

A close-up portrait of a young girl with dark hair and freckles, looking slightly to the side with a gentle smile. She is wearing a red shirt with a floral pattern. The background is softly blurred.

Meet Estella

She is extremely creative
She is full of energy
She thinks outside the box
She has a great memory

But Estella can't always sit still and
concentrate

ADHD and coronavirus

We have adapted our guide to learning difficulties to take account of coronavirus. Find out new ways to support Estella in the current crisis.

Understanding ADHD

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental condition - which means that it is part of the make-up of the brain. It is one of the most common of all learning difficulties and research indicates that around 5% of the population has ADHD. More males are currently diagnosed than females, though recognition of ADHD in girls at an earlier age is increasing.

A person with ADHD will almost certainly have difficulties with impulsiveness, inattention and hyperactivity. They may be unable to sit still, plan ahead or finish tasks. Due to their short attention span they may often be unaware of what is going on around them.

On a good day someone with ADHD may seem fine, leading others to think that the ADHD is something the individual can choose to switch on and off. This can lead to frustration and misunderstanding on both sides as it is not as simple as that. However, many people can learn to manage their own ADHD well, using a combination of approaches including educational support and behavioural strategies, and sometimes medication.

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) - it is now recognised that some people have attention disorder without hyperactive and impulsive symptoms. These individuals can appear lethargic, often struggling to pay attention, plan, organise and complete work tasks.

ADHD: strengths and challenges

Estella often needs help with structure. It can be useful to provide her with reminders and prompts. Try to put Estella in a position that demands short-term bursts of concentration and give her good organisational support. A minimalistic environment would help to reduce her stress and hyperactivity.

Capitalise on her enthusiasm, her energy and her curiosity. Estella is best at projects and tasks that can be completed quite quickly. She is personable and good at looking after people. She thrives on new challenges with a short-term deadline.

In the coronavirus crisis, children and young people with ADHD may:

- Feel especially anxious
- Be aware of the news, but be unable to process everything they hear, leading to a lot of confusion
- Forget the rules about handwashing and social distancing
- Find it very hard to adapt to learning at home – starting a task, staying on task and completing the task may be difficult to achieve and your child might need help with one or more of these stages

Here are a few ways we can all support Estella during the coronavirus crisis and lockdown:

General

- Talk with her about strategies that work best for her
 - Acknowledge that her worries are real, and many people feel the same
 - Help her to plan out activities or tasks
 - Encourage her to think of one day at a time – planning too far ahead is not easy for any of us right now
- Let her have breaks in the day
 - Breaks before and after any tasks will help her to manage to complete them

At home

- Use a diary for notes and reminders
 - Involve Estella in creating colourful signs to remind the family about handwashing. Put these up in plain sight
 - Add handwashing stickers and symbols into her diary
- Give access to a peaceful and quiet space
 - Somewhere away from reminders about the lockdown
- Keep routines consistent but vary activities
 - Routines don't need to mirror the school day, find the routine that works best for Estella, and for you
 - Make tasks fun, include games and make use of technology and apps that make learning enjoyable
- Be consistent and clear with rules and boundaries

When you help Estella to keep learning at home, think about these general tips for schools and see if you can also do these things:

At school

- Break large assignments into smaller blocks of work
- Check results regularly and give feedback
- Review study plans daily and help Estella to make schedules and lists
- Vary tasks and keep them fairly short
- Where possible, regularly assign fresh duties to help Estella stay on task

At the hospital

- The hospital might have some different processes than usual, find these out in advance if you can
- Explain any medical procedures clearly
- Provide activities to occupy Estella
- Plan the best time of day for her appointment
- Ensure waiting times are as short as possible on arrival and that staff are aware of Estella's ADHD



Salvesen Mindroom Centre
support • inform • empower

A registered Scottish charity SC030472

A company limited by guarantee and registered in Scotland SC209656

Meet Amber



She is full of curiosity and energy
She can remember everything
She is passionate about her interests
She can light up the room with a smile

But Amber can't always understand how
to act in social situations.

Autism and coronavirus

We have adapted our guide to learning difficulties to take account of coronavirus. Find out new ways to support Amber in the current crisis.

Understanding Autism

Autism is a neurodevelopmental condition - which means that it is part of the make-up of the brain. People refer to autism in different ways, and you might see it called Autism Spectrum Disorder or Condition (ASD or ASC). Asperger syndrome is a diagnosis that has been given in the past to autistic people who do not have a learning disability, though this term is no longer often used.

About 1 in 100 people are thought to be on the autistic spectrum. Autism is more commonly diagnosed in males, though it is increasingly recognised that there are more females on the autism spectrum than previously thought.

