



Building
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Norfolk & Waveney ASD/ADHD Support Service March 2023 Newsletter

Welcome to our March 2023 newsletter.

We hear quite often from the families we work with that the anxiety their children and young people are living with a lot of the time is their biggest challenge.

Central to understanding and helping is the idea of **'intolerance to uncertainty'**.

This is why your children and young people often dislike plans changing, supply teachers, people dropping in unexpectedly, road closures, new foods appearing unexpectedly at dinner times or global pandemics changing everything. An inability to think flexibly leads to uncertainty, lack of control and ultimately stress and anxiety. Knowing what a large role uncertainty plays in anxiety can help you to improve the environment around your young person.

In this edition of the newsletter we will include:

- **Thinking About Comorbidity**
- **Stress and Anxiety**
- **Online Safety for Children and Young People**
- **WORLD AUTISM ACCEPTANCE WEEK**
- **What's Happening around the County?**
- **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.

Thinking About Comorbidity



There is a tendency when your child or young person has a diagnosis such as Autism or ADHD, for every issue or difficulty they have to be attributed to that diagnosis. 'It's just their autism' you will hear. But it is important to be aware that there are a number of comorbid conditions linked to neurodiversity, occurring independently alongside ASD or ADHD, and which may require separate recognition and treatment. Comorbid just means co-occurring. This does not mean that your child or young person will ever suffer from any of these but that they can be at a slightly higher risk than their neurotypical peers.

The first thing to point out is that you are more likely to also be autistic if you have ADHD, and vice versa. And this can be quite difficult to unpick because there are many overlapping traits. Repetitive stimming behaviours and sensory processing difficulties for example can be seen in either condition. But if you have an autistic child who is showing clear signs of inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity it may be worthwhile seeking a separate diagnosis of ADHD which could result in prescribed medication to help.

And whether you have ASD or ADHD there are some comorbidities which are linked to both - Anxiety, Low Mood, Dyspraxia, Specific Learning Difficulties, Eating Disorders, OCD and Sleep Disorders for example.

And other co-occurring conditions which tend to be linked more closely to either ASD *or* ADHD.



We do hear from families that when their child was diagnosed with **ADHD** and put on appropriate medication, traits of ADHD were lessened but that other issues became more clear. So focus, for example, may have become better but difficulty with some areas of school work still remains. Or hyperactivity is less of a problem but defiance is not getting any better. It can be difficult to work out if there is a stand alone comorbid condition at work in these situations such as a Specific Learning Difficulty (SLD) or Obsessive Defiant Disorder (ODD) or whether these behaviours are secondary to ADHD, that is, triggered by the difficulties and frustrations of coping with ADHD. So the child or young person may, due to an ability to focus over many years, have developed anxiety and lack of resilience around school work rather than having an additional difficulty.

"Comorbid conditions are distinct diagnoses that exist simultaneously with ADHD or ADD. They do not go away once the primary condition – in this case, ADHD – is treated. Comorbid conditions exist in parallel with ADHD and require their own specific treatment plan." [ADDitude Magazine](#)

The most common comorbid conditions linked to ADHD include:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)
- Specific Learning Difficulties - such as Dyslexia or Dyscalculia
- Fine and gross motor difficulties - such as Dyspraxia
- Tic Disorders

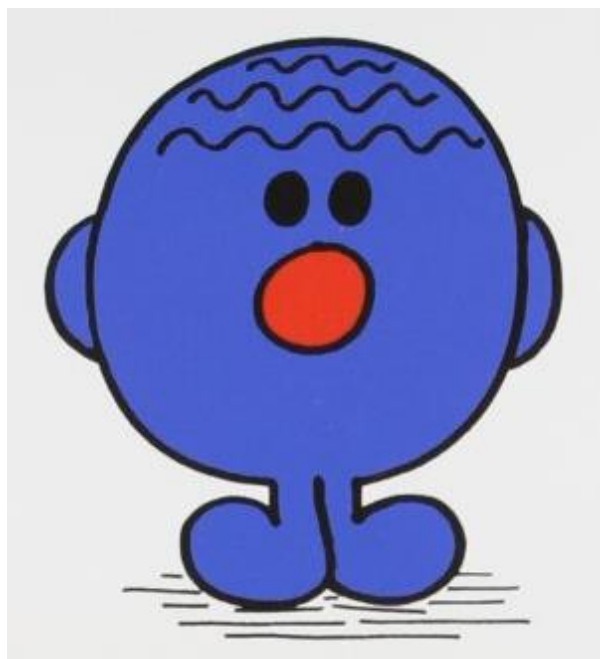
If your child or young person continues to struggle after they have been diagnosed and begun treatment for ADHD, you will need to carefully observe where and when symptoms arise in order to determine whether those symptoms dissipate with a few adjustments to the planned medication or persist despite the fact that the medication is alleviating other symptoms. If you think you have identified a comorbid condition, go in the first instance to your GP who can make the appropriate referral.

