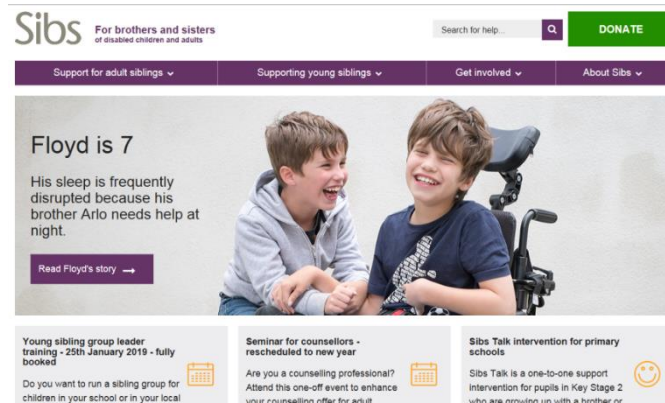


## Siblings of children with additional needs: Support/signposting

Research highlights that siblings of children with additional needs may be at risk of adverse psychological and educational outcomes, particularly siblings who take on significant caregiving responsibilities, and siblings to children who display behaviours that challenge. Nevertheless, with the right support in place, siblings have the potential to thrive and benefit in a number of ways from their experiences. The following recommendations may be helpful:

**The Sibs charity** ([www.sibs.org.uk](http://www.sibs.org.uk)): This is the only UK charity specifically supporting siblings of children with disabilities and long-term health conditions. The charity includes a range of information and support for child and adult siblings, parents, as well as professionals.



- **Sibs' top tips for parents/carers** ([www.sibs.org.uk/supporting-young-siblings/parents/top-tips-list-rename](http://www.sibs.org.uk/supporting-young-siblings/parents/top-tips-list-rename)): Spend some time each day with siblings one-to-one and/or share a special shared weekly activity, provide opportunities for talking, questions, listening and reassurance, validate and acknowledge negative feelings as well as positive ones, be open and honest about the disability/condition from an early age, teach them about the condition, give siblings choice about spending time with their brother or sister where possible/appropriate, teach siblings fun activities to do with their brother or sister, limit the type and amount of care and support that siblings do, show appreciation of any support given, take action on issues that affect your siblings' wellbeing and education, talk to siblings in the teenage years about plans for the future, involve them in decision-making, give siblings permission to enjoy and live their own lives, celebrate siblings' achievements, offer breaks with friends and extended family, encourage them to pursue their own hobbies, and celebrate the positives of being a sibling to someone with autism.
- **Sibs' top tips for professionals** ([www.sibs.org.uk/supporting-young-siblings/professionals/top-tips-for-professionals](http://www.sibs.org.uk/supporting-young-siblings/professionals/top-tips-for-professionals)): Identify siblings within your school, service, or local authority, assess the needs of siblings at the same time as those of the child with additional needs, ensure siblings are protected from harm, acknowledge the important role that siblings play in their families, provide siblings with age-appropriate information, signpost siblings to sources of support, help parents support siblings, help provide short breaks for siblings, and run a sibling support group at your school or service.
- **Sibs' top tips for siblings** ([www.youngsibs.org.uk/info-and-advice](http://www.youngsibs.org.uk/info-and-advice)): This link contains support for different feelings, such as sadness and worry (e.g. talk to a parent, teacher, or friend, write down your worries etc), and promotes identifying the positives of being a sibling (e.g. learning new skills, development of personal qualities, sibling relationships etc), developing knowledge/understanding of the disability/condition, developing their own hobbies and interests, the importance of taking breaks/time out, and talking to a key member of staff at school to

**Dr Alexandra Gregory: Educational Psychologist**

[alex@gregorypsychology.co.uk](mailto:alex@gregorypsychology.co.uk); [www.gregorypsychology.co.uk](http://www.gregorypsychology.co.uk)

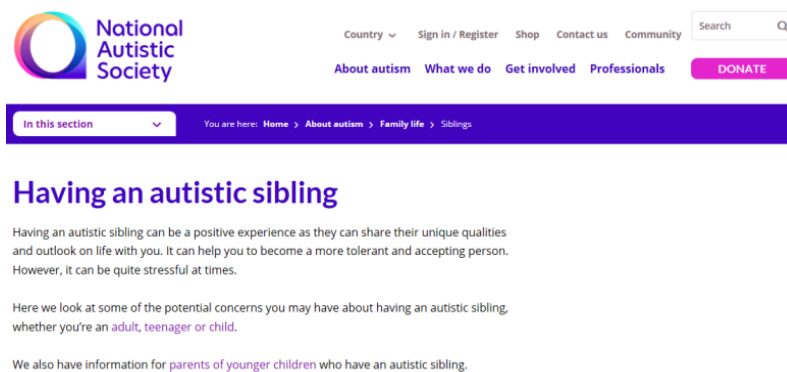
Social media: @DrAlexGregoryEP

support if issues like doing homework at home are difficult (e.g. setting up or attending a homework club at school).

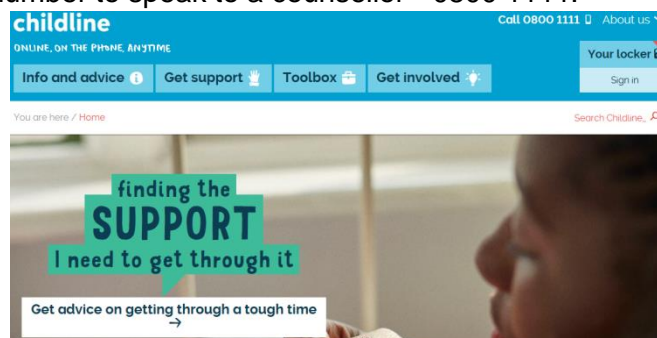
**Young Sibs** ([www.youngsibs.org.uk](http://www.youngsibs.org.uk)): This is where children can seek information and support, such as contacting other siblings on an online forum or contacting a sibling advisor, as well as a place to learn more about different disabilities and conditions.



**National Autistic Society** ([www.autism.org.uk/about/family-life/siblings.aspx](http://www.autism.org.uk/about/family-life/siblings.aspx)): This webpage includes useful strategies, resources and books for siblings of children with autism.



**Childline** ([www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)): Childline provide advice and support on a range of issues, including a free contact number to speak to a counsellor - 0800 1111.



**Young Carers** (<https://carers.org/about-us/about-young-carers>): This website signposts young carers to support services in different areas/locations.

**Books:** <https://www.autism.org.uk/shop/books.aspx> e.g. 'My family is different', 'life as an autism sibling: A guide for teens', and 'autism my sibling and me'.

If you are particularly concerned about the sibling's wellbeing, please refer to your GP.

**Dr Alexandra Gregory: Educational Psychologist**  
[alex@gregorypsychology.co.uk](mailto:alex@gregorypsychology.co.uk); [www.gregorypsychology.co.uk](http://www.gregorypsychology.co.uk)  
Social media: @DrAlexGregoryEP