



Parents *Connected*



Summer 2025

INSIDE:

- An award winning project
- You don't always need to be strong
- The importance of boundaries
- and much more...



INTRODUCING...



Michelle Jones is a Project Manager, she is also a parent of three adult children one of which received an autism diagnosis at the age of 19. Michelle has previously worked as a nurse, health visitor and special needs teacher and enjoys being able to utilise her diverse range of lived and learned experience to support families.



Angela is a Family Advisor she has two adult sons, She has previously worked in secondary schools with SEND children, She has also been a foster carer which led to her being a Mockingbird Hub carer where she supported families who had children in care. She has lots of experience working with children with SEND.



Michelle is a Family Advisor, she is Mum to two teenage boys. Michelle's eldest son received an autism diagnosis when he was 6. Now in his late teens they are currently navigating together the transition to college. Alongside her lived experience, she has worked in a primary school and various agencies in Suffolk supporting children, young people, and families.



Robert is a Parent Carer Family Worker. He is an autistic ADHD adult and a parent to three children with a range of support needs, including autism with demand avoidance traits, ADHD, learning disabilities, and a physical disability. With years of lived experience, Robert understands the realities families face and is passionate about equipping parents with the knowledge, strategies, and confidence to support their children and navigate systems around them.



Sheree is a ND Duty Worker. She also works as a Young Carers advisor supporting families whose children have an array of additional needs.



CRAFT, COFFEE AND CHAT for Parent Carers

This informal group for parent carers hosted by one of our volunteers, Elisa, will take place usually once a month term time.

You will be provided with the equipment and resources needed for the crafts, activities will vary each month and be based on participant's feedback and interests.

**Once a month from 10.30am - 12noon
The View - A Space for Carers, Claydon, Ipswich**

REGISTER YOUR INTEREST

SUFFOLK LIBRARIES

Your local libraries stock a range of books about Autism and ADHD. You can search the online catalogue or look at the recommendations list. If the book isn't in your nearest library, or is out on loan, you can request it. It is also worth talking to the library service assistants about any future titles you would like to see added to the library catalogue.



CHILDHOOD NEURODIVERSITY PARENT/CARER WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

Neurodiversity means that across the population there is variation in people's brains. Having people in society who see the world differently and have unique skills is an important part of life to be celebrated. The term "neurodivergent" refers to people whose brains work differently to the typical cultural standards. Neurodivergence includes conditions that people are born with including autism, ADHD, learning disability and learning disorders.

This programme of free virtual workshops for parents and carers will explore nurturing the unique strengths of neurodivergent children and young people and provide advice on how to support them with the challenges they face. Any parent or carer is welcome to join regardless of whether their child has a diagnosis. The workshops are live on Zoom and are 75 minutes long. Recordings of the workshops and resource packs will be sent after the live event to everyone who has registered.

TO BOOK A WORKSHOP

PARENT CARER RESPITE

We understand how challenging it can be caring for a child with additional needs, and we recognise the value of carers having a break from their caring role to recharge their batteries and manage their own health and wellbeing. We've put together a helpful document to help...

[FIND OUT MORE HERE](#)

Ask The Advisor

Free 10 minute advice slots for parent carers

Whether it's a specific behaviour, a tricky transition, or just figuring out how to get five minutes to yourself.

This is your space to ask. Submit a question in advance and book a quick, 10-minute slot to get honest, practical advice from someone who gets it.

Short chats.
Real support.
Zero waffle.

How do I make
transitions
easier?

How do I
stop the
yelling?

How can I help
my child unwind
at night?

When?

Launching 7th May

Wednesdays (fortnightly) | 12–1pm

Thursdays (fortnightly) | 7–8pm

Suffolk Family Carers
Living Fuller Lives

Book a slot via our website
Ask your question
Feel a bit more human

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE STRONG ALL THE TIME

Robert Ward is a Parent Carer Worker at Suffolk Family Carers, he is also neurodivergent. Here he explains how his own lived experience helps him to empathise and encourage parent carers.

