



Building
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families



Norfolk & Waveney ASD/ADHD Support Service Newsletter February 2023

Welcome to our February 2023 newsletter.

This can be a difficult time of year for all families. The days are still short and the weather wet and cold. Children are forced to play indoors more than they, or you, would like.

What is an inconvenience for families of children with no additional needs, can be a source of real difficulty for parents children with neurodiverse conditions, diagnosed or suspected. Children and young people with ADHD traits will typically have a real need for movement. They will be happier, and everyone around them will be happier, when they are able to be outdoors and engaging in physical activities. Expending lots of energy during the day is also likely to make bed time and getting to sleep a little easier. Children and young people with ASD traits, usually love their routines and tend not to cope well when things have to change. If going to the swing park after school, or walking the dog before dinner or bouncing on the trampoline after dinner have become

part of their daily routine then the weather or lack of daylight getting in the way of this is likely to be difficult for them.

And at school, the weather will result in lots of 'indoor play' rather than running around the playground at breaktimes. School staff may insist that children wear hats and gloves when they do have the opportunity to play outdoors and not really think about how difficult that may be for children with sensory issues around clothing.

So if your child or young person seems more anxious or more grumpy than usual, have a think about whether there have been seasonal changes to their activities or routines. We cannot change the season or the weather but we can at least acknowledge that the changes are unsettling for our young people and likely to lead some difficult feelings or mood changes.

Think about what those activities provided for them and what you could do to provide alternatives. What indoor activities are organised locally? Could your very active child get involved in Cubs, Scouts, Guides, Gymnastics. Swimming or Ten Pin Bowling for example? Could those children really missing parts of their routine do these things a bit earlier in the day or at the weekend instead of a school day? Think about indoor activities that could become part of their new routine like baking, colouring in, playing cards or board games, movie nights with popcorn or having a treasure hunt.

And take heart in the fact that we are now well past the shortest day and spring is just around the corner.....we hope!

In this edition of the newsletter we will be thinking about:

- The National Autistic Society's SPELL Framework
- What's Happening around the County?
- Let us know what you think
- Upcoming Courses, Workshops and Support Groups
- Norfolk and Waveney ASD/ADHD helpline
- Family Action FamilyLine
- About our Service - contact details

Just as every child is unique, every family's situation is different. We in the Norfolk and Waveney ASD/ADHD Support Service speak to many families with children of differing needs. Some of the information contained in this newsletter is anecdotal and some from respected websites. We hope you find the following interesting and helpful.

The SPELL Framework

The National Autistic Society has developed the [SPELL Framework](#) which it has based on five principles of best practice. The aim is to provide anyone who comes into contact with an autistic child, young person or adult with guidance about the approach they should take. Of course, we know that every person is an individual and that autism is a spectrum, so a person-centred approach is still required, taking the autistic person's views and wishes into account. It does however mean that teachers, TAs, club leaders, extended family members and employers have access to a guide

and that parents can refer others to this framework if they feel they need some extra help and advice. So what are the five principles and what do these look like if we are thinking mainly about children and young people?



1 - S is for STRUCTURE

It is key that anyone interfacing with your child or young person understands that routine, ritual, repetition and consistency make them feel safer and better able to function and interact. This structured approach should be reinforced with timetables, regular reminders and visuals. Structure allows the autistic person to feel in control and be more independent and also reduces anxiety and fear. So knowing when you walk into a classroom where you will be sitting and who will be sitting next to you and who will be teaching you and what subject they will be teaching makes it more likely that you will have a good lesson. Arriving in class and being faced with a supply teacher, Maths instead of Physics, hockey instead of rugby, or that you have been moved to a new seat next to someone you don't know immediately raises anxiety. The child or young person is unlikely to be able to take much in because their mind is too busy racing and trying to accommodate the changes. And, this anxiety will diminish their ability to verbalise how they are feeling and what needs to happen to make them feel better. Where at all possible, inform, prepare and repeat to take some of the fear out of the changes.

And structure is not just about keeping the timetable and the environment constant, but is about consistency of approach. Do not allow something one day and blow your top about it the next. If you have started giving extra processing time or allowing a child to use an iPad to photograph instructions rather than copying from the board, then do not suddenly stop without warning.

