# Tom Tom's Helping Hands Directory

*UK Autism Help and Support A to Z*

**A practical guide for autistic people, families, carers and professionals**

Children • young people • adults • non-speaking people • families

*Prepared 25 October 2026*

A starting point for finding the right help. This directory brings together national charities, public services, specialist communication resources, rights advice and postcode-based finders. Start with the section that best matches what you need today.

**A note about "every service":** The UK has thousands of local NHS teams, council services, charities and peer groups, and provision changes by area. No fixed document can safely list every current local service. This guide gives a broad national A–Z and the official finders that can reveal local help by postcode, so the directory can point you toward the full local picture.

# Start here

If you are unsure where to begin, use this short route map. You do not need to wait for an autism diagnosis before asking many services for information, adjustments or support.

| If you need… | A good first step |
|---|---|
| **Need help right now** | Emergency services, NHS urgent mental health support and listening services |
| **Need autism information or next steps** | National Autistic Society, Autism Central, or the relevant nation-specific organisation |
| **Need school or college support** | Local SEND/ALN information and advice service; IPSEA in England; Enquire in Scotland; SNAP Cymru in Wales |
| **Need help for a non-speaking person** | Ask the NHS speech and language therapy team about AAC assessment; see Communication Matters, Makaton and ACE Centre |
| **Need adult social care or day-to-day support** | Contact the council adult social care team for a needs assessment; request communication adjustments |
| **Need money, benefits or grants** | Citizens Advice, Scope, Turn2us, Family Fund, and the relevant government benefits service |

# Urgent and emergency help

This directory is not a crisis service. If someone is in immediate danger or needs urgent medical help, call 999 or go to A&E. If it is urgent but not an immediate emergency, use the NHS urgent-care route for your nation or contact the GP/out-of-hours service. Autism does not change a person's right to urgent healthcare; explain communication, sensory or processing needs and ask staff to make reasonable adjustments.

- England: NHS 111 for urgent medical help; choose the mental health option where available. Call 999 for immediate danger.
- Scotland: NHS 24 on 111 for urgent care; call 999 for an emergency.
- Wales: NHS 111 Wales for urgent care; call 999 for an emergency.
- Northern Ireland: contact your GP or GP out-of-hours service for urgent non-emergency care; call 999 for an emergency. Find local out-of-hours details through nidirect.
- Samaritans: call 116 123, free, 24 hours a day, for someone to listen. Website: https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/
- Shout: text SHOUT to 85258 for free, confidential text support in the UK. Website: https://giveusashout.org/get-help/
- Childline: call 0800 1111 or use online chat for children and young people. Website: https://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/

# How to use this directory

- Choose the closest match: age, location, communication preference and the issue you want help with.
- Check eligibility, costs, referral rules, waiting times and opening hours with the service before relying on it. Some are local, commissioned or have limited capacity.
- When emailing, include your postcode or nation, whether you prefer email/text/phone, the support you are seeking and any access adjustments that help.
- For a local service, search the official directory first and then verify the provider's own contact page.
- A diagnosis is not required for many general disability, education, communication, wellbeing or family support routes. Ask the service what evidence it needs.

Language note: this guide uses "autistic person" and "non-speaking" where suitable, while recognising that people may describe themselves differently. "Non-speaking" does not mean a person has nothing to say; AAC and other communication methods should be taken seriously.

