



Norfolk & Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service July 2024 Newsletter



Many of you will be working hard at maintaining a routine and structure for your children and young people because you know that this is what helps them to feel safe and in control. But sometimes life gets in the way. Despite your best efforts there will be times when your child has to deal with quite major changes such as illness, bereavement or divorce for example. This is difficult for any child or young person but can be even harder to process for those with neurodevelopmental differences. We will be thinking this month about some of these types of situations and trying to give you a few ideas about how you can proactively prepare your child or young person. Of course there are some situations to which you can only react.

This month's newsletter includes:

- **Our New Contact Details**
- **Some Dates for your Diary**
- **Bereavement**

- **Puberty**
- **Divorce and Separation**
- **We have a job opportunity**
- **Our Upcoming Courses - PLAN BEE, PUFFINS AND CYGNET**
- **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.

KEEP A NOTE OF OUR CONTACT DETAILS

Do you want to know more about our courses, workshops or drop-in groups? Do you want a bit of advice or support? We have changed our contact email address to NorfolkAndWaveney@family-action.org.uk

Our direct telephone number for all enquiries remains **01603 972589**

Our **Gorleston** office can continue to be contacted on **01493 650220** or by email on **Gorleston@family-action.org.uk**

Join us at our Zoom Information Session in JULY



What is my child's behaviour telling me?
A Question and Answer Session
for Parents/Carers.

Thursday 18th JULY 10am to 11am

No need to book for this friendly and informal session with no presentation. We will be answering your questions about what your child's behaviour is trying to communicate.

Just use the joining details below.
Meeting ID: 931 4604 6862
Passcode: 231659
SEE YOU THERE.

The Family Action logo is a green speech bubble with the words "family action" in white lowercase letters, set against a white circular background. To the left of the logo is a yellow square, and above it is a yellow dashed line forming a partial circle. To the right of the logo is a yellow circle.

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. They are a chance to meet our knowledgeable team as well as other parents and carers who are facing similar challenges.

We run these groups in Lowestoft, Gorleston, Swaffham and King's Lynn on a regular basis. We also run one-off drop-ins in the Central area, visiting various towns. This month we are in Norwich on 9th July. And we are also continuing our trial of a monthly ONLINE drop-in group on Zoom for anyone who has difficulty getting along to a face to face group.

Click on the cards below to see ALL our drop-ins in JULY. Just click on a card to enlarge.

Join us in KING'S LYNN

Our drop-in support group meets each month in.....

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

No need to book just come along on.....
TUESDAY 9th JULY 2024 9.30am - 11.00 am
FIND US IN THE COMFY, SOFA AREA.

RING 01603 972589 or

EMAIL NorfolkAndWaveney@family-action.org.uk for more information.



Drop-In and Meet Us ONLINE in July



If you have a child with a diagnosed or suspected neurodivergence...

....we would love you to join us online on ZOOM. No need to book, just come along if you can.

NEXT MEETING
WEDNESDAY 17th JULY
10 TO 11AM

JOINING DETAILS
Meeting ID: 931 4604
6862
Passcode: 231659

A chance to meet other parents who 'get it', to meet our team and ask for advice or resources.

For more info you can ring Family Action on 01603 972589

Meet our team and other parents in... GORLESTON



We meet at.....
GORLESTON LIBRARY, FAMILY ACTION OFFICE,
GORLESTON-ON-SEA, NR31 6SG

Wednesday 3RD JULY 2024 from 10:00am to 11:30am

No need to book, friendly and informal, but if you do want more information then please RING 01493 650220 or EMAIL gorleston@family-action.org.uk for more information.



We meet each month, UPSTAIRS in Costa Coffee, Market Place, Swaffham, PE37 7AB

Meet us Wednesday 10TH JULY 9:30 – 11:30
Friendly, informal, no need to book.

Ring 01603 972589 or
Email NorfolkAndWaveney@family-action.org.uk if you want more information.



Why not join us in LOWESTOFT?

We have a regular drop-in support group....

