

Suffolk Parent Carer Forum

Newsletter May 2025



Welcome

Welcome to the May half term edition of our newsletter, where you will find Suffolk Parent Carer Forum news, updates and events.



Membership

We always welcome new Parent and Carer membership to capture real experiences of SEND in Suffolk.

If you would like to become a member, please sign up [here](#)

Did you know that we also offer Affiliate Membership at SPCF?

Affiliate membership is designed for practitioners, within both the Voluntary and Statutory sectors. Members will be kept up to date by receiving regular information and news. You can sign up [here](#)

SPCF End of Term Closure

We will be closed from Monday 26th May and return on Monday 2nd June. All the SPCF team are parent carers, and this enables us to meet our caring responsibilities.

Mike McKeaveney, the new Assistant Director of Inclusion and SEND at Suffolk County Council

“My name is Mike McKeaveney, and I have recently joined Suffolk County Council as the assistant director of inclusion.

I have a diverse background in education, leadership, and governance. I began my career in research and business before transitioning to teaching. With 25 years in education, I have held leadership roles across various school types, including Academies, Voluntary Aided, and community schools in London.

I fully recognise the significant work required in Suffolk and the profound impact it has had on families. I am eager to contribute to the meaningful change that the county urgently needs.”



Amber Burton, the new Director for Inclusion, Education & Learning at Suffolk County Council

“Hello everyone,

I am really pleased to be joining Suffolk as the new Director for Inclusion, Education & Learning, from May.

I have a long history in education, from working in special residential schools to mainstream and post 16 education settings. I have also worked in different local authorities of all shapes and sizes and in different strategic roles. Through all my experiences I have learned that the best way to do a great job for children, young people and families, is by working closely and in true partnership with them. I know how important it is to hear the views and experiences of parents and carers as their insight enables service and system developments in the right direction and from the right place.

I am really looking forward to working in Suffolk and getting to know everyone. I know there is a lot to do, and I am certainly up for the challenge!”



SPCF Upcoming Opportunities

Please see below a list of our upcoming sessions for your diaries.

➤ **Neurodevelopmental Local Offer Support Focus Group – 22nd May**

This session is for parents and carers to share what they need from Suffolk's Local Offer website, to support them in caring for their neurodivergent child or young person.

➤ **Coproduction Focus Group – 23rd May**

This session is for parents and carers to hear about work on coproduction and supporting a more positive way forward.

➤ **Virtual Coffee Morning – 5th June**

A relaxed drop-in session, hosted by Jerry, our Expert by Experience. This is for parents and carers to feedback on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) experiences with us and learn more about Suffolk Parent Carer Forum.

➤ **SPCF Bury St Edmunds Event – 12th June**

Abbeycroft Leisure Centre, Beetons Way, IP33 3TT

We invite you to come and meet professionals and support services in Special Needs and Disabilities (SEND) at this in person event.

➤ **ARFID Peer to Peer Support Group – 17th June**

The purpose of this session is for general peer to peer discussion around ARFID (Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder) and possible coproduction opportunities.

➤ **SENDIASS Information Group – 4th July**

This is the opportunity to meet professionals in the SENDIASS team, to ask questions, find out about the service they provide and how they support SEND families in Suffolk.

➤ **Virtual Coffee Morning – 11th July**

This drop-in session is hosted by Sue, our Chair of Trustees. Sue has been a SEND advocate for many years and has a wealth of knowledge. This session is for parents and carers to feedback on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) experiences with us and learn more about Suffolk Parent Carer Forum.

SPCF Meetings

This month, SPCF has been actively raising concerns with leaders regarding ongoing issues faced by families navigating SEND services. Key challenges highlighted included difficulties with school attendance, the rejection of private diagnoses, and long delays in accessing support. Families have also reported poor experiences during annual reviews and unhelpful responses when making formal complaints.

SPCF has voiced particular concern about the lack of communication on the Right to Choose and is hopeful that updates will be shared with families soon.

In efforts to drive improvement, SPCF is calling for the relaunch of annual review training, with a strong push for schools and settings to engage.

SPCF has shared anonymised quotes from families describing their experiences with the complaints process, underlining the need for a more responsive and empathetic approach.

Please keep sharing your feedback with us. We value your voice and your time.

You can provide your feedback on SEND, education and health services in Suffolk at any time [here](#)



Parent / Carer Complaints Comments



"Little point in complaining unless they are going to investigate and answer"

"Cherry pick what parts of the complaint to answer"

"Inaccurate responses"

"Poor grammar"

"At what point will they even care?"

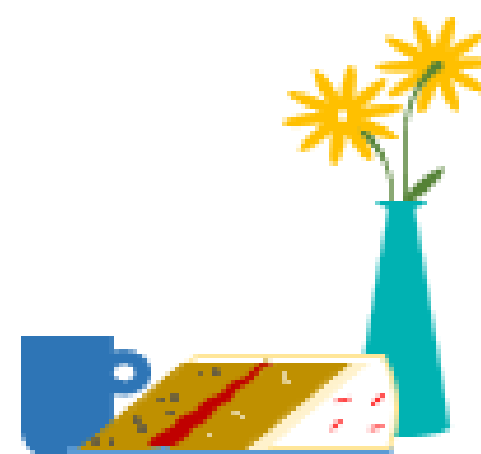
"Don't always respond to complaint"

"Have to chase them"

"Shut down"

Suffolk County Council Meeting Minutes

Suffolk County Council make documents and minutes from their SEND meetings available on the Governance and Oversight section of their website. You can view the documents along with information about the committees, boards and panels [here](#)



Suffolk Parent Carer Forum

Virtual Coffee Morning

with Jerry, SPCF Expert by Experience

This relaxed drop-in session is for parents and carers to feedback on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) experiences with us and learn more about Suffolk Parent Carer Forum.

Friday 5th June 10:30AM – 11:30AM

This is an open invitation, and you are welcome to drop in throughout the session. We ask all participants to adhere to our Members & User Agreement when attending.

Join the meeting via Microsoft Teams

Meeting ID: 334 112 106 640 1

Passcode: Z7yX3Xv6



Working towards a brighter future for
Suffolk's children and young people

suffolkpcf.co.uk [01473 760933](tel:01473760933) info@suffolkpcf.co.uk



Suffolk Parent Carer Forum



SEND OPEN EVENT

Come and meet professionals and support services in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Featuring

Suffolk County Council, Health Services (NHS), SENDIASS Specialist Education Services, Psychology in Schools Team, Attendance, Travel Training, Activities Unlimited, Suffolk MIND, Suffolk Family Carers, Wellbeing Suffolk, Health Watch Suffolk, ACE Anglia, Family Action, PACT, BEANS and more!

**Bury St. Edmunds
Abbeycroft Leisure Centre**

Beetons Way IP33 3TT

Thursday 12th June

10:30AM – 1:30PM

For those seeking a quieter time, we recommend attending during the final hour

📞 01473 760933

✉ info@suffolkpcf.co.uk

🌐 www.suffolkpcf.co.uk



FACEBOOK.COM/SUFFOLKPCF

SPCF East Open Event 2025

On Thursday 15th May, SPCF hosted an in-person event for families of children and young people with SEND. The event provided a valuable opportunity to connect with professionals from education, health, and the voluntary sector—allowing families to learn about available services, ask questions, and share their experiences in a supportive environment.



We were delighted with the number of services that attended and the willingness of professionals to engage openly and supportively.

Most importantly, we want to say a heartfelt **thank you to the families** who came along—whether you were there to ask questions, gather information, or feel heard, your presence made the event truly meaningful.



We hope to see more families at our **next event in Bury St Edmunds on Thursday 12th June**—another great opportunity to connect, share, and access support.



**Click here
to take
the survey**

Suffolk Parent Carer Forum

Invites parents and carers to take part in our

ANNUAL SURVEY 2025

We are gathering the experiences of parents and carers on Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) in the last year, to influence positive change in Suffolk for children and young people.

