
SENDIASS SPOTLIGHT
e-newsletter
SEND updates
SEND Articles
SEND Events
OCT
2026
Norfolk SENDIASS
Information, Advice and Support Service

SENDIASS update

Welcome to the latest SENDIASS update. We are pleased to share news, resources, and service developments with families and professionals across Norfolk.

Like many services, we continue to experience high demand, and we'd like to thank families and professionals for their patience and understanding. We're incredibly proud of the positive feedback we receive, particularly from families who tell us that having someone impartial to talk things through with has helped them feel more informed, empowered and less alone.

We're pleased to see our library drop-in sessions continue to be well used, giving families another way to access advice in a relaxed and welcoming environment. We've also been adding to the resources available on our website, making it easier to find trusted information, practical guidance and answers to common questions whenever you need them.

Whether you're a parent, carer, young person or professional, we're here to help. If you need advice, have a question, or would simply like to understand more about SEND processes and support available, please get in touch or visit our website to explore our growing range of resources.

Current waiting times and booking advice

We are currently experiencing very high demand, and the wait for a Helpline appointment is around 16 days.

We know many families contact us when they are worried about a situation or facing an important decision, and we understand that waiting can be frustrating. Our team is working hard to support as many families as possible, but like many SEND services, we continue to experience high levels of demand.

To ensure appointments are offered fairly, we are only able to offer an earlier appointment where there is a legal or statutory deadline that cannot wait. All other requests will need to be booked into the next available appointment.

If you would like to have an earlier appointment, please keep checking the booking system, as sometimes these can become available if another family cancels or rearranges or we add additional calls.

We also encourage families to contact us and book an appointment as soon as they become aware of a deadline or important decision point. The earlier you get in touch, the more opportunity we have to support you.

Niamh Keane, SENDIASS Manager



Working together respectfully

At Norfolk SENDIASS, we know that the SEND journey can sometimes feel confusing, stressful and overwhelming. Many families contact us when they are facing difficult situations or important decisions about their child's education, health or support.

As a confidential and impartial service, we're here to help children, young people and parents understand the SEND process, their rights, and the options available to them. We provide information, advice and support based on the law, while taking into account each family's individual circumstances. Our team is committed to listening carefully, treating people with kindness and respect, and helping families feel informed and empowered to make decisions that are right for them.

We are proud to support families across Norfolk and ask that everyone using our service treats our staff with the same courtesy and respect that they can expect from us. We will not tolerate abusive, threatening, discriminatory or intimidating behaviour towards staff. In these situations, we may need to end or limit contact in order to protect the wellbeing of our team.

We would also like to remind families that calls, meetings and conversations with staff should not be recorded without the knowledge and agreement of everyone involved. Being open about recordings helps us maintain trust and ensures we can continue to provide support in a positive and respectful way.

You can read our full Respectful and Safe Environment Policy on our website:

Respectful and safe environment policy | Norfolk SENDIASS

We're here to help, listen and support, and we achieve the best outcomes when we work together respectfully.

ADHD Awareness

As ADHD Awareness Month comes to a close, we wanted to share a personal reflection from our Service Manager, Niamh. While awareness of ADHD is growing, many of the challenges and strengths associated with it remain misunderstood, particularly because they are often invisible to others.

In this article, Niamh shares her own experience of living with ADHD, the impact of receiving a diagnosis, and why greater understanding and acceptance can make such a difference for people whose brains work differently.



ADHD is something that shapes how I experience the world every day. On the surface, people often see someone who is organised, capable and managing multiple responsibilities, but what they don't always see is the constant mental juggling happening behind the scenes. My mind rarely switches off. Thoughts, ideas, worries and tasks can all compete for attention at the same time, making even simple things feel overwhelming. Sometimes I can spend hours hyper-focused on something I'm passionate about, while other times I struggle to start a task that I know is important – and that just scratches the surface of everything that goes on in my head!

