



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

Welcome to our March newsletter.

If your child becomes distressed or angry or just says NO when asked to do everyday things; getting dressed, going to school, brushing their teeth, or even things they enjoy doing.....you are not alone. Many neurodivergent children and young people experience something called “demand anxiety”. This is a response which, to people looking in, can seem defiant or oppositional or just lazy. However, once you understand the underlying causes of demand anxiety, it is easier to be more empathetic. Demand anxiety is usually linked to autism although a wide range of neurodivergent children and young people can be affected. An extreme version of this is PDA or Pathological Demand Avoidance although we are more often now hearing this referred to as a Pervasive Drive for Autonomy.

Read on to find out more about what demand anxiety is, what it might look like and what might be the most useful approach for you to take to support your child.

This month's newsletter includes:

- **Welcome**
- **Online Workshop for March**
- **Drop-In Groups in March**
- **Meet the NWAASS Team**
- **Difficulties with Demands**
- **Plan Bee Courses**
- **Puffins Courses**
- **Norfolk & Waveney NHS Integrated Care**
- **Family Action Website and 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.

Online Workshop in March - MASKING

No need to book - note the joining details and we will see you there. [Click to enlarge.](#)



Our Drop In Support Groups

Our drop-in groups are friendly and informal. No need to book. Come along, have a tea or coffee, meet other parents in your area. And members of our team will be there to offer advice, support and signposting. [Click to enlarge flyers.](#)



Lowestoft Drop-In Support Group March 2026

Family Action's Norfolk and Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service would like to invite you to come and join our informal drop in session.

Suffolk Sendiass will be joining us for the last 45 minutes of this session to collect feedback from parents and carers and to take comments about the service going forward.

Our sessions are designed for you to pop in at anytime, with no need to book. We will be there to welcome you, help answer any questions and support in the way you need - whether that's giving advice, sharing resources or signposting to other services.

Meet other parents and carers living with their child or young person's autism or ADHD who really 'get it' and will likely be happy to share their experiences.

No diagnosis or booking required.

01493 650220

Gorleston@family-action.org.uk

Norfolk and Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service



The Kirkley Family Hub
Kirkley Street
Lowestoft
NR33 0LU

Thursday
5th March 2026

10:00am - 11:30am



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Gorleston Drop-In Support Group - March 2026

Family Action's Norfolk and Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service would like to invite you to come and join our informal drop in session.

Becky Norris from Great Yarmouth Family Hubs will be coming along to our group, this month.

Our sessions are designed for you to pop in at anytime, with no need to book. We will be there to welcome you, help answer any questions and support in the way you need – whether that's giving advice, sharing resources or signposting to other services.

There will be other parents and carers who are living with their child or young person's autism or ADHD who really 'get it' and will likely be happy to share their experiences.

No diagnosis or booking required

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Gorleston@family-action.org.uk

Norfolk and Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service



Gorleston Library
Family Action Office
Gorleston-on-Sea
NR31 6SG



Wednesday
4th March 2026

10:00am – 11:30am



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

We meet each month, in the quiet upstairs
room in **Costa Coffee, Market Place,**
Swaffham, PE37 7AB

**Come and join us between 9:30-11am on
Wednesday 11th March 2026**

Friendly, informal, no need to book. We can
offer support, advice, signposting and a
listening ear.

Ring 01603 972589 or

**Email [NorfolkAndWaveney@family-](mailto:NorfolkAndWaveney@family-action.org.uk)
[action.org.uk](mailto:NorfolkAndWaveney@family-action.org.uk) for more information.**



Don't miss.....A new regular drop-in for families in Dereham. Come and join us and the Breckland Family Hub in Dereham Library on the first Monday of every month. See flyer below.



BRECKLAND FAMILIES



Join Our Monthly SEND Parent/Carer Café
Family Action - Norfolk and Waveney Autism /ADHD Support Service in partnership with Breckland Family Hub invite you to
 attend our **FREE drop-in sessions at**
Dereham Library NR19 1DZ
1st Monday of EVERY month, 1:30–2:30 PM.

Enjoy a cuppa, chat with other families, we will have fun activities for
 children, young people—and you!
 with guest services like:
 ASD Helping Hands
 KIDS - Parent carer support
 SENDIASS
 Early Childhood and Family Service
 ...and many more!

Keep an eye on our Facebook group (QR code below) for who is in each month
Pop in when you can - no need to book!
 For more details - email us at communityfocusbreckland@norfolk.gov.uk

*Please note: Children remain the responsibility of their parent/carer and must be supervised at all times.
 *Any date changes will be shared on Facebook





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 Norfolk County Council

SEND Café



Join Danii from SEN Socials and Early Help Community Worker Georgie, and Norfolk and Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service each month for a cuppa and an informal chat about all things SEND parenting. No diagnosis needed!

Children welcome, and there will be an activity each session provided by Voices Through Art!

Please contact sensocialsdownham@gmail.com for further information or to request a social story and venue walk through.



