

family
action



Norfolk & Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service November 2024 Newsletter

ANXIETY and how to help a child or young person with anxiety is becoming one of the most common concerns among the families we speak to in our service. We are not clinicians but we did want to share with you some of what we have learned in talking to and supporting families of children and young people with autism or autistic traits. For those parents with children more likely to have ADHD, this may still be of interest due to the overlapping nature of some of the traits and characteristics.

This month's newsletter includes:

- **Some Dates for your Diary**
- **Autism and Anxiety**
- **Anxiety, Schools and Learning**
- **SENDiass Update**
- **Our Upcoming Courses**
- **What are other services offering?**
- **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 are not health professionals but we do 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.

Family Action's Autism and ADHD Support Service is proud to take part in Norfolk County Council's Making Sense of Send events.



MAKING SENSE OF SEND

A free information fair for parents and carers of children aged 0-25 with SEND, and the professionals that work with them.

 **King's Centre, Great Yarmouth**

 **Tuesday 26th November 2024**

 **10am-12pm**

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.

See below ALL our drop-ins in NOVEMBER. Just click on a card to enlarge.

Meet our team and other parents in...
GORLESTON



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

Wednesday 6TH NOVEMBER 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.

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 7TH NOVEMBER 2024 from 10:00am to 11:30am
NO NEED TO BOOK

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



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 12th NOVEMBER 2024 9.30 - 11.00 am
FIND US IN THE COMFY, SOFA AREA.

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



We would like to meet you in..... SWAFFHAM

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

Meet us Wednesday 13TH NOVEMBER
9:30 – 11:30am
Friendly, informal, no need to book.

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



COME AND MEET US IN DEREHAM

THURSDAY 14TH NOVEMBER 2024

Dereham Library, 59 High St, Dereham NR19 1DZ
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.



Anxiety and Autism



Anxiety is a natural response to a threat but when the symptoms remain and persist after the threat is removed, it can become quite debilitating. Anxiety is known to be more prevalent among those living with autism and may have features which differ from anxiety in neurotypical peers.

It appears that the traits of autism make anxiety more likely and more difficult to manage. And the traits of anxiety make seeking and accessing professional help or communicating your needs in an effective way more difficult to achieve.

Why does autism seem to make anxiety more likely? This may be due to a number of factors.

- Communication differences can compound the stresses of working to social rules of interaction which are not fully understood.
- Overwhelming sensory sensations can lead to sensory overload and can trigger anxiety.
- A natural attention to detail can mean rarely feeling absolutely ready to move from one activity to the next and being much more comfortable with what is routine and familiar.
- Differences in processing skills, executive function and abstract thinking can make some tasks feel too difficult.

In other words:

I can't read other people which makes friendships and social situations problematic and sometimes scary.

I know that at some stage in the day I may be bombarded with sensory input which I will find very difficult.

I have an intolerance to uncertainty but have to live in a very uncertain world.

I may believe that I am likely to fail at things I try to do, leading to avoidance and resistance.

What will this look like? Anxiety will look different for each individual..

There may be physical symptoms of nausea, diarrhoea, headaches or anxiety may present more as changes in sleep patterns, loss of appetite, a feeling of fear or dread which comes and goes or which may seem more permanent. Anxiety can lead to 'meltdown' style behaviours, increasingly controlling or obsessive behaviours or complete shutdown and apparent inability to communicate or to engage with usual activities or with school and learning. For some it can also express itself in self-harming behaviours. What looks like anger, fear and irritability is often springing from anxiety.

And some responses can just look like increased autistic behaviour and so be more difficult to spot as anxiety, such as escalating repetitive behaviours, hyper-focus on comforting hobbies and activities, more insistence on routines or sensory seeking behaviours. All of these can be the child or young person's own attempts to control rising anxiety.

Observing and keeping a diary can help you to have greater understanding of the types of things which are contributing to this. Observation is key as your child or young person may not have the emotional language to explain what the problems are and remember also that as anxiety rises the ability to communicate well declines.

Demand for support with anxiety is at an all-time high and is generally accepted to be overwhelming the statutory and voluntary services which you might turn to for help. And so it is important that parents and carers understand more about their child or young person's anxiety and have some strategies to support them while awaiting professional help.

What can you do to support?

Remove the Trigger – If you can identify a specific problem causing anxiety such as bullying, fear of certain foods, sudden changes, bright light, worry about certain types of social situation then you may be able to remove this and immediately make a difference for your child. If you cannot remove

triggers, it is still crucial to be aware of these so that you can pre-empt, prepare and reduce the effects.