For a long time, I was hard on myself for finding things difficult that seemed to come naturally to other people – and sometimes I still am! Receiving my ADHD diagnosis helped me understand that my brain simply works differently. It gave me permission to be kinder to myself and to find strategies that support me rather than trying to fit into a mould that wasn't designed for me.

ADHD brings challenges, but it can also sometimes bring strengths. ADHD is not something I would choose to define me, but it is part of who I am. This ADHD

Awareness Month, I want to help remind others that not all disabilities are visible, and that a little understanding can make a huge difference.

Niamh Keane, SENDIASS Manager

Blanket Policies

A blanket policy is when the same rules are applied to every pupil in the same way. While this may seem fair, it can sometimes place disabled children and young people at a disadvantage because it does not take account of individual needs.

For example, a school's healthy eating policy may not meet the needs of a child with a medical condition, or a uniform policy may be difficult for a child with sensory sensitivities or a skin condition.

The law recognises that some pupils may need a different approach. Under the Equality Act 2010, schools have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils and to avoid practices that place them at a substantial disadvantage compared with their peers.

This is particularly important when considering behaviour policies. Some children with SEND may find it more difficult to meet certain expectations because of their additional needs. Schools should consider whether a child's disability or special educational needs may be affecting their behaviour and whether reasonable adjustments are needed, rather than automatically applying the same consequences to all pupils.

An inclusive approach does not mean treating every child exactly the same. It means recognising that children have different needs and ensuring they can access education, support and opportunities on an equal basis. School policies should be flexible enough to take account of these differences and comply with equality and human rights legislation.

What can I do if I think a school is using a blanket policy unfairly?

1. Speak to the school

- Talk to your child's teacher, SENCO or Head Teacher.
- Explain how the policy is affecting your child and what support or flexibility may be needed.

2. Ask about reasonable adjustments

- Ask how your child's individual needs have been taken into account.
- Discuss whether adjustments can be made to the policy for your child.

3. Put your concerns in writing

- If the issue isn't resolved, write to the school explaining your concerns and the impact on your child.
- Keep copies of emails, letters and notes from meetings.

4. Follow the school's complaints process

- If you're still unhappy, you can make a formal complaint using the school's complaints procedure.

Amy-Lou Mulligan - SENDIAS Advisor



DfE Call for Evidence on School Exclusion

The Department for Education (DfE) is asking for views on proposed changes to school exclusion processes and has launched a national Call for Evidence, which is open until 19 November 2026. The feedback received will help shape future reforms and inform a later public consultation on how any changes should be put into practice.

The proposals focus on three key areas:

- Creating a clearer framework for internal suspensions (where a child is removed from lessons but remains in school).
- Introducing more structured support when a child returns to school following a suspension, including reintegration meetings and plans.
- Ensuring that pupils are provided with schoolwork during the first five days of a suspension or permanent exclusion to help minimise disruption to their learning.

The DfE is keen to hear from parents, carers, schools, local authorities, charities, researchers and organisations that support children and young people. It is particularly positive to see SEND Information, Advice and Support Services (SENDIAS) specifically included in the list of organisations invited to contribute evidence.

For families of children and young people with SEND, this is an opportunity to help influence how schools support pupils who experience suspension or exclusion, and to highlight what works well and where improvements may be needed. The DfE has said it wants to understand the impact of exclusion practices on different groups of pupils and what support helps children successfully return to education.

If you would like to find out more or share your views, you can access the consultation here:Call for evidence on school exclusion reform
Deadline for responses: 19 November 2026

Making Sense of SEND Event

Norfolk SENDIASS will be attending the next Making Sense of SEND event in Thetford, and we would love to meet you there.

This free event brings together families, professionals and a wide range of local SEND services, offering the opportunity to access information, advice and support all in one place. Whether you have questions about SEND, education, health services, EHCPs or available support in your area, there will be plenty of opportunities to speak directly with professionals.

