-for-children-and-young-people

ADHD Assessment

Current information on ADHD assessments is available here:

www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/services/adhd-service-for-children-and-young-people

Right to Choose (RTC)

Under the NHS Right to Choose, families may ask their GP to refer their child to an alternative NHS approved provider for certain assessments (such as autism or ADHD), where this option is available. These assessments are funded by the NHS but delivered by independent providers.

Waiting times are often shorter than local through local NHS services, and there is no cost to families. Diagnoses are NHS recognised.

However not all assessments are covered, availability varies, and families must ensure the referral follows the correct NHS Right to choose process. Ongoing support after diagnosis may still sit with local services so there needs to be a shared care agreement in place.

Private and Independent Assessments

Families may choose to seek a private assessment, which is arranged and funded independently. These assessments need to be carried out by qualified clinicians and can often be completed more quickly. This process may offer shorter waiting times, greater flexibility, and more detailed assessment reports, however private assessments can be costly, and families should ensure the clinician is appropriately qualified. Following a private diagnosis there may still need to be follow up support, medication and/or further treatment which will incur further costs. Alternatively some companies will allow care to be transferred over to the NHS, a private diagnosis does not automatically mean that NHS services will take over any recommended treatment, prescribing or follow-up care. Arrangements can vary depending on the condition, local services and the individual child's needs. A shared care agreement would need to be in place before choosing your private provider however it's important to know shared care is not automatic, the GP or NHS clinician must be satisfied that taking responsibility for prescribing is clinically appropriate.

Dyslexia

If you think your child may be dyslexic, you can explore a formal dyslexia assessment. Start by speaking with your child's teacher and SENCO to discuss concerns and strategies already in place. A very small number of schools can provide a screening for dyslexia, though not a formal assessment this may help with the type of support put in place. For an official assessment only private options are available, recognised specialist organisations such as the British Dyslexia Association (www.bdadyslexia.org.uk) or local dyslexia charities offer formal diagnostic assessments for children (usually over 8 years of age). These independent assessments can provide a detailed report that helps inform school support and interventions.

Things to Remember

You know your child best, and you are their best advocate, a diagnosis can help some families better understand their child and access specific services or support. However, a diagnosis is not required for schools to put support in place, schools will continue to use a needs-led approach and Ordinarily Available Provision to support children, whether they are diagnosed, waiting for assessment, or do not have a diagnosis.

Please speak to your child's school, class teacher or SENCO about the support they can provide.

How Support in School Works

Support for you child should be needs led based on their own individual strengths & needs

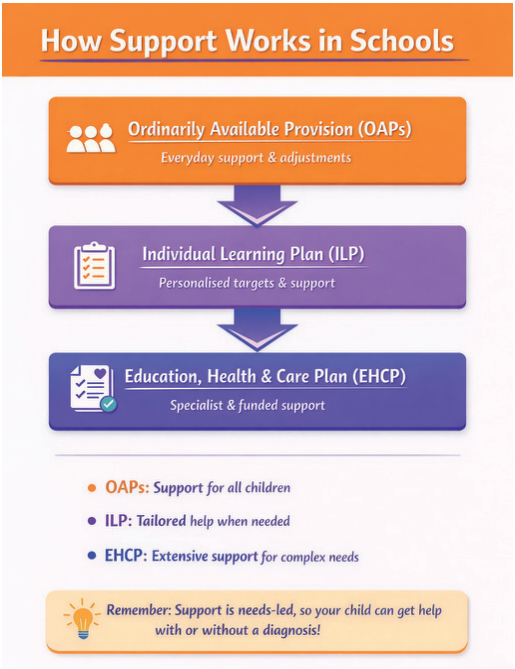
Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP)

Schools use OAP to provide the support and adjustments that all children with additional needs are entitled to as part of everyday teaching. This includes strategies like classroom seating plans, differentiated tasks, extra time on assignments, or targeted small group support. OAP ensures every child can access learning and thrive without needing a formal plan or diagnosis.

Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) – or Targeted support

If a child needs more personalised support than OAPs alone can provide, schools may create an Individual Learning Plan (ILP). Some schools may have different names for these plans such as IEPs.

ILPs outline specific targets, interventions, and resources tailored to a child's strengths and needs. They are co-produced with the SENCO and reviewed regularly and help track progress, ensuring support is responsive and effective.



Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

An EHCP may be needed if a child or young person's needs cannot be met through the support normally available in school, including OAP and targeted support such as an ILP. Having a diagnosis does not automatically mean an EHCP is needed.

An EHCP is a legally binding plan that sets out a child or young person's education, health and social care needs, the support they should receive, and the outcomes they are working towards. It may also include funding for additional support or specialist provision.

The EHCP process

- A parent, school or professional can request an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Needs Assessment from the Local Authority (LA).
- The LA decides whether to carry out the assessment and gathers advice and evidence from education, health and other professionals.
- The LA then decides whether an EHCP is required by discussing at a panel using the information gathered.
- If agreed, a draft EHCP is shared with parents for consultation before the final plan is issued.
- The school or setting implements the EHCP, which is reviewed at least annually.

If the LA decides not to carry out an EHC Needs Assessment or decides not to issue an EHCP following an assessment, you will receive a letter explaining the decision, your right to challenge it, and the next steps available to you.

Please note: Support in schools may change in the future. as a result of the SEND Reforms. We will keep our website updated with the latest information and changes.

SENDIASS provides free, impartial information, advice and support throughout the process, including guidance on your legal rights. Their contact details can be found later in this booklet.

More information about **EHCPs and the assessment process,** visit the SEND Local Offer

www.wokingham.gov.uk/children-families-and-young-people/send-local-offer/help-learning/education-health-and-care-plan-ehcp

Key Points:

Support is based on a child or young person's needs, not a diagnosis. A formal diagnosis is not required to access support.

- Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP): The support all schools should provide as a first step.
- Targeted support (e.g. an Individual Learning Plan): Additional, personalised support where needed.
- Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP): For children and young people whose complex needs cannot be met through the support and resources normally available in school.

Transition into secondary school

Transitioning into secondary school can be a really big step, with lots of excitement and also anxiety. It's a really good idea to speak to your child's school, SENCO and class teacher to discuss this next step. Primary schools will work closely with secondary schools to identify any pupils who need more than the standard transition program, many will put additional visits in place, making reasonable adjustments and creating a positive plan to support your child.



Where to get Additional Support Beyond School

Wokingham SENDIASS
(Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service) provides free, confidential and impartial support for children, young people (up to 25) and their families.

0118 908 8233
sendiass@wokingham.gov.uk
www.sendiasswokingham.org.uk

They help you understand SEND, explain processes such as Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), and give guidance on school support, your rights and available options.

They can assist with:

- Explaining SEND support and legislation
- Helping with EHCP requests and annual reviews
- Preparing for meetings and understanding reports
- Signposting to other local services
- Supporting with disagreements and appeals

Early Help

The Early Help team are a Wokingham Borough Council support service for children, young people, and families who need extra help to prevent difficulties from escalating. Parents/carers can self-refer, and a member of staff will be able to advise.

0118 908 8002
triage@wokingham.gov.uk
www.wokingham.gov.uk/children-families-and-young-people/children-and-families/family-support/early-help-service

Speech and language therapists (SaLT):

SaLT can assess and advise on support for speech, language, communication and social interaction. They can help provide strategies and support for children at school and at home.

Occupational Therapist (OT)

OT's asses a child's skills needed for daily activities and independence. They may become involved if a child is having challenges with co-ordination or fine motor skills. They provide practical strategies and adaptations to ensure a child can successfully participate in day-to-day activities.