Be positive about the abilities and potential of the child or young person but know that some extra work may need to be put in by you in order to create an environment in which they can fully achieve that potential. And even when you have put in the work to ensure the routine and structure and consistency of approach, be aware that something which happened before they arrived with you could be impacting their ability to learn or to communicate effectively.

Self-esteem and resilience can be low in children and young people with Autism. They have learned from an early age that they find some things difficult and inflexible thinking means that they may not be able to visualise overcoming this. Remind them regularly of all the things they are good at, use

their special interests and natural abilities as much as possible to boost confidence. If the class is doing a writing task and the aim of the task is to learn about using adjectives, does it really matter what they are describing? Allow the autistic child or young person to write about their own specialist subject to create opportunities for praise. Generally help the less academic to achieve by giving more processing time before expecting an answer, differentiating work into manageable chunks, providing things like word banks for writing tasks and highlighting in bright colours the important instructions in a work sheet.

And try not to allow barriers to learning such as anxiety, or limited communication blind you to the underlying level of ability.

Empathy is what enables us to appreciate the difficulties in a situation for another person, to see it from their perspective.

By making efforts to see the person as an individual, understanding what they find difficult and learning as much as we can about how they think, we are better able to relate to them, predict what they will find difficult and help to reduce anxiety.

A person centred approach is key. For example, you may have heard that people with Autism find change difficult but that is too black and white. Each individual person, when faced with a change to their routine, will need different types and amounts of information about the change before they feel safe about proceeding. One size does not fit all.

Acknowledge and respect that they may be having difficult feelings even when they are unable to express why.

Low arousal means more than just limiting sensory input, it is about reducing sensory clutter in different areas.

It refers to the importance of a calm, focused and consistent approach when thinking about:

- the environment
- communication and interaction
- teaching and learning

Over stimulation is the opposite of helpful and can lead to anxiety, meltdown or shutdown.

An **Environment** which is calm and structured, will reduce anxiety and aid concentration. This means reducing distractions such as the number of people using the space, noise level, colour schemes, odour, lighting and general busyness and clutter.

Communication should also be calm and focused. Think about how many words you use and whether they are all necessary. We know that some children will have difficulty finding the overall meaning in a mass of information so help by giving them only the most important words. Give plenty of time for processing, around 12 seconds or so, and we know this takes practise, before repeating or rephrasing. And use positive phrasing as much as possible. That means telling a child what they should do rather than what they should not be doing and so 'Stop running near the busy road please' becomes 'We walk near a busy road, thank you'. Raising your voice is counter productive. Think about where you are communicating and whether the environment is allowing the child to focus. See above.

In a **Learning** environment it is even more important that you have already considered the setting and the way you are communicating, as described above. Clear information should be given at a careful pace in an attempt not to overload or bombard children. Access to a quiet and calm space either inside or outside the classroom is helpful. Even something like copying from the board can be difficult if you have difference around proprioception and where your writing hand is in space. Observe and make 'reasonable adjustments' as appropriate.

But remember that low arousal is not the same as no arousal. Autistic children may want to seek out sensory experiences. To manage and control this you may want to have regular and structured sensory play sessions. Last months newsletter had lots of information about sensory diets and sensory circuits in school settings.

Here is a link to a useful video about how to create the right learning environment for autistic children, produced by Twinkl.

<https://youtu.be/MLWij7yrgqE>



2 - Supporting Autistic Children in the Classroom | National Autistic Society | Twinkl

The inclusion of Links in the SPELL framework emphasises the importance of forming partnerships to support a child or young person. Parents should try to see not only friends and extended family but anyone else who interacts with their child or young person as a partner who, if they are given all the information they need, can contribute to the growth, development and wellbeing of the individual. Be open and honest about the strengths, difficulties, hopes, dreams and fears of the child or young person and build a support network around them. Creating links with educators, support groups and the local community develops self-esteem and independence.

What's Happening Around the County?



