



Norfolk & Waveney Autism and ADHD Support Service December 2023 Newsletter

Welcome to our December 2023 newsletter. We are going to focus in this edition on the fabulous and fun (or scary and unpredictable - depending on your perspective).....festive season.

There are undoubtedly going to be extra pressures on families this Christmas. The high cost of living means that extra cash for presents and even for just putting the usual Christmas treats on the table is going to be difficult for many this year. And if you have a child with additional needs you will also have the added task of making Christmas a calm and happy time for them, while meeting the expectations of your other children. We have updated our top tips for a neurodiverse Christmas to remember and hopefully for all the *right* reasons. Also included are some budget-busting festive activities.

We wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

This month's newsletter looks at:

- **A neurodiverse Christmas**
- **Christmas activities**
- **News from other services**
 - **Big Norfolk (Festive) Holiday Fun**
 - **SENDIASS**
- **Upcoming courses, workshops and support groups**
- **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 Autism/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.

Planning for a less stressful Christmas



Like many things in life, preparation and planning are key to managing Christmas when you have a child with Autism or ADHD. It really makes sense to take some simple steps to avoid difficulties. This is not about cancelling Christmas, especially when you have other children to think about, but about making some reasonable adjustments to keep it both fun and predictable for your neurodivergent child. Take time to think about the things which are likely to fill up their 'bucket' and what you could do to make holes in that bucket. Remember that there is no 'right way' to do Christmas. Why would you try to follow traditions which are likely to cause distress? Start your own new traditions which work for your family. Here are just a few ideas to think about:

Give your child as much information as you can about what is planned for the Christmas period, but make sure you also emphasise all the things which will be staying the same. Do all you can to make them feel safe.

Plan visits by friends or family in advance rather than allowing them to just 'pop round' and try to put a time frame on visits.

If you are visiting family, keep the visits short, stick to the agreed times and ask them if they can have a quiet space available for your child if they need it.

As soon as any visits have been arranged, get them onto your child's visual timetable.

Write some social stories for reading together in the run up to Christmas to help your child with things they might find difficult such as saying thank you even if they do not like a gift or understanding that they will not win every time they play a board game.

If Christmas day has been busy with lots of family involved, perhaps plan a very quiet Boxing Day to allow some recovery time.



Take a week to decorate the tree with each member of the family hanging just one or two decorations each day.

Or limit decorations to one room only so that the rest of the house is a Christmas free zone.

Take time to think about the sensory onslaught of Christmas lights, scents, music, tinsel, noise and extra people and make sure your child or young person knows they have access to a quiet space or ear defenders or that the lights can be switched off for a while to give them a break.

Before you start putting up the Christmas decorations, it may be useful to look at photographs of the house from previous years to help prepare your child for the changes and to allow them to talk about aspects of Christmas they found difficult.

One small present a day in the run up to Christmas can be worthwhile for children who cannot contain their excitement.



Rein in the Father Christmas talk - he can be quite a scary figure for many children. They may still be keeping one eye on the chimney months after Christmas.

Does Christmas dinner have to be turkey for everyone? It may not be sensible to make a stand about food issues on a day which should be just about eating together and being happy. Who says chicken nuggets dipped in cranberry sauce isn't festive if it works for your child?

Even those who are prepared to be more adventurous in their eating over Christmas may appreciate it if you provide a menu in advance so they can look at it and reassure themselves.

And think about whether pulling crackers with a loud bang really needs to be part of your Christmas. A joke, a hat and a few sweets or a small toy can easily be wrapped up in bit of tissue

paper and tied with a bow. Less scary and definitely cheaper. Or start saving the inner tube from your toilet rolls now, fill and wrap.



Have some time away from Christmas excitement. Plan walks in the park or feeding the ducks at the local pond, baking together, arts and crafts or whatever normally makes holes in their bucket.

Presents can be difficult for some children either because of the uncertainty and surprise or because ripping off the paper can challenge their fine motor skills. Try wrapping loosely in tissue paper, wrapping in see-through cellophane, putting a picture of the gift on the outside of the parcel, leaving some presents unwrapped or opening just a couple of presents a day over the whole Christmas period.