# A to Z quick finder

Use these topics to jump to the kind of support you need, then use the links in the directory and nation-specific sections to find a provider.

| | |
|---|---|
| A Assessment and advocacy | B Benefits and budgeting |
| C Communication and AAC | D Diagnosis and daily living |
| E Education and EHCP / ALN | F Families and carers |
| G Grants and getting support | H Health and wellbeing |
| I Independent living and inclusion | J Jobs and reasonable adjustments |
| K Keeping safe and urgent help | L Legal information and rights |
| M Mental health and masking | N Non-speaking communication |
| O Occupational therapy and access | P PDA and profiles |
| Q Quiet spaces and sensory needs | R Respite and relationships |
| S Social care and school support | T Transition to adult services |
| U University and further education | V Voice, choice and AAC |
| W Work, wellbeing and family support | X eXtra help while waiting |
| Y Young people and youth support | Z Zero-cost information and advice |

# National and specialist support A to Z

The entries below are a curated national directory of established organisations and public services. The links take you to the organisation's own contact or service page wherever possible. "UK-wide" means the information or service is intended to be accessible across the UK; local eligibility can still vary.

**ACE Centre** *[Children and adults with complex communication needs]*
Specialist charity supporting communication, assistive technology and access to learning. Explore assessment, training and resources for people who use or may benefit from AAC.
Phone: 0161 358 0151 | Email: info@acecentre.org.uk
Website: https://acecentre.org.uk/
*Check service area, referral pathway and fees with ACE Centre.*

**Afasic** *[Families of children with speech, language and communication needs]*
Parent helpline and information for families concerned about a child's speech, language or communication. Can explain routes to assessment and support.
Phone: 0300 666 9410 | Email: Online enquiry form
Website: https://afasic.org.uk/the-afasic-helpline/
*Helpline hours listed by Afasic: Monday and Wednesday, 10.30am–4pm.*

**Ambitious about Autism** *[Autistic children and young people, families and professionals]*
National charity focused on education, rights, transition and opportunities for autistic children and young people. Provides information and campaigns, with specialist education provision in parts of England.
Phone: 020 8815 5444 | Email: info@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk
Website: https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/
*Some direct school and college services are geographically limited.*

**Autism Alliance UK** *[All ages; local member charities]*
Network of specialist not-for-profit autism organisations. Use its member information to find regional organisations providing community support, education or adult social care.
Phone: Contact form | Email: Contact form
Website: https://www.autism-alliance.org.uk/
*The Alliance is a network; service eligibility belongs to each member organisation.*

**Autism Central** *[Families and support networks of autistic people in England]*
NHS-commissioned peer education programme. Offers lived-experience-informed resources, learning sessions and routes to peer support for families and carers.
Phone: Contact form | Email: autismcentral@annafreud.org
Website: https://www.autismcentral.nhs.uk/
*England programme; it is not a diagnostic or crisis service.*

**Autism NI** *[Autistic people, families and carers in Northern Ireland]*
Autism NI provides a helpline, family support, early intervention, local groups, training and resources for children, young people and adults.
Phone: 028 9040 1729 | Email: info@autismni.org
Website: https://autismni.org/help-support/helpline
*Helpline Monday–Friday, 9am–5pm. Option 1 for helpline and membership; email if phone is not accessible.*

**Autistic Girls Network** *[Autistic girls, women and gender-diverse people; families and professionals]*
Autistic-led information, training and community resources, with a focus on girls and women whose needs may be missed or misunderstood.
Phone: 07825 326820 | Email: hello@autisticgirlsnetwork.org
Website: https://autisticgirlsnetwork.org/contact/
*Check current programme availability and eligibility online.*

**BILD** *[Autistic people and people with learning disabilities; families and professionals]*
BILD works on rights, inclusion and improving support, including training and resources on positive practice and reducing restrictive practices.
Phone: 0121 415 6960 | Email: enquiries@bild.org.uk
Website: https://www.bild.org.uk/
*Primarily information, training and system-improvement resources rather than a general family helpline.*

**Carers UK** *[Unpaid carers, including family members supporting autistic people]*
Information and advice on carers' rights, benefits, work and wellbeing. Use the postcode-based local directory to find carer organisations.
Phone: 0808 808 7777 | Email: advice@carersuk.org
Website: https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/
*UK-wide information; local groups and statutory support differ by nation.*

**Cerebra** *[Families of children up to 16 with brain conditions, including autism]*
Freephone advice, sleep advice, parent guides, legal rights information and practical resources for families of children with brain conditions.