The survey is open from **1st - 31st May** to all Suffolk based parents and carers who have children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The link for the survey is -

<https://forms.office.com/e/1XtzZ3LXeJ>

Visit our website at **suffolkpcf.co.uk** to complete the survey or find it pinned on our **Facebook** page!



Working towards a brighter future for
Suffolk's children and young people

 suffolkpcf.co.uk  01473 760933  info@suffolkpcf.co.uk



ARFID Focus Group

Families met with Dr Beth Mosely and SPCF to explore future directions for peer-to-peer support and co-production in children's services. Using Slido, Beth asked families to share what they most need from these sessions. Attendees highlighted the importance of being updated on services, avoiding lengthy presentations, and having genuine, two-way conversations in a non-judgemental environment. Families expressed a desire for support through shared lived experiences and valued the opportunity to engage in open discussions on flexible topics with others who understand their situations.

Nathalie MacDermott, the newly appointed paediatrician, provided updates on ARFID (Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder) Paediatricians will be able to refer over-11s directly to the ARFID service, while discussions can take place for under-11s prior to a referral if needed. Training for health visitors is also planned, and an ARFID-dedicated website is to be developed. The next session is scheduled for 1pm on 17th June, with no fixed agenda to allow for a free-flowing conversation.

Opt-in for school or Post-16 travel

Who needs to opt-in

(You must opt-in each school year)

- ✓ New pupils
- ✓ Returning pupils
- ✓ Post-16 students

Opt-in deadline

- ! Applications must be received by 31 May 2025



DEFINE FINE

Define Fine is a national parent carer led peer support organisation. Their team all have lived experience of children and young people with school attendance difficulties, sometimes referred to as EBSA: Emotionally Based School Avoidance - linked to unmet Special Educational Needs & Disabilities including physical or mental health, either suspected or diagnosed, bullying, issues relating to academic pressure, or even the school environment.

Their support model is based on current relevant government guidance and research to enable parents, carers and professionals to work together from the earliest signs that a child or young person is experiencing barriers to education.

You can find out more about Define Fine, their parent and carer resources and useful links [here](#)



Family Fund Grants

Family Fund Trust offer various grants to families of disabled children and young people to purchase things like Family breaks, Computers and tablets, Sensory toys, Games consoles, Outdoor play, Days out, Games, books and music, Specialist trikes / bikes, Clubs, hobbies and activities.

Eligibility, criteria and application can be found [here](#)



Family Fund
Helping disabled children



Office of the
Public Guardian



Carers Week

LPA AND DEPUTYSHIP INFORMATION SESSION

12 JUNE 2025 | 1PM – 2PM



To mark Carers Week, OPG is holding a free online information session for people with caring responsibilities.

If you help manage the finances or health of the person you care for, you may want to learn more about lasting powers of attorney (LPAs) and deputyship orders.

Join us to find out how to apply, how much it costs and what the role of an attorney or deputy involves.

Register

REGISTER HERE





HOPELINE247

HOPELINE247 is a suicide prevention helpline for anybody aged 35 and under who is experiencing thoughts of suicide, or anybody concerned for a young person.

Call: 0800 068 4141

Text: 88247

Email: pat@papyrus-uk.org

Open 24 hours a day, every single day of the year.

[Click here to visit their website and resources](#)



PAPYRUS
PREVENTION OF YOUNG SUICIDE

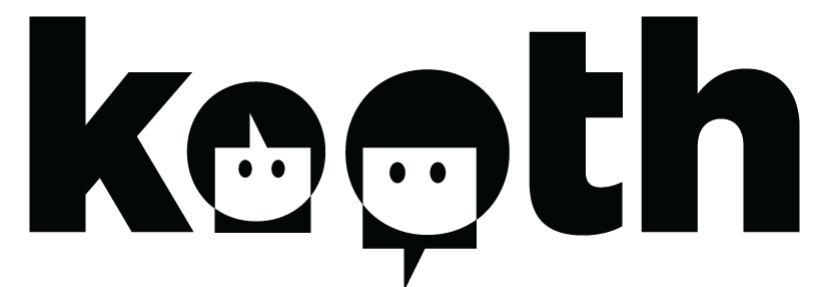
Kooth

Kooth is a free, safe, and anonymous online platform where young people can access mental health support whenever they need it. Delivered in partnership with the NHS, Kooth is available to anyone between the ages of 10-18, and in some areas, it extends up to age 25.

