



Norfolk & Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service September 2024 Newsletter

As usual, the summer holiday has come to an end very quickly. Some children will be so grateful to get back to their school routines, others will be feeling a little uncomfortable about the transition period and for some there will be real anxiety and resistance around returning to the school environment. The six week holiday is long enough to allow doubts and fears to start bubbling up.

The newsletter this month will focus on how you can help with **Returning to School**.

And our team is returning to normal service also, with our face to face courses, online information sessions and drop in support groups around the county all running again in September. Read on for more details.



This month's newsletter includes:

- **New and Improved - Family Action Website**
- **Some Dates for your Diary**
- **Returning to School**
- **How you can Support**
- **How Schools can Support**
- **Our Upcoming Courses**
- **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.

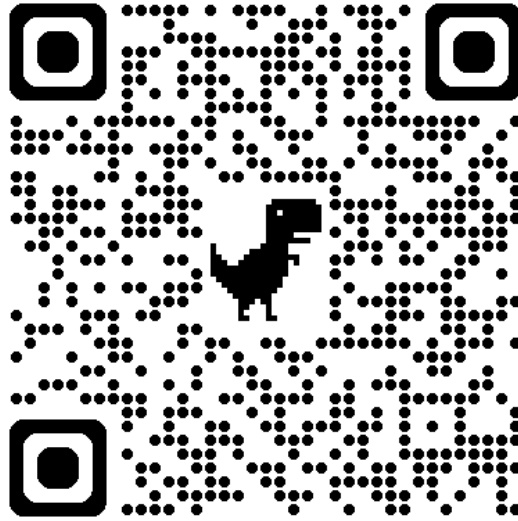
Family Action Website



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.



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**

September Information Session for Parents/Carers

A flyer for a session titled "Encouraging Self-Care". The background is orange. The text is white and yellow. There is a yellow dashed line on the left side. A yellow square is at the bottom center. A yellow circle is at the top right. The "family action" logo is on the right side, consisting of a white circle with a green arrow pointing right and the words "family action" in white text on a green background.

Encouraging Self-Care

Thursday 26th September 12 to 1pm

No need to book for this friendly and informal session. We will be discussing why self-care such as showering, toothbrushing and hairwashing can be so difficult for your child or young person, and how you can support them.

Meeting ID: 987 7621 0649
Passcode: 500508

SEE YOU THERE.

family action

Making Sense of SEND



Norfolk County Council and The Local Offer
are holding their next

MAKING SENSE OF SEND event in THETFORD

on Thursday 19 September 2024 10am to 12noon

Family Action's Norfolk & Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service will be attending, so come and meet our team and many other services which provide support and advice to families of children with SEND.



We would love you to join us at
The Charles Burrell Centre,
Staniforth Rd, Thetford, IP24 3LH

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.

Click on the cards below to see ALL our drop-ins in SEPTEMBER. 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 10th SEPTEMBER 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.



Drop-In and Meet Us ONLINE in September



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 18TH SEPT
10 TO 11AM

JOINING DETAILS
Meeting ID: 995 6554 5152
Passcode: 696333

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 4TH SEPTEMBER 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 would like to meet you in.....
SWAFFHAM

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

Meet us Wednesday 11TH SEPTEMBER
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.



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 5th SEPTEMBER 2024 from 10:00am to 11:30am
NO NEED TO BOOK

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



Returning to School



If your child or young person has some kind of neurodivergence and is one of those who has begun to worry about going back to school, there could be a number of factors in play.

Transitions can be difficult for some children, and we mean even the smallest transitions like coming off your computer game when it is time for dinner. So, a big change like returning to school after a long holiday will definitely seem quite daunting. We know that neurodivergence can mean some differences in executive functioning which may make changing flexibly to a new situation more difficult. Our executive functioning, or the brain's management system, is responsible for reasoning, planning ahead, problem-solving, sequencing and managing change, so lots of the things we probably need to be working well in order to think about and prepare for a new school year.

This difference in executive function can also result in quite fixed and rigid thinking. Once your child has decided that the new school year is not going to be enjoyable, it can be difficult, whatever you say or do, to change their opinion. And when *you* are an overthinker, it can lead to the misunderstanding that others are putting as much thought into their own words and actions. You may read too much into the fact that friends turn up late or change plans at the last moment. If you think very literally 'see you later' may mean something different to you than to your friend. Difficulties with jokes or off the cuff remarks can cause worries about whether friends are laughing with you or at you.

These kinds of differences with social communication might mean you have had to work very hard at social interactions and building friendships. The long summer holiday may lead to nagging self-doubts about whether your friends are still your friends, will they have forgotten me, will I have to start all over again? And there is a tendency for some people with autistic traits to catastrophise, to move very quickly from "Will my friends have forgotten me?" to "All my friends WILL have forgotten me!"

If your child has a lot of sensory sensitivities, the school environment will have been difficult for them. The time at home, away from the noise, the busyness of the classrooms, the smells of the dinner hall and the discomfort of the uniform will be time they are reluctant to give up.

If your child has a strong need for movement, they will not be relishing returning to an environment where there is still a lot of emphasis on sitting still and not fidgeting.



If you have a demand avoidant profile, the school environment, with so many rules and regulations about moving when a bell rings, wearing a set uniform, about how you speak to teachers, when you must hand in homework and perhaps even when you can go to the toilet, will of course provide plenty of triggers for difficult feelings.

And so, for lots of reasons the previous school year could have been very difficult for your child or young person, maybe much more difficult than you knew. We know for example that children with ADHD receive many times more negative comments during the school day than their neurotypical peers. This leads to a downward spiral of low self-esteem and low resilience. "What is the point? I was rubbish last year and I will be rubbish this year."

These are only a handful of the reasons your child may appear reluctant about the return to school. Your understanding that school can be a difficult environment for your child or young person and that this is not just because they are being difficult but because they have real needs and difficulties, will mean a lot to them. But we do want children in school and learning as much as possible so how can you support your child at the start of the new school year?

How Can You Support?



- When school is difficult, when your child is anxious, a key way you can help them is to do everything you can to keep the stress level in their buckets low. Think of all the tried and tested methods you use to make holes in the bucket such as fewer demands, fewer words, more time and space, talking about special interests, processing time, routine and repetition, consistency of approach and language from partners, favourite foods in lunch boxes, encouraging good sleep and a familiar bedtime routine, proprioceptive exercise, weighted blankets, reducing sensory input you know they find difficult and giving them more of the sensory input which you know they like. By emptying the bucket you may leave room in there for some of the difficulties of the school day to be contained in the bucket without overflowing into distressed behaviours. Here is a link to a previous newsletter all about [The Bucket Model](#)
- And remember also that the period immediately after school will be tricky to negotiate. Your child will have been containing lots of difficult feelings during the school day and that bucket is full and probably overflowing. Keep demands low, don't use too many words or ask too many questions, offer snacks or drinks, give them space and time to de-escalate. You may want to read our newsletter on [The After-School Effect](#)
- If you are going to approach school about what support they are going to give your child or young person, you will need to try to gather useful information from your child about what the issues are and the types of adjustments which would make school life better. This may not be easy for a child or young person with communication differences. Have a look at our [School Anxiety](#) newsletter which gives tips about encouraging these types of conversations.
- Be careful about the messages you are giving out. Try to sound confident and excited about the new school year even if you have doubts about how they will cope. They will pick up quickly on your worries or negativity and will definitely overhear if you are talking to partners or friends about concerns. Talk about the subjects they are good at, the teachers they like, the friends they haven't seen for a while and the clubs and activities which will now restart.
- And when your child is worrying about the transitions and changes associated with a new school year, make sure you focus their attention back on all the things which are staying the same. You are moving into a new class with a new teacher, but your friends are moving with you, you will

still eat lunch in the same room and play in the same playground. They may need reminding of all of these things.

