Planning for the future

1. **Many of us feel like we're playing catch-up** when it comes to planning for our brothers' and sisters' futures. This can feel **especially true if they were diagnosed later and/or have spiky support needs profiles.**
    a. Our sisters and brothers themselves (as well as the rest of our families) may take some time to adjust to the diagnosis. It can be difficult to think about future planning if everyone is still adjusting to the idea that they will need more support than had been previously supposed.
    b. If they are uncomfortable with the label, our brothers and sisters may not feel open to engaging with formal autism or disability supports and communities.

2. **Our parents might resist change (or future planning) for a number of reasons:**
    a. Caring for our sisters/brothers may be a strong part of their identity, and they might not be ready to admit that they do (or will someday) need help.
    b. They might not trust anyone else to "do it right" and may fear losing control over the outcomes once Social Care (or other services) are involved.
    c. If they feel guilty about the idea of us (as siblings) taking on responsibility, they may be hesitant to involve us in conversations – even if we ourselves would like to be involved (or have trouble imagining a future where we aren't).

3. **As siblings, it can feel like we aren't being listened to when we bring up concerns about future planning.** It can be frustrating to put a lot of work into research and conversations that never seem to get off the ground.
    a. We might do research, signpost our parents (and brothers or sisters) to available resources, offer emotional support, and mediate between different family members' wants and needs.
    b. It can feel like nothing's moving until things hit a crisis point (even if it's a crisis that we tried to predict ahead of time).
    c. Sometimes, it can help to just start doing things anyway - pick up a task from your parents without asking permission, or do some research yourself and send it to them!

4. **If our parents have savings, then financial planning around Wills and Trusts can sometimes feel like a more approachable starting point.**
    a. Legal documents can feel like a more concrete step, with established guidelines and the goal of offering everyone a degree of legal protection. This can feel less emotional than negotiating plans for living and support arrangements, where different people's wants and best interests may conflict.
    b. In addition to the Sibs guide to Wills & Trusts, there are great resources available from charities like Mencap and the National Autistic Society!

Other useful links include:

- The Sibs guides to Future Planning, Talking to Parents, Managing Money (benefits, appointeeship, deputyship/guardianship), and Getting a Care Needs Assessment.
- The "Thinking Ahead" Planning Guide from Together Matters - with questions for the whole family to think through together about what you want the future to look like!