



Parents *Connected*



September 2025

INSIDE:

- Low demand approach
- College Transition
- New on demand workshops
- 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

Themed craft, coffee and chat sessions are structured craft sessions where you will get a chance to learn and practice a new craft. The sessions are hosted by parent carer volunteers.

Crochet • Cake Decorating • Seasonal • Bring your Own

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

BOOK YOUR PLACE NOW

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.



**SUFFOLK
LIBRARIES**

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](#)

MISSED A WORKSHOP?

We understand how difficult it is being a parent carer, so if you had booked onto a workshop, need a reminder of what we covered or just didn't get chance to attend we have a library of pre-recorded workshops on our YouTube channel.

[CHECK THEM OUT](#)

JUST ADDED:

- Low demand approach
- Executive function and visuals
- Supporting your neurodivergent teen and young adult

COLLEGE TRANSITION

Michelle Barnett is a Family Advisor for the ND Team at Suffolk Family Carers. She has written an article aimed at young people, and their carers who are considering next steps in education.

Hello, I'm James's mum, and I'd like to share a bit about our journey as a family navigating James's transition into college. James is 18 and lives with us, his dad, younger brother, and me in Suffolk. He was diagnosed autistic at around six years old, though he doesn't often refer to himself as autistic. To his close friends, it's simply the 'ism just one part of who he is. But to us, he's always just been James.

Recently, James started attending a mainstream college, and I thought it might be helpful for others to hear about how we got there through open days, taster sessions, and the application process.

James spent most of his secondary school years at an independent specialist school where he felt supported, understood, and genuinely happy. It was the right environment for him. He made friends, mostly through shared interests like gaming, and engaged well with learning. Against expectations, he achieved five GCSEs something we were once told might not happen.

However, after his GCSEs, James hit a wall. He was completely burnt out and found it hard to stay engaged with the post-16 programme at his school. With a lot of patience and encouragement from us and teachers, he managed to attend school once a week just for English lessons, working hard to pass his English Language GCSE; an exam he's now attempted several times and has just taken again (4th time lucky!!!).

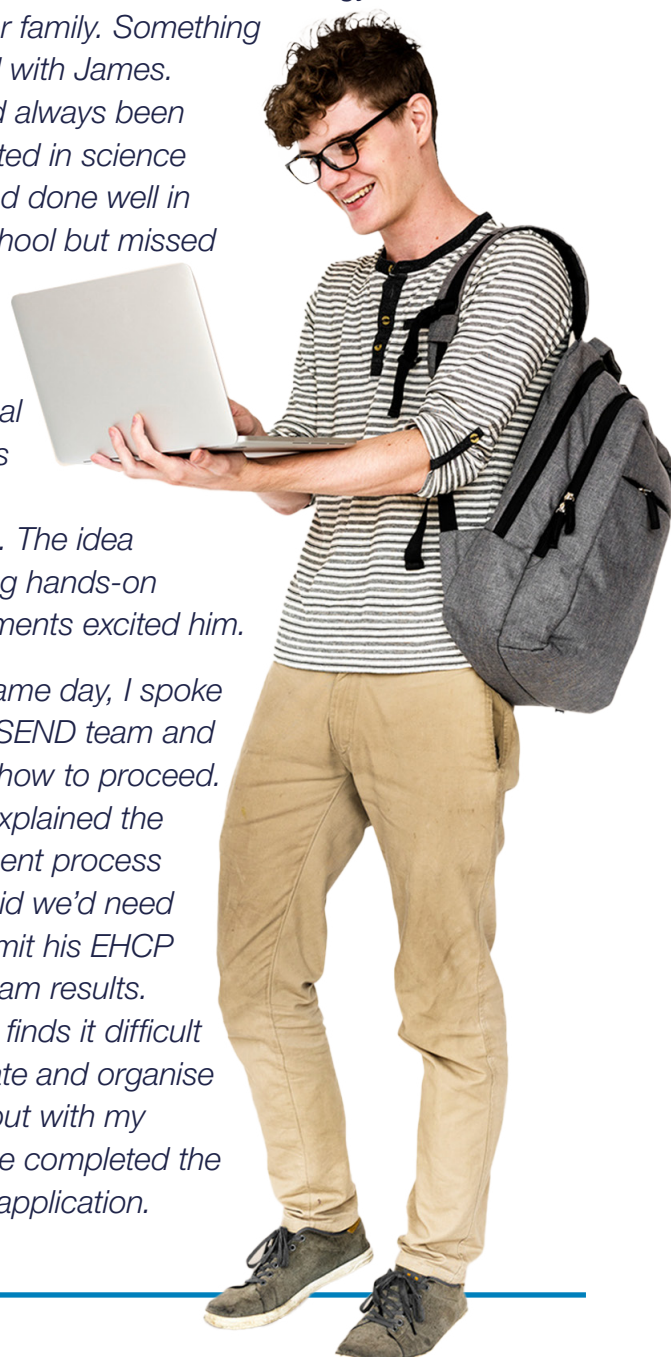
One key support during this time was a young person's worker from the local authority, who would come to our home to talk about James's future. He gently encouraged James to step out of his comfort zone and attend a college open