I wanted to start with my own experience, some days I felt like I was just surviving. Not thriving, not coping, just surviving. Like I was holding it together with a bit of tape and whatever scraps of energy I could find between meltdowns, meetings, school emails and yet another phone call where I was expected to just know what to do.

I used to think something was wrong with me for feeling like that. Everyone around me seemed to be managing better, coping better, smiling more, planning ahead, filling out forms without crying over them. Everyone else looked like they had some kind of manual that I must have missed.

But the truth is, they were probably struggling too. They just weren't saying it out loud.

It's hard to explain what this kind of parenting does to you unless you've lived it. The never-ending pressure to stay calm when your child is in distress. The guilt for feeling you are not doing enough, even though you are doing everything you can. The energy

used explaining your child over and over again to

people who do not

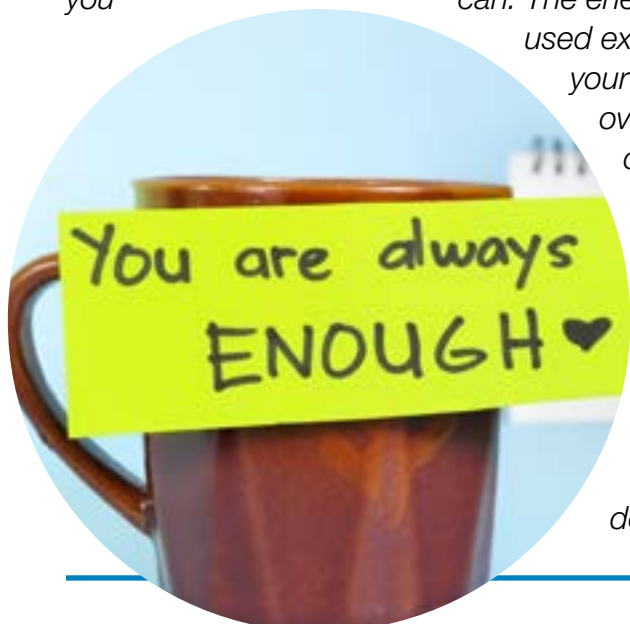
listen or just do not "get it". The worry that if you say the wrong thing, ask the wrong question, or express things are going well that the support you need might disappear completely.

And it's more than that. It's the way you hold your child's needs, fears and frustrations in your own body. It's how your own needs get pushed to the back of the queue, so often you forget they're even there. It's living in a world that expects you to be strong, patient, informed, and available all of the time. While also being sleep-deprived, overwhelmed, overstimulated and feeling completely out of your depth half the time. And no one really talks about that bit. Not properly.

People call you strong and say, "I don't know how you do it," like it's meant to be comforting. But honestly, sometimes I didn't know either. I didn't feel strong. I felt like I was just about keeping my head above water while trying to juggle a thousand invisible things, supporting behaviour, forms, preparing food my child will actually eat, school communication, my own executive function, the bills I forgot to pay or emails I forgot to reply to, the guilt, the isolation, and everything in between.

And I'm neurodivergent too, which just adds a whole extra layer that people don't always see. Some days I couldn't even manage my own regulation, let alone support someone else's. Some days I needed silence and space, but life didn't allow that. I was overstimulated from the minute I woke up. Sensory overload, emotional overwhelm, decision fatigue or task paralysis. I didn't even know where my own body was in space half the time because I was so busy supporting my child's needs and making sure they were safe.

And yet, people expected me to be the expert. To know what to do. To advocate calmly and firmly. To always be one step ahead. To explain things



clearly. To never miss a deadline, to never miss a cue, to never lose it, even when everything was burning around me. But I did lose it sometimes. Of course I did. I am only human. And that doesn't make me less of a parent. It makes me a parent who's doing their absolute best in a world that wasn't built with us in mind.

There were times I cried quietly in the kitchen while pretending to be busy. Times I had to walk away because I could feel myself unravelling. Times I forgot how to ask for help, or didn't know who to ask, or felt like asking made me look incapable. I felt ashamed of how hard I found it all, as though struggling meant I wasn't cut out for this, even though I loved my child more than anything in the world.

And that's the part no one talks about. That you can love your child with every fibre of your being and still feel like it's all too much. That you can be so committed, totally invested, and still be absolutely exhausted. That you can want to be everything they need, and still not know how to be that person when you're running on empty.