Little Miracles is a charity that supports families that have children with additional needs, disabilities and life-limiting conditions. We have many branches in the East of England but have just opened a first branch in Norfolk

Just like everyone else, these children need a place to play, laugh and create friendships. At Little Miracles we provide this environment for children whilst families can access the advice, support and care they deserve.

In the UK there are over one million disabled children under the age of 16. This is approximately one child in every twenty. Yet the majority of families we work with report feeling like they are alone on their journey. Little Miracles exists to reduce this isolation and ensure that carers get the care they need to fully support their families.

Our Family Support Workers and counsellors provide activities, training, advice and safe-spaces to the whole family even before they receive a formal diagnosis This includes everyone - the children, their parents, carers and siblings.

Many families see Little Miracles as a lifeline.

WHAT LITTLE MIRACLES CAN OFFER

SUPPORT

Counselling, Emotional Support, Bereavement Support, Benefits Advice, Behavioural Support, Emergency Essentials.

ACTIVITIES AND RESPITE

Holiday Clubs, Play Groups, After-school Clubs, Day Trips

TRAINING

Parenting Courses, Disability Specifics, Education for Children, Accredited Learning, Help to get into Employment

SAFE SPACES

Local Branches, Dedicated Centres, Sensory Rooms, Adapted Caravans, To Make New Friends

A new branch has recently opened in Kings Lynn.

Look on their website for much more information. <https://www.littlemiraclescharity.org.uk>

Phone Number 01733 262226 for more details

February Little Miracles are holding a session at Little Sharks soft play centre on the Hardwick in Kings Lynn. This session is on 19.2.23

Sessions for March and beyond are in the works to be organised and all details will follow on our Little Miracles Kings Lynn group on Facebook.

We have applied to be part of the swimarathon held at St James on the 25th Feb. This is being run by the Rotary club in Kings Lynn. Every charity that wants to take part will need a team of 6, all of the members will need to get sponsors of a minimum of £25 each. Every participating charity will receive a donation in return.



Norfolk SENDIASS - FREE TRAINING - How to appeal a final Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

We are running online and face to face training over several dates for parents/carers, young people and professionals wanting to know more on the process of appealing a final Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), it focuses specifically on appealing needs (section B), provision (section F) and placement (section I). We will not be able to discuss personal circumstances. Online training will be recorded. Cameras and microphones will be turned off and there will be a Q&A session. At the face to face training we will be offering a limited amount of individual 1:1 appointments following the training. These are on a first come first served basis.

28th February 10:00-13:00

Online How to appeal a final EHCP training for parent/carers

[BOOK](#)

5th April 10:00-13:00

Online How to appeal a final EHCP training for parent/carers and Young people

[BOOK](#)

15th March - PROFESSIONALS 15:30-18:30

Online How to appeal a final EHCP for Professionals only

[BOOK](#)

21st March 10.00-13.00

Face to face How to appeal a final EHCP training for parent/carers

[BOOK](#)

OR Book an hour face to face appointment with one of our SEND Advisors to discuss or review paperwork related to special educational needs in education.

For example, we can support with:

- EHC Needs Assessment paperwork
- SENDIST (First Tier Tribunal) paperwork

- Draft Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

Visit our website to book your place.

- **Monday 6th February 2023 – Diss - CURRENTLY FULL**
- **Tuesday 7th March 2023 – Norman Centre, Mile Cross, Norwich**
- **Thursday 20th April 2023 – Fakenham**

[BOOK NOW](#)

Let us Know What you Think!



We are here to help and support you, so we are always open to suggestions and ways in which we can improve the service. We would really appreciate you spending 5 minutes completing our anonymous questionnaire which will help us to develop the service in the future.

Just click the link below:

<https://forms.office.com/e/k2pRzk2t9j>

If you would like to discuss any of your comments in further detail please add your email address or contact number to the 'any other comments' question and we will be happy to contact you.

THANK YOU ALL

Upcoming Courses, Workshops and Support Groups



Drop-in support groups - Come along and meet other parents/carers to share similar experiences.

Friendly and informal, No need to book. Just come along for a tea/coffee, meet other parents and members of our team.

GORLESTON

JOIN US AT GORLESTON LIBRARY, LOWESTOFT ROAD, GORLESTON NR31 6SG

WEDNESDAY 8th FEBRUARY 2023

10 am - 12 noon (note extended times)

Tea and Coffee available for small donation to library if able to.

