



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

Welcome to our first newsletter of the new year in which we are thinking about neurodivergence and girls.

There is a move away from thinking about neurodivergence and how it presents along gender lines.

This is because every person, whatever their gender, is individual and unique with their own differences, difficulties and strengths. And how we cope with these and appear to the world will also be individual.

We know that girls have generally been under-diagnosed, mis-diagnosed and misunderstood. Girls are still as a rule diagnosed with autism at an older age than boys. There is still to some extent a male-centric understanding of classic autism. It is important to think about why this has been the case but it could also potentially be unhelpful to simply create new stereotypes against which to measure individuals. In discussing girls and neurodivergence we should therefore be very clear that of course there will be boys presenting in lots of the same ways. And there will also be girls whose presentation sits more neatly with the typically male model.

Every boy and girl is unique and individual but there is a tendency for presentation of neurodivergent traits in females to be more subtle and internalised. Girls can often be more empathic, more tuned into the emotions of others and have a better emotional vocabulary. They tend to have better general verbal skills, work harder at understanding and connecting with other people and generally feel more driven to build relationships. Many also have a stronger need to fit in and can become quite accomplished at assimilating with their peer group, camouflaging their differences and masking social challenges.

Significantly more males than females are diagnosed with ADHD. It is thought that boys, speaking very generally, display outwardly many of their ADHD tendencies whereas girls internalise these. There is probably no real difference between male and female symptoms of ADHD but the lived experience of many females appears different. A focus on behaviour as the key indicator of differences and difficulties can lead to a lack of understanding that while males and females may be outwardly behaving differently that in fact many of the differences and difficulties may be the same.

Read on for some ideas around neurodivergence and how it can present.

This month's newsletter includes:

- **Welcome**
- **Online Workshop for January**
- **Drop-In Groups in January**
- **Meet the NWAASS Team**
- **Neurodivergence and Gender**
- **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 January - no need to book - note the joining details and we will see you there.



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.

IF YOU USUALLY JOIN US AT A GROUP IN DOWNHAM MARKET OR LOWESTOFT PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE OF DATES for this month only ON THE INDIVIDUAL FLYERS.

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Lowestoft Drop-In Support Group January 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.

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.

✉ gorleston@family-action.org.uk

☎ 01493 650220

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📍 The Kirkley Family Hub
Kirkley Street
Lowestoft
NR33 0LU

🕒 Thursday
15th January 2026*

10:00am – 11:30am

* Please note that this group is being held at a later date, due to the availability of the venue. (For January only!)

Suffolk
**family
hubs**
Local help for all families

family-action.org.uk

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Gorleston Drop-In Support Group January 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!

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

🕒 Wednesday
7th January 2026

10:00am – 11:30am



family-action.org.uk



Swaffham Drop-In Group JANUARY 2026

Come and join us at our friendly support group.

Family Action Norfolk & Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service. We support families of children with neurodevelopmental differences.

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 other parents and carers with similar experiences. Speak to our Family Support Workers, who are always on hand to offer support and answer any questions.

No diagnosis or booking required.

 norfolkandwaveney@family-action.org.uk

 01603 972589



 **Costa Coffee (Upstairs)
Market Place
Swaffham, PE37 7AB**

 **Wednesday
14th January 2026**

9:30am – 11:00am



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Swan Youth Project Drop-In Group January 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
20th January 2026***

9:30am to 11am
(Group starts at 9am, but we will be there from 9:30am)

***Please note that this month the group is meeting at an earlier date.
(For January only!)**

 01603 972589

 norfolkandwaveney@family-action.org.uk

 Norfolk and Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service



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A new drop-in for King's Lynn in January - in partnership with Family Hubs - come along and meet us.



King's Lynn Drop-In Group JANUARY 2026




Come and join us at our friendly support group, in partnership with Family Hubs.

Family Action Norfolk & Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service supports families of children with neurodevelopmental differences.

If you have personal experiences with a child with neurodivergence or are waiting for a diagnosis, come along to our 'drop in' session to meet other parents and carers with similar experiences. Speak to our Family Support Workers, who are always on hand to offer support and answer any questions.