But here's the thing I want you to hear, and maybe believe a little, even if it's hard to take in.

You don't have to be strong all the time.

You don't have to have all the answers. You don't have to be the calm one every moment of every day. You don't have to respond to every email straight away. You don't have to stay composed when your child is in crisis, or when a professional says something that cuts deep. You don't have to get it right all the time. You don't have to fix everything. That was never your job.

Your job is to love your child. To show up the best you can. To take care of yourself when you're able. To get through the day, however messy and loud and imperfect that might look. And you're already doing that.

You're allowed to feel like this is hard, because it is hard. Not because you're weak, but because it's genuinely a lot. The systems we're expected to navigate weren't made for families like ours. The support we need isn't always there when it should be. The understanding we deserve often comes too late, if it comes at all.

And yet, you're still here. Still trying. Still fighting. Still loving. That's not just strong. That's incredible.

I know it doesn't always feel like it. I know there are days you feel broken, or lost, or like you're doing everything wrong. But you're not. You are doing so much more than you realise. Every single day, you're doing the invisible work that holds your child's world together. You're noticing the triggers before anyone else does. You're calming storms that no one else can see. You're adjusting, adapting, learning constantly, because you care.

That matters. That is strength. Even if you don't feel strong, even if you're exhausted, even if you're falling apart on the inside.

You're not alone in this. There are more of us than you know, quietly holding it all together, or letting it fall apart, and then trying again the next day. And we need each other. We need more honesty. More compassion. More people saying, "Me too." Because this journey isn't just about services or strategies. It's about surviving. It's about finding hope when things feel hopeless. It's about making space for your own emotions, not just your child's.

And if you've made it this far through this article, maybe you needed that reminder today. Maybe you needed someone to say, "You're not failing. You're just tired. And that's okay."

You are enough. Exactly as you are.

So no, you don't have to be strong all the time. You just have to be real. You just have to be here, in whatever way you can. That's more than enough.

You're not alone. And you're doing better than you think.

You can't pour from an empty cup as they say but you also don't have to be the kettle, the mug, the teabag, and the water all at once. Let someone top you up when you need it. Let yourself rest. Let yourself breathe. You're allowed.

Robert runs [parent carer drop ins](#) at Claydon and online. You can also book an [Ask the Advisor](#) 10-minute appointment with him on MS Teams.

TIME OUT SUPPORT PROGRAMME FOR PARENTS

**4-week Support
Programmes for those
caring for an autistic
child or child with
ADHD**

Both courses provide an opportunity for you to support and encourage

others, helping you share feelings and experiences, and come up with solutions to problems on the basis of what works – not what's meant to work!

Time Out courses are very informal and provide plenty of time for you to talk to other parent carers.

REGISTER YOUR INTEREST



A SPACE FOR PARENTS

A Space for Parents is a section on the Suffolk Family Carer website which is set aside for parent carers. We regularly add articles to the site to provide information, advice, support and resources for parent carers.

We are aiming to add a new article each month so do take a look to see if there is anything that might be supportive to you.

VISIT NOW





LOW SENSORY FAMILY FUN SWIM SESSION

Join other SEND families at Fore Street Swimming Pool, Ipswich for a low sensory swim session.

The pool will only be open to families registered on these sessions and is limited to 30 attendees.

Booking is only available a week in advance.

BOOK NOW

Please note: these sessions are only available for families registered with Suffolk Family Carers who have an under 18 with SEND

FOLLOW US

As well as the main Suffolk Family Carers social profiles, there are also specific pages for Parent Carers where we share relevant resources and information. To keep up to date with our events, resources and more, make sure you follow A Space for Parents on Instagram and Facebook.



SUMMER HOLIDAYS

Low Sensory Swim Sessions

Join other SEND families at Fore Street Swimming Pool for a low sensory swim session.

Sessions take place monthly on a Saturday from 5.30-6.50pm.

BOOK HERE

This is an exclusive session for families with a child who have SEND. You must have a child under 25 with SEND who will be attending this session.

