

CRAGSIDE SEND WINTER NEWSLETTER



Welcome to Cragside's SEND Newsletter!

Our newsletter is sent out each term with recent research, websites and what's going on locally relating to SEND.

We hope you find it useful!



Miss Harris



SEND**CO**

Email –
ellie.harris@cragside.northumberland.sch.uk

Navigating Parenthood

*A positive, practical parenting course
for families with children aged 6+*

- Stages of behaviour
- Effective communication
- Building relationships
- Clear boundaries and expectations
- Parenting styles and temperaments
- Reconciliation gestures
- Understanding brain development
- Co-regulation and de-escalation techniques
- Online safety
- Useful, practical help and support



*Book your
place now-
Nland.cc/fhreg*

Starting 12th Jan at 6.30pm Online



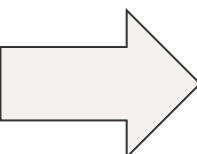
Do you have a child aged 0-19 years? Come along for a cuppa and chat and to meet other parents. No diagnosis needed!

01670 711122



**Special Educational
Needs & Disabilities**

Join us on:



Tuesday 6th January 2026, 10am - 12pm:

Hexham Family Hub, Hexham First School, Beaufront Avenue, NE46 1JD

Tuesday 13th January 2026, 1pm-3pm:

Cramlington Community Hub, Forum Way, Manor Walks, NE23 6YB (next to Concordia)

Thursday 22nd January 2026, 1pm-3pm:

The Lindisfarne Centre, 30 Lindisfarne Road, Alnwick, NE66 1AU

Wednesday 28th January 2026, 10am - 12pm:

Ashington Family Hub, Alexandra Road, Ashington, NE63 9EF

Thursday 5th February 2026, 10am - 12pm:

Berwick Family Hub, Ladywell Place, Tweedmouth, Berwick-upon-Tweed, TD15 2AE

Monday 9th February 2026, 1pm - 3pm:

Morpeth Golf Club, Loansdean, NE61 2BT

Evening session:

Tuesday 27th January 2026, 5pm - 6:30pm:

Morpeth Golf Club, Loansdean, NE61 2BT



If you have any questions, contact your Local Family Hub or email:
adelle.hicks@northumberland.gov.uk

Is your child struggling with sleep?



*For children and young people aged between 4-25 years

- Understanding sleep cycles
- Causes of sleep issues
- The importance of sleep
- What you can do to support your child to sleep better

Virtual Sleep Workshop

Delivered **virtually** over one session.

Tuesday 25th of November 4:30pm - 6:30pm

Wednesday 17th December 10am - 12pm



 Northumberland
County Council



Visit our website
nland.cc/familyhubs

 Family Hubs
Here for everyone

 Sleep
ACTION

NEW to Northumberland



Family Wellbeing Service

Having a child can be the most rewarding and also the most challenging time in anybody's life.

'You are not alone'

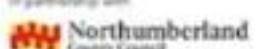
As part of the Family Hub offer - personalised support is available to new and expecting mothers, fathers and significant others, (up until a child is two), who are experiencing mental health issues...

Are you or do you know someone who may need support to:

- understand their low mood
- connect with other parents
- feel less worried about parenting
- establish routines
- breastfeed
- feel less anxious
- have better relationships
- access services

Contact your local Family Hub or speak to your midwife/Health Visitor

In partnership with





The Toby Henderson Trust

CHRISTMAS TIPS FOR NEURODIVERGENT FAMILIES



The team at The Toby Henderson Trust have both lived experience of raising Neurodivergent children and some of us are Neurodivergent ourselves. We have put together a guide full of advice and tips that might help your family this Christmas.

Some of us welcome the change to our daily routine that Christmas brings. We enjoy seasonal foods and drinks. Seeing friends and family. Giving and receiving presents. Seeing lights twinkle and hearing carols sung and so many other traditions!

But while the festive season can be joyful, it can also feel overwhelming for some children, young people, and adults. Changes in routine, busy social calendars, financial pressures, emotional expectations, or sensory overload can all make this time of year more challenging. Our hope is to help families find ways for everyone to enjoy Christmas, in a way that feels right for your own family. It's okay if it looks different from what you imagined or what you see on social media. With a little planning, flexibility, and kindness to yourself, you can create a Christmas that works for everyone. In this guide, we've put together some tips and ideas that might help you during this time.



