

Suffolk Parent Carer Forum

Newsletter December 2025



Welcome

Welcome to the December 2025 end of term edition of our newsletter, where you will find Suffolk Parent Carer Forum news, updates and family events.

We are continuing to refresh and add to our online information section to support parents and carers navigating Suffolk SEND education and health services.

You can view all our resources [here](#)



Membership

Why should you become a member of Suffolk Parent Carer Forum?

It's completely **FREE**

Stay up to date with our projects, news and SEND developments in Suffolk

Receive our newsletters straight to your inbox

Hear about SPCF events and other SEND-related events happening locally

Take part in opportunities to share your experiences and have your say

Get involved in meaningful co-production with services

Be entered into members-only prize draws

Your voice matters. Together, we can make a real difference for children and young people with SEND.

If you are a parent, carer, grandparent, family member or professional you can join us for free today [here](#)

Affiliate Membership

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](#)

Feedback

Your feedback on SEND education, and health services in Suffolk is valuable to us. Please share your thoughts anytime [here](#)

Anonymous Feedback

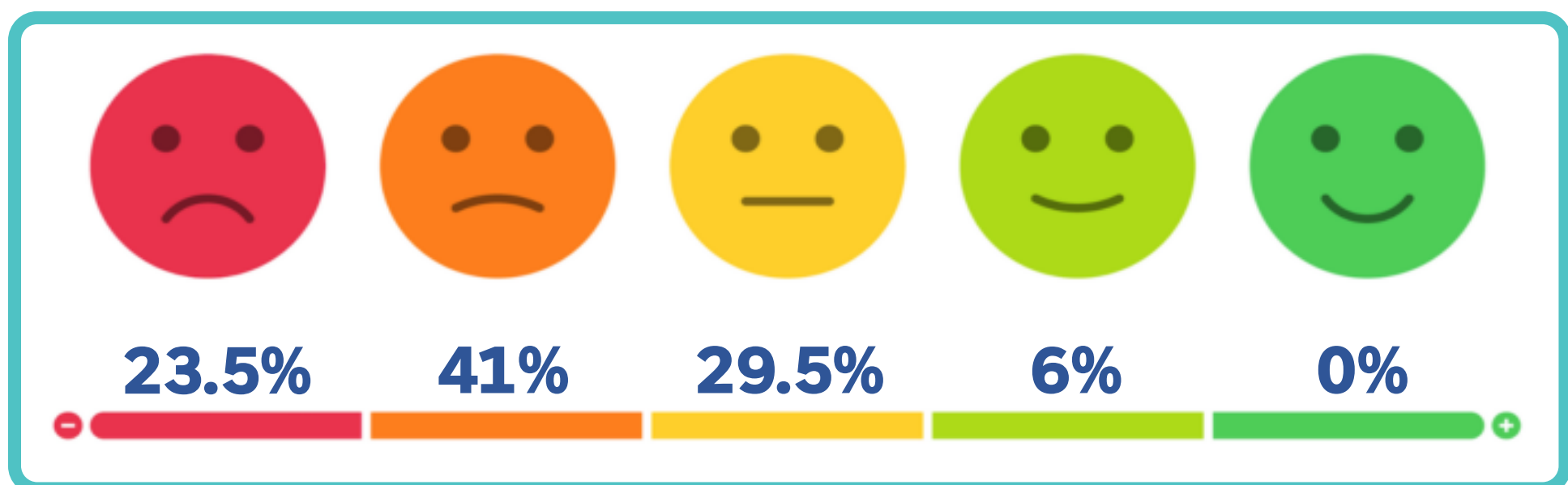
Every Tuesday during term time, we reach out to the parent and carer community on our social media to see how you're getting on.



We understand how vital SEND services are, which is why we offer this anonymous space for you to tell us what's working and what needs to improve.

It only takes a moment to answer our two quick questions, but the impact is huge. We take your feedback directly into our meetings with health and education partners to ensure your voice is heard.

Below is a scale of how parents and carers have told us they are feeling since November.



We will continue to run our anonymous feedback opportunities every Tuesday. Thank you for helping us work on improving services for our SEND children and young people.