Craft and Play Bury st Edmunds

Come as a whole family to enjoy a play and craft session. We will have activities inside and outside (weather permitting). The session will be led by two ND Family Advisors. *Booking is required for this session.*

Moreton Hall Community Centre
Monday 28th July
10.00am - 11.30pm

BOOK HERE



Craft and Play Ipswich

Come as a whole family to enjoy a play and craft session. We will have activities inside and outside (weather permitting). The session will be led by two ND Family Advisors. *Booking is required for this session.*

Tower Hall, Rushmere st Andrew
Monday 1st August
10.00am - 11.30pm

BOOK HERE



Mini Monster Soft Play

Mini Monsters Ipswich. Soft play and play frame. Activity suitable for children under 10. At least one child in the family who is attending the session must neurodivergent, diagnosed or awaiting assessment on the NDD pathway.

Mini Monster, Ipswich
Monday 18th August
10.00am - 12.00noon

BOOK HERE

CONGRATULATIONS

We are thrilled that our ND and Parent Carer projects have recently been recognised for the great support they offer to families. They received an **Ipswich and East Suffolk Alliance Award** to recognise the impactful respite opportunities and accessible activities provided by the projects, as well as the development of the new Parent Carer Project.

An example of the respite offered is our work with EAST Sailing for the disabled to provide a sail school for children who are neurodivergent and are not able to engage in full time education. This relationship is now in its third year, with our latest course seeing 10 young people training for the RYA basic qualification.

The award, presented on 29th April by Maddie Baker-Woods, Edward Creasy and Phaniel Mutumburi from the ICB who met with the team to hear further about how these activities support families.

They were also able to hear about the amazing work our volunteers do, assisting us to run activities such as Art Club for neurodivergent teens and our coffee and craft for parent carers. The invaluable support from our volunteer administrator has enabled us to managing the bookings for low sensory swimming and parent carer yoga sessions which continue to run in Ipswich.

Michelle Jones, Project Manager for the team, said, *"I am delighted that we have won this award, it is a real team effort utilising the vast skills and experience of our staff and volunteers to widen opportunities for families who are caring for a child with additional needs. I want to thank the whole team for their creativity, flexibility and wiliness to continue to go the extra mile."*



PARENT CARER SUPPORT GROUPS

There are many support groups for Parent Carers across the county to provide support for both parent carers and their ND children.

We have produced a document listing all the support groups, it includes venues, contact details and meeting dates

[SEE THE GROUP DETAILS HERE](#)

PARENT CARER DROP-INS

Parent Carer Drop ins for those caring for a child with additional needs. An opportunity for peer support and advice from a Family Worker from Suffolk Family Carers.

All Drop ins' are Term Time Only!

Come along for just for a cuppa, or stay for the whole session, talk it through or just listen, gain peer support and build connections

**The 2nd Tuesday of the month
from 10am to 12noon
@ The View - A Space For Carers, Claydon**

[CHECK OUT THE FULL DETAILS HERE](#)

REGISTER YOUR INTEREST

We hold regular workshops and activities for parent carers as well as the whole family. To be notified about new events that may interest you please register your interest using the button below.

The events include:

- Time Out Support Programmes • Teen Life • Friendship Groups •
- Parent Carer Respite Activities • Whole Family Activities •
- Special Interest Groups • and many more •

**REGISTER YOUR
INTEREST HERE**





RESTORATIVE YOGA for Parents and Carers

The sessions will help you to learn techniques and exercises which will strengthen your body and mind, enabling you to incorporate self-care

It is suitable for parents and carers of for a young person with SEND.