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New Venue:

 The Activity Room
St. Augustine's
Healthy Living Centre
Columbia Way
King's Lynn
PE30 2LB
-To enter: Please press
the door buzzer
labelled Family Hub

 **Tuesday
13th January 2026**

9:30am - 11:00am



family-action.org.uk

Meet the Family Action NWAASS Team

Meet Sue Killick



Hi, my name is Sue Killick and I am lucky enough to have been working in an amazing team for Family Action for the past three and a half years. My role is Family Support Worker in the Norfolk & Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service and I mainly support families living in the west of Norfolk. Like many people I work from home some days but meet up with my colleagues in the office one day a week. I give families some advice and support over the phone, deliver our Plan Bee course face to face and online, present online workshops on a variety of topics and run two drop-in support groups in Swaffham and Downham Market. I also organise and deliver the post-diagnosis Puffins Autism Programme in venues across the county along with my colleague Becky.

Neurodivergence is a thread that runs through my family as I have children and grandchildren who are neurodivergent – so I have lots of lived experience. What I enjoy is being able to help parents, carers and grandparents to navigate their own ND journey, gain more understanding and confidence, so that they can then help to improve outcomes for children. I love that I can make a difference.

Flying Under the Radar

Girls are considered to often 'fly under the radar' due to a combination of factors; a male-centric view of neurodivergence, differences in presentation, societal expectation, and the efforts they make themselves to assimilate, to camouflage and mask their differences. Of

course boys can and do mask and so the information below may be relevant for parents/carers of boys also but it is still considered that masking is a tool, a coping mechanism, used more routinely and perhaps also more expertly by girls and which means they often get missed or that their needs are not recognised or supported.

Again, we are generalising, but girls are considered to want to please, want to fit in and want to have friends more than boys do. And there are gender based differences in upbringing between boys and girls with very many parents expecting more polite, sensible, calm and thoughtful behaviour from daughters than from sons and then working to achieve that. So not only are many girls more naturally inclined to try to fit in but society expects this also.



We will consider autism and ADHD separately but remember to keep an open mind. The diagnostic criteria may be different but there is a lot of co-occurrence and overlapping of symptoms. Having a diagnosis of only one does not mean that there will not be some traits of the other. The focus should be on a child's needs and not on the label they have been given.

Masking for example is seen in both autism and ADHD as a coping response to fear of stigma and rejection. And just to repeat, masking is now understood as not being a female-specific issue, it can apply to anyone, and is not characteristic of a 'female presentation' of autism. Focus has shifted from who masks to how it can affect mental health and well-being. Hiding yourself for long enough can lead to feelings that yourself is not good enough or something that no one really wants to see.



Boys are thought to more often exhibit hyperactive type **ADHD**. Girls are thought to exhibit inattentive type **ADHD** more commonly. If a boy is struggling to keep still in class, tapping on the desk, moving about on his chair and a girl is twiddling with her hair and appearing to daydream, who is most likely to stand out in a classroom as requiring some support?

And when some hyperactivity is present in both, for boys that often displays itself physically, a need for movement a restless body. For girls this is more often internalised and cognitive, a restless, unsettled mind; ideas running around, going over situations which you could have handled better, what you would do the next time, practicing conversations you have already had or want to have tomorrow, worrying about all the ways in which something could go wrong, ways in which you could stand out. Girls are described at times as being unfocused, a bit scatty, daydreamers but actually their minds may be very busy indeed. And this hyperactive mind can lead to talking a lot but again this might just be seen as being overly chatty or sociable rather than being a difficulty in containing everything that is going on.

Girls will have all the typical difficulties with focus, organisation, attention for detail, taking good notes and initiating/completing assignments as boys but, due to the extra effort they put into masking these, will fly under the radar more. And girls are additionally thought to have more of a drive to perfectionism which puts them under even more pressure to get it right despite the difficulties.

“A male and female student with ADHD are assigned a long-term project. They each put off the work for weeks. Then, the night before the project is due, each remembers the deadline. Rather than attempt to get the work done, the boy decides to watch back-to-back episodes of *SpongeBob*. Meanwhile, the girl freaks out and tries to make a perfect project overnight. (Perfectionism is another common behavior in ADHD girls.) She demands that her mother help her while she stays up until 1 a.m. to finish her work. When she hands in the assignment the next day, the teacher has no clue that it was done at the last minute.”