The online nature of Kooth means that neurodivergent people can access mental health and wellbeing support from a safe space, free from sensory triggers and travel demands.

The potential stressors that come with telephone or face-to-face support can be avoided, removing some of the barriers to talking about their mental health.

You can explore the Kooth website and what they have to offer young people [here](#)



The Mix

The mix is a youth work charity-based hub in Stowmarket. They offer a range of clubs and opportunities for young people.

All the clubs at The Mix are supported by their SEN Youth Worker.

This includes inclusion training, adapting resources, building support networks in the community, and creating bespoke approaches to working with young people with different needs.

More information about their SEND programmes and activities can be found on their website [here](#)



DROP INS

2025 TERM TIME DROP-IN TIMETABLE

HOME-ED DROP IN

Fortnightly on Mondays (Years 7 to 11)

1pm to 3pm At The Mix Stowmarket

12th May // 2nd June // 30th June // 14th July

YEAR 7 & 8

Weekly on Mondays

4pm - 6pm

At The Mix Stowmarket

YEAR 9 TO 11

Weekly on Thursdays

4pm - 6pm

At The Mix Stowmarket

DROP IN LATES

Weekly on Tuesdays (Ages 16 to 19)

5pm - 7pm At The Mix Stowmarket

NEEDHAM MARKET DROP IN

Weekly on Fridays (Year 7 to 11)

4pm - 6pm At The Hut Needham Market

X-SPACE DROP IN

Monthly on Wednesdays (Ages 18 to 25)

5pm to 7pm At The Mix Stowmarket

Fourth Wednesday of each month

SUMMER HALF TERM

at 4YP

For more information contact us at: 01473 252607 | Youthteam@4yp.org.uk | www.4yp.org.uk

26
MAY

Bank Holiday Monday

NO SESSION TODAY

GOALS

TUE
27
MAY



Goals & Games (younger)

9.45am-3pm Years 4-6 (8-11 yr-olds)

Morning session at Goals followed by lunch at The Hub and then games through to 3pm

Meet at Goals at 9.45am for 10am start. Pick-up at Hub 3pm. Lunch included!

WED
28
MAY

Goals & Games (older)

9.45am-3pm Years 7-11 (12-16 yr-olds)

Morning session at Goals followed by lunch at The Hub and then games through to 3pm

Meet at Goals at 9.45am for 10am start. Pick-up at Hub 3pm. Lunch included.



THUR
29
MAY



Girls Group Taster & Workshop

1pm-3.30pm Years 5-10 (10-15 yr olds)

Curious about Girls Group? Try our Girls Group taster session. No pressure, just fun!

Years 5 & 6 are also welcome to stay on for our Thursday Girls Group 4.30-6.30pm

FRI
30
MAY



Boys Group Workshop

Workshop & Planning session for new Boys Group

All boys invited and welcome to join us to discuss, network and plan how a new Boys Group might look!

Meet at 4YP Hub 10am - 12.30pm

ALL ACTIVITIES ARE FREE!

During half term our usual weekly groups will be running as normal. Find the 4YP Hub at:
14 Lower Brook Street, Ipswich IP4 1AP.



PLACES WHERE KIDS EAT FREE (OR FOR £1) MAY HALF TERM 2025

moneysavingcentral.co.uk/kids-eat-free



ANGUS STEAKHOUSE

Kids under 8 eat FREE daily, 12pm to 5pm

ASDA

Kids eat for £1 daily, with no adult spend

ASK ITALIAN

Kids under 10 eat for £1 during school holidays

BEEFEATER

2 kids under 16 eat for FREE with 1 adult breakfast

BELLA ITALIA

Children eat for £1 with any adult main

BILLS

Kids Eat Free, weekdays, Mon 26th – Fri 30th May

BREWERS FAYRE

2 kids under 16 eat for FREE with 1 adult breakfast

BREWDOG

2 Kids eat free with 1 adult, Mon 26th – Fri 30th May

BURGER KING

From 26th May - 1st June 2025,

Kids Eat Free with every adult meal, via the app.