Suffolk County Council Meeting Minutes

Suffolk County Council make some 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 Pharmacy Opening Times



The seasonal period can affect local pharmacy opening times. The quickest way to check which pharmacies are open in Suffolk and North East Essex (SNEE) is by using the official NHS Find a Pharmacy service.

How to Find Open Pharmacies

The NHS updates its online service with bank holiday hours for every pharmacy, including those in the SNEE area.

Visit the NHS 'Find a Pharmacy' Website:

Go to: www.nhs.uk/service-search/pharmacy/find-a-pharmacy/

Enter Your Postcode:

Type in your home postcode or the postcode of the area you will be visiting.

Check Opening Times:

The results will show pharmacies near you, and their specific opening hours for Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Day, and any other bank holidays.

While the NHS website is the official source, consider calling the pharmacy before travelling to double-check their opening hours, especially if you are making a special journey.

Your Holiday Checklist

Order Repeat Prescriptions Early:

GP practices and pharmacies are very busy at this time of year. Consider ordering any repeat medicines you need well in advance, allowing at least 5-7 working days for your GP to process the request and your pharmacy to dispense it.

Stock Up on Essentials:

Make sure you have over-the-counter medicines at home, such as pain relievers, cold and flu remedies, and a first-aid kit, to manage common winter illnesses.

For Urgent Medical Advice:

If you need urgent medical help or advice when your GP practice is closed, and it's not a life-threatening emergency, visit 111.nhs.uk or call **111**.



Suffolk Parent Carer Forum will close for the end of term on Friday 19th December, and reopen on Monday 5th January



The Parent Carer Project

We understand that for many parents and carers, there is a real sense of uncertainty. As services and funding shift, support can feel fragile. Many tell us they wonder what is still available or who to trust. At Suffolk Family Carers, we listen to ensure the information we share is genuinely accessible and helpful.

One vital offer is the **Parent Carer Project**. Parent caring is rarely straightforward; it doesn't follow neat timelines or end at a specific age. The emotional load and the advocacy often continue in ways that feel unseen by others. For many, the role evolves but the responsibility never fully disappears.

Support is available for those caring for children and young people with additional needs from early years right through to age 25. We are clear on this because parents of young adults often tell us they feel forgotten. If you care for a young person up to 25 and that role affects your wellbeing, this support remains for you.

You do not need a diagnosis or a specific threshold to access help. What matters is the impact caring has on you and your family. You do not need to be in crisis or have all the answers before reaching out to us.

The project recognises you as a person, not just a service user. There are various ways to engage, depending on what feels manageable for you right now:

Regular Drop-ins: Both in-person and online, these provide a space to talk openly or simply sit and listen. We also offer a dedicated virtual drop-in for male carers, recognising that men often appreciate a space designed with them in mind.

One-to-One Support: You can work with a Parent Carer Family Worker for focused, short-term support. Whether navigating education transitions or managing the emotional load, this is offered at a pace that suits you.

Ongoing Access: You aren't expected to fit your life into a fixed box. Support can be accessed again if circumstances change, acknowledging that caring journeys are ongoing and often unpredictable.

Cont.

This isn't about a brief interaction and moving on. We listen and respond to help you feel steadier, rather than rushing you. Alongside this, our events and activities throughout the year create opportunities for families to connect in a supportive, rather than demanding, environment.

We know how hard it can be to take the first step. Many parents feel they "should" be coping or that they shouldn't take up space. You don't need the right words, and you don't need to reach breaking point to deserve support.

We are sharing this because it matters that you know what is available, especially when other doors may feel like they're closing. Knowing that support exists, and that you can return to it when needed, makes a real difference.

If you'd like to access this support, register via our website [here](#) and click 'Register'. Then, a member of the team will be in touch. If registering online feels difficult, or you'd prefer to make contact another way, you can also email the team at hello@suffolkfamilycarers.org and they will help guide you through the process.