CONTACT GORLESTON@FAMILY-ACTION.ORG.UK FOR MORE INFORMATION

KING'S LYNN

JOIN US AT DOBBIES, next to TESCO HARDWICK, KING'S LYNN PE30 4WQ

TUESDAY 7TH FEBRUARY 2023 FROM 9:30 TO 11:00 AM

FIND US IN THE COMFY, SOFA AREA.

RING 01760 725801 or EMAIL Swaffham@family-action.org.uk FOR MORE INFORMATION

SWAFFHAM

UPSTAIRS IN COSTA COFFEE, MARKET PLACE, SWAFFHAM

WEDNESDAY 8TH **FEBRUARY** 2023 FROM 9:30 TO 11:00 AM

RING 01760 725801 or EMAIL Swaffham@family-action.org.uk FOR MORE INFORMATION

A DROP-IN SUPPORT GROUP FOR DADS OR MALE CARERS

A CHANCE FOR MEN TO SUPPORT EACH OTHER, ASK QUESTIONS AND BUILD KNOWLEDGE ABOUT AUTISM AND ADHD

Run by our male family support workers on ZOOM

ZOOM details:

<https://family-action.zoom.us/j/4257569109?pwd=amZ2c21XZ0xUcGtiM2hGdWMwQWdoZz09>

Meeting ID: 425 756 9109

Passcode: 231659

Tuesday **7th February** 6-7 pm

WE ARE SO LOOKING FORWARD TO WELCOMING YOU TO ONE OF OUR SUPPORT SESSIONS IN THE NEAR FUTURE - Family Action's Norfolk and Waveney ASD/ADHD Support Service Team.



Family Action Norfolk and Waveney ASD ADHD
Support Service & Family Action West Suffolk
Neurodevelopmental Support Service

**Dad and Male Carer ASD/ADHD
Drop-in Chat**

**We are hosting virtual drop-in's for
dads/male carers**

Come and join us for a drop-in chat.
Do you have any worries, concerns or just
want to speak with likeminded male carers/parents

**Tuesday 7th February
6pm-7pm**

**Meeting ID: 425 756 9109
Passcode: 231659**

If you have any questions or wish to discuss, please contact us at
swaffham@family-action.org.uk or wsuffolk@family-action.org.uk or via
telephone 01284 636655 (West Suffolk) or 01760 720302 (Norfolk)

3 - Drop-in Support Group for Dads and Male Carers

PLAN BEE COURSES NEAR YOU



Plan Bee – Understanding and supporting your child or young person with additional needs

‘Plan Bee’ is a FREE 3 week course (2hrs per week) written by two Clinical Psychologists working in Norfolk and is aimed at parents or carers of children or young people with additional needs including suspected or diagnosed ASD or ADHD.

During the three week course, we will explore:

- Behaviour as communication.
- Understanding the full range of needs your child may have.
- Developing a plan to support behaviour in difficult situations which can then be shared with grandparents, schools and others.
- Strategies for creating an environment in which your child or young person can thrive.
- Sharing experiences, challenges and successes with other parents experiencing similar issues and learning from these.

What? Plan Bee West - Understanding and supporting your child or young person with additional needs

Where? St Faith's Community Hub, Church Drive (next Gaywood Church Rooms), Gaywood, **King's Lynn** PE30 4DZ

When? Thursdays 2nd, 9th (break for half-term) and 23rd **FEBRUARY** 2023, 10.00 am to 12.00 noon

Contact? Swaffham 01760 725801/720302 or email swaffham@family-action.org.uk

Our March Plan Bee in the East of the county is now FULL

Please note however that we are planning a **ZOOM Plan Bee course in April** which will be in the evenings for those parents who work or find daytimes difficult to manage.

This is on Tuesdays 18th and 25th April and Tuesday 2nd May from 6:30 to 8:30pm

Contact Swaffham 01760 725801/720302 or email swaffham@family-action.org.uk to book or just find out more.