COCONUT TREE

Kids Eat Free from Sun 25th May to Sun 1st June.

DOBBIES GARDEN CENTRES

Kids eat for £1 with an adult breakfast or lunch

FARMHOUSE INNS

2 kids eat FREE with one paying adult, Friday 23rd to Friday 30th of May. Sign Up Required

FUTURE INNS

Under 5s eat for free with any adult meal

GORDON RAMSEY RESTAURANTS

Kids under 10 eat FREE all day, every day

HUNGRY HORSE

Kids eat for £1 on Mondays

IKEA

Kids get a meal from 95p daily from 11am

LAS IGUANAS

Kids under 12 eat FREE with 'My Las Iguanas' App

MARCO PIERRE WHITE

Kids under 12 Eat FREE daily with an adult spend

MORRISONS

Kids Eat FREE all day, every day with a £5 spend

PAUSA CAFE @ DUNELM

Kids eat FREE with every £4 spend after 3pm

PREMIER INN & TRAVELODGE

2 kids eat for FREE with 1 adult breakfast

PRETO

Kids up to age 10 eat free with 1 paying adult

PUREZZA

Kids under 10 get free pizza with every adult meal

SA BRAINS PUBS

Kids eat for £1 on Wednesdays

SIZZLING PUBS

Kids eat for £1, Every Monday to Friday, 3 - 7pm

TABLE TABLE

2 Kids Eat free breakfast daily with 1 paying adult

TGI FRIDAYS

Kids Eat Free with any adult meal (Via App)

THE REAL GREEK

Kids under 12 eat FREE Sundays with £10 spend

WHITBREAD INNS

2 kids eat for FREE with 1 adult breakfast

YO! SUSHI

Kids eat free all day (weekdays) in school holidays

Activities Unlimited is part of Suffolk County Council. They give grants to activity providers around the county, to enable them to put on high quality, inclusive groups, clubs and activities for children and young people with additional needs and disabilities.

To view the providers guide for 2024-2025, click [here](#)



Short Breaks Personal Budgets

A Short Break Personal Budget is a sum of money paid directly to eligible families as a contribution to help your child access short breaks and to give you a break from your caring responsibilities. You can find out more information and how to apply [here](#)

AU Update

“A message for anyone who has received a NEW Prepaid Card. We are receiving calls from parents querying why there are no funds in the account. Payments will be made from April 2025. A text message will be sent to let you know when a payment has been made to your Prepaid Card.”

SENDIASS

Suffolk SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service) is a confidential and impartial information, advice and support service on issues related to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). It is free, easy to access and confidential. They can help children, parents and young people take part in decisions that affect their lives.

They offer information, advice and support to:

- Children and young people (up to 25 years) with SEND
- Parents and carers of children with SEND
- Practitioners (who might support children, young people or parents to access our service)

You can find a list of the SENDIASS online sessions [here](#)

All of the SENDIASS workshops can be viewed after the event on their YouTube channel [here](#)

Special Educational Needs
and Disability Information,
Advice & Support Service

sendiass
in Suffolk

Suffolk Local Offer

Suffolk Local Offer provide a range of information and advice for families of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Suffolk.


They cover topics including:

- Education
- Health and Wellbeing
- Social Care
- Preparing For Adulthood
- Short Breaks & Leisure


You can find them [here](#)

Suffolk Inclusion Support Line

Advice, guidance and information for education settings to help meet the needs of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).



Call us today on 01473 265502
Email - localoffer@suffolk.gov.uk
www.suffolklocaloffer.org.uk



contact

Contact are a charity that offer a range of services to support families with disabled children. They give information and advice, run a variety of workshops, provide 1:1 telephone appointments for parent carers needing emotional support and more.

You can find out more about the services they provide [here](#)

Their workshop calendar can be viewed [here](#)

Contact have also launched a free helpful guide which is an all-in-one book full of the information and help you need to enjoy family life.