PLANNING AHEAD

- Your child might benefit from using visual supports to help them count down to Christmas. Some neurodivergent individuals can crave predictability. They also might have trouble with the concept of time. A minute might seem like an hour, and a week is hard to imagine. Advent calendars are perfect for this. However, this approach might not work for every child. Some may prefer to focus on the festive period as a whole rather than building up anticipation for a single day.
- Your child might like to be involved with your plans over Christmas. You could ask each family member what they would each like to do and prioritise these activities and events. It's sometimes not possible to do everything but you could have some non negotiables that your family members would like to do that would bring joy. It's okay to be honest about how your Christmas is going to look and that you can have your own way of doing it that's right for you as a family.
- A social story might be beneficial to use. These are short, descriptions of a situation, event or activity. They're usually illustrated and include specific information about what to expect in that situation and why. For advice on how to make them, please [click here for a link to Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trusts website with more information about Social Stories](#). A social story about Christmas Day could include a schedule of what will happen that day and safe spaces they can go to if it gets too overwhelming.
- You could make a calendar, which will show all the changes and plans that your family can expect. December usually brings changes to your normal weekly and daily routines. Your calendar could include things like when the decorations begin to go up, when the tree is taken down, when school starts again. We have included an example of our free downloadable calendar below which is available to download on our [website](#). You don't have to stick to a paper version, some families prefer using online shared calendars instead.



ROUTINES AND SCHEDULES

- For some neurodivergent individuals, they like to keep to their usual daily routines as much as possible to maintain predictability. It's important that autistic individuals know what to expect. If there are changes, make sure they are aware in advance if this would help them.
- Make schedules for non-routine days in whatever format works best for your child.
- Remind your child what's coming up at regular intervals if they benefit from regular prompts and reminders. First, we'll do this, then we'll do that. You could use some visual supports to help with this.
- Use a timer or clock so your child knows how long each activity will last. Don't extend the timer after you've set it. Not even secretly so they can trust the timer.
- When you have a routine that works, stick with it! Finding a Christmas routine for your family might take a trial and error over a few years. And yours might end up looking different to others but that's ok! For example, you might spread out opening presents over a few days. Or you might only have your tree up for one day. But if it works, that's great and you know you can do it again. We always say to families "you do you".
- Be mindful of overscheduling over Christmas. While it's tempting to pack as much fun into your time off as you can, it can all be too much for a Neurodivergent individual. Make sure they have plenty of space between activities. And provide lots of transition time and down time. It might be worth looking up the Spoon Theory or Energy Accountancy which are visual toolkits for energy rationing which could be used for the WHOLE family!
- For more information about Spoon Theory visit:
<http://reachoutasc.com/spoon-theory-and-autism/> and Energy Accountancy visit: <https://www.spectrumgaming.net/post/energy-accounting>

VISITORS AND VISITING

- Talk to friends and family before visits. Tell them what your plan for the day is.
- Ask people to message or phone ahead before visiting so your child knows what to expect and who will be coming to their home.
- Show your child photos of the people they will be seeing beforehand but also the environment they will be visiting.
- Give your child plenty of notice of transitions to new activities. For example, give a ten-minute warning before dinner. You could again, use the sand timers and phone alarms to help with this.
- Have a quiet space in your house that your child can retreat to when it all gets too much. This gives your child the opportunity to escape when they need to. If you're visiting anywhere else you could ask if there will be any quieter spaces that they can access or if family or friends could make a quiet space in their home. It could be that a blanket provides some comfort and safety. It's important to not make any fuss when an autistic person needs some time away, we like to view this as a positive that they feel comfortable to remove themselves from a situation to help with their own regulation, especially when they're overwhelmed.
- Give your child a job to do if they need to be kept occupied. Having something else to focus on can distract them from the stress that the festive season may bring. You could also involve them in any decisions to help them feel in control and involved in any process.