[ADDITUDE](#) Magazine

What can you do to support:

Encourage girls to be more physically active in whatever way they are able to access this. Physical activity promotes calmer cognitive processes.

Manage anxiety by helping them to feel more organised and on top of things. Girls are very prone to the overwhelm which comes from lack of organisation and leaving things to the last minute.

Being more organised also allows focus and attention to remain more closely on the task in hand rather than worrying about all the ways in which you are not properly prepared.

Stick to routines as much as possible. When routine and structure is tight neurodivergent minds can relax and focus on tasks rather than trying to rationalise and cope with whatever has changed.

Appreciate how exhausted your child may be at the end of the school day. The batteries are flat and need time to recharge.

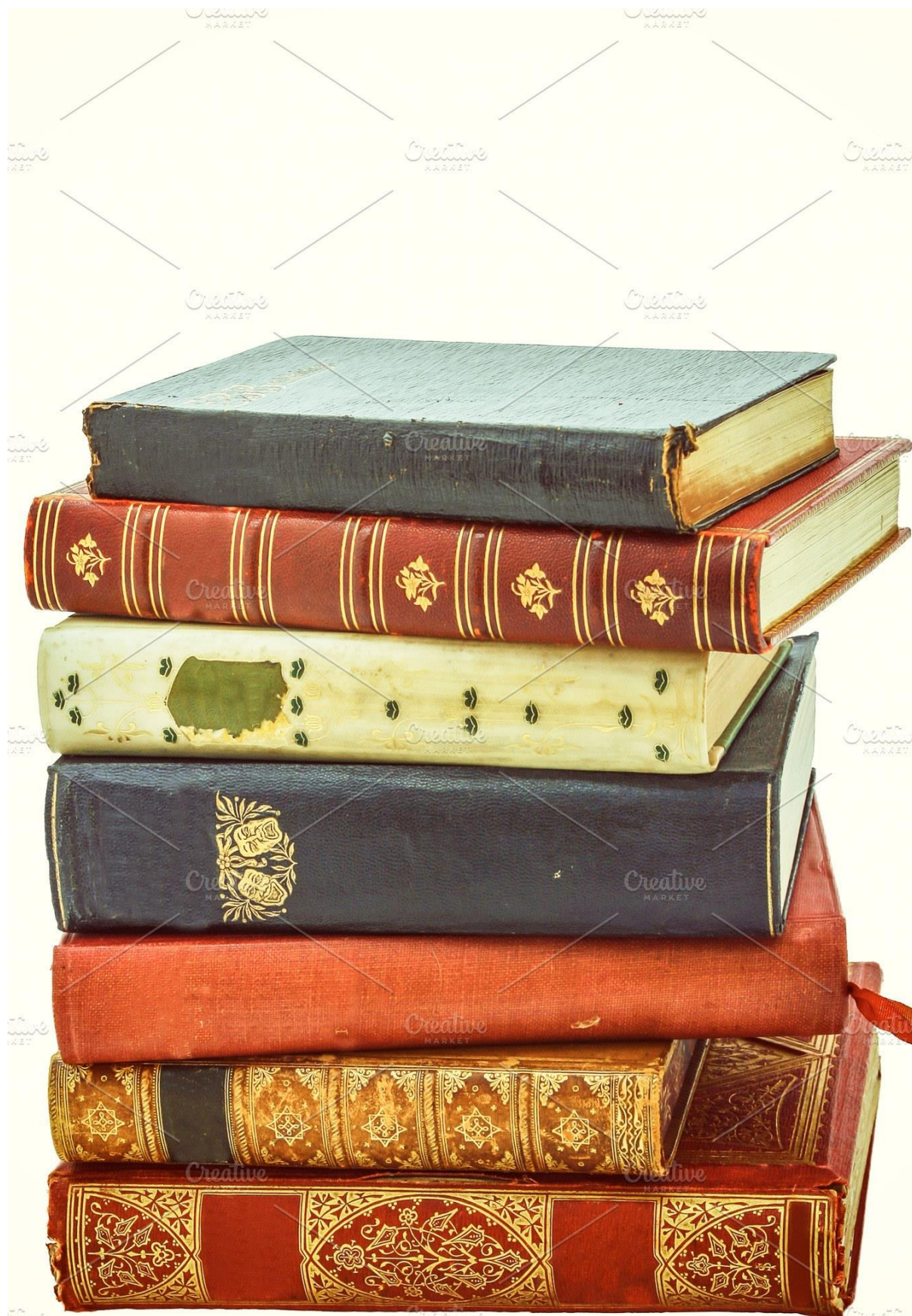
Appreciate how distressed your child may be at the end of the school day. All of that containing and pretending to cope will have taken its toll.