Tuesday 15th July from 10am - 12.00pm
Milton Road Scout Hall, Stowmarket

REGISTER YOUR INTEREST



Supported by **The Boshier Grant Scheme**

Support group for adult siblings of autistic people



*Scan
here!*



**Join our online peer support group sessions
(7pm-8.30pm), run by a trained Sibs volunteer:**

- 13th Feb: Being a sibling vs being a carer
- 9th Apr: Money (mis)management
- 10th Jun: What if your brother/sister doesn't want support?
- 4th Aug: Reciprocity
- 7th Oct: Supporting romantic relationships
- 3rd Dec: Setting boundaries

**Find out more at
sibs.org.uk/autismgroup**

Sibs is the UK charity for brothers and sisters of disabled children and adults.
Registered charity number 1145200. Limited company number 7834303.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BOUNDARIES FOR NEURODIVERGENT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Boundaries play an essential part in the development of all children and young people, however for those who are diagnosed neurodivergent, it is even more important that you put boundaries in place. Neurodivergent people experience the world differently, these differences can include how they process information, regulate their emotions, how they communicate, and social situations. By providing boundaries you are providing a sense of security and predictability for your child.

Creating a Sense of Safety and Predictability

Many neurodivergent young people thrive on routine. Boundaries provide a framework that helps reduce anxiety and sensory overwhelm by creating an environment that feels safe, predictable and manageable. Knowing what to expect and what is expected of them can make social interactions and transitions less frightening. When boundaries are communicated in a clear manner, and you are consistent, it helps you and your child/young person to foster a nurturing and positive relationship.

Supporting Emotional Regulation and Social Learning

Boundaries help neurodivergent young people understand social rules and develop emotional regulation skills. For example, they may need teaching and reinforcement of concepts like personal space, respectful communication, or turn-taking. These are not always instinctive to someone who is neurodivergent, boundaries then become a guide rather than a restriction. When enforced with empathy, they can help young people build resilience, problem-solving skills, and confidence in their own ability to navigate and build positive relationships.

Protecting Autonomy and Preventing Exploitation

An important but often overlooked aspect of boundaries is that they also serve to protect the neurodivergent individual's own rights and wellbeing. Neurodivergent young people are statistically more vulnerable to peer pressure, bullying, exploitation and being in unsafe situations. By teaching them about healthy boundaries not just what others expect of them, but also what to expect from others, promotes autonomy, consent, and self-advocacy. This empowers them to say "no," to recognise when something feels wrong, and to ask for help/advice when needed.



Fostering Healthy Relationships

Boundaries lay the groundwork for mutual respect in relationships. By learning to set and respect boundaries, neurodivergent young people are better equipped to build meaningful connections with others. This is essential for reducing isolation and promoting inclusion, particularly when they may already feel “different” or misunderstood.

Balancing Flexibility and Consistency

It’s important that boundaries for neurodivergent children are firm, fair, consistent and adaptable. Flexibility allows for individual needs and communication styles, while consistency ensures that expectations remain clear and fair. If they are not, it could be confusing for the child which could lead to distressed behaviours.

Tips On How to Set Boundaries for your Child/Young Person

- If you can involve your child/ young person in setting the boundaries, pick a time when they are calm and focused, they may then be more engaged in sticking to the boundaries.
- Try to keep the number of boundaries between 3 to 6, depending on their age and understanding.
- The boundaries then need to be written in either brief clear language, or picture format e.g. a visual, display them where the child or young person can clearly see it.
- If you haven’t involved your child/Young person, check that they fully understand the boundaries never assume that they do, many neurodivergent children can learn them verbatim but may not understand the context. Ask them to answer in their own words what the boundaries mean to them, if they don’t understand clearly explain to them your boundaries or use a social story.
- Own your mistakes or errors in front of your children, by doing this you are showing them how you reflect on your error and how you go about rectifying the mistake. You will be a positive role model showing them that it’s okay to make a mistake, life is not perfect it’s about realising how we learn and move on from our errors.
- If boundaries need to be changed for some reason, it’s best avoiding making decisions at the height of an argument or in anger. The message about new boundaries may be lost as one or both of you struggle to keep control of your emotions. New boundaries should always be revised when we are calm and focused.
- If your child/Children live in different homes the boundaries are going to be different, the child/ children need to clearly understand the different boundaries in each household using brief clear language, or picture format e.g. a visual, display the them where the child young person can clearly see. If you co-parent your children/young people, it could be a good idea if you could keep to the same boundaries for both households for consistency and less confusion.
- If boundaries are broken keep calm, check your tone of voice and address the broken boundary when you are both calm and ready to discuss.