FOOD AND SENSORY ISSUES

- Your child might like to Try holiday foods in advance. That way you can see what your child likes and doesn't like. It can also give you a chance to discover any cooking smells that may be too overpowering for your child. If they struggle with smells, you could use a piece of material and spray some preferred scents such as perfume or essential oils to help manage this. This could be something you use when out of your home too, we know there's often lots of new and different smells around Christmas.
- Take your child's favourite/safe foods with you. Sometimes crunchy foods are helpful for regulation such as raw carrot, pretzels and ice cubes/lollies.
- Let your child eat what they usually eat on Christmas Day! If they are used to a sandwich and fruit for lunch, or the 25th falls on 'chicken nuggets night' then just go with that.
- Maybe have a buffet instead of a traditional Christmas Dinner. That way everyone gets to eat the food they like, at their own pace. You could show them photos beforehand of what will be available on the day.
- Practice wearing 'special clothes' beforehand. A new outfit for Christmas day might feel all different and just not right. 'Party' clothes aren't often very comfortable and neurodivergent individuals can be particularly sensitive to things like seams and scratchy fabrics. You might have a few dress rehearsals before the day. You could also wear clothes that they feel comfortable in underneath any costumes or party outfits.
- Let your child wear their everyday clothes. Those old jogging bottoms and a favourite T-shirt are perfect Christmas outfits if they make your child feel more comfortable.
- If you visit another family home or if you're out in the community, you could take something to help deal with the noise. This could be ear defenders, ear buds, noise cancelling headphones or a device with music on.
- Be aware of things that make loud noises, like Christmas crackers and party poppers. Consider not using them at all when your child is nearby or maybe give your child a warning before you use them.



DECORATIONS

- Consider not putting up all the decorations while your child is not at home. Coming home to find the house looking completely different could be very upsetting. We often say you're the expert of your child and you know what will be best for them.
- Decorate gradually. For example, put the tree up one day, and decorate it over a couple of days. You might want to add other things a bit at a time and you could highlight on the calendar, when these changes are going to happen.
- You might like to take a photo of what your house normally looks like and set a defined date of when the festive period will end.
- Get your child to choose decorations and help you to put them up. They might find it easier to cope with their surroundings looking different if they made some of the changes themselves.
- Avoid decorations that may be too stimulating or distracting. Flashing lights or having lots of things hanging from the walls or ceiling might just be too much for some. Although it might not feel as Christmassy to you, keeping it minimal just might help your child during the festive period.
- Consider decorating just one room in the house. Or keeping the twinkliest and noisiest things away from the areas your child uses every day. It might be for some, that your child LOVES the twinkly lights so you have these in lots of areas across the house.



AND FINALLY...

- Remember to look after YOU and your own regulation. If you can try, take some time to relax (even just 10 minutes) and do something for yourself. This is especially important as Christmas can be a busy and stressful time of year.
- If things go wrong, be okay with that being okay. Your child might get upset, upset others or refuse to take part and this is ok. If you know what went wrong and it's fixable, then you can try to fix it next year. And if it isn't, just let it go. There is no law that says you should do Christmas a certain way.
- Celebrate the season your way. The holiday season is meant to be a time for fun and relaxation. If the things you have to do to make it fun and relaxing seem odd to other people, don't mind them. There's no official Christmas rule book.
- Remember this is not a to-do list. Or a list of do's and don'ts. These are simply suggestions – made by us. There's more than one way to live a family life and equally more than one way to enjoy an Autism friendly Christmas.

We hope this guide helps you and your family in the run up to Christmas.

Merry Christmas from Team Toby x



December 2025

Monday 15th Of December - Friday 19th of December

Family Hubs
Here for everyone

FREE

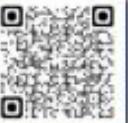
MONDAY

15th Dec

PEEP Stay and Play drop in Blyth West Family Hub 1:00-14:30pm

Family Christmas Movie Night **HOME ALONE'** Blyth West Family Hub Movie Starts at 4:15 *Booking Required

Healthy Relationships



TUESDAY

16th Dec

Calm Stay & Play Blyth West Family Hub 09:30-10:30am

Weigh Clinic (Health Team) Blyth Central Family Hub 9:30-11:30am Cramlington Community Hub 1:00-3:00pm 0300 3732488 to book

Family Christmas Movie Night **HOME ALONE'** Blyth Central Family Hub Movie Starts at 4:15 *Booking Required

Family Drop In Blyth Central Family Hub 3.30-4:45pm

WEDNESDAY

17th Dec

PEEP Stay and Play drop in Astley Pavilion Seaton Deleval 10:00-11:00am

Feeding Friends Blyth West Family Hub 12:30-2:00pm

Weigh Clinic (Health Team) Blyth West Family Hub 1:00pm-3:00pm Cramlington Community Hub 1:00-3:00pm 0300 3732488 to book

Free to Be Blyth Central Family Hub 4:30-7:15pm

THURSDAY

18th Dec

Birth Registration Blyth Central Family Hub

To register your new baby & obtain their birth certificate, book an appointment via Birth Registration on Northumberland County Council's website, or call on 0345 600 6400

Thursday Tales Short Movies, Stories & Crafts **'SNOWMAN & SNOWDOG'** Blyth Central 10:00-11:30am *Booking required

Calm Movie Night **The Boy, The Mole, The Fox & The Horse** Blyth West Family Hub Movie Starts at 4:15 *Booking Required

FRIDAY

19th Dec

PEEP Stay and Play drop in Blyth Central Family Hub 09:30-11:00am

Sensory Chillout Blyth Central Family Hub 4:00-5:30pm

Solihul Approach



Growing Healthy Android



Growing Healthy Apple App



Merry Christmas!