4 - When a flower is not growing, you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower. AD Heijer

Puffins ASD Programme - for parents/carers of children or young people with a **diagnosis** of ASD



Family Action is working with Norfolk Community Health and Care to run the Puffins ASD Programme for Parents/Carers of children or young people **with a diagnosis of ASD**. This is a free, comprehensive, four week course with sessions led by Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy professionals from within the Neurodevelopmental Service and by the ASD Specialist Educational Team.

PLACES STILL AVAILABLE

What? Puffins ASD Programme February

Where? JOIN US ON ZOOM FOR THIS COURSE - As this starts so soon, here are the joining details if you have an ASD diagnosis for your child or young person and would like to come along. No need on this occasion to pre book.

Meeting ID: 984 1976 5510 Passcode: 419725

When? Thursday 2nd and 9th **FEBRUARY** (break for half term) then Mondays 20th and 27th FEBRUARY 2023 9.30 am - 12.30 pm (apart from first session which is 9.30 am - 1.00 pm)

Contact? Swaffham 01760 725801/720302 or email swaffham@family-action.org.uk

What? Puffins ASD Programme MARCH

Where? St Faith's Community Hub, Church Drive, Gaywood, **KING'S LYNN**, PE30 4DZ

When? Thursdays 2nd, 9th, 16th and 23rd **MARCH** 2023 9.30 am - 12.30 pm (apart from first session which is 9.30 am - 1.00 pm)

Contact? Swaffham 01760 725801/720302 or email swaffham@family-action.org.uk

If you wish to join our closed Facebook group, go to Facebook and to the Family Action page and then search for Norfolk and Waveney ASD and ADHD Support Service.

You can still access the online videos of our Positive Behaviour Strategies course (now Plan Bee) on the NHS for Norfolk website, Just One Norfolk.

Just click here: <https://www.justonenorfolk.nhs.uk/child-development-additional-needs/behaviour-sleep/norfolk-positive-behaviour-strategies-pbs/>

Are you aged 16-25 with a neurodevelopmental difference such as autism or ADHD or their carer?

If you live in the Norfolk and Waveney area, you can contact the Norfolk and Waveney ASD/ADHD Support Service (NWAASS) helpline. We can provide specialist advice and guidance on benefits, education, independent living, social activities and much more.

Call 01603 577 958

Text 07989 729756

We're open Tuesday - Thursday, 9:30am to 2:30pm
Plus evening hours on Tuesday from 6-8pm

Alternatively, you can email:

nddhelpline@family-action.org.uk



Building
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Family Action FamilyLine



FamilyLine

Supporting adult family members
via telephone, text, email and
web chat

[FamilyLine](#) is a service for adult family members that aims to:

- provide both immediate and long-term support
- help with practical information and guidance
- provide emotional and listening support
- help with understanding and accessing relevant services and information
- provide regular one-to-one befriending
- support to service users feeling isolated
- access to short term telephone counselling
- a referral into our many projects across England and Wales, where relevant.

Family members aged 18 years old and over from anywhere in England, Wales and the Isle of Man can get in touch with the service for free via telephone, text message, web chat or email, using the details below.

Opening times: Monday to Friday, 9am to 9pm

Contact details: Telephone: 0808 802 6666

Text message: 07537 404 282

Email: familyline@family-action.org.uk

Live web chat

Contacting FamilyLine out of hours

Do you need FamilyLine but it's out of our operation hours? You can either call back in our opening hours, leave a message on our voice mail for a call back in our operation hours or if you're in crisis you can contact our crisis line to get in touch with a trained professional.

Text FAMILYACTION to 85258

Our crisis messenger text service provides free, 24/7 crisis support across the UK. We know that getting the correct support at the correct time is so beneficial which is why we've introduced our crisis line. This service is delivered in partnership with [Shout](#).

About our Service - Contact Details



To contact us for advice and support, or to book a place on one of our courses or information sessions, please use the details below.

Phone Swaffham 01760 725801/720302 or email swaffham@family-action.org.uk

Phone Gorleston 01493 650220 or email gorleston@family-action.org.uk

For North and South Norfolk and Norwich please ring the Swaffham number above or email central@family-action.org.uk

Unsure which area to contact? Use any of the above – we are all here to help you.