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

Come along and join us on Thursday 4th JULY 2024 from 10:00am to 11:30am NO NEED TO BOOK

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



COME AND MEET US IN NORWICH

TUESDAY 9TH JULY 2024

At NORWICH MIND, Churchman House, 71 Bethal Street, Norwich, NR2 1NR from 10am to 12noon.

No need to book, friendly and informal, just come along for coffee/tea and a chat with our team.

RING 01603 972589 or
EMAIL NorfolkAndWaveney@family-action.org.uk if you would like more information.



Bereavement and Loss



Loss of any kind is difficult to deal with at any stage but particularly when you are younger. Beginning to understand that the people you love the most may not always be around is hard especially when you really do rely on just a very few people to make you feel safe. And loss of a pet or an important friendship or a house you love can all be difficult too.

Grief is a natural process and generally does not require professional intervention. There are several models which show the main stages of grief, although rarely do we pass through each stage in an orderly fashion! The stages tend to be mixed up and we often go around in circles until we eventually reach some form of acceptance.



Children with autism and ADHD may face additional challenges when faced with death and loss. Whilst they will show the typical grief responses shared by all children, such as anger, restlessness, and changes to sleeping and eating patterns, they may also communicate their grief through excitement or aggressive and destructive behaviours. Alternatively, they may withdraw, and not appear to grieve at all.

They may feel more anxious, and this additional anxiety could leave them less able to cope with their normal day to day activities. They might focus more on their special interests. You might see more stimming type behaviours as they try to control their anxiety. Things they would normally cope with might, at this time, lead to additional, unexpected meltdowns or shutdowns.

We know that some types of neurodivergence can make it difficult to see things from another person's point of view and so your child or young person may not quite understand the change in emotions in the people around them. They may have difficulty connecting with their own emotions and may not cry. Their emotional responses may be delayed or extreme. Or they can be very aware of the emotions of others but have not idea how to make things better and this also becomes a trigger.

A young person with autism may need help processing information about the loss, to understand the implications of the death, that the pet or person will no longer be there for them. They might struggle with perception of time and with imagining how things will be in the future.

The language around death and loss can be confusing to a young person with autism or ADHD. We often use phrases such as "passed away", "lost", "departed", "resting in peace" or even "up in the clouds" to soften the difficult words around death. However, a child who thinks rigidly and very literally, may be completely thrown by the use of such language.

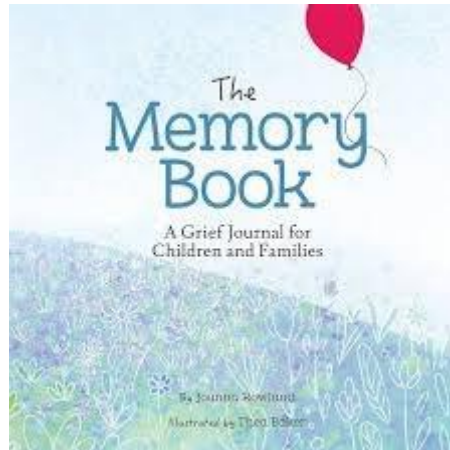
Think about the child who already finds social situations quite difficult to negotiate. They may find themselves completely confused and overwhelmed by the new and different social situations around illness and death such as hospital visits, funerals and other customs and gatherings at which people they know well may be looking and behaving in ways which are very different from how they normally behave.

[Child Bereavement UK](#) and the [National Autistic Society](#) offer some great strategies to help support neurodivergent children and young people with loss. These strategies include:

- Using direct, unambiguous language when talking about death and loss. Avoid using euphemisms that a child might take literally such as "passed away" or "gone to sleep". Use appropriate, concrete examples to explain that death is a permanent state. For example by talking about what "dead" means when coming across a dead animal or plant.
- Explain that everyone expresses grief differently and that it is okay to express grief in a way that works for your child.
- Children understand death in different ways at different stages of development. Try to tailor information and discussions about loss to the child's level of understanding. There are several books and materials out there specifically to help explain death to children.
- Provide as much information as possible about what to expect when attending hospitals or funerals, for example. [Social stories](#) are a great way to introduce and explain social situations to a child or young person with autism or ADHD. They can be used to talk about death, funerals, hospitals - any situation that a child may not understand or be anxious about. Use photos of the places that your child may visit, or maps of routes taken on the day of a funeral. You may even consider visiting places in advance with your child.
- You can explain that other family members may behave differently to usual, that they are upset because they won't see a person they care about again. Explain any customs and ceremonies they may observe or be part of beforehand.
- Consider using a feelings thermometer, emotions scale or simple language to help a child understand and express their emotions. Point out and label emotions displayed by characters in TV programs to help a child understand their and other people's emotions.

[Cartoon strip conversations](#) are another approach that can help to describe emotions in certain situations.

- Memories are an important part of the grieving process and help a child to acknowledge an emotional bond, even if the physical bond is broken through death. You can consider helping a child to create their own memory box, filled with things chosen by the child. Child Bereavement UK suggest including things that relate to all five senses.



Useful links:

<https://childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/about-1/what-we-do/research-evidence/key-statistics>

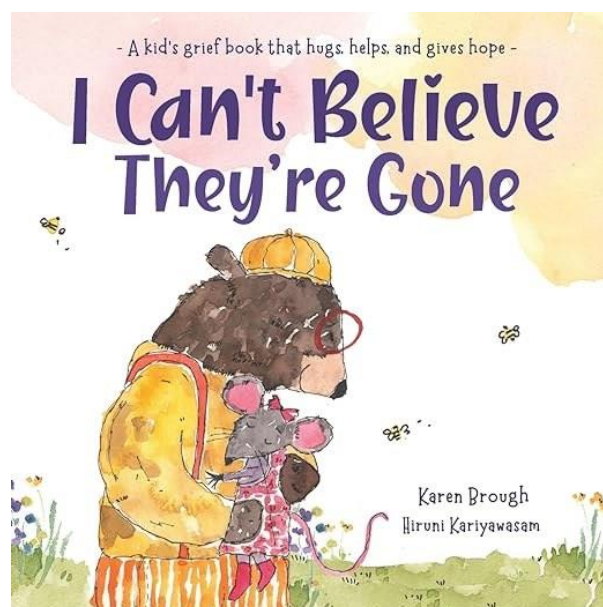
<https://www.andnextcomesl.com/2018/09/free-social-stories-about-death-and-funerals.html>

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

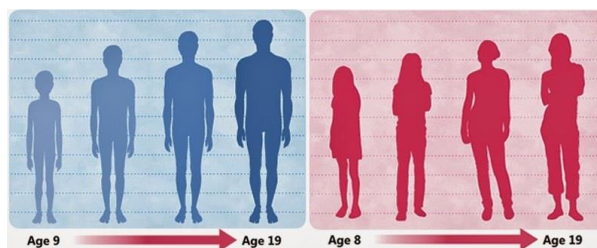
<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/information-bereaved-children-with-asd>

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/information-childrens-understanding-of-death>

<https://www.purpleella.com/2018/03/01/autism-and-bereavement/>



Puberty



This is not an easy time in the life of any young person but traits of Autism and of ADHD tend to make these teenage years more difficult for young people than for their neurotypical friends.