And don't be disappointed if your child doesn't show excitement about gifts in the way you expect. Remember that they may have difficulty understanding that you do not already know how they feel about the gift, and that they need to show you.

Why not try giving your child or young person a special job which they can focus on like 'official photographer' taking all the Christmas photos.

Think about what worked last year and try to repeat. By doing this Christmas will begin to feel like it has a pattern and a routine to it and this will reduce anxiety.

Find out about autism-friendly events. Norwich Theatre Royal has a 'relaxed' production of its pantomime, Jack and the Beanstalk, on Friday 5th January 2024 at 5pm. This is not bookable online so ring the box office on 01603 630000. King's Lynn Corn Exchange has a 'relaxed'

performance of Dick Whittington on Thursday 28th December. You can book online or ring 01553 764864.

Santa is coming to Dereham Windmill 11 Dec 2022, 12:00 – 15:00

There will be a quiet session from 11 till 12, with no flashing lights or music for Autistic and other SEN children that might prefer a quieter experience with Santa. This has limited availability and must be booked in advance. To book please email info@derehamwindmill.co.uk Cost is £7.50 per child including present and £2 for an adult.

Have a look at the National Autistic Society's - [Christmas Tips for Autistic People and Their Families.](#)

See some quotes from the site below.

"Last year my son chose his own main present, and checked it was right when it arrived, then it was wrapped. He felt better knowing his present was right, and it wouldn't be a surprise, so started the day calm."

"Over the years, we've learned that Christmas doesn't need to be done all in one day. Family visits can be spread over the week and presents don't need to be opened all at once."

Keep 'em busy



After the excitement of Christmas itself, when all the presents have been opened, the relatives have visited and gone home, the roast turkey, turkey curry and turkey sandwiches have been eaten, and only the toffees are left in the Quality Street tin.....it can be a bit of an anti-climax for children who have difficulty regulating their emotions. Some planning beforehand can help you on those low days or alternatively on the days in the build up to Christmas when excitement is beginning to spiral out of control. Here are some ideas for keeping children occupied without spending a fortune.

Christmas Treasure Hunt - treasure hunts are not just for Easter. Plan ahead, have some clues written in cheap Christmas cards, put a sweetie for each child in with the clues and small gifts for final prizes.

Christmas Drive – go for a night time drive to look at other people’s Christmas lights and decorations from the quiet safety of the car.



Christmas Movie Night - Who doesn't love Elf and Home Alone? Plan a movie night with hot chocolate, popcorn and cosy blankets.

Sleep Under the Stars - Well actually.....the lights. Allow your children to camp out in sleeping bags under (or close to) the Christmas tree.

Christmas Disco or Christmas Karaoke - Only one rule, Christmas tunes only.



Painted Pine Cones - They look great on the mantelpiece or hanging from the tree.



Elf on the Shelf - Children love trying to spot the Elf each day.



Christmas Baking - mince pies, cookies using Christmas cutters, gingerbread men. Messy but fun.



Christmas Guess Who? - Have lots of Christmas characters pre-written ready to slip into a head band.

News from Other Services





Booking is officially open for this year's Big Norfolk Holiday Fun programme!

After weeks of careful planning, Norfolk County Council (NCC) are excited to invite children across the county to join them for a variety of fun-filled activities scheduled for December 21-22 and January 2-3.

Explore a variety of activities happening throughout the winter break, including outdoor adventures, football, swimming, and drama. Some of our newer providers are back, including zookeeping at Banham Zoo, and for older children coding and engage in robot design with Crea Norfolk in King's Lynn. There's really something for everyone.

Children aged 5-16 (or 4 if they are in reception) can take part in lots of different activities to keep them busy and healthy during the school holidays. Don't forget, if you claim benefits-related free school meals it's all totally free - plus your child will receive a free healthy lunch.

If you are not eligible for benefits-related free school meals, your child may still be able to take part. Please speak to your school if you feel your child would benefit from a place. Remember there are paid for places available too.

[Search](#) for activities near you and book today with Every Move. Spaces will fill up quickly and they don't want you to miss out so please have a look through the activities today.

They are working with providers to make sure that activities are inclusive and accessible for children with additional needs. Please speak to your chosen activity provider as early as possible so that they can help ensure your child's needs are met.