Event details

Thursday 19 November
10:00am to 12:00pm
The Charles Burrell Centre
Staniforth Road, Thetford, IP24 3LH

Visitors will be able to:

- Speak with Norfolk SENDIASS and other local SEND services.
- Hear from SEND professionals and learn more about available support.
- Meet representatives from more than 20 organisations supporting children and young people with SEND.
- Share feedback and speak with members of the EHCP team or SEND advisers.

There is no need to book. Simply come along on the day.

If you are looking for information, guidance or support for a child or young person with SEND, this is a great opportunity to ask questions, explore local services and find out what help is available.

We look forward to seeing families and professionals from across the Thetford area and helping people access the support they need

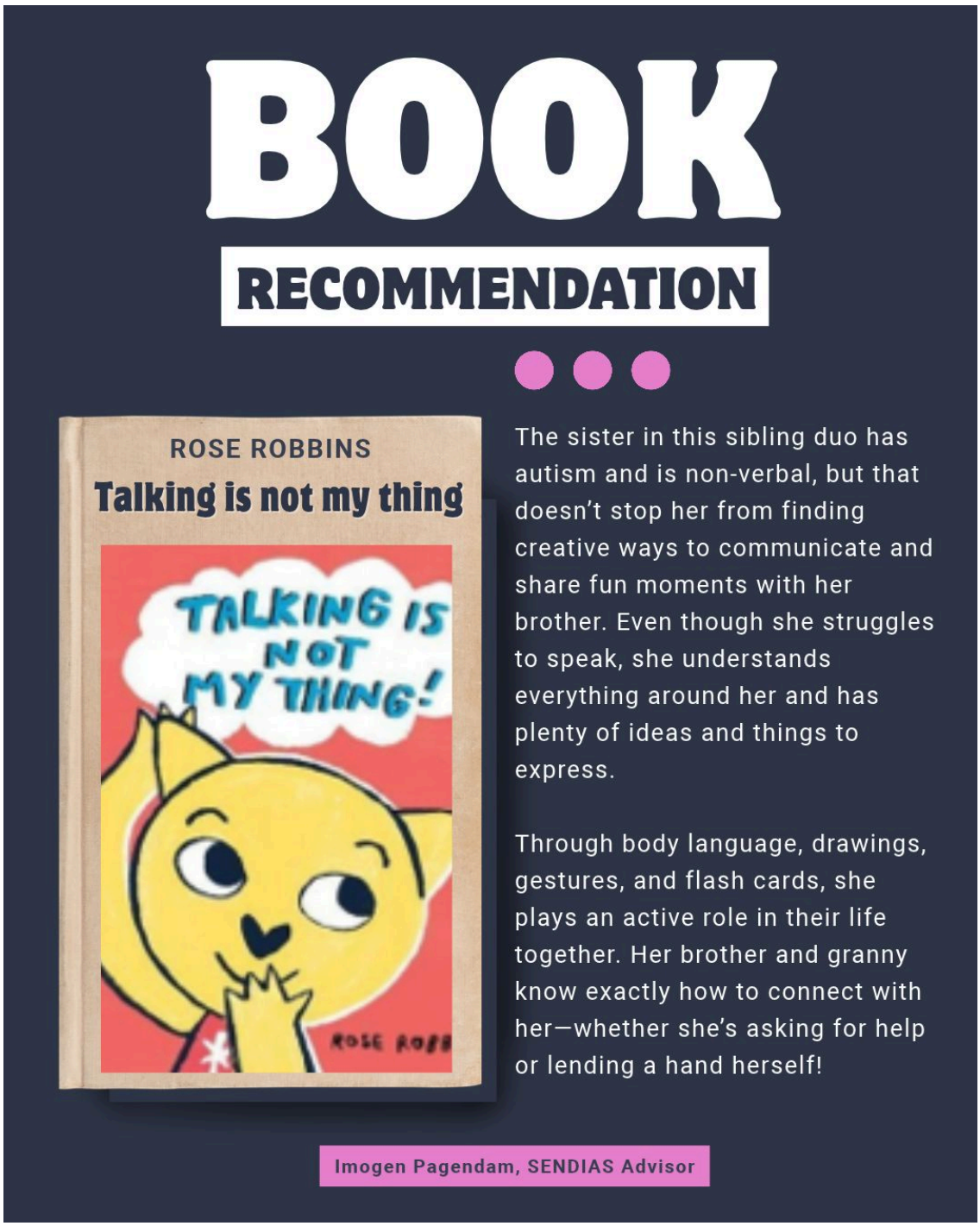


Book recommendation

Looking for a new book to read with your child? Why not visit your local Norfolk library and see if you can borrow *Talking Is Not My Thing* by Rose Robbins?

Recommended by Imogen Pagendam, SENDIAS Adviser, this heartwarming story follows a non-speaking autistic girl and the different ways she communicates with her family. It offers a positive introduction to autism, communication and inclusion for young readers.

A great read for families wanting to explore and celebrate different ways of communicating. Check with your local Norfolk library to see if a copy is available.



Find your local library

Library Drop-in's

The Library drop-in sessions are informal and friendly, our Advisor's can give you next steps advice about your child’s education, SEN Support, EHCP and other SEND processes.

All sessions are subject to change, and any changes will be advertised on our Facebook page. Please be aware these sessions do not offer a private room to talk, we will be based in main areas of the library. As we are not taking bookings, we will do our best to speak to you on a first come, first served basis. The sessions will be restricted to 20 minutes during busy times.

Take a look at our online calendar to check where you can find us in November!

Find out where you can find us

Norfolk SENDIASS
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UPCOMING

LIBRARY DROP-IN SESSIONS

NOVEMBER 26

2	WATTON LIBRARY	11:00 - 13:00
12	GREAT YARMOUTH LIBRARY	10:00 - 12:00
13	MILE CROSS LIBRARY	12:30 - 14:30