Autism is a spectrum condition, which means that the variation between individuals is huge, though there are key similarities. The core challenge for all is in making sense of the world. The main areas of difficulty are social interaction, communication, flexibility of thought and behaviour, and sensory processing. The degree to which these difficulties impact on day-to-day life can range enormously from person to person, in different settings and across the life span.

People on the autism spectrum often find changes difficult to manage and may become fixated on certain objects or actions. Some will use alternative communication systems, for example signs or pictures. Many autistic individuals are over or under sensitive to touch, taste, smell, sound, light, temperature or pain.

Autism: strengths and challenges

Amber benefits from a reliable daily routine. She is likely to be at her best in safe, familiar surroundings and to find sudden changes challenging.

Amber is best suited to tasks where her attention to detail is a real asset. She can work accurately and will deliver consistently good performance on tasks which match her skill level. For her, quality rather than quantity is the driving force during her day.

Quiet environments with few distractions are where Amber can maximise her strengths. She is a good and loyal friend, but she will almost certainly have difficulties with social interaction and she is unlikely to feel at her best in situations that rely heavily on social or communication skills.

Amber may struggle to explain when a problem arises, so it would be good to check in with her regularly to let her raise any issues.

In the coronavirus crisis, children and young people with autism may:

- Feel especially anxious because of changes to routine and new uncertainties about the future
- Be aware of the news, but be unable to process everything they hear, leading to a lot of confusion and maybe exhaustion
- Become over-fixated on hand-washing and cleanliness
- Find it very hard to adapt to learning at home
- Miss their peers at school, and need support to maintain those relationships

Here are a few ways we can all support Amber during the coronavirus crisis and lockdown:

General

- Communicate clearly and speak literally
 - Find a simple way to explain concepts like 'social distancing' and stick to your explanation
 - Help Amber understand how flexible the new rules are, by explaining the underlying reasons that they have been introduced
- Keep routines consistent
 - Routines don't need to mirror the school day, find the routine that works best for Amber, and for you
 - Try to settle on a routine and stick to it so this can become your 'new normal'
- Give ample warning and explanation of changes

At home

- Use visual cues to help communication
- Tell her what she should do, not what she shouldn't do
- Help her to make charts and write lists
- Identify stress triggers and try to work around them

When you help Amber to keep learning at home, think about these general tips for schools and see if you can also do these things:

At school

- Provide a predictable environment
- Be clear about learning time rules
- To explain harder tasks, use lists, cards or pictures

At the hospital

- The hospital might have some different processes than usual, find these out in advance if you can
- Be aware that Amber may be over (hyper) or under (hypo) sensitive to touch, pain, smells and sounds
- Explain any medical procedures very clearly
- Try to ensure that Amber sees the same staff regularly
- Consider the best time of day for an appointment
- Make waiting times as short as possible



Salvesen Mindroom Centre
support • inform • empower

A registered Scottish charity SC030472

A company limited by guarantee and registered in Scotland SC209656

A close-up portrait of a young woman with freckles and a bright smile. She has brown hair and green eyes. The background is a soft, warm light.

Meet Jennifer

She is determined and hardworking

She can think creatively

She works wonders on the computer

She loves to read

But Jennifer often avoids physical activity
and dislikes new or unpredictable situations

DCD and coronavirus

We have adapted our guide to learning difficulties to take account of coronavirus. Find out new ways to support Jennifer in the current crisis.

Understanding DCD

Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) is a neurodevelopmental condition - which means that it is part of the make-up of the brain. It is often used interchangeably with the term 'dyspraxia', though DCD is the diagnosis most likely to be given by health professionals. DCD is more commonly diagnosed in males and sometimes runs in families.

DCD is characterised by impairments in coordination, motor control and planning which can affect any or all movements. These difficulties interfere with daily living activities and academic achievement. The condition varies in severity and may also affect language, perception and thought.

Core problems involve difficulties in planning and carrying out complex, sequenced actions. As a result, those with DCD may be seen as clumsy and delayed in their actions.

Someone with DCD may struggle with everyday tasks such as: using pens or cutlery, getting dressed, walking up and down stairs, tying shoelaces and spatial awareness. They commonly have difficulties with organising their time and activities.

DCD often coexists with other neurodevelopmental conditions such as dyslexia and autism.

DCD: strengths and challenges

Jennifer usually needs help with structure and organisation. She will benefit from positive encouragement, as difficulties with everyday activities can become very frustrating.

Jennifer will be at her best when given time and reassurance to complete activities. Talk with her to find out what activities she struggles with most and work on coping strategies together. Structured environments will help her to develop motor skills and confidence.

Being positive and focusing on what Jennifer can do, not what she can't, will help her motivation and self-esteem.