day. So, we went together as a family. It was a lot bigger and busier than his school, but James actually quite liked it.

We toured the entire college, though nothing really grabbed his interest, despite our assumption he'd be drawn to gaming or IT courses. Then we happened upon the science department, just as a tutor was discussing the Forensic Science and Criminology course with another family. Something clicked with James. He had always been interested in science and had done well in it at school but missed out on

practical lessons during COVID. The idea of doing hands-on experiments excited him.

That same day, I spoke to the SEND team and asked how to proceed. They explained the enrolment process and said we'd need to submit his EHCP and exam results. James finds it difficult to initiate and organise tasks but with my help, he completed the online application.



As part of the process, James also filled out a wellbeing questionnaire. The student support team then arranged a phone call with him to discuss some of his answers, particularly about his burnout. Since phone conversations are difficult for James, they kindly arranged a face-to-face meeting instead. The staff were warm, respectful, and put him at ease.

From there, the SENCO got in touch with us and suggested some transition visits before the taster day. James was very nervous, so I went with him on the first visit. The SENCO was lovely, and she made a real effort to speak directly to James, not just to me, and that made him feel included. She showed us quiet areas and shortcuts through the building, which helped James feel more comfortable.

She suggested more visits at different times of the day to help James get used to the college environment. He did two more, one at the start of the day and one at the end, both without me. That was a huge step. The SENCO supported him throughout and even introduced him to the learning support team. James was genuinely surprised at how friendly everyone was. These visits helped build his confidence in the lead-up to the taster day.

When the taster day arrived, we were both nervous. I dropped him off, and a familiar face from the SEN team was there to meet him, just as we had arranged. That small gesture made a big difference. James spent the day attending talks and trying out a class in his chosen subject. Importantly for him, he got to eat lunch in a quiet area.

He came home, slightly overwhelmed, tired but proud and thankfully still enthusiastic about the course. That was all we needed to hear.

Here are some tips that you might find helpful when thinking about college:

- Talk through your options with people who can support you. This could be your parents/carers, siblings, teachers or careers advisers.

- Look out for open days of the colleges that interest you or arrange alternative visits with the college.
- Check out the college website, it should contain policies and how they support learners with additional needs.
- Look through college prospectus. These usually include course summaries and requirements too. This should help you find a course you could be interested in. Most colleges have these available to view or download on their website. You can also ask the college for a physical copy.
- Talk with your parents/carers about the support you may need at college.
- Consider making a list of what you want to ask during your visits.
- Think about visiting at different times of the day to get a proper feel of the college.
- Try and arrange to meet with people who will be working with you, for example, tutors or support staff

During and after your visit you might want to try and think about these things:

- Did the college feel welcoming?
- Do the people that go there seem happy?
- Do you think you would be happy at that college?
- Do you think the college can meet your needs?
- How will you get to college?
- Don't be afraid to ask more questions if you have them!