Phone: 0800 328 1159 | Email: enquiries@cerebra.org.uk
Website: https://cerebra.org.uk/
*Some services have age, issue or capacity criteria.*

**Child Autism UK** *[Parents, carers and professionals supporting autistic children]*
UK-wide helpline and information on diagnosis, education, EHCPs, funding, communication and support options.
Phone: 01344 882248 | Email: helpline@childautism.org.uk
Website: https://www.childautism.org.uk/for-families/autism-helpline/
*Helpline hours stated online: Monday–Friday, 9am–6pm. Check costs and suitability for any direct intervention service.*

**Citizens Advice** *[Adults and families needing independent advice on money, benefits, housing, work or consumer issues]*
Free, confidential advice with local services across England and Wales, plus separate national organisations in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Use the site to choose your nation and find local access.
Phone: England/Wales: 0800 144 8848 | Email: Web contact/find local office
Website: https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/
*Phone and face-to-face availability vary by location. Scotland: https://www.cas.org.uk/ . Northern Ireland: https://www.citizensadvice-ni.org/*

**Communication Matters** *[People of all ages who use or may need AAC]*
UK charity for Augmentative and Alternative Communication. Information about communication aids, apps, symbols, signing, communication books and networks for AAC users and families.
Phone: 0113 343 1533 | Email: admin@communicationmatters.org.uk
Website: https://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/
*AAC can include unaided and high-tech methods. The NHS speech and language therapy pathway may provide assessment.*

**Contact** *[Families of disabled children and young people up to 25]*
Free advice on education, health, social care, money and family life; also supports parent-carer participation and local connection.
Phone: 0808 808 3555 | Email: Online enquiry form
Website: https://contact.org.uk/
*See the helpline entry above for hours and enquiry limits.*

**Disability Rights UK** *[Disabled people, families and advisers]*
Rights information, factsheets and resources on independent living, benefits, education, employment and access. Useful as a starting point for national rights information.
Phone: 020 7250 8181 | Email: info@disabilityrightsuk.org
Website: https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/
*Not a casework solicitor or crisis line; check current office hours and whether it can take an enquiry.*

**Family Fund** *[Low-income families raising a disabled or seriously ill child]*
UK-wide grant-making charity. Families can check eligibility and apply for grants that may help with items, breaks, technology or everyday needs.
Phone: 01904 550055 | Email: info@familyfund.org.uk
Website: https://www.familyfund.org.uk/
*Eligibility and grant rounds apply. Separate schemes may exist for each nation.*

**GOV.UK and devolved government services** *[Disabled people, adults and families]*
Official starting point for disability benefits, carers' benefits, disability rights, education, Access to Work and local authority support. Benefit rules and names vary across the UK.
Phone: PIP/DLA existing claims: 0800 121 4433 | Email: Online contact and claim routes
Website: https://www.gov.uk/browse/disabilities
*For Scotland, check Social Security Scotland; for Wales, Welsh Government; for Northern Ireland, nidirect.*

**IPSEA** *[Families and young people dealing with SEND education issues in England]*
Free, independent legal information and next-step advice on special educational needs law, EHC plans, school support and SEND Tribunal appeals. Online guides and appointment-based advice lines.
Phone: Call-in helpline: 0300 222 5899 | Email: Use website for advice-line booking
Website: https://www.ipsea.org.uk/
*England education law focus. Call-in helpline hours are limited to listed days; check current schedule online.*

**Makaton Charity** *[People of all ages who benefit from signs, symbols and speech together]*
Information about Makaton, training, resources and ways to support communication. Makaton is one option within a person's communication toolkit; seek a speech and language therapist's advice where needed.
Phone: 01276 606760 | Email: help@makaton.org
Website: https://makaton.org/TMC/TMC/The_Makaton_Charity/Contact_us.aspx
*Phone lines are open on published weekday hours; check before calling.*