Family Action's Norfolk and Waveney Autism and ADHD Support Service regularly signposts families with school issues to the more specialised SENDIASS services in Norfolk and Suffolk. They have been extremely busy recently due to the high quality service they provide so we are happy to share the following from the latest Norfolk SENDIASS Spotlight Newsletter.

SENDIASS UPDATE

We are very happy to announce that we have recruited three new members of the team. Sally started with us on Monday 13th November as our Helpline Advisor, she is in the process of her training, and we are hopeful she'll be up and running on our helpline early in the new year. Sally will be the first point of contact on our helpline for parent/carers when they book an appointment to speak with us.

Our two new Engagement and Advice Workers Jo and Laura will be joining us at the beginning of January, their role will centre around gathering and encouraging the voice of children and young people. We look forward to them joining us.

We are about to interview for our part-time maternity cover SENDIAS Advisor and so for our December newsletter we will hopefully be able to introduce our new member of the team.

ADVICE CLINICS

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.

The advice clinic appointments are strictly to review or discuss paperwork so please make sure to bring this with you.

For example, we can support with:

- EHC Needs Assessment paperwork
- SENDIST (First Tier Tribunal) paperwork
- Draft Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

Thursday 7th December - Cromer Thursday 18th January - Wymondham

Thursday 18th January - Wymondham

[Read November's edition online](#)



The Witherslack Group are offering a webinar for parents about supporting your child or young person over the festive season.

Colin Foley, National Training Director from The ADHD Foundation neurodiversity charity, will present a free live webinar exploring practical ways to support your young person with self-regulation strategies this Christmas.

Supporting Parents and Carers

Date: Tuesday 12 December

Time: 10am-11am (Including Q&A)

In this webinar, Colin will explore why neurodiverse children and young people face challenges over the festive season, identifying how these challenges might present in your child or teenager, how we can support emotional self-regulation and top tips for regulating behaviour during the holiday period.

[Click here to register](#)



help for psychology

Psycho-Education Group For Autistic Girls

A group for girls aged 12-17 with a formal diagnosis of Autism.

A **free-of-charge group** designed to guide young girls in uncovering challenges, embracing strengths, and acquiring valuable tools and skills to navigate adolescence on the spectrum.

A blend of fun activities and group learning!

Duration: 8 weeks, 1.5 hours per week
Location: The Grange, Spixworth Road

Please scan the QR Code to register your interest!



And use the QR code on the flyer above for more information about a new initiative from HelpForPsychology.



Drop-in support groups - Come along and meet other parents/carers and share concerns...and successes.

Our Drop-In Groups are friendly and informal. No need to book. Just come along for a tea/coffee, meet other parents and members of our team.

KING'S LYNN

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

Come along and join us on **Tuesday 5th December** - 9.30 am - 11.00 am, FIND US IN THE COMFY, SOFA AREA.

RING **01603 972589** or EMAIL Swaffham@family-action.org.uk for more information.

SWAFFHAM

UPSTAIRS IN COSTA COFFEE, MARKET PLACE, SWAFFHAM, PE37 7AB

Come along and join us in the quiet, upstairs room in Costa Coffee on **Wednesday 6th December** - 9:30am - 11:00am.

RING **01603 972589** or EMAIL Swaffham@family-action.org.uk for more information.

GORLESTON

GORLESTON LIBRARY, FAMILY ACTION OFFICE, GORLESTON-ON-SEA, NR31 6SG

Come along and meet our team and other parents on **Wednesday 6th December** from 10:00am to 11:30am

RING **01493 650220** or EMAIL gorleston@family-action.org.uk for more information.

LOWESTOFT

AT THE RIVERSIDE FAMILY HUB, 6 CANNING ROAD, LOWESTOFT, NR33 0TQ

Come along and join us on **Thursday 7th December** from 10:00am to 11:30am

RING **01493 650220** or EMAIL gorleston@family-action.org.uk for more information.

New for 2024 - Thetford Drop In January 2024



family action Building stronger families

Early Childhood Development Support Service

Central
Norfolk and Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service

Join our friendly 'Drop In'

If you have personal experiences with a child with neurodiversity or are waiting for a diagnosis, come along to our 'drop In' session to meet our Family Support Workers, who can offer support and answer any questions.