You can order a copy [here](#)

Autism and Nature

Autism and Nature are a non-profit organisation who aim to improve life for children with autism by engaging them with nature.

believe that contact with the natural world can benefit a child's learning, health and wellbeing, and act to raise awareness of these benefits by developing educational resources in partnership with schools, local authorities, conservation organisations and autism charities.

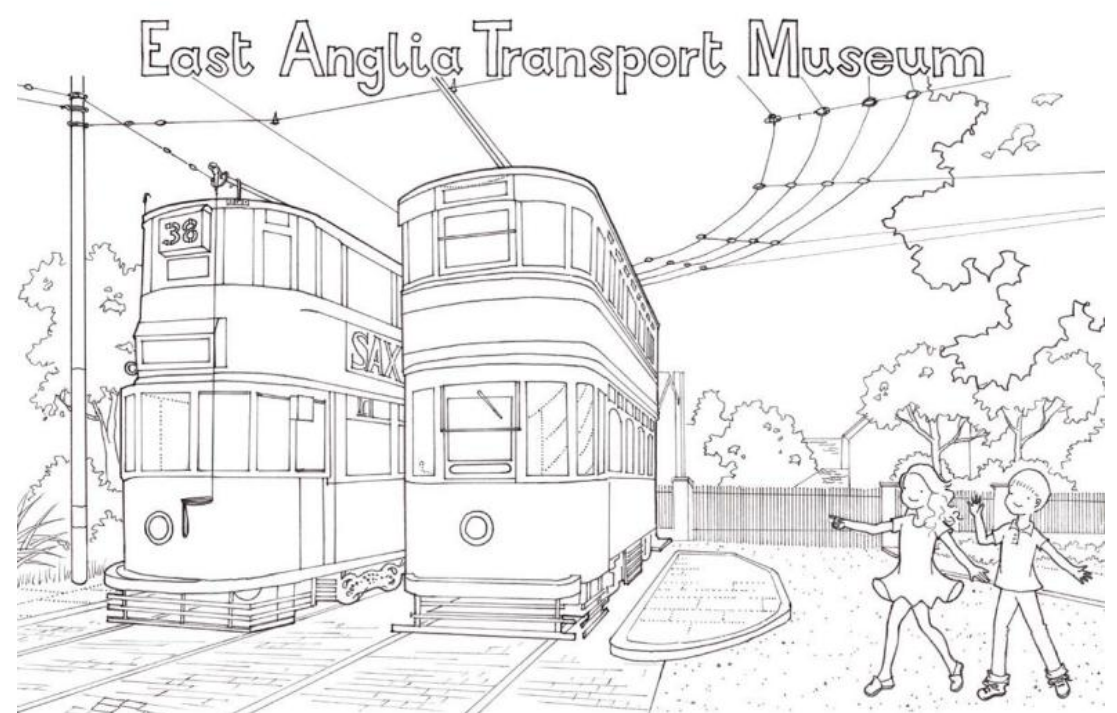
Their books are designed to help parents, carers and teachers to engage children with autism and related disabilities with the countryside, natural world and rural heritage. Illustrations are accompanied by simple text supported by Widgit symbols.