In the coronavirus crisis, children and young people with DCD may:

- Feel especially anxious
- Be aware of the news, but be unable to process everything they hear, leading to a lot of confusion
- Struggle to understand a concept like 'social distancing'
- Find handwashing is difficult due to sensory issues or difficulties co-ordinating hand movement
- Find it very hard to adapt to learning at home
 - managing to start and complete tasks could be a challenge

Here are a few ways we can all support Jennifer during the coronavirus crisis and lockdown:

General

- Be encouraging and supportive
 - Make sure you have support to deal with your own worries, so that you can be supportive and calm with Jennifer
 - Encourage socialisation e.g. via technology, with siblings if possible
- Give clear and specific instructions

At home

- Help her to use a diary for notes and reminders
 - Involve Jennifer in creating colourful signs to remind the family about handwashing. Put these up in plain sight
 - Add handwashing stickers and symbols into her diary
- Plan each day with simple lists and schedules
 - Schedules don't need to mirror the school day, find the routine that works best for Jennifer, and for you
 - Help her to plan out activities or tasks, and help her to get started, stay on task and finish the task
- Encourage her to practise motor and coordination skills
 - In lockdown, there may be fewer opportunities, but helping around the house with tasks like cooking, washing up or folding laundry can help with these skills
 - Encourage use of fine motor skills by playing with games/toys such as beads, Lego, Jenga
 - Encourage use of gross motor skills by playing in the garden, if possible, playing with balls, exercise activities in the home and on the permitted daily outing
- Give support with activities Jennifer finds challenging

When you help Jennifer to keep learning at home, think about these general tips for schools and see if you can also do these things:

At school

- Break large assignments down into smaller blocks
- Allow time for breaks
- Check results regularly and give feedback
- Offer a computer as an alternative to handwriting
- Give extra support in PE and practical subjects

At the hospital

- The hospital might have some different processes than usual, find these out in advance if you can
- Explain any medical procedures clearly
- Be aware that she may be over (hyper) or under (hypo) sensitive to touch, pain, smells and sounds
- Consider the best time of day for an appointment
- Make waiting times as short as possible



Salvesen Mindroom Centre
support • inform • empower

A registered Scottish charity SC030472

A company limited by guarantee and registered in Scotland SC209656

Meet Daniel

A close-up portrait of a young boy with light brown hair, blue eyes, and freckles. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera with a neutral expression. The background is blurred.

He is a visual thinker
He is sociable and a good talker
He can be highly creative
He can achieve impressive results

But Daniel can't always make sense of
letters and words

Dyslexia and coronavirus

We have adapted our guide to learning difficulties to take account of coronavirus. Find out new ways to support Daniel in the current crisis.

Understanding Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a neurodevelopmental condition - which means that it is part of the make-up of the brain. It is the most common cause of reading, writing and spelling difficulties. As many as 1 in 10 people are thought to be dyslexic, and it can run in families.

Dyslexia is best described as a combination of abilities and difficulties that affect reading, writing and/or spelling. It is often a result of not being able to sort out the sounds that make up words. Some people with dyslexia have associated difficulties with processing information, short term memory and organisation.

Although dyslexia can cause significant problems, especially if not spotted early, it is no reflection of intelligence. People with dyslexia may have challenges with literacy, but can excel in other subject areas.

Dyslexia commonly co-exists with any of the other neurodevelopmental conditions.

Similar Conditions

Dyscalculia is a condition which causes specific difficulties in maths. Those affected have particular difficulties in learning 'basic' arithmetic facts, performing calculations and estimating amounts.

Dysgraphia is a condition which causes difficulty with handwriting, affecting the ability to write fluently. It is more than an untidiness in writing and can worsen when under time pressure.

Dyslexia: strengths and challenges

Daniel needs you to make the most of his social, visual and creative talents and to minimise his reliance on text and documents.

Daniel will achieve most in a position that maximises his creativity. He is likely to enjoy varied tasks and has a capacity for lateral thinking. Though he may find purely academic situations challenging, projects using computers suit him well and technology can help him to do his best work.

Take advantage of Daniel's creative ideas and don't hesitate to put him in charge of projects. He has the capacity to do this and just may need some support with his note taking.

Remember that although Daniel may have difficulty with simple writing challenges, he will have many compensatory strengths. These strengths are incredibly valuable if you work with Daniel to profit from them.

