

Sibs

For brothers and sisters
of disabled children and adults



How to find a counsellor

A leaflet for adult siblings who have grown up with a disabled brother or sister

Sibs is the UK charity for brothers and sisters of disabled children and adults
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How to find a counsellor

Many siblings find that the experience of growing up with a disabled brother or sister has shaped who they are as an adult. Being a sibling may have impacted the way you approach life, how you think and feel about things, your job, where you live and your relationships. Some siblings may have had traumatic experiences growing up too. Talking doesn't change what has happened – but it can change how you feel about it. As an adult, this can help you going forward and stop you from being held back by habits or feelings that might be limiting how you live your life.

How to find a counsellor

You can:

1. Go to your GP, explain how you are feeling and ask what counselling services are available in your area. Your GP may need to refer you, or you may be able to self-refer – it depends what is available.
2. Find and pay for a counsellor privately.

"My counsellor helped me to make a connection between having a disabled sister (and how that had impacted on me) and experiencing depression and anxiety later in life, particularly after becoming a parent. She helped me to understand my own behavioural traits better" - Adult sibling

Finding a private counsellor

The terms 'counsellor', 'therapist' and 'psychotherapist' are often used interchangeably in the UK. It can feel a bit daunting searching for someone to begin with, so take your time and read up on what you need to.

1. **Search online using accredited directories** – such as the [UK Council for Psychotherapy \(UKCP\)](#) and the [British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy \(BACP\)](#).
2. **Narrow down the search** with words like 'family', 'relationships', 'disability', and 'autism' if these are relevant for you. A counsellor with a background in these areas may be beneficial.

3. **Search by postcode** and consider the distance you are able to travel. You may feel a bit worn out after a session, so it is worth thinking about the time and distance you're prepared to go.
4. **Read more about the type of therapy** someone offers on the [UKCP website](#). You can also call the UKCP for further advice.

What to ask a private counsellor

1. **Most counsellors offer a short, free, phone consultation.** Make use of this, and ask as many questions as you would like. Everyone is different and it's important to find someone you feel comfortable with and who is a good fit for your needs.
2. **Always ask a counsellor about the training and qualifications they have.** There is no legislation that regulates counsellors – anyone can set up a website and decide to offer this service. Training courses can vary, from a few months to a few years.
3. **Ask them about their experience of working with siblings** or more generally with families where a person has a disability. If they don't have any experience in this area – it's not necessarily a barrier to you seeing them. What's important is that they are willing to listen and to understand. It may help a counsellor to read pages of the [Sibs website](#) or our [eBook](#) to understand sibling issues more widely and to have that context.

It is OK to try out a few counsellors before finding one to have ongoing sessions with. Every counsellor is different, and it's important that you have someone you feel comfortable with.

"Having counselling has had a beneficial impact on how I think and feel about my family relationships, and allowed me to move forward in terms of dealing with my feelings of guilt, sadness and loss associated with my brother's disability" -

Adult sibling

Next steps

What two actions will you take this month as a result of reading this leaflet?

1.
2.

Feedback

We would love to hear what you thought of this leaflet. Drop us a line at info@sibs.org.uk or fill in this [feedback form](#).

About Sibs

Sibs is the only UK charity representing the needs of siblings of disabled people. There are over half a million young siblings and at least 1.7 million adult siblings in the UK, who have grown up with a disabled brother or sister. Sibs aims to enhance the lives of siblings by providing them with information and support, and by influencing service provision throughout the UK.

Being a sibling can be a complex and challenging experience. You are not alone. Visit our website, follow us on social media, and sign up to our mailing.

Website www.sibs.org.uk

Twitter [Sibs_uk](#)

Email info@sibs.org.uk

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Tel 01535 645453

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Sibs relies on donations and grants to support siblings. If this leaflet has helped you, please consider [making a donation](#) or become a [Friend of Sibs](#).

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