**Mind** *[Adults needing mental health information and support]*
Mental health information and a local Mind network. Can help people find local services and resources; autism-specific or urgent clinical support may need another route.
Phone: 0300 123 3393 | Email: info@mind.org.uk
Website: https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/
*Local Mind services vary and may have eligibility criteria. For crisis help use NHS urgent care or emergency services.*

**National Autistic Society** *[Autistic people of all ages, families and professionals across the UK]*
National advice and guidance, online community, branches, Autism Services Directory, training and specialist services. Its directory can be searched by postcode and support category.
Phone: 020 7833 2299 (general office) | Email: Advice enquiry form
Website: https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/contact-us
*The general number is mainly an administrative switchboard; use the advice enquiry form for information and signposting. Urgent help page: https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/urgent-help*

**PDA Society** *[People with a PDA profile, families and professionals]*
Information, support service and resources on PDA (often called a persistent drive for autonomy in some community contexts). Includes guidance for home, school and services.
Phone: Support enquiry form | Email: Contact form
Website: https://www.pdasociety.org.uk/
*Small team; response times can be longer. Explore the support page and community resources.*

**RCSLT – Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists** *[Children and adults with communication or eating, drinking and swallowing needs]*
Professional body with public information and a directory to help locate speech and language therapy services. NHS provision is usually accessed through GP, health visitor, school or local NHS service.
Phone: 020 7378 1200 | Email: info@rcslt.org
Website: https://www.rcslt.org/speech-and-language-therapy/
*The RCSLT is not an NHS clinical provider. Ask the local NHS team about AAC assessment and communication support.*

**Scottish Autism** *[Autistic people, families and professionals in Scotland]*
Scottish charity providing advice, training and practical support, including adult and family services. The Community Advice Line can help with information and signposting.
Phone: General: 01259 720044; Advice Line: 01259 222022 | Email: autism@scottishautism.org
Website: https://www.scottishautism.org/
*Services and eligibility vary across Scotland; ask about local authority coverage.*

**Sibs** *[Children and adults who have a disabled brother or sister]*
Information and support for siblings of disabled people, including autistic brothers and sisters. Resources address feelings, relationships and the future.
Phone: 0121 415 4624 | Email: info@sibs.org.uk
Website: https://www.sibs.org.uk/
*Peer support and resources may be age-specific.*

**SNAP Cymru** *[Children and young people with ALN, and families in Wales]*
Independent information, advice and support on additional learning needs and education, including help preparing for meetings and resolving disagreements.
Phone: 029 2002 8466 | Email: enquiries@snapcymru.org
Website: https://www.snapcymru.org/
*Works across Wales; advice and casework routes may differ. Ask about the ALN enquiry form and local coverage.*

**Scope** *[Disabled people and families across the UK]*
Free disability helpline offers practical advice on benefits, money, work and daily life. Also offers energy and water advice to eligible households.
Phone: Helpline: 0808 800 3333; Energy support: 0808 801 0828 | Email: helpline@scope.org.uk
Website: https://www.scope.org.uk/helpline
*Helpline usually Monday–Saturday, 10am–5pm. Relay UK: 18001 then 0808 800 3333.*

**Turn2us** *[People needing help with benefits, grants and financial hardship]*
Benefits calculator, grants search and information on financial support. Useful alongside advice from Citizens Advice or a welfare rights adviser.
Phone: No general advice telephone line listed | Email: Contact form
Website: https://www.turn2us.org.uk/
*Use the website to check current services and opening hours; do not share bank details in an unsolicited message.*

**VoiceAbility** *[People who need independent advocacy in England and Wales]*
Provides advocacy in some areas and circumstances, including statutory advocacy. Use the postcode search to see whether it is commissioned locally.
Phone: 0300 303 1660 | Email: contact@voiceability.org
Website: https://www.voiceability.org/
*Advocacy entitlement and local availability depend on the issue and local contract.*

# Find local support in your nation

Local support is commissioned differently across the UK. These official or established finders can help identify local autism teams, education advice, social care, communication services and community organisations. If a link changes, search the exact service name with your council or NHS board/trust name.

