

AUTISM AWARENESS

Autism and the Family

A diagnosis of autism can impact the family in many different ways. As well as the emotional impact of the diagnosis, families are faced with many other issues including planning, financial demands, and a knowledge gap about autism.

Emotional Impact of a diagnosis of autism:

- *The diagnosis of a child with autism will have a huge emotional impact on a family just like any other life altering condition that affects a family member.*
- *The parent(s) of the child will have gone through a process of diagnosis which can take up to a year or more to complete.*
- *This process of acceptance takes time and a period of adjustment is required for the whole family as they try to plan a way forward.*
- *This adjustment process can be difficult for parents as they begin to deal with this new reality.*
- *The vast majority of parents will experience the emotional impact of an autism diagnosis at some stage.*
- *Stress and physical and emotional exhaustion can become issues for parents and they may struggle to cope with the additional demands placed upon them.*



During this time parents and families need a period of adjustment to come to terms with the diagnosis and they can go through a range of emotions. These include:

- Shock • Sadness or Grief • Anger • Denial • Loneliness • Acceptance

Change & Moving Forward:

- *Most families will adapt their family life to cater for the needs of the child with autism.*
- *The planning of daily activities must always include the needs of the child with autism.*
- *Parent(s) must quickly familiarise themselves with their child's needs and entitlements and source appropriate services in the public and private sector.*
- *Early intervention is vital for a child with autism and parents must very quickly focus on the practicalities of accessing services for their child.*

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- *Parents and family members must often speak for people with autism as they are unable to do so themselves.*
- *The family will adjust their lifestyle and expectations and make many sacrifices to allow their child or sibling to reach their full potential and have a fulfilling and rewarding life.*

Financial Implications and Planning:

- *The financial burden on the parents and families of children and adults with autism can be very substantial.*
- *A parent may have to give up work to care for the child with autism. This has both financial and practical implications for the whole family.*
- *Parent(s) may choose to pay privately for services to supplement or replace limited state services.*
- *Parents and families must also plan for the long term financial future of the person with autism.*
- *This process can be hugely stressful for parents as they try to put a plan in place for their child when they are no longer in a position to look after them.*



Parents are Advocates:

- *Many people with autism have difficulties with social interaction and communication they may be unable to manage their own affairs.*
- *Parents and siblings will often take responsibility for sourcing appropriate services and other needs that the person may have.*
- *Parents and older siblings will often be involved in the planning long term care and financial planning for the person with autism.*