Wednesday 24th December

Hub: 9am - 4pm | Reception: 10am - 1pm

25th and 26th December CLOSED

Monday 29th December

Hub: 9am - 5pm | Reception: 10am - 4pm

Tuesday 30th December

Hub: 9am - 5pm | Reception: 10am - 4pm

Wednesday 31st December

Hub: 9am - 4pm | Reception: 10am - 1pm

Wednesday 1st January CLOSED



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 and carers to access their service)

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

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

Festive Period Service Update

“Over the festive period, our team will continue to provide support for families. We will only be closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day, and New Year’s Day.

Thank you for your support throughout 2025. We wish you and your family a very Happy Christmas and a wonderful New Year.”

The SENDIASS Team



Christmas inclusion for pupils with SEN(D)



Lots of different activities can take place near the end of the winter term.



We have information about inclusion and adjustments for children and young people with SEN or a disability.

Special Educational Needs
and Disability Information,
Advice & Support Service

sendiass

Christmas Inclusion Information from SENDIASS

SENDIASS have information and guidance on inclusion and reasonable adjustments below.

[Equality and inclusion - Suffolk SENDIASS](#)

[Inclusion of pupils with \(SEND\) – SENDIASS video](#)

[Reasonable adjustments - Suffolk SENDIASS](#)

[SEN Information Report - Suffolk SENDIASS](#)



Applying for primary school 2026/2027

**Deadline:
15th January 2026**

The process is different if
your child has an EHC plan.

Special Educational Needs
and Disability Information,
Advice & Support Service

sendiass

Information from SENDIASS

Children born between 1 September 2021 and 31 August 2022 are due to start primary school in September 2026. You can apply for a school place from 1 November 2025. **The deadline to apply is 15 January 2026.**

The admissions process is different for children and young people who already have EHC plans. However, if you have requested an EHC needs assessment, or this is underway, do still apply through admissions, as there is no guarantee the assessment will lead to an EHC plan.

They have information to help you below.

[Apply for a primary school place 2026/2027 - Suffolk County Council](#)

[Choosing a school for a child with SEND - Suffolk SENDIASS](#)

[Transition tips \(changing school or key stage\) - Suffolk SENDIASS](#)

[SEN Support - Suffolk SENDIASS](#)

[SEN Information Report - Suffolk SENDIASS](#)

[Preparing for Transition to Primary School – webinar recording](#)

Seasonal Support for SEND Families

While the festive period is a time for rest and celebration for many families, we understand that for SEND families, it can also be a source of significant stress.

Navigating the school break can be difficult. Despite the excitement, the holidays often bring major disruptions to the routines that many SEND children and young people rely on to feel safe. This may require parents and carers to use tailored strategies and careful planning to ensure the time is enjoyable and not overwhelming.

We have highlighted some online resources below that offer advice on preparing for the holiday season:



[Contact](#)

[Action For Children](#)

[Toucan Education](#)



We hope that parents and carers can find small, nurturing ways to take a break and care for themselves this season. Even if it's taking five minutes to sit with a warm drink or ensuring you include an activity or tradition that you personally enjoy.

We hope that whatever this season looks like for your family, it is a time of joy, connection, and celebration.

Seasonal Support Providers 2025



Below are a list of mental health support providers available over the seasonal break. Click the images below to visit their websites, where you will find their contact options and operating hours.

If you, or someone you know, is at immediate risk of physical harm because of a mental health concern, or you are worried about your or their safety call 999 or visit your local A&E



0300 111 6000



0800 068 41 41

YOUNGMINDS

0808 802 5544



Option 2



SANE

0300 304 7000



0800 58 58 58

SAMARITANS

116 123

**Rethink
Mental
Illness**

0808 801 0525

YOU ARE NOT ALONE. OTHER SUPPORT PROVIDERS ARE AVAILABLE.



Go Jauntly is a free walking app that helps you discover local routes, with a specific focus on wellbeing, green paths and nature connection.

It includes a variety of step-free and accessible walks, making it easier to plan a route that works for your family. Whether you are looking for a five-minute wander or a longer weekend trail, it is a tool to help you find a walk that suits you.

Suffolk County Council provided a collection of walks to mark World Mental Health Day in 2024.