Think about what they need at that time and adapt your approach. Reduce demands, reduce talking, try not to ask too much about how their day has been, give them space and time.

When the time is right, try to talk about what support would be helpful in school while being mindful that they are putting a lot of effort into not standing out from their peers and may therefore be resistant.

Do not underestimate how the menstrual cycle can affect symptoms of ADHD in particular and make allowances.

Links and Resources for further reading



See our past newsletters on:

Masking <https://sway.office.com/LPTDEmWO3kWbULPm?ref=Link>

The After School Effect <https://sway.cloud.microsoft/0cbBcba0aGUT3iex?ref=Link>

<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/professional-practice/autistic-masking>

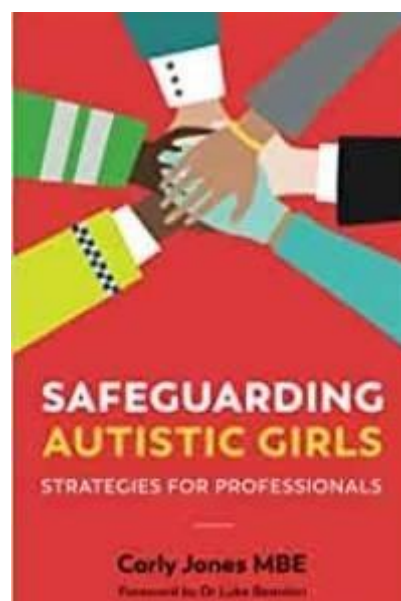
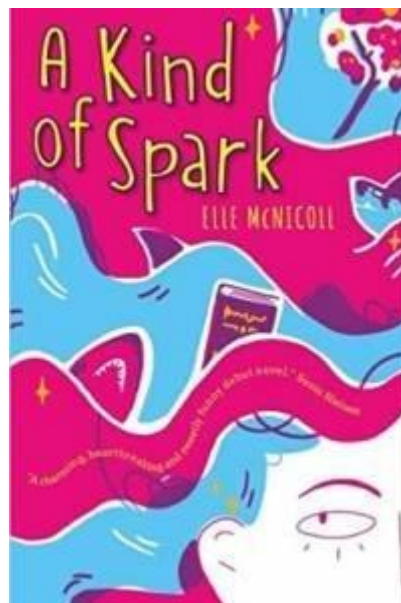
<https://www.autismparentingmagazine.com/autism-masking/>

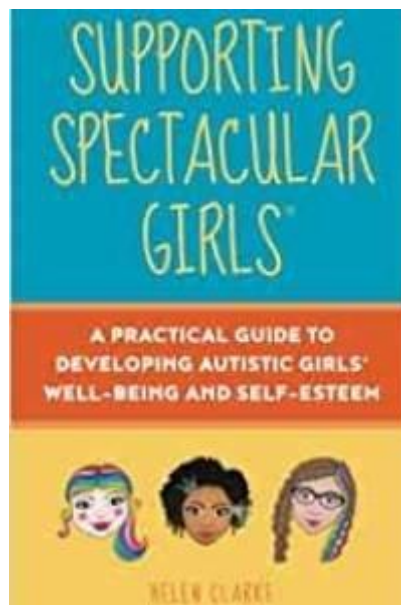
<https://www.ne-as.org.uk/Pages/Category/behind-the-mask>

Have a look at [Beyond Autism](#) Understanding Women and Girls.

A great resource to find out about further reading you could do is [The Autistic Girls Website](#).

Here is just a selection of the books it recommends.





Family Action and West Norfolk Autism Group

Do you live in West Norfolk? Our team has been invited by the West Norfolk Autism Group to take part in an event they have organised on Tuesday 27th January at the Dragonfly Hotel in King's Lynn. The theme will be around communication differences, communicating more effectively and thinking about a low demand approach.. See below for more details.