When
Tuesday
16th January
2024
10.00-12.00
noon

Where
The Charles Burrell
Centre Café
Staniforth Road,
Thetford
IP24 3LH

SCAN ME

For more information contact our team on 01603 972589 (Swaffham Office). or email swaffham@family-action.org.uk

And also new for 2024 - A Drop-In group for EMNETH



Family Action's Norfolk and Waveney ASD/ADHD Support Service would like to invite you to....
a new drop-in support group in the west of the county.

If you have a child with a diagnosed or suspected neurodivergence why not join us?

PLEASE COME ALONG FOR A CUPPA AND A CHAT IN...

SWEET THINGS SAVOURY

33 GAULTREE SQUARE EMNETH PE14 8DA

ON

Wednesday 10th January 2024

Wednesday 14th February 2024

DROP IN ANYTIME BETWEEN 9:30 AND 11AM. NO NEED TO BOOK. WE WILL BE THERE TO WELCOME YOU.

COME AND MEET OTHER PARENTS LIVING WITH THEIR CHILD'S OR YOUNG PERSON'S Autism/ADHD AND SO REALLY 'GET IT'. THERE WILL ALWAYS BE A MEMBER OF OUR TEAM TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS OR GIVE ADVICE, SUPPORT, INFORMATION, RESOURCES OR SIGNPOSTING TO OTHER SERVICES.

For more information ring Family Action on 01603 972589

Or email Swaffham@family-action.org.uk

We will see you there!

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

PLAN BEE



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 Autism 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.

Our Plan Bee courses in Banham in December, King's Lynn in December and on Zoom in January 2024 are already fully booked.

JANUARY 2024- Great Yarmouth Primary Academy

Thursdays 18th, 25th January and 1st February 10:30am to 12:30pm To book your place please ring **01493 650220** or email gorleston@family-action.org.uk

Further courses are being arranged. Keep an eye on next month's newsletter.

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/>

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



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 Autism**. 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 Autism Specialist Educational Team.

DECEMBER 2023 - To be delivered online on ZOOM. Unfortunately this course is now FULL.

JANUARY 2024 - Swaffham Community Centre, The Campingland, SWAFFHAM, PE37 7RB
Mondays *8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th January 9:30am to 12:30pm*

FEBRUARY 2024 - Breckland Hall. Breckland Road, New Costessey, NORWICH, NR5 ODW
Thursdays 1st, 8th, 15th & 29th 9:30am - 12.30pm*

- Please note that the first session only is slightly longer, finishing at 1pm. All other sessions ending 12:30pm.

RING 01603 972589 or **EMAIL** swaffham@family-action.org.uk for more information or to book your place.

CYGNET- East Norfolk version of Puffins

Please call 01493 650220 if you would like more information or want to be placed on the waiting list.

Family Action also serves families in West Suffolk



The West Suffolk Neurodevelopmental Support Service team have been busy delivering courses and bespoke workshops, alongside our regular parent drop-in sessions at Oakes Barn in Bury St Edmunds.

To contact us for advice and support, or to book a place on one of our courses please use the details below. Our number is 01284 636655 or Email wsuffolk@family-action.org.uk

Have a look below at the West Suffolk December Newsletter for more Christmas tips and activities.

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allow-popups allow-same-origin allow-scripts" scrolling="no" style="border: none; max-width: 100%;
max-height: 100vh" allowfullscreen mozallowfullscreen msallowfullscreen
webkitallowfullscreen></iframe>

Family Action FamilyLine



FamilyLine

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



FamilyLine

Phone: 0808 802 6666
Text: 07537 404 282
Email: familyline@family-action.org.uk
Out of Hours: Text FAMILYACTION to 85258
Hours: M-F, 9am-9pm



Family life is full of special moments but it can feel difficult sometimes too. Whether you're feeling anxious or worried as a parent or carer, or need support with a problem big or small, our free FamilyLine is here to help.

[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.

For West and Central Norfolk **01603 972589** or email swaffham@family-action.org.uk

For East Norfolk and Waveney **01493 650220** or email gorleston@family-action.org.uk

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

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 Autism and ADHD Support Service.