You can access the Go Jauntly website [here](#) where you can find more information.

Please note, you can explore the website for routes and maps, but the app requires internet access to give you step by step instructions with pictures on your journey.

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



Building understanding between autistic people and healthcare staff

Autistic people often face barriers when accessing healthcare, from communication difficulties to environments that feel overwhelming.

A.C.T. is a free, autistic-led resource co-produced with autistic people to help make healthcare communication clearer and more accessible. It helps autistic individuals share how they communicate best, what causes distress, and what helps.

- Helps autistic people explain their needs clearly
- Encourages professionals to make simple, effective adjustments
- Promotes equality and understanding in healthcare



Designed by autistic people, for autistic people

**Find out more
and try A.C.T.:**



Share A.C.T. with your members, networks or service users — together we can make healthcare communication easier for everyone.

SEN Parents Support Group

Parents/carers of SEN
children of all ages are
welcome!

**Thursday 11th December,
12:00-13:00**

RAF Honington Church

**Open to all SEND families in the community including those
not affiliated with RAF Honington**

Join our peer support group for a cuppa in a relaxed environment.

Contact: RAF Honington's SSAFA Welfare Officer – Selina Clark

Email: Selina.Clark@ssafa-fhs.org.uk



Tel: +44 800 058 4690



WHAT'S ON IN...

DECEMBER

WE'RE BACK
ON MONDAY
5TH JANUARY
2026!

Monday	DROP IN 10am-4pm Youth workers available for chats & support
 Tuesday	DROP IN 10am-4pm Youth workers available for chats & support GIRLS GROUP Year 7-Year 11 4.30-6.30pm @ 4YP Hub GAMES NIGHT 16+ 5-6.30pm @ 4YP Hub
 Wednesday	DROP-IN 10am-4pm Youth workers available for chats & support EAST BERGHOLT YOUTH CLUB Year 7-Year 11 5.30-7.30pm Constable Hall, Gandish Rd CO7 6TP WALK & TALK Year 7-Year 11 5-6.15pm @ 4YP Hub Year 11 & upwards 6.30-8pm @ 4YP Hub
Thursday	DROP-IN 10am-4pm Youth workers available for chats & support GIRLS GROUP Year 4-Year 6 4.30-6.30pm @ 4YP Hub KESGRAVE HANGOUT Year 6-Year 10 5.30-8.30pm Millennium Hall, Kesgrave, IP5 2EN
Friday	DROP-IN 10am-4pm Youth workers available for chats & support



Visit the hub at:
14 Lower Brook St
Ipswich IP4 1AP

Contact us at:
01473 252607
Youthteam@4yp.org.uk

2-INGREDIENT SENSORY RECIPES

Add food colouring or your natural dye of choice

CLOUD DOUGH

1/3 cup baby lotion
2/3 cup cornstarch

Oobleck

1 cup water
2 cups cornstarch

SOAP FOAM

1/2 cup water
1-2 tbsp baby soap

YOGURT SLIME

3/4 cups yogurt
1 cup cornstarch

FOAM DOUGH

1 1/2 cups shaving cream
1/2 cup cornstarch

FAKE SNOW

2 1/4 cups baking soda
5 tbsp water

PUDDING DOUGH

1 cup pudding
3/4 cup cornstarch

MOON SAND

2 cups flour
1/4 cup oil

DISH SOAP SLIME

1/4 cup cornstarch
2 tbsp dish soap

CHIA GOOP

1/4 cup chia seeds
1 3/4 cups water

PSYLLIUM SLIME

2 tsp psyllium powder
2 cups water

EDIBLE FOAM

Aquafaba
Cream of tartar



Santa's Grotto

SATURDAY 13TH &
SUNDAY 14TH DECEMBER

10AM TO 4PM

Join us for a weekend of festive fun!

FREE Santa's Grotto

Christmas Pudding Trail

Children's Activities

Colouring Competition

Face Painting (small fee)

FEEL FREE TO JOIN OUR SMALL BUSINESS
OWNERS IN YOUR BEST XMAS JUMPERS OR PYJAMAS!

