

# SIBLING SUPPORT

Having a sibling with a special need or learning disability can be a wonderful experience with the sharing of family experiences and activities. However, it can also be stressful; this is a leaflet that can give you some ideas for sibling support.

The advice below is taken from **Sibs.org.uk** A national charity which was set up to support siblings of disabled people. The website is at the end of the leaflet.

## WHAT COULD WORRY YOUR CHILD?

All children worry from time about things in their life, and some children worry more than others. Siblings can worry about things like their brother or sister's health, about bringing other children home, about not doing well at school, and many other things. If worries are not dealt with, they tend to grow bigger and siblings become more anxious about them. Here are some strategies to help siblings deal with their worries.

### Make a worry box

Decorate a small box with a lid. This can be a fun craft activity in itself. The box can be covered in anything from football stickers to glitter and feathers. Taking time to make it look right will help your child feel that it has a special purpose. Put a tiny notepad with easily removable pages and a pen into the box. When a worry or troubling thought comes into their mind, siblings can write it down on a piece of paper and put it in the box. At the end of the day they can take them out and talk about them with you. If it is hard to do this each day, then make a date on the calendar that week when you can give it your time and attention. Make sure you are not interrupted when you talk to your sibling child. ([sibs.org.uk](http://sibs.org.uk)).

### Spend time each day with siblings one to one

Time is precious, if possible, try to schedule 15 minutes each day with individual siblings. If this is difficult schedule in a regular one to one slot each week.

### Talk about disability and additional needs from an early age

Be open and honest with your sibling child about their brother or sister's condition and keep them updated regularly.

### Acknowledge the negative feelings as well as the positive ones

Listen to your sibling child's feelings as this will help them feel loved and build a strong bond between you.

### Teach siblings fun activities they can do with their brother or sister

Show your children how to play together for short amounts of time.

### Give siblings choice about spending time with their brother or sister

Ask your sibling child about how they want to divide their time being with their brother or sister and being with other people.

### Limit the type and amount of care and support that siblings do

Make sure your sibling child is not doing care tasks that should be done by an adult or that affect their wellbeing or school work.

### Take action on issues that affect your siblings' wellbeing and education

Get help with things like disturbed sleep, bullying, getting hurt or not being able to do homework.

### Talk to siblings in the teenage years about plans for the future

Let siblings know they have choice about their involvement and inform them about the options available for their brother or sister.

### Give siblings permission to enjoy and live their own lives

Role model for your sibling child doing things that you enjoy and encourage them with their aspirations.

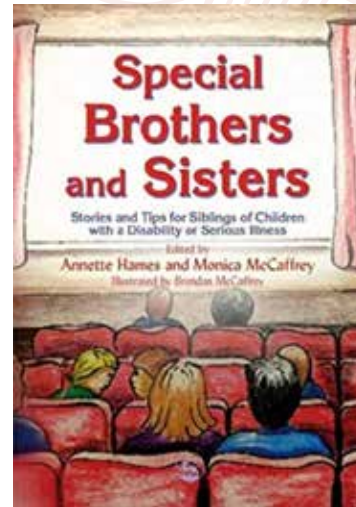
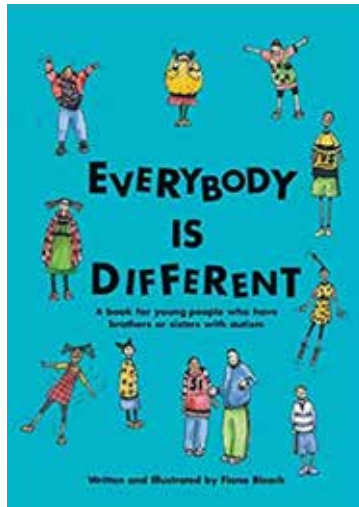
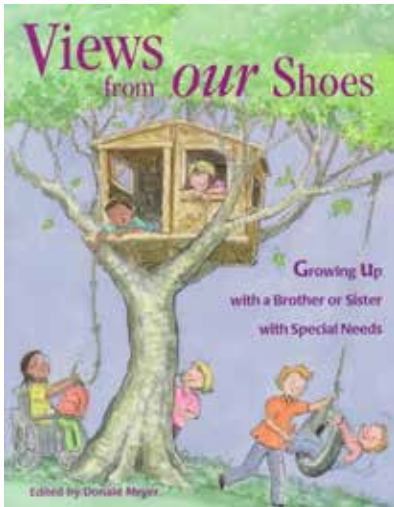
### Celebrate siblings' achievements

List the things your sibling child has achieved recently and have a treat or special ritual to make this with them.



## BOOKS THAT COULD HELP

There are many books available both online and in shops that are written for siblings these are just a few that we found useful.



## WEBSITES THAT COULD HELP

<https://www.sibs.org.uk/>

Sibs is a national charity whose aim is to support the siblings of disabled people. They offer advice and strategies for support.

<https://www.autismeastmidlands.org.uk/family-child-services/sibling-support/>

East Midlands run a support group for children between the ages of 8 and 12 who have a sibling with Autism.

<https://umbrella.uk.net/>

Umbrella is a local group which supports both the young person with a disability and their families.

[youngcarers@derby.gov.uk](mailto:youngcarers@derby.gov.uk)

Derby City Young Carers project covers the whole of the city and offers information, advice and support to young carers. The project aims to help young carers take a break from caring through social events, group activities and one to one support. There is also an opportunity to spend time with other young carers who may have similar experiences.

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