12th January
 9th February
 9th March
 13th April
 11th May
 8th June
 13th July
 10:30AM-12:30PM

📍 Family Hub, St Augustines
 Healthy Living Centre
 Columbia Way, King's Lynn PE30 2LB









Swan Youth Project Drop-In Group March 2026

**Come and join Family Action at
Swan Youth Project's Drop-In Group.**

Whether you are a parent, carer or grandparent, all are welcome to come along to this friendly and welcoming group for tea/coffee/biscuits. With the opportunity to chat to other parents and our Family Support Workers, who are on hand to offer advice and support on anything relating to neurodivergence.

Swan Youth Project
Paradise Road
Downham Market
Norfolk
PE38 9JE

Tuesday
24th March 2026

Please note a different
time for this session only:

09.00 to 10.30am*

(*We will be there at this time. The
group will continue afterwards.)

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Meet the Family Action NWAASS Team

Meet Jeanette



Hello. I am Jeanette French and I am the administrator for Family Action's Norfolk & Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service. I am based in our Gorleston office and have been with the team for just over two years.

Much of my role is reading and replying to the many emails that come through to our Norfolk and Waveney inbox as well as answering phone calls. I also often send out the monthly newsletter and other information, so you may recognise my name. I book places for parents on our Plan Bee courses and keep up with any requests from the wider team.

I am a parent of a neurodivergent child myself, so I understand and empathise with many of the issues and challenges that other parents and carers tell us about. I love working with the team and hope that we can continue to help to make a difference to many families.

Difficulties with Demands



What is demand anxiety?

Demand anxiety is a strong emotional response to demands and expectations whether perceived or actual. Demands can come in many forms. They can be obvious, such as “put your coat on” or “time for bed”. But they can be much more subtle leading to real confusion about what the problem actually is. Children with demand anxiety may hear the demands within praise, react to time-pressure, experience stress around 'expected' routines or even within their own body's 'demand' for something like food, drink or sleep or having to wake up.

For children with demand anxiety, demands of any form can trigger a fight, flight, freeze or fawn response. This means that their nervous systems respond as if the demand is a threat, even if, to you, it seems reasonable. It is important to know that demand anxiety, and the behaviours associated with it, is not about being defiant or difficult, but a result of experiencing high levels of distress.

What can demand anxiety look like?

Demand anxiety does not look the same for everyone. Some will show their anxiety loudly, whereas others may do this more quietly. Things you could see include;

Meltdowns or shutdowns when faced with a demand/request.

Avoidance, delay, bargaining or distraction tactics.

Automatically saying “no”, even if you think it’s something they might enjoy.

Masking at school and then releasing that distress at home.



Why do demands trigger such a response?

Demands can often build quickly leading to feelings of overwhelm, uncertainty, loss of control and anxiety. It may also be that your child or young person is seeing many more demands than you are within a situation. One single request from you like “get your shoes on please” could involve a number of different thoughts and feelings:

“Which shoes do I need to wear and where are they? Mum is going to be annoyed because I didn’t put them on the shoe rack and now I don’t know where they are. Do I have to wear the uncomfortable ones which make my feet feel itchy? I’m going to have to put up with that the whole time we are out. Where are we going? Will I have to keep my shoes on for the entire time? I wanted to play Roblox later with my friend, will we be back in time to do that? Last time I couldn’t tie my laces and my sister laughed at me.”

You may find that rather than facing all of that, your child may just say “no”.



How can you help?

Reduce the number of demands. This doesn’t mean no boundaries at all, it means reducing demands in an intentional way. Think of the things which are most important to you and focus on those. Can other demands wait? Are they optional? Choose your battles.

And think how you can make demands sound less like demands by using humour or competition or asking a child to help you do something because you have forgotten how to. Anything which disguises a demand can be beneficial.

Offer “shared control” wherever possible. Giving choice to your child or young person will help them to feel more in control and therefore lessen that anxiety. An example of this could be “Do you want to have a bath or shower tonight?”. You still have overall say in the fact that some sort of washing is going to happen tonight, but you are allowing an element of control and input over the finer details.

Use “declarative language”. This means slightly changing the way you word things, to make them statements rather than instructions. “I wonder what you would like for dinner today” or “your coat is on the hook”.

The PDA Society recommends the “PANDA Approach”, here is a link: [PANDA as a way in - PDA Society](#)

Children and young people with demand anxiety often require a slightly different parenting approach. It can be difficult to implement changes. As we know, often our children are hard-wired to resist change and this may mean that any new approaches you may want to adopt may be met with resistance initially. The goal is not to eliminate anxiety overnight. It is to build safety, trust and flexibility, one small step at a time and this in turn may make demands just a little easier for your child to deal with.

If this is a topic you would like to know more about, you will be pleased to hear that we will be running an online workshop on Demand Anxiety and Taking a Low Demand Approach in April. Do come and join us. Details on the flyer below.



The Low Demand Approach Workshop

Join us for this **free online session**, which aims to help families to reduce the demands placed on the child and provide an environment that helps to minimise stress and anxiety.