Conclusion

Boundaries are not about control; they are about connection and safety. For neurodivergent children/ young people, thoughtful and suitable boundaries offer an important framework that nurtures their development and safeguards their wellbeing. They provide clarity in a world that can often feel overwhelming, while teaching valuable life skills that enable individuals to thrive on their own terms.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

Whether your child receives a diagnosis of autism and/or ADHD, you will be given a plan of care. This plan will include a clear explanation of the assessment results and recommendations for supporting your child's needs effectively.

Suffolk Local Offer are pleased to inform us that Essex Family Forum has created an exceptional resource pack in collaboration with families. This resource pack focuses on supporting neurodivergent children and has been localised to provide Suffolk-specific resources. It offers practical interventions, resources, hints, and tips based on the lived experiences of local families.

We believe that this will be a valuable tool in helping you navigate the support systems in Suffolk and provide you with practical strategies to support your child effectively.

Click the image to view the pack.



PARENT CARER EVENTS CALENDAR

We have upgraded our events calendar to make it easier for you to find events and book on to them.

You'll find training, activity sessions and peer support drop-ins.

Why not check it out and book yourself on to some!

VISIT NOW!

Please note that most of our events are for families registered under the ND Pathway.



Male Parent Carer Virtual Drop In

Space to share. Space to connect. Just for male carers.

Are you a parent carer or supporting someone under 25 with additional needs and need a space to connect?

This online drop-in is for male carers of any kind, whether you're supporting a child, family member, or loved one. Join us for advice, connection, or simply to listen in. Stay as long or as little as you like.

**Launching
Thursday 22nd May**

What to expect

Peer
Support

Quick advice,
real connection

Talk it
through,
or just listen

Stay for 5
minutes or the
whole session

When?

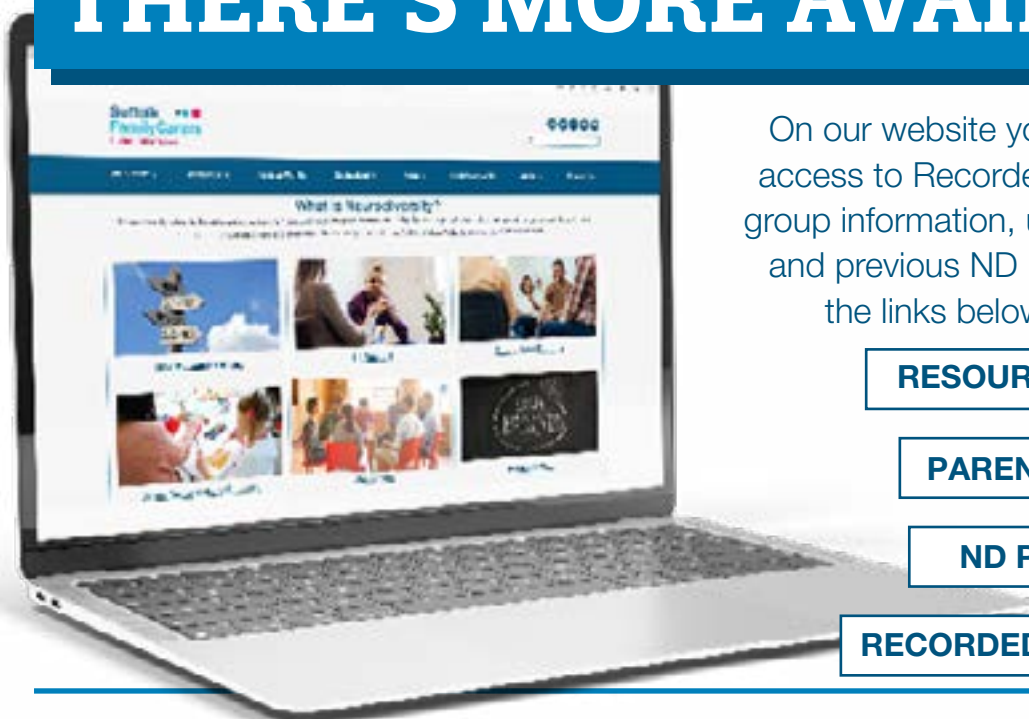
Thursday 22nd May
Thursday 19th June
Thursday 17th July

19:00-20:00 | Online (Teams)

Suffolk FamilyCarers
Living Fuller Lives

Book via our website
Join us – exactly as you are.