For more reading on this have a look at:

ADDITUDE Magazine [When it's Not Just ADHD](#)

[The ADHD Foundation](#) has a page of resources including information about linked conditions.

Stress and Anxiety



Many neurodiverse children and adults experience high levels of stress and anxiety. Research by the National Autistic Society identified that 47% of autistic people in their study showed the clinical signs of severe anxiety. Other studies have identified that between 22-84% of autistic children reported symptoms of anxiety, depending on how the anxiety was measured.

The terms stress and anxiety are often used interchangeably, but stress can be defined as a reaction to a specific external event, whilst anxiety is an internal, persistent feeling that feels like fear and dread – we don't always know where that fear has come from or why the feeling of anxiety seems to have got stuck.

Stress, panic and anxiety are part of life. They serve a purpose and can make us stronger, sharpen our brains, and prepare us to react quickly to danger by triggering our fight, flight or freeze response. However, high levels of stress and anxiety over a prolonged period of time can have a significant effect on everyday life, on our general health, on relationships with friends and family members, and the ability to engage in activities. 59% of autistic people in a National Autistic Society survey said that anxiety had a high impact on their lives. High levels of stress and anxiety can lead to mental health issues, exhaustion and meltdowns.

On our Plan Bee course, we talk about the bucket model – the idea that we all have a certain capacity to manage stress, anxiety, fear, shame and frustration. Developmental differences can mean that someone's bucket fills up quickly with stress and anxiety. As the bucket gets full, an individual may express this through distressed behaviour. If the bucket overflows, the individual may experience a meltdown or a shutdown.

Strategies are the things we can do to put holes in the bucket, to reduce the levels of anxiety. Strategies differ from person to person, so before trying a strategy, we need to observe, record, and understand what is filling up a bucket. We also need to understand how full a bucket is at a particular point in time. You might use a diary, or a more structured approach such as a STAR chart (Setting, Triggers, Actions, Result)

The National Autistic Society's [SPELL Framework](#) is a way to understanding a person and how best to support them, using a structured, positive, non-judgemental approach, shared with others in that person's life.

Common causes of stress and anxiety can include changes to routines, certain social situations, masking to "fit in", and sensory aspects of an environment. Structure and predictability help to reduce uncertainty in a particular situation. Approaches such as social stories, visual timetables, emotion charts and now-next visual prompts can help by providing information about activities and situations, which in turn reduces uncertainty and anxiety.

If you are worried about someone's levels of anxiety and their mental health, then please do approach your GP to discuss additional help. The [Just One Norfolk](#) and [NHS](#) websites also have some useful guidance and contact details of mental health services for children and young people in Norfolk. Although a lot of anxiety does arise from neurodivergent traits, there may be times in a young person's life when it reaches a level which requires attention from mental health services. If your child or young person has Autism, you know what this looks like for them and have made adjustments in their environment, but you now feel that something is looking different and wrong, then do push for further support for them.

<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/mental-health/anxiety>

<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/mental-health/seeking-help>

<https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/professional-development/the-spell-framework>

<https://www.justonenorfolk.nhs.uk/emotional-health/norfolk-waveney-mental-health-advice-support-for-0-25-s/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/feelings-symptoms-behaviours/feelings-and-symptoms/anxiety-fear-panic/>

Online Safety



Social networking is hugely popular. Many young people are sophisticated in the way they use social media apps and websites, tailoring their communication for different audiences, and accessing them from a range of devices including smartphones, tablets, and games consoles.

But social media, like all forms of public communication, comes with some risks. Not all of these risks turn into actual problems; and if children never face any risks, they never learn how to deal with them. By helping your child understand what the risks are, you can play a big part in preventing them from turning into problems.

AMBITIOUS ABOUT AUTISM have produced a guide for parents which is full of visuals and which should help you talk to your child about staying safe online. Have a look at their [easy read guide](#).

Their website also has information about cyberbullying and scams and phishing.

Check out the NSPCC's [Net Aware](#) for the latest safety news and information. The online safety tips, advice and activities have been created in partnership with young people and designed for parents and carers of children with SEND.

Further reading

[London Grid for Learning](#) for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online.

[Thinkuknow](#) for advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online. (CEOP)

[UK Safer Internet Centre](#) for advice for parents and carers.

What's Happening Around the County?



Norfolk
County Council

We have been notified recently by Norfolk County Council about new Autism Cafes being set up in libraries in Central Norfolk.

" Do you have autism, or are you a carer or family member of an Autistic Person?

Norfolk Libraries are creating spaces for people to meet and chat in a friendly, casual environment.

Please use the following link to access posters for Hethersett, Wymondham and Costessey libraries:

<https://wettransfer.com/downloads/88995520e2e3e672ba128d1da30cb55a20230208123037/b8a243e5e286f814cc6b4946c9731c0d20230208123038/04883c> "



**Do you have autism, or are you a carer
or family member of an Autistic Person?**



Norfolk Libraries are creating spaces
for people to meet and chat in a friendly,
casual environment.