For further information take a look at the following resources:

- [Young people](#)
- [Suffolk Sendiass - YouTube](#)
- [Post-16 education](#)
- [Preparing for adulthood](#)

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

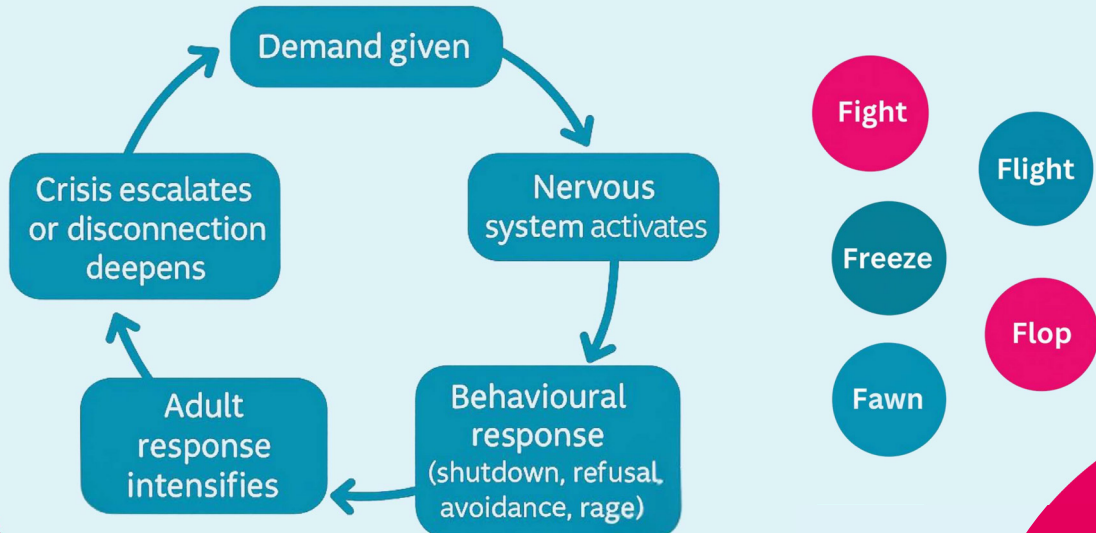
As well as the main Suffolk Family Carers social profiles, there are also specific pages for Parent Carers where we share relevant resources and information. To keep up to date with our events, resources and more, make sure you follow A Space for Parents on Instagram and Facebook.



LOW DEMAND APPROACH

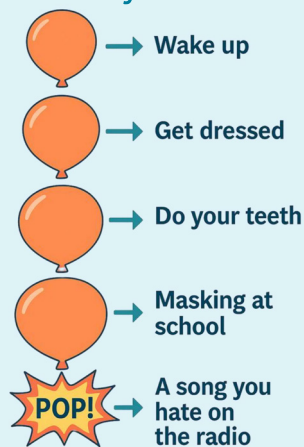
Slides from our Low Demand Approach workshops

DEMAND AVOIDANCE CYCLE



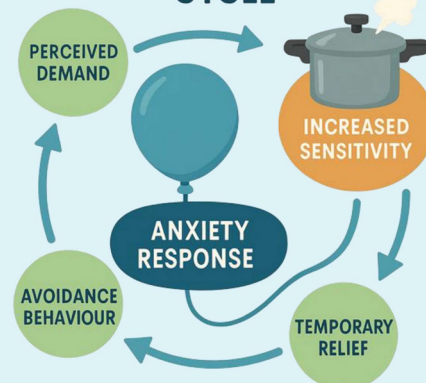
DEMAND STACKING

Imagine a balloon being filled throughout the day



It was never about the song

THE DEMAND-AVOIDANCE CYCLE



LOW DEMAND APPROACH

Continued...