17	GAYWOOD LIBRARY	11:30 - 13:00
23	COSTESSEY LIBRARY	09:30 - 11:00
25	SPROWSTON LIBRARY	11:00 - 13:00



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Engagement and Advice Team Updates

This month, Sally and I (Emma) from the Engagement and Advice Team have continued representing SENDIASS across Norfolk. We have had a busy month as Norfolk's children and young people get settled back into the school routine. It has been lovely to see the seasons change as we travel across Norfolk, and we're looking forward to the festivities to come.

Some of our visits this month included:

Out and about with the Community Engagement Van

Broadland and South Norfolk Council have a fantastic initiative called the Help Hub Van. This month we continued our partnership with them by joining them at Hellesdon Community Centre. It was great to see the comings and goings of the busy community hub, from social groups to bounce and rhyme.

To find out more about what the Help Hub Van offers and where to find it, click HERE.



Norwich Book Festival, The Forum

During Half Term we were back in The Sunflower Snug for Norwich Book Festival at The Forum. It was lovely to return to the space, and we were lucky enough to speak with lots of families who were accessing the festival.

We are excited to confirm that we will be returning to The Sunflower Snug in February Half Term, for Norwich Science Festival 2027 – watch this space!

You can find out more about Norwich Book Festival by clicking HERE – or click HERE to have a peek at what's to come for Norwich Science Festival 2027.



SEND Youth Voice Day - August

We were delighted to be part of another successful SEND Youth Voice Day at County Hall. The event was delivered in partnership with a range of services, including the Local Offer, Norfolk SENDIASS, the SEND Participation Team, and Help You Choose.

Throughout the day, we facilitated a variety of interactive activities to gather young people's views on Help You Choose's new SEND section banner, their experiences of the EHCP Annual Review process, and the development of Easy Read resources. It was fantastic to hear the thoughtful feedback, experiences, and suggestions shared by the young people. Their valuable contributions will help shape and improve these resources, ensuring they are more accessible, relevant, and meaningful for children and young people with SEND.