Build in Recovery – Think about those situations which trigger anxiety for your child or young person and build in recovery periods, for example, after the school day, or social situations or busy environments. All of these will run down their batteries and recharging those batteries might require alone time, no demands, sensory strategies, or doing an activity which they enjoy. See our newsletter on [The After-School Effect](#). Think about, gradually and with support, introducing new strategies for an older child or young person such as exercise, yoga, meditation and mindfulness. There is lots of information online about Writing for Wellbeing. Here is a link to an ActionforChildren guide for young people called [Can't Talk, Write](#).

Avoid Uncertainty – Give your child or young person all the information they need to feel safe about a change or new situation. Perhaps with *all* the information they *can* do it. Support their need for more certainty with routine, visual timetables, social stories and comic strip conversations. See our newsletter on [Social Stories](#). See our newsletter on [Change and Routine](#).



Seek Adjustments - Be an advocate for your child. They are entitled to some reasonable adjustments to help them access the school environment and their learning. (More about this later)

Build New Skills – giving your child some skills to help them through their day can improve confidence and reduce anxiety. This might mean helping them to understand the rules of conversation, giving them some scripts to use when meeting new people or equipping them with some problem-solving strategies for common every day difficulties such as what to do if they miss the school bus or need to ask the teacher for help with a task. See our newsletter on [Skill-Building](#).

Seek Specialist Support – If you have tried many of the strategies above and are still worried about your child or young person's levels of anxiety, do discuss this with your GP who may be able to recommend or refer to another specialist service. Do not accept statements such as 'It is just their autism'. Be clear that you have been living with their autism all their life and have been trying all the usual strategies to help them and this time those strategies are not enough. This is something different. Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and Mindfulness techniques among other things can be useful and remember that just as in education, you can ask for adjustments from a health professional in order to help your child or young person to access medical appointments or treatments.

Further Reading:

As usual, The National Autistic Society is a leading source of information. Have a look at their [Anxiety](#) guidance.

Just One Norfolk has recently been expanded to include a service called [FYI](#) which offers trusted advice and support to 11 to 24 year-olds.

[Suspected ASC and Anxiety](#) (This is an older resource and we are aware that the language around autism has moved on but still a useful resource which is a collaboration between Norfolk mental health services)

[Suspected ASC and Low Mood](#) (Ditto)

[Mental Health and Wellbeing A-Z](#) from The Children's Society

[YoungMinds | Mental Health Charity For Children And Young People | YoungMinds](#)

Kooth- <https://www.kooth.com>

MIND <https://www.mind.org.uk> see pages on autism/ADHD

[Ways of coping with anxiety | Ambitious about Autism](#)

[Wellbeing for children \(6 -12 years\) | Child anxiety symptoms | PTSD in Children | RISE](#)

[What is anxiety? | Barnardo's](#)

[Reducing anxiety in autistic children and young people](#)

[How to help your autistic child with day-to-day life - NHS](#)

[Help your autistic child with anxiety or anxious feelings](#)

Anxiety, Schools and Learning



One of the pieces of advice above was 'remove the trigger'. When school appears to be the trigger, that advice may be problematic. Legally, your child should be in school. And as a parent you do, of course, want your child in school, learning and achieving and increasing their opportunities in life. We speak to so many parents and carers however who are battling daily to meet the expectations of the education system while trying to support a child or young person who is displaying clear physical and psychological symptoms of anxiety about entering the school environment. We have covered school anxiety at length in previous newsletters and there are lots of links below for further reading. We just wanted to repeat some key points:

- Schools must use their 'best endeavours' to overcome barriers to learning and make 'reasonable adjustments' to help your child access the school environment and the curriculum. See our newsletter on [Schools, Masking and Adjustments](#).
- These endeavours should be 'needs-led and not diagnosis-led'. In other words your child does not need a label for their difficulties.
- Barriers to learning may be academic but may also be linked to social, emotional or mental health difficulties (SEMH)
- Schools should introduce adjustments, review their effectiveness and then try something different if appropriate. This is called the Graduated Approach.
- Schools are able to access outside agencies for advice when things are still not working well. In Norfolk, for example, there are Specialist Autism and SEMH teams within Educational Psychology who can observe and offer advice, the new Schools and Community teams were set up to support with difficulties before they reach crisis point, School2School is a service which allows mainstream schools to access the resources and expertise of the specialist educational settings and schools can access the county's Inclusion Team for advice also.
- You can request a reduced timetable if you think that a period of reduced attendance would be helpful. This has to be approved by your County Council Education Department and is always to be seen as a stepping stone to increased attendance.
- When all of the above has been tried and there is some medical evidence of significant anxiety, the school may be able to apply to NCC's [Medical Needs Service](#) for an alternative educational provision for your child or young person which is usually an online learning platform. See also Suffolk SENDIASS advice about [Medical Needs](#)
- Every county must provide an independent information, advice and support service for parents and carers called SENDIASS. They can help you with any issues around support for your child in school, attendance or difficulties with EHCPs. You can arrange a telephone appointment to speak to one of their trained advisors. More on SENDIASS later in the newsletter.