Henstead Arts & Crafts Centre

Toad Row, Henstead, NR34 7LG

Stick Man Festive Winter Trail at High Lodge

Join Stick Man for his winter forest adventure at High Lodge. It's a lovely way to celebrate the festive season together with friends and family.

High Lodge, Thetford Forest, Brandon, IP27 0AF

[Opening hours](#)

[Get directions](#)

Trail Length

1 mile

Accessibility

Surfaced trail for most of the way



This interactive family trail follows Stick Man as he helps Santa deliver the final present. Along the way, young explorers can enjoy lots of fun wintry activities whilst keeping a lookout for hidden letters to discover who the special gift is for.

Please note, Christmas Stick Man trail packs are available, but are not required to complete the trail.

To visit the website for more winter activities, and for more information, click [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.

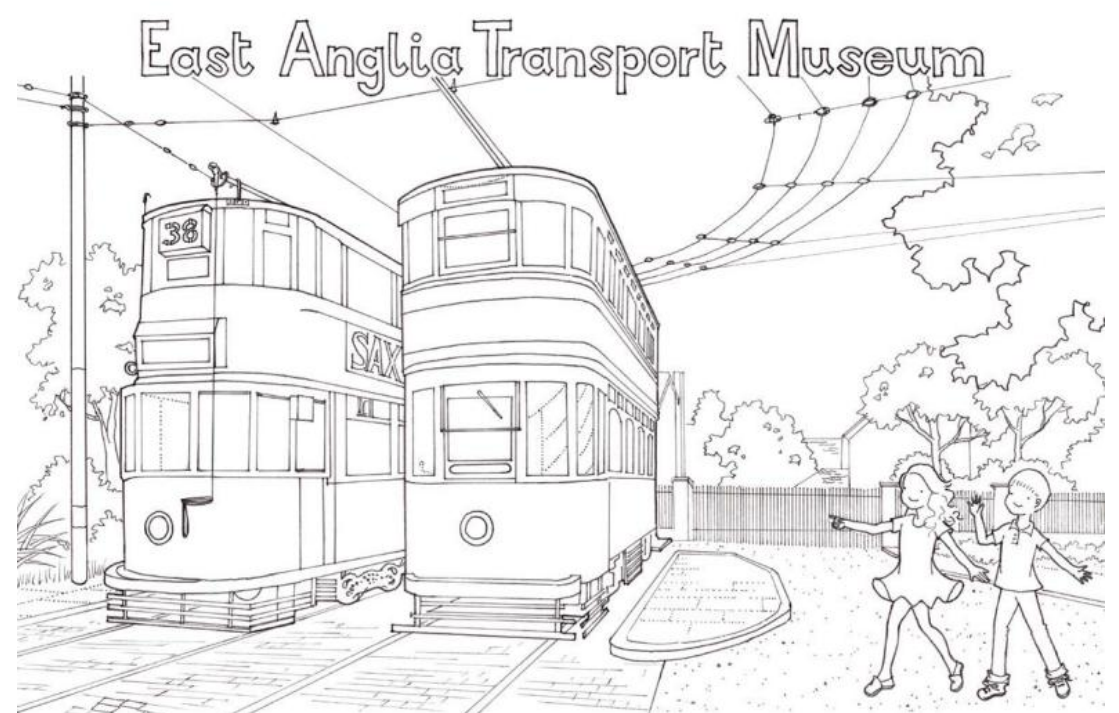
They believe that contact with the natural world can benefit a child's learning, health and wellbeing, and act to raise awareness of these benefits by developing educational resources in partnership with schools, local authorities, conservation organisations and autism charities.

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 Widget symbols.