Professional Engagement

We are always delighted to work with other professionals in the SEND sector, whether they're from educational settings, local authority, VCSE organisers or otherwise. If you would like to have a chat about what we can offer and how we could work together to further support families, please don't hesitate to contact us at: nsendiassengagement@norfolk.gov.uk.

If you would like SENDIASS to attend an event, coffee morning, parent group, school or team meeting, please get in touch at:
nsendiassengagement@norfolk.gov.uk

We would love to hear from you!

Emma Henry, Engagement and Advice Worker

Outreach in November

Throughout November, the Norfolk SENDIASS Engagement and Advice Workers will be attending a range of outreach events across the county, giving families and professionals the opportunity to meet us, ask questions and find out more about the support we offer.

These outreach events are separate from our regular library drop-in sessions and provide additional opportunities to connect with SENDIASS at local community events, information days and SEND-focused activities.

NOVEMBER

OUTREACH

TUE 3RD

STEPS FOOD BANK - DROP IN

09:15 -10:45 - Hope Church, Wymondham

NANSA DROP-IN

WED 11TH

10:00 - 12:00 Coastal Health and Wellbeing, Wells Community Hospital

THUR 19TH

MAKING SENSE OF SEND EVENT

09:00 - 12:30 - Charles Burrell Centre, Thetford

Our Engagement and Outreach Advisors will be attending these outreach events. Please be aware that these are not the same as our library drop-in sessions. Keep up to date with where you can find us via our online website calendar

MORE INFO: **WWW.NORFOLKSENDIASS.ORG.UK**





Norfolk SEND Youth Forum Update

Practice Week

Practice Week will take place from 16th-20th November and will focus on the 'S' in Flourish: Safe and Secure.

Earlier in the month we had some Youth forum members meet to discuss the ‘Safe and Secure’ topic, and what it meant to them. We were touched to have been trusted with some very personal and vulnerable stories, and believe these will have a direct impact on the professionals that read them. See one example below:



Their wonderful contributions will be featured in Practice Week emails and daily bulletins throughout the week. Once Practice week is over, we will share more of their quotes on our own SENIDASS Social Media channels, so keep an eye out for these!

This month’s meeting

It was a busy one! We were delighted to be joined by 11 members, including someone brand new to the group. We were also lucky enough to have Bridget back hosting, having fully recovered from her surgery in the Summer.

Professional Consultation

We welcomed Amy Lewis, Senior Designated Clinical Officer (SEND), NHS Norfolk & Waveney Integrated Care Board (NHS), who wanted to introduce herself to the group as her predecessor, Mark Gower, was a familiar face to us .

We were then joined by Laura and Lauren, Norfolk County Council SEND Participation Officers. They wanted to hear the group's opinions about the Education, Health and Care Plan Annual Review process.

Just a few of the quotes we heard were: "My EHCP Review was delayed, Last year I didn't know whether I got funding until the last week of term. For someone who's whole life depends on this support it was a difficult wait.", "Read between the lines, to notice young people are struggling." and "I would say have multiple meetings, so you know who they are, and getting to know me as a person not just another job, so I feel comfortable being myself and maybe doing something fun as well!".

Laura and Lauren are going to use the group's feedback to recommend ways for children and young people to be involved in Annual Reviews.

Everyone did an amazing job sharing their honest thoughts, ideas and suggestions, providing valuable feedback that will help to shape the Annual review process for Children and Young People in Norfolk. We look forward to hearing back from Lauren and Laura soon.

Well done everyone!