## England

**NHS autism help and support** https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/autism/help-and-support/
Start with the GP, local autism team, council, school or workplace. NHS pages explain assessment routes and support while waiting.

**National Autistic Society Autism Services Directory** https://www.autism.org.uk/autism-services-directory
Search by postcode and category: support groups, education, advice, social care, equipment, legal help and more.

**Council for Disabled Children – local IAS/SENDIASS finder**
https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/about-us-0/networks/information-advice-and-support-services-network/find-your-local-ias-service
Find the local Information, Advice and Support Service for children and young people with SEND and their parents/carers.

**Local Offer** https://www.gov.uk/children-with-special-educational-needs
Search your council website for “Local Offer”. It should list local SEND education, health, care, leisure and transition support.

**Adult social care** https://www.gov.uk/apply-needs-assessment-social-services
Ask the council for a needs assessment. Carers can ask for a carer’s assessment as well.

## Scotland

**Different Minds Scotland – where to get support** https://www.differentminds.scot/where-to-get-support/
National signposting across mental health, autistic-led organisations, local support, health and education.

**Enquire – additional support for learning** https://enquire.org.uk/contact/
Free national advice line: 0345 123 2303; email info@enquire.org.uk. Education advice for children and young people in Scotland.

**Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance** https://www.siaa.org.uk/find-advocacy/
Find an independent advocacy service by area. Telephone 0131 510 9410; enquiry@siaa.org.uk.

**Social Security Scotland – independent advocacy** https://www.mygov.scot/advocacy
Disabled people can request support to access Scottish disability benefits and have their views heard.

## Wales

**SNAP Cymru** https://www.snapcymru.org/
All-Wales independent ALN advice and support. SNAP Connect: 029 2002 8466; enquiries@snapcymru.org.

**Welsh Government Additional Learning Needs information** https://www.gov.wales/additional-learning-needs
Information about ALN, Individual Development Plans and education rights in Wales.

**Autism Wales / National Neurodivergence Team** https://www.autismwales.org/en/
National information and resources, with signposting to local authority pathways.

## Northern Ireland

**Autism NI** https://autismni.org/help-support
Autism helpline, family support, early intervention and local groups. 028 9040 1729; info@autismni.org.

**nidirect – special educational needs** https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/special-educational-needs
Government information on SEN, assessment, education support and appeals in Northern Ireland.

**Family Support NI** https://www.familysupportni.gov.uk/
Search for local disability, autism, family and community services by location and need.

**NI Direct health and social care** https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/health-and-social-care-trusts
Find your local Health and Social Care Trust and relevant service routes.

# Help by what you need

### Adult autism, late identification or diagnosis
Ask your GP or local NHS adult autism team about assessment and support while waiting. Autism Central supports family networks in England; NAS and the relevant nation-specific charity can explain local routes. Consider work, mental health, social care, benefits and communication needs separately.

### Children, early years and diagnosis
Speak with the GP, health visitor or school SENCO/ALNCo about referral and immediate needs. Contact, Child Autism UK, Autism NI, Autism Central and the NAS can provide information or signposting. Ask for written information, a named contact and a review date.

### Non-speaking, minimally speaking or communication access
Ask for a speech and language therapy assessment and discuss AAC (augmentative and alternative communication), including low-tech boards, symbols, signing, communication books and devices. Contact Communication Matters, ACE Centre, Makaton or Afasic. Support all communication methods and do not make access to a communication aid conditional on “earning” it.

### Education, school refusal, exclusion, EHCP/EHC plan or ALN
Use the country’s education advice route: IPSEA and local SENDIASS in England; Enquire in Scotland; SNAP Cymru in Wales; nidirect and local SEN advice in Northern Ireland. Keep copies of plans, reports and meeting notes. Ask what temporary support can begin while assessment or appeal is pending.