The National Autistic Society has on its website an article by autism specialist and autistic adult **Sarah Hendrickx**.

Sarah thinks specifically about school anxiety and suggests a whole different approach to addressing this for children with autism. Rather than focusing on anxiety as a separate entity she suggests a much more holistic approach acknowledging anxiety as arising from the child's autism. Schools need to focus on getting to know each child, understanding what causes them anxiety and then tailor their

approach to meet needs. This means understanding what the world looks like for that child, staying one step ahead of the problems, anticipating reactions and offering solutions.

“For example, if the child struggles with new people, warn them in advance, show photos of the new person, give them some details about the new person which they might find interesting – make the person less ‘new’, less unknown and more predictable. If the child finds verbal communication stressful, give them other means to get their thoughts across, music, drawing, Lego, computer graphics. It’s all common sense really.”

“The problem is not the child; it’s the illogical, flexible, changeable world they are forced to live in.

Supporting the autism will lead naturally to reduction in the crippling and miserable anxiety that many of our autistic children and young people face simply at the thought of going to school. These are often naturally curious children who love knowledge and want to learn. We just need to make sure that school is an environment which allows them enough capacity to be able to do so.”

Click here for the full article [Autism specialist and autistic adult Sarah Hendrickx](#)

Further reading/viewing:

In the webinar [Anxiety, Autism: Five Prime Suspects](#), Christopher Lynch, Ph.D., explores five ways that anxiety and autism may interact.

Read our newsletter on [School Anxiety](#)

For Norfolk - SEMH (Social, Emotional & Mental Health) - Educational Psychology [SEMH Parent Resources \(padlet.com\)](#)

Autism Specialist Team - Educational Psychology EPSS Padlet at https://padlet.com/juliestewart1/rfj56_atbsahtmifi3g

NAS Guide [What Can I do if My Child Won't Go to School](#)

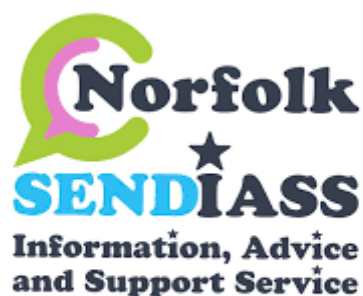
Just One Norfolk [School Life](#) for school anxiety tips and for more information about how to contact the Healthy Child Service team by calling Just One Number 0300 300 0123 or texting Parentline on 07520 631590.

Suffolk County Council Is [Your Child Worried About Going to School](#)

[School Anxiety](#) Brochure - Suffolk

[Not Fine in School - Young People, Information](#)

[Mental Health | Special Educational Needs - Witherslack Group](#)



SENDIASS is an independent parent support service designed to give parents information and support around education issues. Norfolk SENDIASS issues a monthly newsletter called SENDIASS SPOTLITE which you can subscribe to. [Click here for their October issue](#). This is an excerpt about upcoming parent support meetings around the county.

Library drop-ins have certainly picked up the pace recently with us giving next steps advice to parents who just pop into their local library, including the libraries in Attleborough, Dereham, Thetford, Watton, Poringland, Fakenham, Downham Market, Gorleston and Martham. It's a great chance for anyone to come and ask us a question. Check out your local library to see if we are coming your way. Library drop in sessions coming up in November are;

Tuesday 5th 9.30am – 11am, Martham

Friday 8th and 29th 1-2.30pm, Holt and 3-5pm Wells

Thursday 14th 1-3pm, Fakenham

Monday 18th 3.30pm – 5.30pm, North Walsham

Tuesday 19th 9am-1pm, Hellesdon

Thursday 21st 11.30am-4pm, Caister

Monday 25th 3.30-5pm, Watton

Wednesday 27th 9.30am – 12pm, Gorleston

[Suffolk SENDiass](#) has a useful guide for parents around school anxiety.

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 those with traits of 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.

OUR ATTLEBOROUGH, GREAT YARMOUTH AND ZOOM PLAN BEE COURSES DURING NOVEMBER ARE ALL NOW FULL. WE WILL BE PLANNING AND ADVERTISING OUR SPRING 2025 PROGRAMME FOR PLAN BEE IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS.

Places still available in:

SWAFFHAM – Wednesdays **27 Nov, 4th and 11th December** Dickens Room, Community Centre, Campingland, SWAFFHAM, PE37 7RD 10am to 12noon To book 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 ALL COURSES TO THE END OF THE YEAR ARE NOW FULL. WE HAVE FURTHER COURSES PLANNED FOR 2025 - JANUARY IN COSTESSEY, FEBRUARY IN THETFORD AND MARCH IN KING'S LYNN, SEE BELOW. PLEASE CONTACT US IF YOU WANT MORE INFORMATION ON 01603 972589 OR EMAIL Sue.Killick@family-action.org.uk.

