

The Salvesen Mindroom Centre's TOP TEN TIPS



for Parents and Carers of Children and Young
People with Learning Difficulties



The Salvesen Mindroom Centre

no mind left behind

Introduction

We know that being a parent or carer of a child with any form of learning difficulty can be confusing, daunting, and even alienating.

At The Salvesen Mindroom Centre, we're committed to providing information, advice, and support – in a way that works best for you.

Here, we have brought together our Top Ten Tips for coping with some of the issues that you will encounter as you support your child with learning difficulties. We hope you find this a useful starting point on your journey.





Be confident, not confrontational

Remember that you know your child better than anyone else. It is natural to feel emotional when you are engaging with professionals on behalf of your child, especially if you feel your child is suffering because she or he isn't getting the support they need. Showing emotion in a difficult situation is OK, and it does not detract from the fact that you have expert knowledge about what your child needs. However, try not to get angry or be aggressive.



Consider all offers of support

Remember to listen to suggestions from professionals. You may not always agree with what you hear, and you are of course entitled to turn down professional advice. However, don't reject a suggestion without at least considering it – a partial solution might be better than none while you work towards securing the full support your child needs. This is not the same as giving up on what you think should be provided, but compromising can help to build bridges.

Take a solution-focused approach

Having a diagnosis is often important, but it won't solve every issue your child is facing. We will work with your family whether or not your child has a diagnosis but other services may not be open to you without one. Remember, even without a diagnosis your child is entitled to help at school if he or she is struggling.



Communication is key

Always try to maintain positive communication with school staff and health and care professionals. Be assertive, not confrontational! It's worth taking time to think about how you have been feeling before, during, and following discussions. Keep a paper trail of your communications with school staff and health and care professionals (see The Salvesen Mindroom Centre's 'keeping a paper trail' guide – ask the Direct Help and Support team for a copy).



Know your rights

Be informed of your rights, your child's rights and the duties placed on local authorities to meet the additional needs of your child. Take one step at a time and be aware you may be entitled to support from other services. Contact our Direct Help and Support team to find out about other supports available.

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Plan ahead

Always be prepared with what you want to say at meetings by making a bullet point list. If you have more than one concern, prioritise them and address each one at a time.

If possible, take someone with you to meetings/ appointments – they can take notes and chat things through with you after. This will give you the space to listen to what other people have to say and to get your own points across. Don't feel you need to say everything at the meeting (see Top Tip 7).

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Follow up

Follow up meetings with a letter or email:

- ▶ thank the lead professional for their time
- ▶ state your understanding of agreed action points
- ▶ ask for clarification on anything you're unsure of
- ▶ list any questions you didn't get the chance to ask



Be realistic

It's important to have realistic expectations.

Whilst everyone involved in a child's life has a duty to promote their wellbeing, there are limitations. Read the

Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice which provides examples of what schools may be able to offer (access the Code on the Scottish Government's website: **www.gov.scot**).



Let the child's voice be heard



Your child has the right to have their views taken into account when important decisions are made about matters that affect them. We find that it is often most helpful to ask a child advocate to support your child with this. If there isn't a child advocate available in your local authority, try finding a trusted adult who is independent of home and school. Ask our Direct Help and Support team about templates for documenting your child's view.

Remember that YOU are important too!

We know that you want the best for your child. However, they need you to be strong and healthy, physically and mentally. This means taking time for yourself! Don't underestimate what a good night's sleep can do for you so seek respite services and holiday play schemes; do something fun or creative; and speak to someone who will listen non-judgmentally. We can put you in touch with local carers support groups.



Who we are



The Salvesen Mindroom Centre is a small Scottish charity with a big vision – a world where ‘no mind is left behind’ and every person with a learning difficulty receives the recognition and the support they need to achieve their potential.

We keep the child/young person at the centre of everything we do and we empower families by ensuring they have the knowledge, skills and, importantly, the confidence to address areas of concern.

Contact us

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