



Neurodiverse Parenting Support Group

My child is different. What do I do now?

Finding out that your child is different is hard. Watching them struggle is even harder. Finding the help and support they need is bewildering. Parents often feel isolated, lonely, scared and exhausted.

Unless a family is already familiar with neurodiversity, there is a steep learning journey of discovery. And a lot of the information they come across will focus on a very medicalised, deficit led model of what is "wrong" with their child. There is a whole new set of language to be learnt and a great deal of conflicting advice. Friends, families and professionals all chip in with what should be done to prepare your child for the "real world". But often the suggested solutions make things worse and leave parents confused, frustrated and feeling like they have failed.

Parents react differently. Some pick up the gauntlet and go into fight mode. For others, a lack of acceptance, overwhelm and overload may delay the search for support. Either way, parents are at risk of emotional and physical burnout and mental health problems.

In addition, discovering a child's neurodivergence may uncover a parent's own differences. In this case, they may be facing a history of not understanding themselves and of having their own experience of the world invalidated. There is a lot of unravelling and unlearning to do before the parent can move forward.

It can be overwhelming. There is so much to learn about autism, ADHD and other neurological differences. So much new terminology. And that's before any journey begins around the services that can come into play, or how to refer into them, and what to expect. And then there is the SEND Education system. How can we know what to ask for when we have no idea what our children need?

Community Links SW

is a not-for-profit community interest company providing services to support families and individuals.

We run a friendly group offering shared experience and peer support, signposting and training for parents of neurodivergent children.

We meet at the address below at 10am on the 2nd Thursday of the month term time.

All are welcome. You do not have to wait for a formal diagnosis - in fact we encourage parents to seek support as early on as possible in their journey.

We appreciate a donation of £2 a session to help towards our costs.

CONTACT DETAILS

Community Links SW CIC
c/o Okehampton College
Community Centre
Mill Road
Okehampton EX20 1WG

T: 07546 258403 (Heather)
T: 07808 523111 (Office)
E: heather@communitylinks-sw.co.uk

Wherever the parent finds themselves on their neurodiverse parenting journey, they can benefit hugely from the discovery that they aren't alone. Having the opportunity to voice what is going on for them and to get understanding and shared experience from other group members is hugely valuable.

Combining that peer support with professional guidance from family workers with lived experience of parenting neurodivergent children, navigating the diagnosis pathway and the SEND system, ensures that the group holds space for each other and their challenges AND is forward thinking, hopeful and practical.

We meet families where they are and help guide them through every step of their new journey. We provide training and education to help parents understand their children (and themselves) better. We focus on parents well-being and help them understand their nervous systems and how they can be the very best resource their children has.

We help parents understand about anxiety, communication, sensory processing and more. We help parents shift from a pathologizing, deficit view to one a more positive understanding of the variation in human neurology. We help parents to see that it isn't that there is something wrong with their child, but more that the world is not designed to meet their children's needs.

"I would just like to say how much I value these sessions. It just makes me feel like I'm not going crazy and takes away the feeling of isolation. The three meetings I have been to I have felt accepted and included even though we are all coming from different situations, different age and number of children when people are sharing it feels so familiar!"



We encourage parents to be curious, to investigate and discover where their child's challenges are and help them see beyond the behaviour to what the child is communicating.

We empower parents to advocate for their child's needs and to start prioritising their own needs too. Parents need to be resourced in order to cope with the additional challenges of navigating a neurotypical world with a neurodiverse family.

In addition to the monthly face to face groups groups, we have a closed Facebook group where we share useful articles, tips, tools and strategies.

Search for Neurodiverse Parenting Support Group in face book or contact us to join our mailing list.