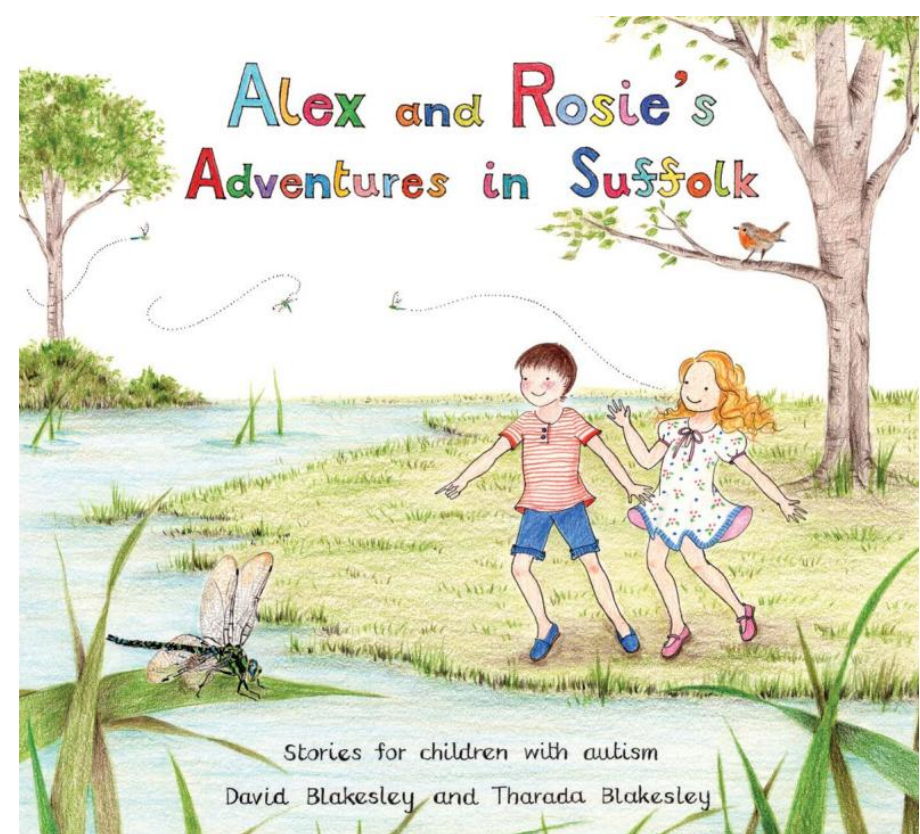
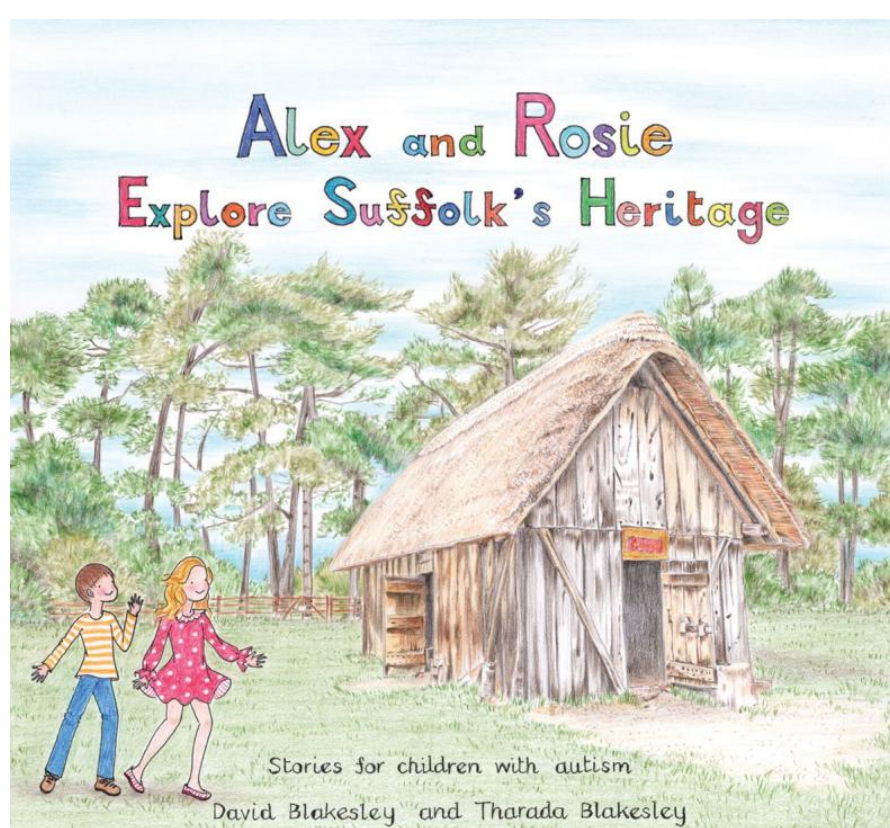
Alex and Rosie were excited to visit Framlingham Castle.