In the coronavirus crisis, children and young people with dyslexia may:

- Feel especially anxious because of changes to routine and new uncertainties about the future
- Be aware of the news, but be unable to process everything they hear, leading to a lot of confusion and maybe exhaustion
- Be unable to always remember the rules, such as keeping a safe distance away from people, or hand-washing
- Find the reliance on technology to learn at home very helpful
- Feel overwhelmed by schoolwork sent home, and may need extra support with this

Here are a few ways we can all support Daniel during the coronavirus crisis and lockdown:

General

- Use as much visual information as possible
 - For example, find a visual that explains concepts like 'social distancing'
 - Use audiobooks to help with reading
 - Use text to speech software to help with writing
- Make sure written information is easy to read with big clear fonts and printed on non-white paper
- Be direct and to the point - avoid long sentences

At home

- Provide reassurance and encouragement
- Plan for breaks when doing tasks involving reading or writing
- Encourage Daniel's creative and visual talents

When you help Daniel to keep learning at home, think about these general tips for schools and see if you can also do these things:

At school

- Use verbal instruction rather than written
- Let Daniel use a computer for written pieces of work
 - Have voice to text software and spellcheck enabled on the computer
- Ensure planned and appropriate adjustments are in place for exams
- Use Daniel's creative capacities
 - Let him take the lead on project work on topics that interest him
 - Remember that spellcheck is a useful tool

At the hospital

- The hospital might have some different processes than usual, find these out in advance if you can
- Talk to Daniel instead of giving written information
- Provide help with forms or paper work
- Explain any medical procedures clearly



Salvesen Mindroom Centre
support • inform • empower

A registered Scottish charity SC030472

A company limited by guarantee and registered in Scotland SC209656

Meet Owen



He is reliable and practical
He is intelligent
He can bring a smile to your face
He can take the initiative

But Owen can't always control his own
movements and sounds

Tourette syndrome and coronavirus

We have adapted our guide to learning difficulties to take account of coronavirus. Find out new ways to support Owen in the current crisis.

Understanding Tourette syndrome

Tourette syndrome is a neurodevelopmental condition - which means that it is part of the make-up of the brain. It affects around 1 in 100 people, is more commonly diagnosed in males and may run in families.

People with Tourette syndrome sometimes lose control over the movements and sounds they make. Without warning, they may twitch, nod, jerk or make grunting, coughing or other noises. These actions are completely involuntary and are known as 'tics'.

Tics can come and go and vary in severity. They can be 'simple' such as a small movement or a single sound, or 'complex', such as speaking a phrase or making a series of movements. Most people will have a combination of physical and vocal compulsions, and may also experience difficulty in managing their emotions. A well-known feature of Tourette syndrome is an uncontrollable use of obscenities ('coprolalia'), but this is not very common.

More and more people are being diagnosed with Tourette syndrome as understanding about the condition improves. Symptoms tend to begin in childhood and are generally most prominent during the early teenage years.

Tourette syndrome is often associated with other conditions such as ADHD, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and coordination difficulties.

Tourette syndrome: strengths and challenges

Owen works best with consistency in the surroundings and people he comes across, as sudden changes and new situations may be hard to handle.

While the tics are involuntary, certain strategies may help to reduce and manage them. It is important that in every environment, Owen has a space for peace and quiet.

Put him in a position that builds on his reliability and energy. Use his intelligence and constructive ideas, and give him an environment where he can be focused and stay readily on task.

By ignoring the tics and drawing on Owen's sense of responsibility and willingness to work hard, he can be given a chance to achieve his true potential.

In the coronavirus crisis, children and young people with Tourette syndrome may:

- Feel especially anxious, as tics/compulsions can be extremely 'suggestible' so tics such as coughing, sniffing, touching face and the like may increase as well as general ticcing
- Struggle to keep social distancing rules if they have 'inappropriate' tics/compulsions such as touching
- Be aware of the news, but be unable to process everything they hear, leading to a lot of confusion
- Find it very hard to adapt to learning at home – establishing new routines may be especially difficult

Here are a few ways we can all support Owen during the coronavirus crisis and lockdown:

General

- Avoid reacting to the tics and keep calm
- Use distraction and keep Owen busy and focused
- Acknowledge that his worries are real, and many people feel the same

At home

- Have reliable routines
 - Routines don't need to mirror the school day, find the routine that works best for Owen, and for you
 - Build in plenty of breaks, somewhere away from reminders about the lockdown

- Provide structure to the day
- Help him to find a hobby to concentrate on

When you help Owen to keep learning at home, think about these general tips for schools and see if you can also do these things:

At school

- Remind Staff that tics/compulsions may mimic coronavirus symptoms, break social distancing rules or seem inappropriate
- Break assignments into manageable sections
- Talk together to agree the best classroom strategies
- Make sure Owen can have regular breaks
- Give him plenty of time to complete tasks and allow extra time for tests

At the hospital

- The hospital might have some different processes than usual, find these out in advance if you can
- Remind Staff that tics/compulsions may mimic coronavirus symptoms, break social distancing rules or seem inappropriate
- Ensure Owen sees the same staff regularly
- Provide activities to occupy Owen
- Consider the best time of day for an appointment
- Make waiting times as short as possible



Salvesen Mindroom Centre
support • inform • empower

A registered Scottish charity SC030472

A company limited by guarantee and registered in Scotland SC209656