THERE'S MORE AVAILABLE!



On our website you are now able to get access to Recorded workshops, support group information, useful links to resources and previous ND related articles. Follow the links below to find out more:

RESOURCE SECTION

PARENT CARERS

ND PROJECT

RECORDED WORKSHOPS

SUFFOLK SENDIASS

Suffolk SENDIASS are trained by IPSEA through the National IASS network. Each of our team members complete an initial 90 hours of accredited legal training, so that we can give you information based on legislation rather than local policy. We regularly receive training updates to ensure that the information we share is correct and current.

We work to a set of national Minimum Standards for services providing impartial information, advice and support relating to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). The Minimum Standards are developed by the Information, Advice and Support Services Network. Providing unbiased information and advice about the local authority's policies and procedures, about health services and provision in relation to SEND, and about the policy and practice in local schools and other settings.

You may find the answer to some of your questions by looking through the information on our website [HERE](#) or through our social media channels. We have some downloadable leaflets and factsheets. If you can't find the answers to your questions, you can get in touch directly. enquiries@suffolksendiass.co.uk

Text ADVICE4ME to 87007 and we will get in touch with you as soon as we can.

The SENDIASS helpline 01473 265210 is open 9am to 5pm Monday to Thursday, and 9am to 4pm on Friday.

We are a small team and the helpline usually has only one operator working at any given **time**.

If you can't get through to someone on your first attempt please do leave your details in a message. Please remember to give your name and your telephone number slowly and clearly on any message you leave.

SENDIASS Online Events

AUTISM CENTRAL

Autism Central is a peer education programme, commissioned by NHS England. It aims to build knowledge and understanding of autism and empower families and carers to advocate for autistic people they support. Local support helps families to get the right understanding and adjustments in place across the services they use.

Everything the programme does is informed by, or co-produced with autistic people, families and carers.

Autism Central hubs deliver the programme in seven regions of England through group and one-to-one sessions, giving information on local services. Each session is delivered by parents and carers of autistic people who are happy to share their knowledge and experience with others. To find out more visit [Autism Central](#) for Parents and Carers.

A DAY OUT AT THE FOOD MUSEUM

FOOD
MUSEUM

THE ARMED FORCES
COVENANT FUND TRUST

We have two corporate day passes for the Food Museum in Stowmarket that are available FREE for a day to any registered family carer, with each providing free entry to the museum for up to 6 people, giving an opportunity for a fun day out.

**MORE INFORMATION
CLICK HERE**

A DAY AT THE FARM

As part of our Time Out Together project we now have a family day pass for Easton Farm Park.

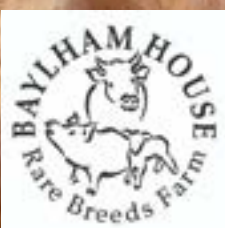
To have the chance for FREE entry to the farm please click here.

FIND OUT MORE HERE



THE ARMED FORCES
COVENANT FUND TRUST

REQUEST A PASS HERE



A DAY OUT AT BAYLHAM RARE BREEDS FARM

Parent Carer Virtual Drop In

Space to share. Space to breathe. From your own home.

Join our relaxed online drop-in for parent carers. Whether you want to talk something through, ask a question, meet others who get it, or just take a moment for yourself – you're welcome here.

**Launching
Thursday 8th May**

What to expect

**Peer
Support**

**A listening
ear**

**No pressure
to talk**

**Stay for 5
minutes or the
whole session**

When?

**Thursday 8th May
Thursday 5th June
Thursday 3rd July
19:00-20:00 | Online (Teams)**

Suffolk Family Carers
Living Fuller Lives

**Book via our website
Join us – exactly as you are.**

Suffolk Family Carers
Living Fuller Lives



01473 835477 | hello@suffolkfamilycarers.org



@aspaceforparents



@A Space For Parents

Unit 6 & 9, Hill View Business Park, Claydon, IP6 0AJ