WHAT IS THE LOW DEMAND APPROACH

A connection-first way of supporting children where we reduce non-essential demands, focus on regulation, and create emotional safety.



WHY IT MATTERS

- Connection builds trust**
Children are more likely to follow guidance when they feel safe, seen, and connected.
- Reduces anxiety and overwhelm**
Low-demand approaches help reduce the internal stress that drives shutdowns, avoidance, or meltdowns.
- Supports emotional regulation**
Meeting kids where they are helps co-regulate their nervous system and strengthens their ability to manage emotions.
- Encourages long-term growth**
When children feel safe, learning happens. Growth is slower but deeper when led by curiosity, not pressure.
- Improves relationships**
Less conflict means more space play, and genuine connection in everyday life.
- Nurtures autonomy and self-worth**
Children begin to feel capable, not controlled – which helps them build confidence on their own terms.

IT'S NOT...

- Letting them "get away" with things
- Being lazy or inconsistent
- Avoiding teaching altogether
- A free-for-all with no boundaries
- About the adult giving up – it's about tuning in

COMMUNICATION

The Six Core Elements Of Communication

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|--|---|
| | | | | | |
| Declarative language
"I'm heading to the car now"
Tells what's happening, without pressure | Reduced questions
Swap "Can you brush your teeth?" for "Teeth time - I'll be in the bathroom" | Curious invitations
"I wonder if we'll need..."
Invites rather than demands | Say less, mean more
Use pauses. Fewer instructions.
More processing time | Non-urgent tone
Soft, slow, unpressured tone.
No "come on" or "quickly" | Options + opt-outs
"You can join if you want"
Always a way out |

Real Life Example

We used to argue every morning about getting dressed. Now I just lay his clothes nearby, say 'I'll be downstairs when you're ready' and the pressure's gone. Some days he still struggles, but we're connected instead of clashing.

Changing how I speak changed how he felt, and that changed everything."

LOW DEMAND APPROACH

Continued...

FLEXIBLE BOUNDARIES / SHARED CONTROL

You just need to be more strict, implement boundaries?

NO!

Low demand does not mean no boundaries.

Boundaries can be flexible and protective.

‘You can’t hit, but you can stomp or scream here.’

It’s okay to say no AND still stay regulated and present.

Shared control is not loss of authority – it’s gain of collaboration.

When a child feels powerless, their only option may be refusal.

Building shared control rebuilds trust.

‘What feels manageable right now?’ is more powerful than ‘You need to...’

SAYING NO, WITHOUT NO.

That sounds exciting, but I think it might feel a bit too much if we tried it today.

That’s a brilliant idea, I’m just not able to make it happen at the moment.

You wanted But I wonder if this might feel a bit easier instead?

Did you see what the cat just did?

Core Elements

Look for a Win-Win

The need stays, but they get power in the process.

Offer an Alternative

The want stays valid, you just shift the shape of it.

Distract / Redirect

You don’t ignore the feeling, you just loosen its grip.

Remind of a Past Experience

You gently anchor the moment without shaming the past.

Empathise and Co-Regulate

You hold the boundary with kindness, not control.

FOR MORE INFORMATION WATCH OUR PRE-RECORDED LOW DEMAND APPROACH WORKSHOPS

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



Sibs

For brothers and sisters
of disabled children and adults

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.