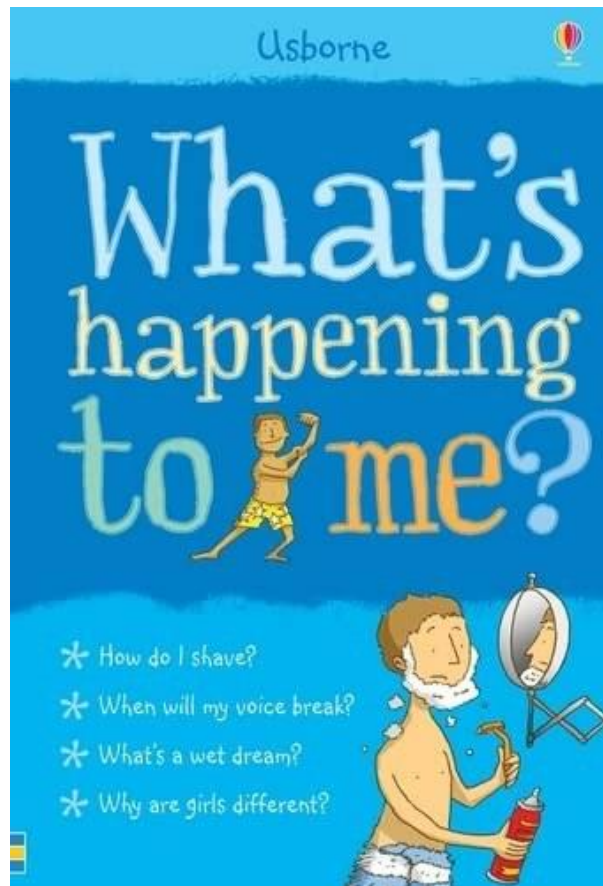
We know that voices break, periods start, various parts of the body grow larger, spots appear and hair starts to sprout in new places. Let's add masturbation, wet dreams, PMT, internet safety, personal hygiene, different types of sexuality and the possibility of having sex in the future, into the equation. Talking to your child before these changes happen is crucial because they will need time and support to prepare for puberty. Neurodiversity does not delay puberty, it is going to happen whether you feel you or they are ready for it, so best to be well prepared.

As a guide, puberty usually begins around:

- 10-11 years for girls
- 11-13 years for boys.

You know your child best but start early by simply pointing out the differences between child and adult bodies, between boys' and girls' bodies, don't shy away from answering awkward questions, use social stories and visuals where you can and use photos to show them how they have already changed and that this will continue. Think about the language you use with children who may be quite literal in their thinking. 'Your voice will break' could be quite a scary concept so 'your voice will begin to change and get deeper' would be more appropriate. Try to use proper names for body parts. Talking about things changing 'down under' will just cause all sorts of confusion. But they do need to know that school friends may use other words. You should also clarify with the school what they will be teaching and the terms they will be using so that you can reinforce rather than confuse their message.

And in amongst all the facts it is crucial for young people with additional needs that a lot of emphasis is put on how they keep themselves safe, what would be inappropriate, the meaning of consent and that sex is something they may want to do if they meet the right person but not something they ever have to do.





Girls will need early and thorough preparation for starting periods, or it could be a frightening experience. They will need reassurance that although they will bleed this is completely normal. Social stories can be really helpful for this situation. Girls will need to see and handle sanitary products and begin to store some in an agreed place so that they know they are there when they need them. If learning new sequences is difficult, you may want to create a visual resource showing the steps for using and disposing of these. They may need you to mark their pants to show where the pad fits. Talk to them about what to do if they start their period in school, who to go to and what to say. Once they are having regular periods, include this on their visual timetable if they use one at home. They also need to know that their emotions may be affected by their menstrual cycle. It may take trial and error to find the product which is right for your child. Sensory issues can make pads uncomfortable for some. You can buy period pants which have a built in pad and which are washable and reusable. M & S sell them, although we are sure that other brands are available.

Have a look at the National Autistic Society's

[Autism and Sex Education - A Guide for Parents.](#)

[NAS - Autism and Periods](#)

Divorce, Separation and Neurodivergence



Of course, the divorce or separation of your parents or carers is a huge upset in the life of any child. For a child with some of the traits of autism such as differences around understanding and expressing emotions, an attachment to familiar routines and an inclination to rigid and inflexible, black and white thinking, layers of difficulty may have to be negotiated. And for children with traits of ADHD, who may find it almost impossible to focus on things which they do not want to hear or who have the characteristic over-sensitivity to anything which feels to them like rejection, a parent leaving the family home is going to be a very difficult thing to explain to them or for them to accept.

All of the above can make discussions about the sharing of custody, the disposal of the marital home and the financial needs of the child, both currently and in the future, much more complex.