More information about all children's health services, including **Speech & Language** and **Occupational Therapy** here: **www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/conditions-and-services/children-and-young-people-s-health**

Educational Psychologist (EP)

EP's work with children, families and schools to assess a child's learning, behaviour, emotional wellbeing and development. They look at strengths and identify barriers to a child's learning. They can provide strategies to support children. They also assess children during an EHCP needs assessment.

www.wokingham.gov.uk/children-families-and-young-people/send-local-offer/help-learning/send-education-support-services/educational-psychology-service

Multi Agency Inclusion Clinic (MAIC)

The MAIC is an advisory service available to primary and secondary schools within Wokingham Borough. The clinic operates fortnightly during term-time. Schools can refer to the MAIC for guidance and signposting to support pupils who are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, long-term absence from school due to various reasons, including the risk of permanent exclusion or on medical grounds.

The MAIC brings together professionals from a range of services to share advice, strategies, and resources to support the needs of the referred child or young person.

Other Support & Useful Links

The **SEND Local Offer** helps you find information about local services, support, activities and events for children and young people aged 0-25 years who have SEND.

www.wokingham.gov.uk/children-families-and-young-people/send-local-offer

The **CAN Network** (Children with Additional Needs) Network is Wokingham Borough Council's Information and Support Service for families and carers of children and young people (aged up to 25) with additional needs and disabilities.

CAN.network@wokingham.gov.uk
https://directory.wokingham.gov.uk/kb5/wokingham/directory/service.page?id=yMqtWsyMkuE

The **School Nursing Service** supports children and young people (5–19) and their families, working with other professionals to provide tailored health advice and support.

Call **0300 365 0010** (Mon–Fri 9am–4:30pm)
www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/services/school-nursing-service

Local Charities and Support Groups

Building for the Future is a Wokingham based, parent led charity providing activities, support and therapy for children with disabilities and/or additional needs and their families.

admin@bftf.org.uk
07967 105842
www.bftf.org.uk

Me 2 Club is an inclusion charity providing support for children and young people aged 5+ with additional needs and disabilities

info@me2club.org.uk
www.me2club.org.uk

Camp Mohawk is a multi-functional day centre dedicated to providing a safe, secure environment for children with special needs and their families. It offers year-round inclusive activities

info@campmohawk.org.uk
www.campmohawk.org.uk

Dingley's Promise (for under 5s) support children through tailored specialist support in their early years centres, provide outreach support to families, spread inclusive practice through training for professionals

admin.wokingham@dingley.org.uk
www.dingley.org.uk/wokingham-2

Support for Parent and Carers

Being a parent or carer of a child with SEND can sometimes feel overwhelming, and it's easy to put your own needs last. However, taking time to care for yourself is not a luxury, it's an essential part of caring for your child. The support options below are available to help you look after your own wellbeing and connect with others who understand your experiences.

Carers Partnership
Reading & West Berkshire

Wokingham Carers Partnership provide support to anyone who cares for a child or member of their family. They work closely with Promise Inclusion and offer support, advice and information for carers.

https://carerspartnership.org.uk/wokingham-carers-partnership

WOKINGHAM RECOVERY COLLEGE

Wokingham Recovery College provides mental health support for those over 18. They run courses on various mental health challenges as well as peer support groups.

www.wokingham.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing-services/health-services-and-advice/mental-health-and-emotional-wellbeing/wokingham-recovery-college-mental-health-support

Online booking available or contact:
0118 237 9366
recoverycollege@wokingham.gov.uk

contact
For families with disabled children

Contact is a national charity for families with disabled children. They provide a helpline, information & advice, a listening ear service as well as workshops and events for parent carers.

