

# Autism — Parent Quick Guide (UK)

*Educational information only; not medical advice. Check local policies, talk to a qualified clinician, and follow NICE/NHS guidance.*

## WHAT HELPS MOST (home/school)

- Relationship first: follow interests; copy and expand the child's actions and sounds (Naturalistic Developmental–Behavioural Interventions, NDBI). Multiple 3–5 minute play “bursts” daily.
  - Communication coaching: model short 1–2 word phrases in context (“push car”, “more bubbles”). Pause 5–10 s. Count communication attempts per day (speech/sign/AAC) as your progress metric.
  - AAC is speech-friendly: offer a core board, PECS, or an AAC app to reduce frustration. Keep it available at all times. (See NHS England AAC and RCSLT resources.)
  - Visual supports: First/Then cards, visual schedules, and choice boards to reduce uncertainty.
  - Predictability & transitions: preview “what’s next”, use timers, and give movement breaks.
  - Sensory regulation: match need→tool (noise→headphones, movement→mini trampoline, deep pressure→weighted lap if liked). Teach 1–2 calm cues (breathe card, squeeze ball).
  - Behaviour as communication: use ABC notes (Antecedent–Behaviour–Consequence) for 3–5 events/week, teach a clearer “ask”, and reinforce quickly.
  - Sleep basics: consistent schedule, dim lights, screens off ≥1 hour, calming routine (bath–book–music).
- Consider melatonin only with a clinician after behavioural strategies (per NICE CG170).

## WHAT TO TRACK (review in 8–12 weeks)

- Communication attempts/day • ABC frequency • Independent steps for a key routine • Sleep latency
- Parent/carer confidence (0–10).

## SCHOOL SETUP (with SENCO/teachers)

- Agree 3 supports: visual timetable, movement pass, quiet space/noise management. Review each term.
- Reasonable adjustments and SEN support should be documented; escalate to statutory plans if needed.

## RESOURCES

- National Autistic Society (NAS): Advice and Guidance (communication, sensory, school).
- NHS: Autism overview and local pathways. NICE CG170: support & management (under 19s).

## References & Sources

NICE CG170 (under 19s): [nice.org.uk/guidance/cg170](https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg170); NICE CG142 (adults): [nice.org.uk/guidance/cg142](https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg142); NICE NG87 (ADHD): [nice.org.uk/guidance/ng87](https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng87); NHS: [nhs.uk/conditions/autism](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/autism), [nhs.uk/conditions/dyslexia](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dyslexia); National Autistic Society: [autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance](https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance); Gov.UK Access to Work: [gov.uk/access-to-work](https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work); Gov.UK Reasonable adjustments: [gov.uk/reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-workers](https://www.gov.uk/reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-workers); NHS England AAC: [england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/aac-easy-read.pdf](https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/aac-easy-read.pdf); BDA Dyslexia: [bdadyslexia.org.uk](https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk)