



Norfolk & Waveney Autism and ADHD Support Service January 2024 Newsletter

HAPPY NEW YEAR to you and your family and welcome to the first newsletter of 2024. In this edition of the newsletter we will be thinking about communicating effectively with your children and young people. We will start with some ideas for engaging with young children who are pre-verbal or non-verbal, discuss the usefulness of visual supports and move onto some general good practice when communicating with children or young people who are neurodivergent.

Anxiety is a big issue for lots of children and young people with Autism or ADHD. And the first thing which happens when you are anxious is that you are less able, or sometimes even totally unable, to communicate effectively about what is making you anxious or what is required to make you feel better. This is in fact the case for all of us, neurodivergent or neurotypical. This is why a fire exit, as well as the words 'Fire Exit', will have a picture of a running man. It is accepted that anyone under stress will have difficulty processing more than a simple, often visual, instruction. Think about the implications of this for

a child or young person who can feel anxious about almost any detail of their daily life and you will understand why it is worth thinking more about the best ways of communicating.

If you are reading this and thinking that your child or young person has such good language that none of this applies, then think again. Having good language does not mean that you communicate and interact well. If you talk too much about your special interest, talk over people, get too close to them, find eye contact difficult, repeat what others say, don't recognise emotions, don't really get jokes or metaphors or take a long time to process what others are saying to you, then you have some communication and interaction difficulties.

This month's newsletter looks at:

- **Encouraging Language Development**
- **Visuals**
- **Everyday Good Practice**
- **Upcoming courses, workshops and support groups**
- **Family Action FamilyLine**
- **About our Service - contact details**

Just as every child is unique, every family's situation is different. We in the Norfolk and Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service speak to many families with children of differing needs. Some of the information contained in this newsletter is anecdotal and some from respected websites. We hope you find the following interesting and helpful.

How can I encourage language development?



For every child, speech comes at the very top of what is known as the Communication Pyramid. The image below is taken from the [Just One Norfolk](#) website. Follow the link for lots of useful information about encouraging speech and language in the early years.



What this shows is that for every child there are several building blocks which need to be in place before actual speech will happen and, as every child develops at their own rate and grows up in their own environment, we will see differences. And if a child has some type of neurodivergence, some of these

building blocks may take longer to slot into place. A child with autism can, for example, lack much interest in interacting with others and appear to prefer to play alone. A child with traits of ADHD may find paying attention and listening to those around them or focusing on playing games really difficult in the early years. They may need extra patience and encouragement to make progress with some of these basic skills.

We will signpost you to lots of different websites for more information at the bottom of this section of the newsletter but here is a summary of what seem to be the main suggestions for parents/carers hoping to encourage and support the development of spoken language.

- Encourage non-verbal communication – this may seem counterintuitive but it is important that the child grasps the value of being able to communicate with you. Praise them for efforts to communicate with you even though you may be wishing they would just use the word. When you say goodbye, wave your hand. When you are pleased with them clap your hands. Encourage them to do this, you want them to realise the benefits of non-verbal communication which can lead to more complex ways of communicating. And when they show you non-verbally what they want, respond promptly and enthusiastically, you want them to understand the power of communication and how beneficial it is. Over-exaggerate your facial expressions to communicate with them about when you are happy or sad or excited.
- Play is key – take every opportunity to play and talk while you are doing this. And describe the tactile elements of the toys. This play-doh is so sticky, these cakes we are baking smell so yummy they are making me hungry, I like the colour of the yellow lego best. Apparently the need to describe tactile sensory sensation can be strong. And pretend play is so beneficial. *What do you want to buy in my shop?* They can point to what they want, it is the engagement you are encouraging at this stage. *Do you want to be the shopkeeper? Can I buy milk please?*



- Copying is a form of communicating – and it mimics conversation which is also a back and forth. For children who do not seem too interested in interacting with others, try getting down at their level and copy what they are doing, make the sounds they make, mimic their actions, unless they are behaviours you do not want to encourage. You want them to grasp the concept of copying, to begin to clap when you do or smile when you do. You are also trying to convey with this Intensive Interaction that other people are interesting and worth interacting with. And

this will lead to turn-taking which is also a key skill for language development. *I can blow bubbles. Your turn now.* Don't be afraid to look silly.

- Use visuals – A young child with little or no language may actually feel anxious when you put their coat on. *Where are we going? What is happening? I am happy here.* And they may not be understanding the words you are using. You could show a picture of their coat before you put it on, then a picture of your car and then a picture of gran's house to help their understanding and feeling of safety. Simple social stories can also be helpful to teach for example road safety, or keeping your hands to yourself, or to prepare a child for a new situation like starting nursery. Toys which are bright and attractive and which say words when you press the images are likely to gain your child's attention.
- Use their special interest – if they love dolls or superheroes or fans or pylons, use this. They will be more interested in playing with you or in trying to work out what you are saying if they are interested in the topic.
- Keep talking - Don't think that because your child is not talking that you should stop talking. But do keep it simple and use fewer words. You do need to talk and interact with your child but you do not want them to feel overwhelmed and withdraw. Use key words and not all the extras. *'Josh, shoes, thank you.'*
- Leave them space to talk - Don't jump in to talk for your child, give them a little time. Encourage them to answer in their own way if they are not ready to talk. *'Show me what cereal you want to eat.'* *'Show Gran what you want to play with next.'* And we know our children so well that we often know what they want or need before they ask but resist the temptation to give them things before they have at least attempted to communicate what they want but then respond enthusiastically when they point or pull you towards the item. Remember that all successful communication encourages more communication.
- Think about the environment - Can they concentrate on all the fun interactions you are initiating? Are there too many other distractions. Remember also that they are likely to be very sensitive to sensory input. Is the TV on, is the washing machine on it's final spin, is the sun in their eyes, are they hungry or thirsty? Create a low arousal environment in which you and the toys or visuals you are using are the most interesting things.

More reading:

[Just One Norfolk](#)

[Autism Speaks](#)

[Raising Children](#) - an Australian Parenting Website

[Autism Wales](#) - a guide for early years settings

[Expressable](#)

Use Visuals

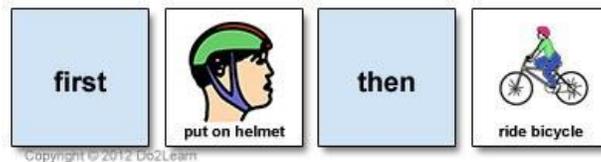


Everyone is different but it is accepted that visuals can often be the most effective way to communicate information to children, young people and to adults living with autism. An overall message can sometimes get lost in a lot of words but seem much clearer if presented visually. Visual supports can include hand signals, photographs, drawings, cartoons, toys/objects and written words. Visual aids help parents to communicate with their children, they can be shared with others who interact with your child so they are getting a consistent message, can help to explain changes of routine or new situations to a child who is feeling anxious and crucially can be used by the child or young person to help *them* to get their message across to *you*.

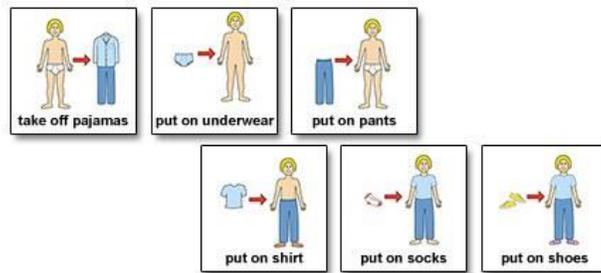
Schools routinely now use **Visual Timetables** in the classroom. These were introduced initially to aid children with autism but were quickly seen to be of benefit to every child. They can help children with attention difficulties to remind themselves what is happening next and so be more prepared and organised. Timetables can be useful at home also. Children who worry about what is happening later in the day or later in the week can go to the timetable to reassure themselves, feel more in control and less anxious. It allows them to prepare for what is happening without asking so many questions. Sticking to

the timetables is important but changes do happen. Create a visual for change, like a speech bubble with OOPS in it, or a cartoon of an exploding bomb, and then put this symbol on the timetable as soon as you learn about the change, allowing the child the chance to look at the change, ask you about it and prepare themselves by seeing this visual reminder in the run up to the change.

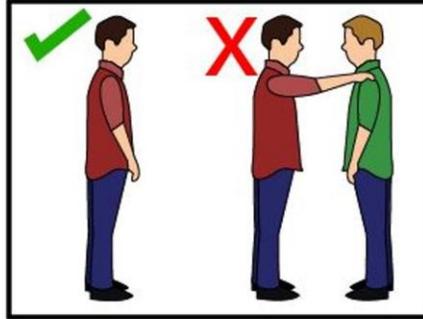
For younger children the simplest form of visual timetable is a **Now and Next or First and Then Board**. This can be a piece of card or a whiteboard with a line down the middle and drawings or pictures on either side. *First we are getting your brother from school* (photo of brother waiting at the school) *and then we are going to the play park. Now you eat lunch, Next we will walk the dog.* This helps prepare the child for the next thing happening but over time can help them to accept direction from others and realise that sometimes they have to do something they don't enjoy but will also get opportunities to do the things they want to do. When it is time to move on to the second activity you should return their attention to the board. Move the second activity into the first section and introduce your visual for what is happening after that. This would suit younger children or children without the attention span for a daily or weekly visual timetable.



Learning sequences can be difficult for some children. No matter how often you tell them the order that school clothes need to be put on in the morning, you may still often end up with pants over trousers. **Visual Sequences** can be copied and with repetition often learned more successfully. Even teens can struggle to remember what order they are meant to do things when showering. They might need a visual sequence taped to the outside of the shower cubicle which they can see through the glass or perhaps just numbers 1, 2, 3 on the shower gel, the shampoo and the conditioner to help them keep on track. The National Autistic Society website has lots of free visuals for downloading.



I keep my hands to myself. I do not hit or poke my friends.

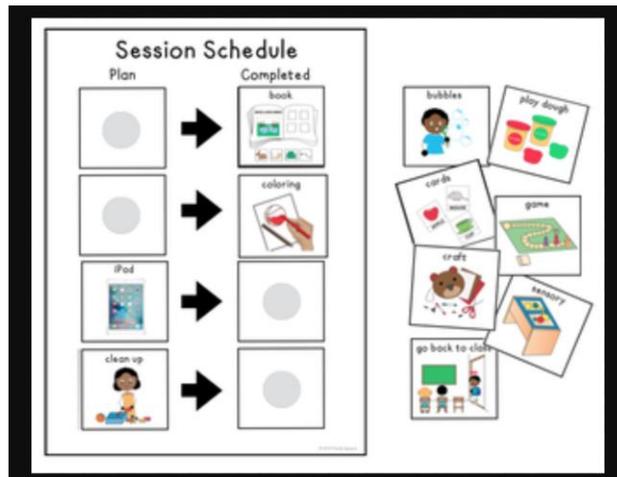


 I keep  my  hands  to  myself.

 I do not  hit  or  poke  my friends.

My Feelings From A-Z

 Angry	 Bewildered	 Confused	 Depressed
 Enthusiastic	 Frightened	 Glad	 Happy
 Irritated	 Joyful	 Kooky	 Low
 Melancholy	 Nervous	 Overjoyed	 Proud
 Queasy	 Rowdy	 Shocked	 Terrified
 Upset	 Victorious	 Worried	 (E)Xcited
 Yucky	 Zany	How do you feel today? <small>© Kathy Ryan 2013 http://www.teacherspayteachers.com/store/Kathy-Ryan</small>	



School timetable

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Mon									
Tue									
Wed									
Thu									
Fri									

MY SCHOOL TIMETABLE

	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
break					



9:00



11:00



16:00



English

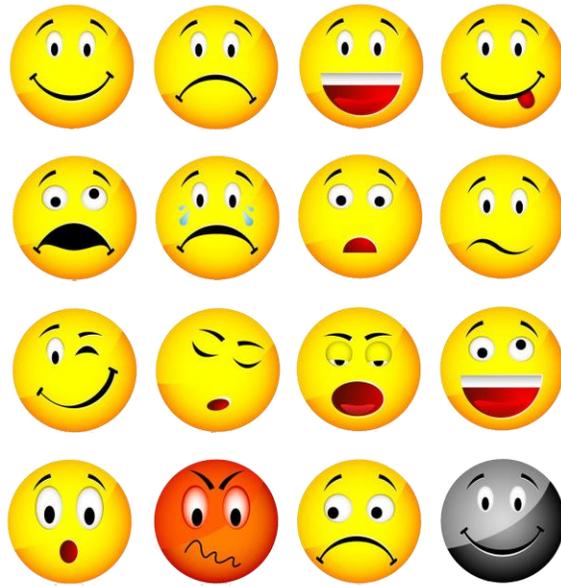


Games



Bike





Class teachers are increasingly using **hand signals** to tell children to stop working, listen, sit down and so on. Not only can children with additional needs more easily follow these signals despite the distractions of the classroom but it leads to a quieter working environment for everyone because the teacher is less likely to need to raise their voice. And at home you may find that a quiet thumbs up can be better received than overt praise. And teaching your child some simple signals to communicate to you that their anxiety is rising or that they need to leave a busy shop NOW can help you avoid a public meltdown.

Emotion cards can help children to communicate how they are feeling while learning more about reading the facial expressions of others.

Simple **visual indicators on school work** can make a big difference to children. A coloured dot on a page to show where to start writing or highlighter pen on the really important information in a worksheet can be so helpful even to older children who have working memory problems or difficulties with focus.

Red and green pens or pieces of red and green card can allow pupils to let the adults in the classroom know that they are fine (green) or that they need some time out (red) without having to verbalise the problem or put their hand up and attract attention.

Photos of your own child can make a social story much more personal and relevant for them. Photos of them being dropped off at nursery by dad, playing in nursery, being picked up from nursery by mum, eating their dinner at home and asleep in bed with their favourite toy in a simple social story to be read regularly can convey the important message that yes, you go to nursery, but you always come home to your safe space. There is no need to be fearful.

Social stories can also teach a new skill, how to cross the road, how to deal with difficult feelings, how to ask for help. And search online for animated social stories. Click here to see an animated social story about [getting angry](#).

Comic strip conversations are a visual way for older children and young people to think about social situations and what they could have or should have done differently or could do differently the next time.

More reading on visuals:

[Autism Speaks](#) - Visual Supports and Autism

[National Autistic Society](#) - Visual Supports

[Do2Learn](#) - Picture Cards

[Autism Toolbox](#)

Tips for everyday communication



- Model language in the right way - a child who is trying to speak will quickly get fed up, and possibly give up, if told all the time they are getting it wrong. Don't point out mistakes, don't ask them to repeat it correctly. If your child says 'The dog goed in the park' you can say 'Yes, the dog *went* in the park. Well spotted!' Say the sentence correctly and slightly stress the corrected word but then move on. This is modelling while encouraging their efforts.
- Use thank you instead of please. It makes it much clearer that you expect them to do something.
- Use your child's name at the start of conversations or requests to help get their attention.
- Use fewer words. Adults talk too much. We know that children with autism tend to focus on just a few key words and not get the overall message.
- Start using the 12 second processing rule. Ask a simple question or give a one step instruction (see tip above about fewer words) and try to wait 12 seconds without saying a thing. After 12 seconds repeat exactly the same thing again. If you phrase the request differently, the processing may have to start all over again.
- When it comes to questions, think about the quality rather than the quantity. Many children just shut down under questioning. If this sounds like your child, try using '*I wonder.....*' An example might be '*I wonder what I should make for dinner tonight, pizza or pasta?*' You say it as if you are talking to yourself, give your child some processing time and hope for a response. Children who feel under the spotlight if questioned directly can respond well to this approach.

- Why do we start so many sentences with 'Don't...' or 'Stop....' and then go on to state the very behaviour we do not want to see? Work on being positive and only stating the behaviour you *do* want to see. So 'Don't run near this busy road please' becomes 'Remember that we walk near this busy road, thank you.'
- Think about how your words might be taken literally and remove some of the unnecessary and confusing idioms and sayings which are part of our language. Bob is not your uncle, the hamster has never worn clogs so how can they have popped and your eyes are clearly not bigger than your belly.

More reading:

[Autism West Midlands](#)

[Devon County Council Guide](#)

[The Spectrum](#)

[Autism Education Trust](#) - Guide for SENCOs

News from Other Services



Have your say to refresh the Norfolk All Age Autism Strategy for 2024 – 2029



We want to hear more about what is important to autistic people and their parents and carers, to refresh the autism strategy. Join us for a one-to-one or group chat, at a library listed below. Or register to join an online group discussion via Zoom, using one of the links below.

Library sessions (no need to book – just come along)

Wednesday 17 January 11 am to 1 pm	Thetford Library Raymond Street, Thetford IP24 2EA
Monday 5 February 1 pm to 3 pm	Wroxham Library Norwich Road, Wroxham NR12 8RX
Thursday 8 February 1 pm to 3 pm	The Shoebox Community Hub 21 – 23 Castle Meadow, Norwich NR1 3DH
Friday 9 February 4 pm to 5 pm	Gaywood Library Gaywood River Lane, Gaywood, King's Lynn PE30 4HD
Tuesday 13 February 4 pm to 6 pm	Cromer Library Prince of Wales Road, Cromer NR27 9HS
Monday 19 February 4 pm to 5 pm	Fakenham Library Oak Street, Fakenham NR21 9DY
Friday 23 February 10.30 am to 11.30 am	Great Yarmouth Library Tolhouse Street, Great Yarmouth NR30 2SH

Online sessions (registration required)

Monday 15 January 3 pm to 5 pm	Zoom session for autistic people. To register visit: https://tinyurl.com/4mppm99h
Monday 22 January 10 am to 12 pm	Zoom session for parents/carers. To register visit: https://tinyurl.com/5x6afc45
Tuesday 6 February 6.30 pm to 8.30 pm	Zoom session for all. To register visit: https://tinyurl.com/4mw7nc4p
Thursday 15 February 3 pm to 5 pm	Zoom session for all. To register visit: https://tinyurl.com/mrx4wuak

Join us for the Build Together Breckland Families Workshop – 2 workshops to bring families together and strengthen our communities.

[BOOK ON EVENTBRITE](#)



Are you a parent or carer in Breckland looking to support your child's mental health and well-being?

The Build Together Breckland Families Workshop is a fantastic opportunity to come together with other families in the community and explore strategies to promote positive mental health.



Description: Are you a parent or guardian in Breckland looking to support your child's mental health and well-being? The Build Together Breckland Families Workshop is a fantastic opportunity to come together with other families in the community and explore strategies to promote positive mental health.

These engaging workshops will cover a range of topics, including:

1. Understanding Youth Mental Health: Gain insights into the challenges young people face in today's world and learn how to recognise signs of mental health issues.

2. **Effective Communication:** Explore effective communication techniques to foster open, honest conversations with your children about their emotional well-being.
3. **Self-Care and Coping Strategies:** Discover practical self-care techniques for both parents and children to manage stress and anxiety.
4. **Community Support:** Learn about local resources and organisations that can provide support for youth mental health in Breckland.
5. **Building Resilience:** Develop strategies to help your child build resilience and cope with life's challenges.
6. **Q&A and Networking:** Connect with other parents and guardians, ask questions, and share experiences in a supportive and welcoming environment.

Our knowledgeable facilitators will lead interactive discussions, group activities, and provide valuable resources to empower you to support your child's mental health journey. Together, we can build a stronger, healthier Breckland community.

Don't miss this opportunity to make a positive impact on the mental well-being of the youth in Breckland. Register today and be a part of the Build Together Breckland Families Workshop. Together, we can build a brighter future for our children.

Our next workshops are: Swaffham - January 2024

Dereham - Feb 2024

Thetford - March 2024



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

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

KING'S LYNN

PLEASE NOTE THERE IS NO JANUARY DROP-IN

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

Come along and join us on **Tuesday 13th February 2024** - 9.30 am - 11.00 am, FIND US IN THE COMFY, SOFA AREA.