Click to move through the flyers below and click on the arrows bottom right to enlarge.

Puffins ASD 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 ASD**.

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

Week 1 – Introducing ASD 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 (NCC EP & Specialist Support – Autism Support Team)

NB: Session 1 only in each course is just a little longer, 9:30am to 1:00pm

Norwich 2025

Thursdays 9th, 16th, 23rd & 30th January
9:30am to 12:30pm (apart from 1st session – see above)

Queen's Hills Community Centre,
Poethlyn Drive, Queens Hills, NR8 5BP

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

Family Action on 01603 972589 or email sue.killick@family-action.org.uk

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Week 4 – Autism in Education (NCC EP & Specialist Support – Autism Support Team)

NB: Session 1 only in each course is just a little longer, 9:30am to 1:00pm

Thetford 2025

Mondays 3rd, 10th 24th & 27th February
9:30am to 12:30pm (apart from 1st session – see above)

Charles Burrell Centre, Staniforth Road, Thetford IP24 3LH

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

Family Action on 01603 972589 or email sue.killick@family-action.org.uk

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NB: Session 1 only in each course is just a little longer, 9:30am to 1:00pm

Kings Lynn 2025

Mondays 3rd, 10th, 17th & 24th March

9:30am to 12:30pm (apart from 1st session – see above)

**St Faiths Community Hub, Church Drive, Kings Lynn
PE30 4DZ**

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

Family Action on 01603 972589 or email sue.killick@family-action.org.uk

Have a look at what else is on offer



Norfolk and Suffolk

NHS Foundation Trust

Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust (NSFT) provides a lot of workshops for parents, including Supporting your Child with Anxiety.

'Our Psychology in Schools Team run a program of parent workshops throughout the year to provide up to date advice and guidance on how parents and carers can support the young people in their life. All the workshops are recorded for you to watch at any time.'

Check out the full list of workshops to access. <https://www.nsfh.nhs.uk/parent-workshops/>



Parents with children having difficulties with food and eating may want to click on the link below to listen to this informative discussion.

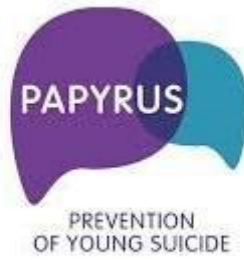
[The Food Programme - Eating on the Spectrum - BBC Sounds](#)



Our Start for Life and family hubs approach supports parents and carers of children and young people from conception until they are 19-years-old. We can support families with young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, until they are 25-years-old. You can get support:

- Online
- In your community, in places you might already visit
- By visiting [a local family hub site](#) and speaking in person to someone who can help
- From another experienced parent or carer

We share an ambition that Norfolk is a place where all children and young people can [flourish](#). To find out more, visit the [Family Hub Page](#) on the Norfolk County Council website.



If you are worried about a young person self-harming, Papyrus have a very comprehensive [Parent Guide](#) booklet.

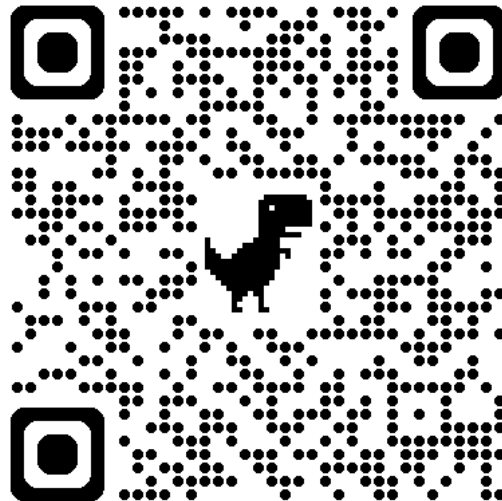
[Family Action Website](#)



Family Action is a national charity, supporting families up and down the country and has recently updated and relaunched its [website](#).

In addition to being able to search for Family Action services and projects in your locality, you can also now access lots of information and resources on a wide range of topics affecting families today. Have a look for example at a number of [self-help resources](#) around the return to school and preparing your child for the school day, linking nicely in with the topic of our September newsletter.

See also the QR code below which will take you to the home page.



Family Action also serves families in West Suffolk



For more information about what the West Suffolk team can offer, and to read their November newsletter with top tips for enjoying the festive season, just click on the the link below.

Embed://<iframe width="760px" height="500px"
src="https://sway.cloud.microsoft/s/d6V1JWhGrxABsbhj/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.



Family Line



0808 802 6666



07537 404 282



familyline@family-action.org.uk



Online Chat



Family Line

 0808 802 6666

 07537 404 282

 familyline@family-action.org.uk

 Online Chat

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.