### Adult social care, independent living or support at home
Contact the council’s adult social care team and request a needs assessment. Explain daily living, communication, sensory, safety and community access needs. Ask whether the assessment can be done by email, with a supporter present, with extra processing time or in a familiar place.

### Benefits, grants and money
Use GOV.UK or the correct devolved benefit service for applications and criteria. Get help from Citizens Advice, Scope, Turn2us or a local welfare rights adviser. Family Fund and Cerebra may help eligible families with disabled children. Check deadlines and appeal rights promptly.

### Employment, college, university or training
Ask for adjustments in writing and identify the barrier and effective adjustment (for example, written instructions, quiet space, predictable schedules, communication preferences or extra processing time). Explore Access to Work, the National Autistic Society employment guidance, Scope and local disability employment services.

### Mental health, anxiety, burnout or distress
Speak with a GP or mental health service and describe how autism affects communication, sensory load, routines and recovery. Request adjustments to appointments. For urgent help use the emergency section above. NAS urgent-help guidance links to UK crisis and listening services.

### Parents, carers and family members
Ask the council for a carer’s assessment where applicable. Contact Contact, Carers UK, Autism Central, Cerebra or your nation’s autism charity. Ask about respite, short breaks, peer groups, sibling support and carer wellbeing.

### Rights, advocacy, complaints or discrimination
For education rights use the nation-specific service above. For social care, health or benefits advocacy, ask the council, NHS body or commissioning service for an independent advocacy referral. Disability Rights UK and Scope provide general rights information; seek a specialist adviser for legal deadlines.

### Sensory access, appointments and community participation
Tell services what helps: email-first contact, appointment details in advance, longer appointments, reduced waiting, quieter space, clear language, breaks, permission to move, or a supporter present. Ask the venue about accessibility, quiet hours and visual information before travel.

### Transition from child to adult services
Start planning before leaving school or children’s services. Ask for a transition meeting involving the young person, family if wanted, education, health and adult social care. Record who is responsible, what will continue, and what happens if adult support is delayed.

## A short message you can adapt

Subject: Request for autism-related support / reasonable adjustments

Hello,

I am contacting you about [myself / my child / the person I support]. We are looking for help with [briefly describe the issue]. Our postcode is [postcode] and we are in [nation / council area].

The person is autistic / may be autistic and needs [communication, sensory, learning, daily living or other support]. Please let us know what support is available, whether a diagnosis or referral is required, any costs or waiting times, and what information you need from us.

Our preferred way to communicate is [email / text / phone / letter]. Please make these adjustments: [for example, written questions in advance, extra processing time, quiet room, no unexpected calls, accessible format].

Could you confirm the next step and who will contact us?

Thank you,
[Name and safe contact details]

# Source and checking notes

Contact details and service descriptions in this guide were checked against public-facing charity, NHS, government and national service pages on 25 October 2026. The linked provider page is the source to use for current opening times, eligibility, costs, referral requirements and service availability. Telephone lines and email addresses can change.

Key sources used:

NHS autism help and support

NHS autism assessments

National Autistic Society contact and advice

NAS Autism Services Directory

NHS Autism Central

Autism NI helpline

Scottish Autism contact

Autism Wales / National Neurodivergence Team

Contact helpline

Child Autism UK helpline

Communication Matters

Makaton Charity contact

IPSEA helplines

SNAP Cymru contact

Enquire Scotland helpline

GOV.UK Disability Service Centre

GOV.UK Carer's Allowance Unit

Cerebra contact

Scope helpline

Afasic helpline

Samaritans contact

Shout get help

**Produced by Counsellor Tomass J. Wood • Tom Tom Universe**

Please check services directly before sharing or acting on contact details. If you spot a broken link or outdated detail, tell the provider and update your local copy.