Christmas Get Together 🎄

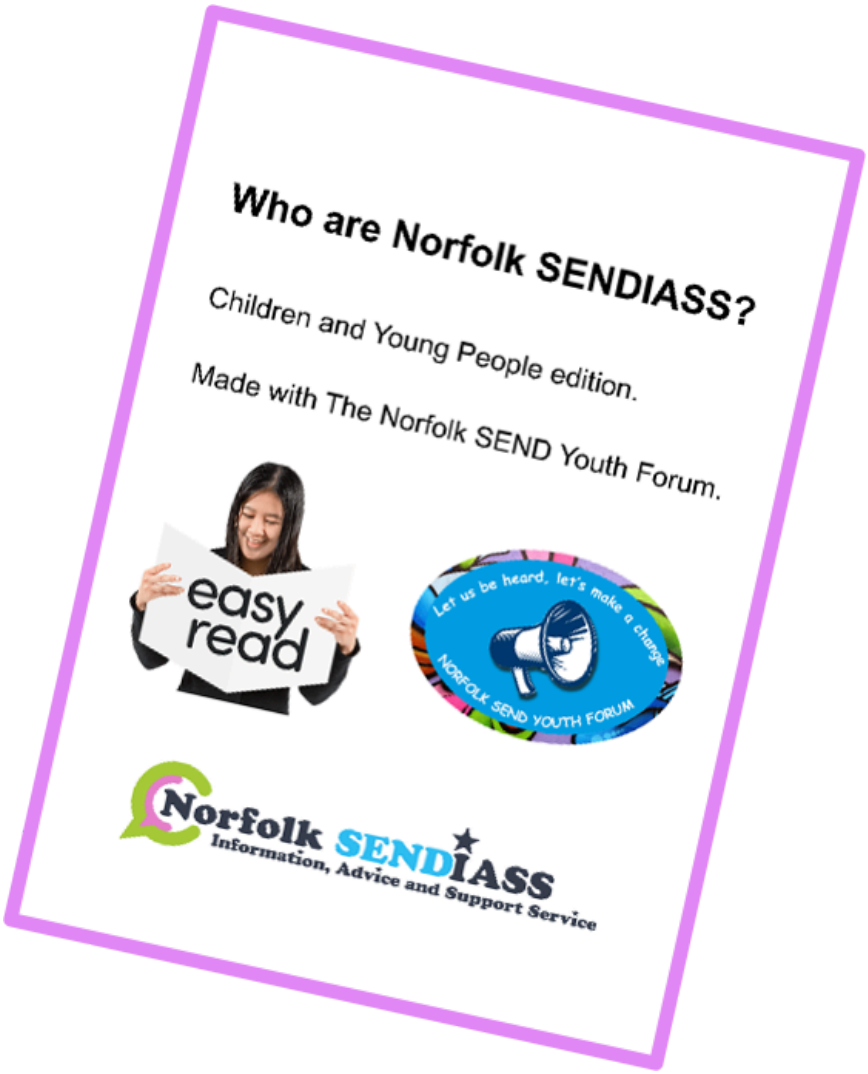
We have let the Youth Forum members know that this year's gathering will take place on Saturday 12th December. The members agreed that they enjoyed bowling and Bella Italia so much last year that they would like to do the same again! More details will be shared soon.

Next Meeting

Our next Youth Forum meeting will be via TEAMS on Wednesday 18th November 2026, from 6:30pm to 7:30pm. We can't wait to see everyone there!

New Members

If you or someone you know has SEND, lives in Norfolk, and is aged 11-25 we would love to welcome you to the Norfolk SEND Youth Forum. You can follow this link to register Norfolk SEND Youth Forum - Registration Form | Norfolk SENDIASS.



Find out more about the Norfolk SEND Youth Forum

Website information and resources

Our website has a wealth of information and resources including information on SEN support at school, Transport, Suspensions and Exclusions, Education Health and Care Plans, Appeals, Health and Social Care. This short video explains how to navigate the search function and the information zone.

www.norfolksendiass.org.uk



How to use the use the information zone and search function on Norfolk SENDIASS website

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contact For families with disabled children

Contact provide 1-1 telephone appointments with a family support adviser for parent/carers looking for a listening ear, reassurance and practical and emotional support. Appointments are 45 minutes long and it's important that you book a time and date that you know you will be free to talk, are somewhere that you feel safe and is quiet so that you can get the most out of the time you have.

If you would like to use Contact's listening ear service, please follow the link below to book an appointment.

Listening Ear | Contact



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