Framlingham Castle



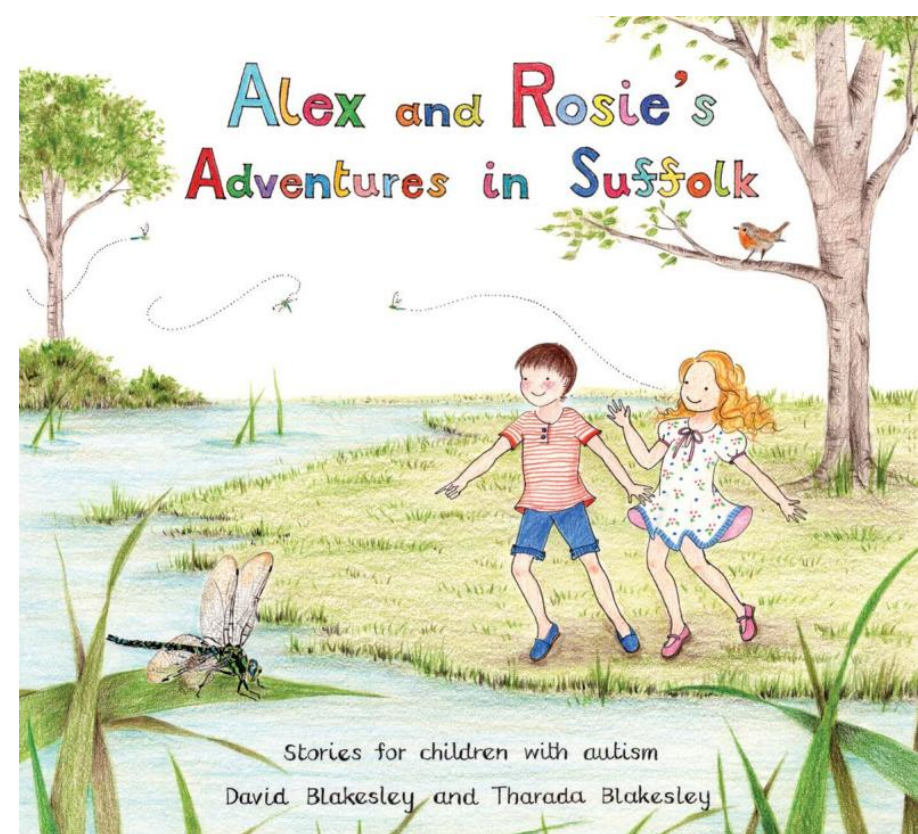
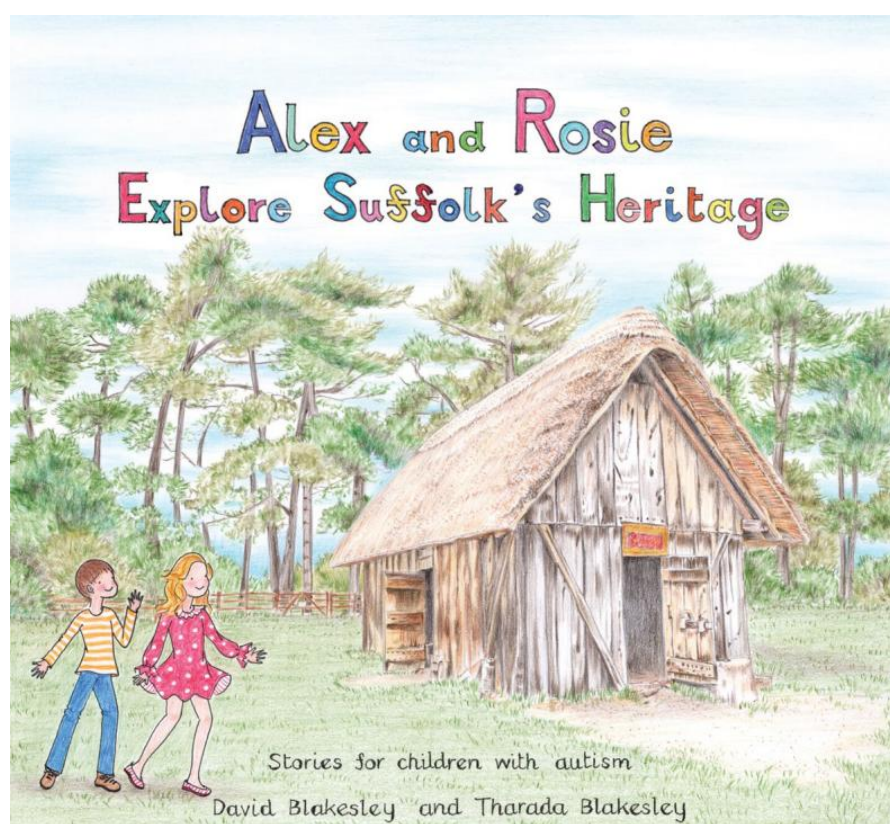
Alex and Rosie were excited to visit Framlingham Castle.