Address

Blyth Central Family Hub
103 Wright Street
Blyth, NE24 1HG
Tel:01670 798800

Blyth West Family Hub
Devonworth Place
Blyth, NE24 5AQ
Tel:01670 625574

Astley Park Pavilion
Seaton Delaval
NE25 0AE

Cramlington Community
Hub Cramlington
NE23 6YB

Warm Space, Manor Walks
Shopping Centre
Cramlington, NE23 6UT

Hop-in Building
Hareside Primary School
Cramlington, NE25 6BH

MONDAY

22nd Dec

Family Christmas Movie Night
'POLAR EXPRESS'

Blyth West Family Hub

Movie starts at
3:30pm
*Booking Required

Teenage Christmas Movie Night
'Red One'

Blyth Central Family Hub

Movie starts at 6pm
*Booking Required

TUESDAY

23rd Dec

Weigh Clinic (Health Team)

Blyth Central Family Hub
9:30-11:30am
Cramlington Community Hub
1:00-3:00pm
0300 3732488 to book

Family Christmas Movie Night
'POLAR EXPRESS'

Blyth Central Family Hub
Movie starts at 3:30pm
*Booking Required

Teenage Christmas Movie Night
'Red One'

Blyth Central Family Hub
Movie starts at 6pm
*Booking Required

South East Family Hubs

December 2025

Monday 22nd Of December - Tuesday 23rd of December



FREE

PEEP Stay & Play 0-5years (previously known as LTTP 0-5)
Sessions for families to play and explore together, gain tips and techniques to support your child's development.

Calm Stay & Play (0-5 years)
A quieter and more relaxed Stay and Play session for those with additional needs and/or disabilities

Calm Movie night
A calmer and more relaxed showing for Children with additional needs and/or disabilities

Feeding Friends
Come along for infant feeding advice and support, to have a chat and share tips with other parents

Free to Be
For young people 13-18 years who identify as LGBTQIA. Get support and advice, take part in activities and lots more.
Free food/refreshments.

Weigh & Stay
Free session for parents/carers, have your babies weighed, speak to a health professional. Stay and play together to explore activities and receive your baby book start pack.
Book your appointment by ringing the single point of contact Health Team on 0300 3732488.

Sensory Chilli Out (Additional Needs & Disabilities)
For the whole family who have children with learning or physical disabilities.

MENTAL HEALTH HELPLINES AND USEFUL ORGANISATIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



Anxiety UK

03444 775 774
anxietyuk.org.uk

Barnardo's

barnardos.org.uk

BEAT

0808 801 0677
beateatingdisorders.org.uk

CALM

0800 58 58 58
thecalmzone.net

Childline

116 123
childline.org.uk

Hub of Hope

hubofhope.co.uk

Kooth

kooth.com

Live Fear Free

0808 80 10 800
gov.wales/live-fear-free

Mermaids

0808 801 0400
mermaids.org.uk

MIND

0300 123 3393
mind.org.uk

Nightline

nightline.ac.uk

No Panic Youth Helpline

0330 606 1174

Music Minds Matter

0808 802 8008
musicmindsmatter.org

NSHN (National Self Harm Network)

nshn.co.uk

NSPCC

0808 800 5000
nspcc.org.uk

Papyrus

0800 068 4141
papyrus-uk.org

Samaritans

116 123
samaritans.org

SupportLine

01708 765 200
supportline.org.uk

Switchboard (LGBT+ helpline)

0808 808 4994
switchboard.lgbt

Tellmi (APP)

tellmi.help

The Children's Society

childrenssociety.org.uk

The Mix

0808 808 4994
themix.org.uk

Young Minds

0808 802 5544
85258 (text crisis-line)
youngminds.org.uk



The Team at the Toby Henderson Trust have made recommendations and suggestions of books that they have found really useful.

Please follow this link to explore:

<https://www.ttht.co.uk/book-recommendations/>

THANK YOU FOR READING!

ANY QUESTIONS PLEASE EMAIL:

MISS HARRIS -

ELLIE.HARRIS@CRAGSIDE.NORTHUMBERLAND.SCH.UK