- Although trying to focus on the positives, it is important also to be empathetic. You can show that you understand their fears and worries and clearly acknowledge how real and difficult these are. Offer to work with them on finding solutions to some of their concerns and reinforce that avoiding problems means they are less likely to go away.
- Neurodivergence can come with difficulties but also strengths. Talk to your child about what you consider to be his or her 'superpowers'. Talk about the personality traits or interests or knowledge they have which you find endearing or interesting and which will make them interesting to others. Boost as much as possible their self esteem. You can only get more confident about embarking on and building friendships if you believe you have something to offer.
- Help them to find others with similar interests. Encourage them to get involved in groups and activities where they will meet like-minded people. Help them to find their 'tribe' and a place they feel they belong. For teens this might mean connecting with others on social media. Check in regularly to make sure they are safe.
- Give them practical help with social skills if they need this, including giving them some opening lines they can use when meeting new people and open ended questions for keeping conversation going. They may want to keep a list on their phones to refer to during the day. Speak to them about the two way nature of a conversation and that when someone says something to them, they need to reply with a statement or question which is relevant. Conversation and interaction have rules and although it may never come naturally to your child they can probably learn to get much better at it by learning and following some rules.
- Set aside some time when they can talk to you about situations or conversations they have had during the school day and which they feel could have gone better so that you can unpick the problems together. Don't suggest this the moment they walk through the door after a difficult day as they will probably need some time and some holes in the bucket before they can face it. Even kindly questions about their day can feel like just one demand too many after a day at school. Comic strip conversations can be a useful tool. Here is a link to a previous newsletter on [Social Stories and Comic Strip Conversations](#)
- If planning and organising is a problem, give your child or young person practical support. Look at their timetables, give reminders about having their PE kit on the correct days or have a home timetable with homework deadlines or reminders about taking ingredients for a cookery lesson. They might not cooperate very well with you regarding this as they may be hardwired to have no attention span for the small details of life which they find boring. But they will appreciate not being in trouble all the time for small infractions at school which will leave them feeling low and dejected. For older children, technology like phone alerts or Alexa style virtual assistants can be useful, with the added bonus that it is then Alexa who is 'nagging' and not you.
- The aim with all of the above is to try to stop anxiety about school really taking hold and giving rise to linked physical symptoms also. Despite your best efforts some children can become so

anxious about school that it becomes more about not being able to go to school rather than not wanting to go to school.

How Can School Support?



At the earliest opportunity, remind the school that your child or young person has additional needs and will need enhanced support with transition to the new class, new school, new school year.

Ask that they review the adjustments they already have in place to support your child or young person both with making academic progress in the classroom and also with any difficulties they have with communication or with social, emotional or mental health. Is there more they could be doing?

Children with special educational needs and disabilities are likely to need some 'reasonable adjustments' in order to access the curriculum and thrive at school. Adjustments are not about favouring your child but about ensuring a level playing field, about making sure your child is not put at a disadvantage in school because of their SEND. Your child does NOT need to have a diagnosis to access these adjustments, but just an identified barrier to learning. Adjustments a school could offer might include movement breaks, brain breaks, adapted uniform, individual work stations, small group interventions, SEMH programmes, buddy schemes, noise cancelling headsets, reduced homework, additional adult support, use of visuals, quiet space, sensory circuits, fidget toys, pre-teaching or a referral to an external agency such as Speech and Language, Access Through Technology, School2School or Educational Psychology.



Have a look at the PEaSS document (Provision Expected at School Support) for much more information about the kinds of adjustments a mainstream school should have access to. This document organises support according to five main areas of need: communication (speech and language), Communication (social interaction), cognition and learning, social, emotional and mental health and physical or sensory needs. [SEN Support Guidance PEaSS \(Provision Expected at SEN Support\) \(PDF\) \[1MB\]](#)

When many things have been tried and your child or young person is still finding it difficult to access their schooling, you can ask the school about the possibility of a reduced timetable. Reduced timetables are temporary in nature, they must be reviewed after six weeks although they can be extended, and the aim is always to be increasing the time spent in school. A reduced timetable must always be agreed with parents and not imposed on them. They were created to help children having real difficulty with school and not for schools having difficulties with particular children. As a temporary support for a child with significant school anxiety or as a stepping stone back to school after a period of exclusion, they can be a useful tool.