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

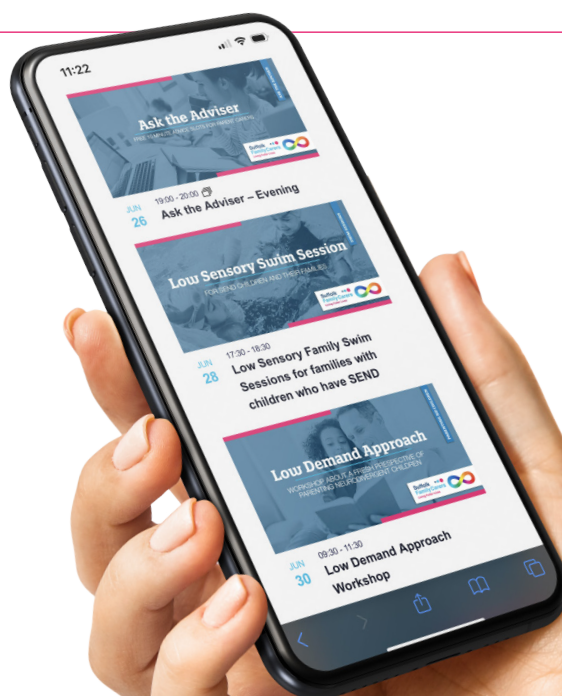
We have upgraded our events calendar to make it easier for you to find events and book on to them.

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.

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 - Please see website for dates
19:00-20:00 | Online (Teams)

Suffolk Family Carers
Living Fuller Lives

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

MISSED OUR WORKSHOPS?

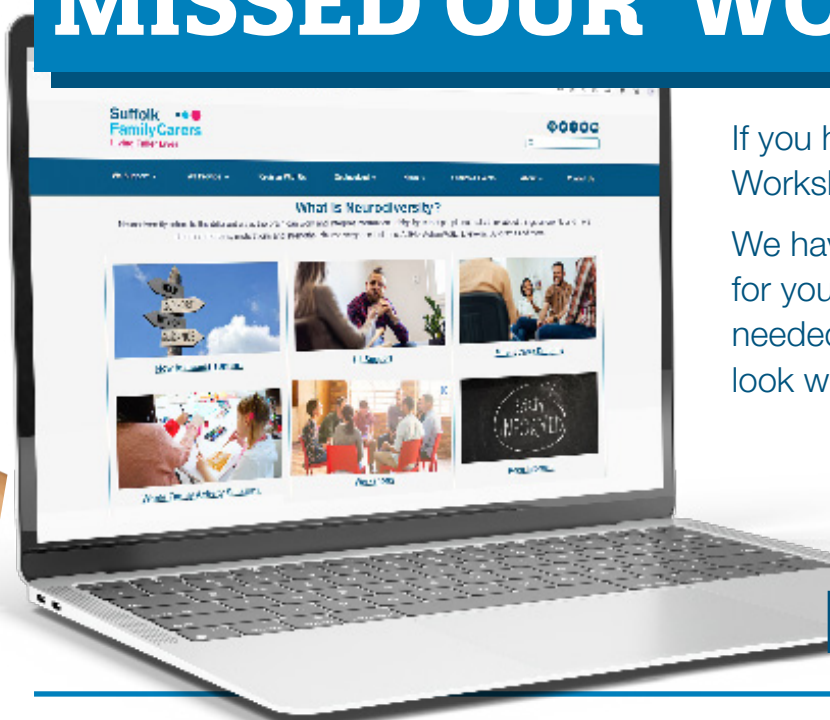
If you have missed one of our Parent Carer Workshops, no need to worry...

We have started to record some of these for you to watch back and refer to when needed. You can find them on our new look website.

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.



**VISIT THE
RARE BREEDS
FARM IN
BAYLHAM!**

REQUEST A PASS HERE

**FOOD
MUSEUM**

**A DAY OUT
AT THE FOOD
MUSEUM IN
STOWMARKET!**

REQUEST A PASS HERE



**VISIT A HUGE
COLLECTION OF
AIRCRAFT AT
THE AVIATION
HERITAGE CENTRE!**

REQUEST A PASS HERE

**Easton
farm
park**

**A DAY OUT
VISITING THE
ANIMALS
AT EASTON
FARM PARK!**

REQUEST A PASS HERE

Parent Carer Virtual Drop In

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

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Support**

**A listening
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**No pressure
to talk**

**Stay for 5
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01473 835477 | hello@suffolkfamilycarers.org



@aspaceforparents



@A Space For Parents

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