How you approach the subject of divorce will depend on the developmental age of your child, with younger children needing fewer details than teens. As a general guide:

- Be absolutely clear that none of this is because of anything they have done
- Clear and concise language will work better than euphemisms
- Try to use positive language as much as possible
- Don't have the conversation until you have prepared answers to the many questions you are likely to be asked
- Build in lots of processing time
- Be prepared to repeat lots of the information
- Think about preparing a social story to help your child to take in key information and make sure it stresses how much will be staying the same
- Avoid the blame game - it will make moving on to the new reality more difficult if your child blames one parent for all the changes
- Acknowledge their feelings - it is okay to feel sad
- As soon as you can, produce some kind of concrete schedule showing where they will be staying on which days of the week

And finally, remember the bucket model we refer to a lot. When you talk to your child or young person about a huge change like divorce or separation, their bucket is likely to fill up quickly with anxiety and sadness and anger. Do not expect to convey all the information they need in one conversation. We know that when the bucket is full they may not be capable of hearing or reasoning or communicating well so you may have to wait and talk later. The bucket will sometimes overflow into distressed behaviour such as meltdown or shutdown. You may have to allow lots of breaks for calming down and for things which make small holes in the bucket. Stimming, spending time alone in their safe space, punching or screaming into cushions, playing video games, getting into favourite pyjamas, having a nap, having a snack, repeatedly watching a favourite film or reading a book about their special interest are all ways that a child or young person with autism may try to regulate themselves and calm down. As long as these are not harming themselves or others, they should be allowed.

For more reading, have a look at the following:

<https://www.myaspergerschild.com/2013/10/coping-with-divorce-help-for-kids-on.html>

<https://autismspectrumnews.org/understanding-and-resolving-conflict-in-divorce-involving-autistic-children/>

<https://blog.stageslearning.com/blog/how-to-help-your-autistic-child-cope-with-their-parents-divorce#:~:text=Neurodivergent%20children%20can%20benefit%20from,parent%20contact%20and%20new%20environments.>

<https://www.aspergerssocialstories.com/2013/10/aspergers-child-talks-about-his-parents.html>

JOB OPPORTUNITY

Are you a skilled practitioner with excellent communication skills? Are you solution-focused and passionate about making a difference? If so, Family Action has an exciting opportunity and would love to hear from you.

The Norfolk & Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service is delighted to be hiring a Family Support Worker in the Central locality to join our supportive and successful team and welcomes applicants with professional and personal experience.

Job Title: Family Support Worker (Central Region).

Service: Family Action's Norfolk & Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service.

Location: This is a home-based contract however please note that extensive travel is a compulsory requirement of the position to localities across Central Norfolk, such as Norwich, Thetford, Wymondham and Attleborough

Hours: 22.5 hours per week (part-time) Days and times to be agreed.

Salary: £22,546 - £23,966 FTE per annum (£13,710.41 - £ 14,573.92 per annum for part-time, 22.5 hours per week)

Contract type: Temporary - this successful service will seek recommissioning end March 2025

Interested applicants will need to go to the Family Action website for full advert, job description and person specification. Please go to [Family Action's Current Vacancies](#) and find the vacancy with the ID no. 1222 Family Support Worker (Central Region) Norfolk & Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service.

Please do not contact The Norfolk & Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service about this vacancy. Applications must be made on the Family Action website. CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS - FRIDAY 12TH JULY 2024 9AM.

PLAN BEE COURSES



PLAN BEE – understanding and supporting your child or young person with additional needs.

‘Plan Bee’ is a FREE 3 week course (2hrs per week) and is aimed at parents or carers of children or young people with additional needs including suspected or diagnosed Autism or ADHD.

If your child or young person already has a formal diagnosis of autism, please see the information later in the newsletter about the PUFFINS AUTISM PROGRAMME.

PLEASE NOTE THAT DUE TO THE DEMAND FOR OUR PLAN BEE COURSES, SOME ARE ALREADY FULL

JULY - OUR THETFORD COURSE IS NOW FULL

You can still book onto the following upcoming courses.