0808 808 3555
www.contact.org.uk

Many parents find it helpful to talk to other parents of children with SEND, both for advice and emotional support. Local groups including **SEND Voices Wokingham, ASD Family Help** and **Promise Inclusion** run coffee mornings. There is a list of local support for parents & carers on the SEND Local Offer website

www.wokingham.gov.uk/children-families-and-young-people/send-local-offer/social-care-children-send/support-parent-carers

Parents and carers of disabled children are entitled to a **Parent Carer Assessment**. This assessment considers your physical and emotional wellbeing, including participation in work, education, training, or recreation. This may result in getting services or direct payments to support your caring role. Information about these assessments is in the Wokingham Borough Council Children with Disabilities Service Continuum of Need Document here:

www.wokingham.gov.uk/children-families-and-young-people/send-local-offer/social-care-children-send/send-social-care-support-services/children-disabilities-team

Ask your **GP** to record that you are a carer. This means that you will be offered annual health checks and a flu jab, plus more convenient appointments. You can also contact NHS Berkshire **Talking Therapies** who can help with common mental health problems:

www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/talking-therapies

Acronyms

ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactive disorder
ASSIST	Autism Spectrum Service for information, support and training
CAMHS	Child & Adolescent mental health service
CYPIT	Children & Young peoples integrated therapies
DCD	Developmental coordination disorder
DLA	Disability living allowance
EBSA	Emotional based school avoidance
EHCP	Educational health and care plan
EP	Educational psychologist
GP	General Practitioner - Doctor
ILP/IEP	Individual learning plan / Individual Education plan
LA	Local Authority
MAIC	Multi agency Inclusion Clinic
MHST	Mental Health Support Team
ND	Neurodiversity
NHS	National Health Service
OAP	Ordinarily Available Provision
ODD	Oppositional Defiant Disorder
PDA	Pathalogical Demand Avoidance / Persistent Drive for Atonomy
PINS	Partnership for the Inclusion of Neurodiversity in schools
RSD	Rejection Sensitivity Dysphoria
RTC	Right to choose
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SVW	SEND Voices Wokingham
TAF	Team Around the Family – Made up of professionals who have supported a child

SEN contact details at my child's school:

SENCO name:

.....

SENCO contact details:

.....

SENCO working days:

.....

Family support worker:

.....

Mental health lead:

.....

Questions you could ask your child's school:

- What SEN support is currently in place for my child?
- What Ordinarily Available Provision is currently being used to support my child? (This includes things like reasonable adjustments in the class room, adaptive teaching, different forms of communication, more structure during break times etc)
- Have any needs been identified in school for my child?
- How are my child's needs being assessed and monitored and how often is this reviewed?
- Who is responsible for overseeing my child's SEN support?
- How can I be updated on my child's progress and wellbeing?
- How is my child involved in decisions about their support?
- What happens if the current support is not enough?
- How can the school support my child's emotional wellbeing?
- What support is available if my child becomes overwhelmed or dysregulated?
- Is there a safe space or trusted adult my child can access?
- How are friendships and social inclusion supported?
- How does the school identify signs of masking, anxiety, or burnout?
- How can we work together consistently between home and school?
- What is the best way for me to share concerns or updates?
- How does the school balance wellbeing alongside academic expectations?

Notes

SEND Voices
Wokingham

The independent voice of SEND families, representing their experiences to help improve day-to-day lives

What do we do?

We give a voice to families who have a child or young person aged 0-25 years with any Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND). We work in partnership with education, health, social care, and other service providers to make sure the services they commission meet the needs of children and young people with SEND in Wokingham. We represent parent carers experiences, views, and priorities. We also run events and training courses for parent carers.

How do we do this?

By listening to our members and as many parent carer voices as we can, from across the Wokingham Borough. We do this through:

- **Events**
- **Training courses**
- **Consultations & surveys**
- **Information sharing**

Join us, become a member - It's FREE

To become a member of SEND Voices Wokingham email

e info@sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk
W www.sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk
f SendVoicesWokingham

We are currently able to offer all our members a **FREE** Max Card. The Max Card is a discount card for families of children with additional needs age 0-25. Families can use their Max Card at selected venues across the UK to get free or discounted admission.

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