

Mental Capacity is NOT One-Size-Fits-All label

Many of us worry about our autistic brothers' and sisters' ability to understand the long-term consequences of decisions about money, (un)healthy living, and future planning. We recognise that everyone has the right to make unwise choices, and while we don't want to limit our brothers' and sisters' independence, we also worry about their long-term wellbeing (and its impact on us!).

- 1. Decision-making and advocacy.** Some siblings want to be more involved or disagree with parents/carers about where capacity lies. Just as parents/carers may do, we can also advocate for our brothers' and sisters' best interests.
 - [Sibs guide to Decision-making](#) is a great starting point for understanding mental capacity
 - This practical [Supported Decision-Making](#) tool focuses on identifying what support someone needs to make their own informed decisions and aligns with disability rights legislation.
 - [Choice Support](#) also has specific advice on supporting our brothers and sisters to make decisions about sexuality and relationships
- 2. Supporting engagement and choice.** It can be frustrating when our brothers/sisters reject support or activities, especially when we worry about isolation or boredom. Change can feel scary, so it can help to:
 - Reframe support as something you can do or benefit from together
 - Identify “pinch points” — what makes this feel difficult or overwhelming?
 - Use the [PANDA method](#) to work around mental roadblocks. Try making bargains (you do this and I'll do that) or offering choices (you can go yourself or I can go with you).
- 3. Keeping perspective.** Remember that our brothers/sisters don't always need to be having a good/perfect time of things. Where we do support our siblings, our priority is their safety. It isn't (and often can't be) our job to keep them happy all the time.
- 4. Financial vulnerability.** Some of our brothers/sisters may be particularly financially vulnerable, for example repeatedly taking out loans without understanding repayments. As siblings, we can choose to set limits on the financial help we personally provide. Shielding someone from all consequences can sometimes limit opportunities to learn, if learning is possible. Where it feels right for both of you, siblings may choose to:
 - Become an **appointee** for benefits, managing essentials before releasing spending money
 - Act as a **financial power of attorney / deputy / guardian**
 - Be a **trustee** of a trust their brother/sister benefits from

Further information is available in the Sibs guides on [Managing money](#) and [Savings, wills and trusts](#). There is **no legal requirement** for siblings to manage finances. If this doesn't feel right for you, the local authority or specialist financial advocacy services can take this role on, sometimes for a fee.

- 5. Safeguarding concerns.** If you're worried that your brother/sister may be being taken advantage of or abused — for example, giving large sums of money to people they believe are friends — you can raise a safeguarding concern with the local authority. Find out [when and how to raise a safeguarding concern](#).