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](#)



Free Family Rides at Abbey Gardens, Bury St Edmunds

Enjoy family rides at Abbey Gardens for free this Christmas.

Brought to you by Our Bury St Edmunds BID, Bury St Edmunds Town Council and West Suffolk Council and a part of [Christmas in Bury St Edmunds](#).

Open Wednesday to Sunday 11am – 4pm from Wednesday 26th November to Sunday 21st December and on Monday 22nd December to 24th December 11am – 4pm at the former bowling green, Abbey Gardens.

Free to use



Places Where
KIDS EAT FREE
During All UK
School Holidays

Click
here for
the list!

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- Short Breaks & Leisure

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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).



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Email - localoffer@suffolk.gov.uk
www.suffolklocaloffer.org.uk

Suffolk Community Libraries

Libraries across Suffolk have various events in your local library, including meet-ups, author talks, wellbeing sessions, activities for children and more.

You can find out what's coming up at your local community library [here](#)

Home Library Service

If you or someone you know can't make it to the library, Suffolk's Home Library Service can deliver titles to homes and care homes. If health or mobility problems are preventing you or someone you know from visiting a library branch or mobile library, their Home Library Service volunteers can help. The service is free and available from most libraries.

If you think this might be right for you, you can visit their website [here](#)

Contact your local library [here](#) Email: hls@suffolklibraries.co.uk

A warm welcome at your library

Come in from the cold to a friendly face at the library. Cosy up with a good book and enjoy our free WiFi. Everyone is welcome!



Snowman ♥ Crafts



**Sunday 21st
December
11am &
2pm**

**@ Southwold
Library**

Free crafts – no need to book

**Make a wide variety of
festive snowman
themed crafts**

Suffolk
Community Libraries

suffolkcommunitylibraries.co.uk



Free Santa's Grotto

Bishops Café and Tea Room, at Holywells Park in Ipswich, are hosting a free Santas Grotto, on 20th December, from 11AM – 3PM.

Click here to be taken to their event page on Facebook – [EVENT](#)



Christmas Tree Festival

Stowmarket Town Council announced that they recently awarded a grant via StowFund to St Peter and St Mary's Church towards Stowmarket Christmas Tree Festival.

Part of the grant has funded a SEND session and books to gift children and young people. You can read more about this [here](#)

SEND Session – Thursday 11th December 6-7.30pm. The Church will be open for those with autism and other sensory needs, who need a quiet space.





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](#)

You can follow them here – [Facebook](#)

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](#)

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

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](#)

Child Trust Fund Flowchart

For families of young people with limited mental capacity, the process of accessing their savings at 18 often requires an application to the Court of Protection (COP) in England and Wales.

For savers with only a Child Trust Fund, this can be an unduly lengthy and burdensome process. Contact is working to lobby the government to change this for families.

Contact have launched a new, dedicated advice flowchart aimed at simplifying the steps for families of disabled young people attempting to access their Child Trust Fund (CTF) savings.

To access the flow chart, click [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 parentsandcarerstogogether@gmail.com



"Supporting you, supporting your child"

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

www.parentsandcarerstogogether.uk

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

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



@pactenquiries



/parentsandcarerstogogether/

Help and advice



Find information on:

- financial support
- practical support
- health and wellbeing
- work and career



Citizens Advice

Citizens Advice Suffolk are a group of independent charities that help  to find a way forward. They offer confidential and impartial advice for free.

They help with a range of topics including:
benefits, debt, employment, housing, family and relationships, energy advice,
consumer issues and more.

Their main website has resources that you can access online that could support you. They also offer support by phone; by completing a contact form or some locations offer face to face appointments. Contact your local Citizens Advice [here](#)



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