Occasionally anxiety about school can be so severe that even a reduced timetable is not possible. It is important to keep your GP involved when this is the case as medical evidence of significant anxiety may be required further down the line if you have to try to arrange some kind of home learning platform. Schools can make a referral to the Medical Needs Service. Read more for [Norfolk](#).

Councils must provide an independent advice service for parents and carers to support with queries around education. These SENDIASS services, see links below, provide excellent support and guidance to parents and even legal advice in complex cases. You can arrange a telephone appointment with one of their specialist support workers to talk through your concerns.

Useful Links:

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

Autism Specialist Team - Educational Psychology EPSS Padlet at <https://padlet.com/juliestewart1/rfj56atbsahmifi3g>

[NCC What we expect from schools](#)

Suffolk SENDIASS advice about [Medical Needs](#)

[Suffolk Local Offer](#) - Support in Mainstream Schools

[Norfolk SENDIASS](#) general support around school

[Norfolk Local Offer](#) for SEND

[Autism Education Trust](#) - has a large range of resources for parents/carers

[National Autistic Society](#) - offers some guidance around schools and education

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.

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 *** **PLEASE NOTE THIS COURSE NOW FULL**

SEPTEMBER - LOWESTOFT Tuesdays 10th, 17th, 24th Sept. Riverside Family Hub, Canning Road, Lowestoft, NR33 0TQ from 10am to 12noon. To book call 01493 650220 or email gorleston@family-action.org.uk *** **COURSE NOW FULL**

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

OCTOBER - GORLESTON Thursdays 10th, 27th and 24th **OCTOBER** Gorleston Library, Lowestoft Road, Gorleston, NR31 6SG 10am to 12noon. To book call 01493 650220 or email gorleston@family-action.org.uk

ATTLEBOROUGH – Wednesdays 6th, 13th, 20th **NOVEMBER** Attleborough Primary School, Besthorpe Road, Attleborough, NR17 2NA 10am – 12noon To book 01603 972589 or email NorfolkAndWaveney@family-action.org.uk

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 OUR SEPTEMBER PUFFINS COURSE IN NEW COSTESSEY IS NOW FULL. OUR COURSES IN OCT, NOV AND DEC ALL HAVE PLACES REMAINING.

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 – (INCHC Speech and Language Therapy Team)
 - Week 3 – Understanding Sensory Processing (INCHC 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:

September 2024

Mondays *9th, 16th, 23rd & 30th Sept
9:30am – 12:30pm

Norwich - New Costessey

Breckland Hall, Breckland Rd,
New Costessey, Norwich, NR5 0RW

October 2024

Thursday *3rd 10th 17th & 24th Oct
9:30am – 12:30pm

Theford

Charles Burrell Centre, Staniforth Road,
Theford, IP24 3LH

November 2024

Monday *4th 11th 18th & 25th Nov
9:30am – 12:30pm

Kings Lynn

Community Hub, Church Dr,
King's Lynn, PE30 4DZ
(Parking at Gaywood Church Rooms)

December 2024

Thursday *28th Nov, 5th & 12th, 19th Dec:
9:30am – 12:30pm*

Delivered online

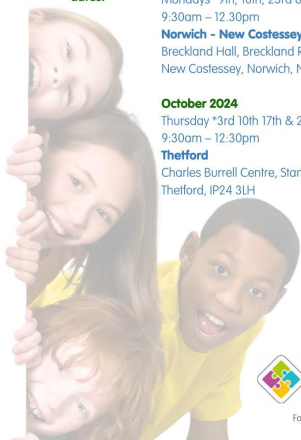
Joining details available for participants
once place is secured.

**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

✉ swaffham@family-action.org.uk



Educational Psychology & Specialist Support



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.

Family Action also serves families in West Suffolk





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



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.