**Costessey Library is hosting
Autism Café**

**Last Saturday of the month starting the 25th Feb
Time 11.30am-1pm**

This is a free event and you can just turn up

For more information ask one of our staff or email:
Costessey.lib@libraries.norfolk.gov.uk

Norfolk Library and Information Service
borrow discover connect

Norfolk County Council



Do you have autism, or are you a carer or family member of an Autistic Person?



Norfolk Libraries are creating spaces for people to meet and chat in a friendly, casual environment.

Hethersett Library is hosting Autism Café

First Friday of the month

Time 5pm-6pm

This is a free event and you can just turn up

For more information ask one of our staff or email:

Hethersett.lib@libraries.norfolk.gov.uk

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Do you have autism, or are you a carer or family member of an Autistic Person?



Norfolk Libraries are creating spaces for people to meet and chat in a friendly, casual environment.

Wymondham Library is hosting Autism Café

First Thursday of the month

Time 12—1pm

This is a free event and you can just turn up

For more information ask one of our staff or email:

Wymondham.lib@libraries.norfolk.gov.uk

Norfolk Library and Information Service
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Did you miss the recent BBC Two showings of a documentary by CountryFile's Chris Packham called Inside Our Autistic Minds.

The two episodes are still available on [BBC IPlayer](#)



Asperger East Anglia

Asperger East Anglia will be holding a weekly meet and greet meeting in King's Lynn for people with Autism starting on Wednesday 8 th March from 10.30 am to 2pm at the North Lynn Discovery Centre, Columbia Way PE30 2LA. Anyone who would like to speak to an experienced support worker or learn more about the services the charity provides can drop by with no appointment necessary. For further information email info@asperger.org.uk Tel 01603 620500

Norfolk and Waveney MIND



March 1st is Self Injury Awareness day. In recognition of this Norfolk and Waveney Mind's RESTs are reminding everyone that we are here for you. Help and support is available all year round, and staff are always ready to have a chat.

If you are self-harming or know someone who is, and want to talk to someone please go to your nearest REST hub, where someone will be available to talk with you and provide you with a free self-harm care kit.

To go to the MIND website just click [here](#).

WORLD AUTISM ACCEPTANCE WEEK IS 27TH MARCH TO 2ND APRIL

Autism Anglia - A Note for your Diary

Muddy Fun - Sat 18th March

Think you're up for the challenge? Sign up to the Muddy Fun Run today!

Our Muddy Fun event is a 1km course with 30 obstacles including big walls, slides, monkey bars, water pit, rope climbs and a ninja warrior style ramp. All we ask is that you complete at least one lap (but try for two!) within the 2hour time, or simply go back to tackle your favourite obstacles or jump in the muddy ditch!

"Just have fun, get muddy and take on the challenge. It's a brilliant team building event or even parents v kids!"



Playmakers at the site near Bury St Edmunds are on hand to help and encourage but there's no pressure to complete all the obstacles.

Tickets are just £15 for adults (over 18) and £12 for children (minimum age 7yrs) via the Playground website and we are asking for further sponsorship or donations to Autism Anglia. Anyone who raises over £20 in sponsorship will receive a free Autism Anglia t-shirt on the day.

Our last Mud Run managed to raise over £4,500 which blew us away and we'd love to see the same again!

With limited places left, make sure you sign up!

[Sign up!](#)

ADHD NORFOLK

Postwick Norwich ADHD Drop in support group 6.00pm to 7.30pm

1st Wednesday of each month.

[Read More](#)

King's Lynn Drop in Support Hub. 2023 Dates to be confirmed.

Kings Lynn PE30

[Read More](#)

OUR 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 MARCH 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 MARCH 2023 FROM 9:30 TO 11:00 AM
SCHOOL HOLIDAY

NB: NO APRIL DROP IN DUE TO EASTER

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 MARCH 2023 FROM 9:30 TO 11:00 AM
SCHOOL HOLIDAY

NB: NO APRIL DROP IN DUE TO EASTER

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

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.



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.

Plan Bee (East) - LAST FEW PLACES REMAINING - contact us as soon as possible to reserve your place

This is on Tuesday **MARCH** 7th, 14th & 21st - 10.30 am - 12.30 pm in the Britten Room, Lowestoft Library

Our **ZOOM Plan Bee course in APRIL** is now fully booked. Other Plan Bee Zoom courses to be held later in the year.

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

Where? The Mullinger Room, Community Centre, Campingland, **SWAFFHAM**, PE37 7RB

When? Wednesdays 10th, 17th and 24th **MAY 2023** 10.00 am to 12.00 noon

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



1 - 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 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

What? Puffins ASD Programme APRIL

Where? Owen Barnes Room, Community Centre, Breckland Road, New Costessey, **NORWICH**, NR5 ORW

When? Thursday 30 March (break for Easter) then Mondays 17 and 24 & Thurs 27 April 9.30 am - 12.30 pm (Session one only 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



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Family Action FamilyLine



[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.