Tuesday 21st April 2026
10:00am – 11:30am



No need to book.

Just join us on the day via Zoom using the following details:

Meeting ID: 966 4447 9930

Passcode: 400275

For more information you can contact us Monday to Friday 9-5pm on:



01603 972589



NorfolkandWaveney@family-action.org.uk



Family Action Norfolk & Waveney
Autism/ADHD Support Service.

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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.

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:

Our Brundall course in March is now fully booked.

See flyers below for Plan Bee courses in March and April still available to book. Click to enlarge.



Norfolk and Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service

SATURDAY CONDENSED Plan Bee - Online March 2026

Understanding and supporting your neurodivergent child or young person's needs.

A free online session for parents & carers

To meet demand from parents/carers who work or who are otherwise unable to join us for our usual face to face, three week course. We will be delivering a Saturday Plan Bee on ZOOM in ONE session.

We hope this will be more suitable for working parents or for those with preschool children who find it difficult to attend a full length course during the week.

The aim of this course is to help parents and carers:

- Understand why their child or young person might become overwhelmed.
- Reflect on what might trigger certain distressed behaviours and how to implement pro-active and re-active strategies.
- Develop a support plan which they can share with other family members and schools to ensure a consistent approach.
- All behaviour is a form of communication. Our course supports parents to understand their child's individual needs and how to best support them.

SATURDAY
21st March 2026
9:30am to 12:30pm

Online - ZOOM

Joining details will be provided after booking

For more information and to book your place contact us Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

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Norfolk and Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service

Plan Bee Course Attleborough April 2026

Understanding and supporting your neurodivergent child or young person's needs.

A FREE course for parents & carers

Plan Bee is a 3 week course (2 hours per week) written by two Clinical Psychologists working in Norfolk Community Health and Care. We have been commissioned by Norfolk & Waveney NHS Integrated Care Board to deliver this course for parents and carers of children who have suspected or diagnosed neurodevelopmental conditions.

All behaviour is a form of communication. Our course supports parents to understand their child's individual needs and how to best support them.

The aim of this course is to help parents and carers:

- Understand why their child or young person might become overwhelmed.
- Reflect on what might trigger certain distressed behaviours and how to implement pro-active and re-active strategies.
- Develop a support plan which they can share with other family members and schools to ensure a consistent approach.
- Meet with other parents/carers for peer support.

**Tuesday 14th 21st & 28th
April 2026**

10am - 12noon

**Attleborough Primary
School**
Besthorpe Road
Attleborough
Norfolk
NR17 2NA

Please contact us if you require support or assistance of any kind, to help you to access this course.

For more information contact us Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

01603 972589

norfolkandwaveney@family-action.org.uk

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



Family Action has now been re-commissioned by Norfolk Community Health and Care to continue to run the comprehensive, free, four-week Puffins Autism Programme for Parents/Carers in *West and Central Norfolk* until end of March 2027.

This is a strictly post-diagnosis autism course and includes sessions delivered by Family Action, by Speech & Language and Occupational Therapists from NCH&C clinical teams and by Autism Specialists from within NCC's Educational Psychology & Specialist Services. Do not miss your chance, if you have a child or young person with a formal diagnosis of autism, to attend this well regarded programme.



THE PUFFINS COURSE IS VERY POPULAR and FULL in MARCH and APRIL.

But we will be coming to a venue near you.....

In Thetford in May, in Downham Market in June and in Norwich in July.

KEEP AN EYE ON THE NEWSLETTER FOR FURTHER ADVERTISING OF COURSES OR CONTACT Sue.killick@family-action.org.uk FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT BOOKING A PLACE.

Norfolk and Waveney NHS Integrated Care Board

Family Action's Norfolk and Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service is commissioned by the Norfolk and Waveney NHS Integrated Care Board to provide support and advice, learning, resources and signposting to parents/carers of children or young people either awaiting a neurodevelopmental assessment or newly diagnosed.

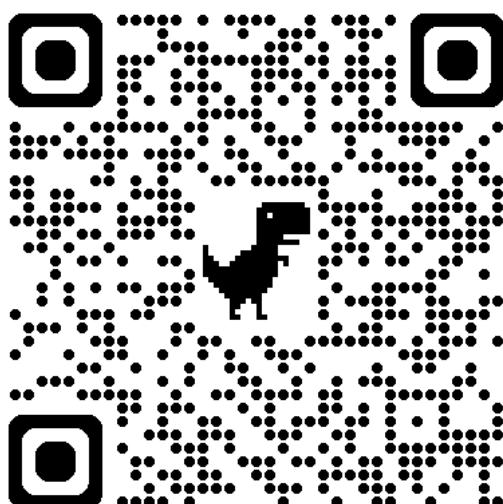




Family Action Website



Family Action is a national charity, supporting families up and down the country and has recently updated and relaunched its [website](https://www.familyaction.org.uk/).



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.

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

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



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.

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