The castle walls were very tall.



Alex and Rosie enjoyed a ride on the tram.

They have kindly made the resources below available for families in Suffolk to download free of charge on the Suffolk Local Offer Website [here](#)



PACT offer non-clinical peer-led support and resources for parents and carers. Their vision is to reach parents and carers across Suffolk who are caring for a child or young person with mental health issues. They offer support (face to face meetups, online, and our outreach 1:1 service), training (including Youth Mental Health First Aid and parent guided CBT) and tools/resources to help both with a parent/carers wellbeing and via them, their child/young person too.



You can contact PACT at parentsandcarerstogether@gmail.com



"Supporting you, supporting your child"

**Suffolk Support for parents and carers of children and young
people with mental health issues**

www.parentsandcarerstogether.uk

Helpline number (07856) 038799 (not 24/7)

**Support group for parents and carers of children and
young people with mental health issues**



@pactenquiries



/parentsandcarerstogether/

Low Sensory Swim Session

FOR SEND CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

[Click the image to see session dates and booking information](#)

Suffolk
Family Carers
Living Fuller Lives



SWIM SESSIONS

Ask The Advisor

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

#LiftLoudForDanny Groups

Monday Drop ins 10.30am to 12.30pm, pop along for as little or long as you like for any of our sessions.

1st Monday of the Month, Time for You for those struggling with their mental health and/or their carers. Mini mindfulness with Stacey, cuppa and chat.

2nd Monday, Heart of the Matter with Stacey Richards, a wellbeing drop-in for those experiencing mental health difficulties or their carers.

3rd Monday, PACT for parents/carers of young people 0-25 who may be struggling with their wellbeing.



4th Monday, Time for You for those who may be struggling with their mental health and/or their carers. Mini mindfulness with Stacey, cuppa and chat.

Thursday Night Drop In 7.30 until 9pm, Cuppa and chat for those who experience mental health issues, loneliness or isolation. Somewhere to support each other through kindness, empathy and understanding. Table top activities/puzzles/games.

1st Tuesday SEND Drop in 10 until 12 for parents or young people 16+ who may need support with Special Educational Needs or just join others who understand for a cuppa and chat. Third Tuesday Zoom online, contact us for details.

You will find us at Push Forward, 113-114 High Street, Lowestoft, NR32 1HN





DROP-INS

Steam House Cafe, Ipswich

**First Tuesday of the month 10am-12pm
22 Carr Street, Ipswich, IP4 1EJ**

Pavilion Cafe, Woodbridge

**Second Tuesday of the month 10am-12pm
Pavilion Cafe, Jetty Lane, Woodbridge, IP12 4BA**

Linden House, Bury St Edmunds

**Third Tuesday of the month 10am-12pm
147 kings Road, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 3DJ**



A monthly group for parents and carers of neurodivergent children and young people to ask questions, raise concerns and receive non judgemental support and guidance.

For more information visit accessct.org

**SUFFOLK
LIBRARIES**

**WHERE
I BELONG**

Special Educational Needs
and Disability Information,
Advice & Support Service

sendiass

in Suffolk

**Lowestoft Library offer relaxed SEND-friendly sessions every
Saturday morning, for families to meet and play together.**

SENDIASS will be joining us on these dates:

February 8th 9-10am

March 22nd 9-10am

May 3rd 9-10am

Lowestoft Library, Clapham Road South, Lowestoft, NR32 1DR.

No need to book, just drop-in!

suffolklibraries.co.uk



By donating to Suffolk Libraries you can help us fund crucial additional services that reduce social, digital and rural isolation in our communities. For details visit www.suffolklibraries.co.uk/donate

POWRC charity number: 30734478



**Working towards a brighter future for
Suffolk's children and young people**

🏠 Suffolk Parent Carer Forum, Brightspace, 160 Hadleigh Road, Ipswich, IP2 0HH

☎ 01473 760933 ✉ info@suffolkpcf.co.uk 🌐 www.suffolkpcf.co.uk