Booking is via Eventbrite using the link below.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/communication-presentation-tickets-1978773149758?aff=ebdsoporgprofile>

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:

<https://www.justonenorfolk.nhs.uk/child-development-additional-needs/behaviour-sleep/norfolk-positive-behaviour-strategies-pbs/>

See below courses with places still available to attend in January/February 26. Click to enlarge



Norfolk and Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service

Plan Bee King's Lynn January 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.

Monday 12th 19th & 26th
January 2026

10am – 12noon

St Faiths Community Hub
Gayton Road
King's Lynn
PE30 4DW

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



01603 972589



NorfolkAndWaveney@family-action.org.uk



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Norfolk and Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service

Plan Bee Course Gorleston January 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.

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- 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.

Wednesday 14th, 21st
& 28th January 2026

10am–12.30pm
week 1 &
10am–12pm
weeks 2 & 3

Gorleston Library
1 Lowestoft Road
Gorleston
NR31 6SG

Carnegie Room
(upstairs)

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



01493 650220



norfolkandwaveney@family-action.org.uk



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Norfolk and Waveney Autism/ADHD Support Service

Plan Bee Course EAST HARLING January/February 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.

Monday 26th January & 2nd, 9th February 2026

10am – 12noon

**East Harling Primary School and Nursery,
4 Gallant's Lane
East Harling
Norwich
NR16 2NQ**

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 been 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 2026.

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 COURSES ARE VERY POPULAR and are mostly FULL. We hope to very soon be able to advertise courses planned from April 2026.

See below a flyer for our Feb 2026 course in King's Lynn which still has one or two spaces.
Click to enlarge

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.



**Educational Psychology
& Specialist Support**



Puffins Autism Programme King's Lynn - February 2026

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 and are currently commissioned to deliver the Puffins course to parents/carers in west and central Norfolk.

Week 1 - Introducing Autism and Understanding Behaviour (Family Action)

Week 2 - Communication - (NCHC Speech and Language Therapy Team)

Week 3 - Understanding Sensory Processing (NCHC Occupational Therapy Team)

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

King's Lynn February 2026

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

Monday 2nd, 9th & 23rd
February & 2nd March 2026

9:30am - 12:30pm

Please note: This course is not suitable for children to attend and no childcare is provided.

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

01603 972589

Sue.Killick@family-action.org.uk



family-action.org.uk

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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.



Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board

"CHILDHOOD IS PRECIOUS BECAUSE IT IS BRIEF; TOO MANY CHILDREN ARE SPENDING TOO MUCH OF IT WAITING FOR CARE."

Darzi, 2024

FIND SUPPORT AND SERVICES FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ON
JUST ONE NORFOLK

WWW.JUSTONENORFOLK.NHS.UK



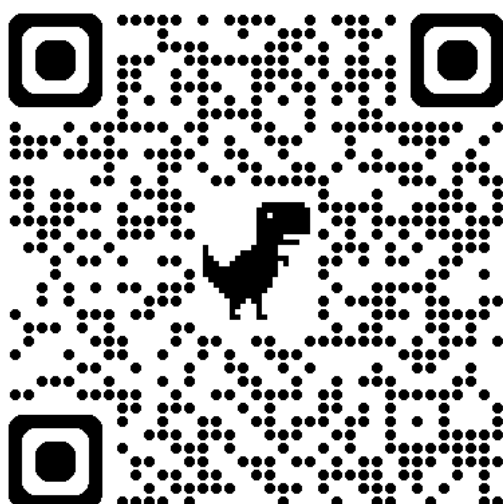
SCAN ME

NHS
Norfolk and Waveney
Integrated Care Board

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 FamilyLine - for any parenting concerns or crises. We can listen, support, inform and refer to a relevant service.

A graphic with a pink background. At the top, there is a photograph of a woman with glasses and a young child sitting at a desk, looking at a laptop. Below the photo, the text 'Family Line' is written in a bold, black font. Underneath this, there are four lines of contact information, each preceded by a small icon: a telephone icon for the phone number '0808 802 6666', a speech bubble icon for the phone number '07537 404 282', an envelope icon for the email address 'familyline@family-action.org.uk', and a speech bubble icon for 'Online Chat'.

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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