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

SWAFFHAM *PLEASE NOTE THERE IS NO JANUARY DROP-IN*

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

Come along and join us in the quiet, upstairs room in Costa Coffee on **Wednesday 14th February** - 9:30am - 11:00am.

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

GORLESTON

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

Come along and meet our team and other parents on **Wednesday 3rd January 2024** from 10:00am to 11:30am

Next drop in Wednesday

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

LOWESTOFT

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

Come along and join us on **Thursday 4th January 2024** from 10:00am to 11:30am

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

New for 2024 - Thetford Drop In January 2024

family action Building stronger families

Early Onset/ADHD Support Service
for children with neurodivergence

Central
Norfolk and Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service

Join our friendly 'Drop In'

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

When
Tuesday
16th January
2024
10.00-12.00
noon

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



SCAN ME

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

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



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

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

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

SWEET THINGS SAVOURY

33 GAULTREE SQUARE EMNETH PE14 8DA

ON

Wednesday 10th January 2024

PLAN BEE



Plan Bee – understanding and supporting your child or young person with additional needs

'Plan Bee' is a FREE 3 week course (2hrs per week) written by two clinical psychologists working in Norfolk and is aimed at parents or carers of children or young people with additional needs including suspected or diagnosed Autism or ADHD.

During the three week course, we will explore:

- Behaviour as communication.
- Understanding the full range of needs your child may have.
- Developing a plan to support behaviour in difficult situations which can then be shared with grandparents, schools and others.
- Strategies for creating an environment in which your child or young person can thrive.
- Sharing experiences, challenges and successes with other parents experiencing similar issues and learning from these.

JANUARY 2024 - Great Yarmouth Primary Academy

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

FEBRUARY 2024 - Breckland Hall, New Costessey, NORWICH, NR5 0RW *Places still available*

Mondays 5th, 12th and 26th February 2024 10am to 12noon To book your place please ring **01603 972589** or email swaffham@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



Family Action is working with Norfolk Community Health and Care to run the Puffins ASD Programme for Parents/Carers of children or young people **with a diagnosis of Autism**. This is a free, comprehensive, four week course with sessions led by Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy professionals from within the Neurodevelopmental Service and by the Autism Specialist Educational Team.

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

A few places
Mondays *8th, 15th,

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

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

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

Do you live in Waveney? In February our team in the east are planning to run the following course in Lowestoft.

CYGNET- East Norfolk version of Puffins (Dates still to be confirmed)

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

Family Action also serves families in West Suffolk





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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



FamilyLine

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



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

[FamilyLine](#) is a service for adult family members that aims to:

- provide both immediate and long-term support
- help with practical information and guidance
- provide emotional and listening support
- help with understanding and accessing relevant services and information
- provide regular one-to-one befriending
- support to service users feeling isolated
- access to short term telephone counselling
- a referral into our many projects across England and Wales, where relevant.

Family members aged 18 years old and over from anywhere in England, Wales and the Isle of Man can get in touch with the service for free via telephone, text message, web chat or email, using the details below.

Opening times: Monday to Friday, 9am to 9pm

Contact details: Telephone: 0808 802 6666

Text message: 07537 404 282

Email: familyline@family-action.org.uk

Live web chat

Contacting FamilyLine out of hours

Do you need FamilyLine but it's out of our operation hours? You can either call back in our opening hours, leave a message on our voice mail for a call back in our operation hours or if you're in crisis you can contact our crisis line to get in touch with a trained professional.

Text FAMILYACTION to 85258

Our crisis messenger text service provides free, 24/7 crisis support across the UK. We know that getting the correct support at the correct time is so beneficial which is why we've introduced our crisis line. This service is delivered in partnership with [Shout](#).

About our Service - Contact Details



To contact us for advice and support, or to book a place on one of our courses or information sessions, please use the details below.

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

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

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

If you wish to join our closed Facebook group, go to Facebook and to the Family Action page and then search for Norfolk and Waveney Autism and ADHD Support Service.