AUGUST - ONLINE ON ZOOM Tuesdays 13th, 20th and 27th July. To book and to receive joining detail please call 01603 972589 or email NorfolkAndWaveney@family-action.org.uk

SEPTEMBER - NORWICH Thursdays 12th, 19th and 26th SEPTEMBER Stafford Room, Ground Floor, Costessey Centre, Longwater Lane, Norwich, NR8 5AH PLEASE NOTE SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT TIME FOR THIS COURSE 9:30 TO 11:30AM To book call 01603 972589 or email NorfolkAndWaveney@family-action.org.uk

OCTOBER - KING'S LYNN The HUB, St Faith's Church, Gaywood, King's Lynn, PE30 4DW **Thursdays 3rd, 10th and 17th October 10am to 12noon.** To book call 01603 972589 or email NorfolkAndWaveney@family-action.org.uk


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



Please note that we are only able to advertise Puffins courses up to end September because our contract to deliver these is up for review at that time. As soon as we hear that we have been recommissioned to deliver Puffins, we will advertise available courses.



Puffins Autism Programme

The Puffins Programme is a FREE, four week programme designed by Norfolk Community Health and Care's Neurodevelopmental Service for parents and carers of children and young people with a diagnosis of Autism.

Family Action are working in partnership with NCHC and EPSS to deliver the programme to families in Norfolk.

Week 1 – Introducing Autism and Understanding Behaviour (Family Action)
 Week 2 – Communication – (NCHC Speech and Language Therapy Team)
 Week 3 – Understanding Sensory Processing (NCHC Occupational Therapy Team)
 Week 4 – Autism in Education (INCC EP & Specialist Support – Autism Support Team)
 NB: *Session 1 only in each course is just a little longer, 9.30am to 1.00pm

Programme dates:

July 2024
 Mondays *1st, 8th, Thursday 11th and Monday 15th July
 9:30am to 12:30pm
Swaffham
 The Community Centre,
 The Campingland, Swaffham, PE37 7RB

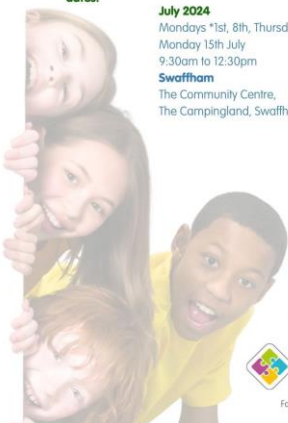


August 2024
 Thursdays *8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th Aug
 9:30am to 12:30pm
Delivered online
 Joining details available for participants once place is secured.

September 2024
 Mondays *9th, 16th, 23rd and 30th Sept
 9:30am – 12.30pm
New Costessey
 Breckland Hall, Breckland Rd, New Costessey, Norwich, NR5 0RW

**Please note: Courses may change to an online version if participant numbers are low.

To find out more or book a place, please contact Family Action on:

01603 972589
 NorfolkAndWaveney@family-action.org.uk

Family Action. Registered as a Charity in England & Wales no: 264713.

Do you live in East Norfolk or Waveney? CYGNET is the approved post-diagnosis course for families who use the Newberry Clinic for assessment.

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

Have a look at NSFT's Psychology in Schools team page. They have lots of free upcoming workshops for parents to access. Click on the link to book your place. <https://www.nsft.nhs.uk/parent-workshops/>

Family Action also serves families in West Suffolk



For information about courses, drop-ins and workshops which you can access if you live in West Suffolk just click and enjoy their newsletter below.

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src="https://sway.cloud.microsoft/s/AChCePfenMb3jLmE/embed" frameborder="0"
marginheight="0" marginwidth="0" max-width="100%" sandbox="allow-forms allow-modals allow-orientation-lock 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 - for any parenting concerns or crises. We can listen, support, inform and refer to a relevant service.



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 action Building stronger families

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 NorfolkAndWaveney@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.

Or use the link below to visit our ND Services Web Pages.

