

The Virtual Autism Hub Newsletter

Focus on Mental Health

January and February can be brutal on mental health. Christmas and cold weather create additional financial burdens and the dark can be unrelenting.

Although autism is not a mental health condition, a 2020 survey from the National Autistic Society working with Mind showed a high percentage of autistic people suffering from anxiety and depression. Over half the people surveyed said anxiety had a high impact on their ability to get on with life. This is more than January blues and needs to be taken seriously.

What help is there in Lincolnshire?

Sometimes help comes in finding other people and making connections. This isn't an easy ask for autistic people who can find social interactions difficult. However, there are many social groups across Lincolnshire. Some of which are created and run by autistic people for autistic people. Groups are often interest-led; music-making, art, dungeons and dragons, cooking and gardening are some examples.

If you need help making that first step towards joining a group, you can look to Social Prescribing services at <https://lincscvp.org.uk/>. Filling in a quick online form will ensure someone gets back to you. You can also find links to volunteering services on the website which will list current

volunteering vacancies serving customers or working behind the scenes at charity shops, driving a community bus or serving puppuccinos at fund-raising events.

Other places to engage with the community and make friends are Wellbeing Hubs and Satellite hubs. These offer classes like yoga, singing and crafts which are open to everyone. Many hubs host men's sheds which are increasingly popular men's community groups. As are BroPro groups, both of which offer a safe space and peer-to-peer support. Night Light Cafes are also dotted across Lincolnshire Wellbeing Hubs, offering trained volunteers who listen and support.

To find a group near you, you can look on the How Are You Lincolnshire website. The Virtual Autism Hub will also give you an updated list of local autism-specific

or general support groups. Email: lpft.virtualautismhublincs@nhs.net

What if I need more help?

Lincolnshire Talking Therapies has graduated help for over-16s, from computerised CBT therapy and self-help courses, through to counselling and interpersonal therapy.

Lincolnshire Recovery College offers a wide range of courses covering autism, anxiety and depression among others. They also run creative courses like poetry, song writing, drama and journaling for mental health and courses for carers who may be affected.

Lincolnshire Talking Therapies and Lincolnshire Recovery College are NHS services that you can self-refer to on their websites.

How are you, Lincolnshire?

Are you looking to boost your wellbeing and mental health? Find local groups on

haylincolnshire.co.uk



Find your nearest Wellbeing Hub or Satellite Hub using the How Are You Lincolnshire website, or find local autism support groups by emailing us at lpft.virtualautismhublincs@nhs.net





A note from Manager, Neil Wells

We are fast approaching a full years' service offer to the community! The time has flown by. We have had such a varied year, from initial phone enquiries, emails and visiting people to help with a variety of form filing requests. We have also attended medical appointments on an advocacy basis, receiving great feedback.

Our WAVE 2 grant making scheme is ticking along nicely and we will have an announcement in the very near future with regards to all those we have accepted and will be providing grants to.

Our team truly go above and beyond to help all those that reach out for our support. As manager, I'm extremely proud of all the team who give so much.

Contact us



lpft.virtualautismhublincs@nhs.n



01522 458588



www.lpft.nhs.uk/virtual-autism-hub

Focus on Mental Health...continued

What if I need urgent help now?

If your mental health deteriorates and you feel unsafe, distressed or worried, call **111** and select the mental health option.

A mental health professional will answer your call. If you are unable to call, someone can call on your behalf.

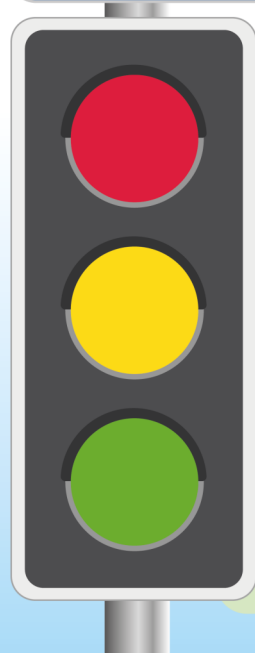
Emotional support can be

found by calling the mental health helpline 0800 001 4331.

Mental health and emotional wellbeing support for children and young people can be accessed by ringing Lincolnshire Here4You on **0800 234 6342**.

If you cannot call, text **SHOUT** on **85258** to start a conversation.

Support for your mental health and wellbeing



Need urgent help now?

Call **111** select mental health option
In a life-threatening emergency call **999**

General support

Mental Health Helpline (over 18): 0800 001 4331 (24/7)
Here4You Advice Line (children and young people):
0800 234 6342 (24/7)
Lincolnshire Talking Therapies:
www.lincolnshiretalkingtherapies.nhs.uk
Night Light Cafes: 0300 011 1200

Looking after yourself

HAY Lincolnshire website: haylincolnshire.co.uk
Every Mind Matters website: nhs.uk/every-mind-matters
Lincolnshire Recovery College: lpft.nhs.uk/recovery-college

Pop-Up Autism Hubs in the Library

- **Louth Library** every 1st Wednesday of the month, 9–12pm.
- **Lincoln Central Library** every 2nd Friday of the month, 2-4.30 pm.
- **Sleaford Library** every 3rd Wednesday of the month, 10.30-12.30pm.
- **Skegness Library** every 4th Tuesday of the month, 10-12.30 pm.



Celebrating Lincolnshire Parent Carer Forum's 2025 Week of SEND

Save the date for your brand new 2025 diaries! 27 and 31 January sees the Lincolnshire Parent Carer Forum's Week of SEND 2025.

The concept for a dedicated week covering a wide range of SEND issues was born out of a statement from one of the parent members on LPCF's private Facebook page which stated that there were no services for parents of children with SEND in Lincolnshire. After a lot of research and organisation, the annual week of SEND was created to bridge the gap between organisations and parents/carers. This year marks the event's fifth anniversary.

LPCF volunteers, who are all parents of children with SEND, organise and host the week of SEND. It is a huge project. With over 80 organisations taking part covering early years to adulthood, it takes volunteers five months to organise. There are 16 sessions held throughout the morning, afternoon or evening. All are accessible from the comfort of your own home or office and all are free.



The sessions are aimed at anyone who has an interest in the world of special educational needs and disability; parents and carers of children with SEND and the professionals who work with them. The objective is to give participants as much information as possible in bite-sized ten-minute presentations.

Feedback from last year's Week of SEND was very positive. "Priceless" one member commented!. Previous participants have stated that the week was "well planned and executed" with a "good mix of professionals and families."

The Lincolnshire Parent Carer Forum is a registered charity with a membership of over 4,200 parents and carers of children with SEND and 1,500 on their professional membership. They were tasked by the Department for Education to represent the views of parents and carers of children with SEND.

They do this by collecting their views through numerous ways; their workshops and events, the State of SEND Survey, (due out January 6), their Facebook page and the "your say" section of their website. They anonymise and collate comments, publish them in a document (the Parents' Voice Report) and feed them back to service providers including the local authority, health and other stakeholders.



Teams of volunteers then attend scores of strategic meetings to represent the views of the membership. They then work with service providers to address any further issues before feeding back outcomes to members.

You can find out more about their role and remit through two sessions that they are holding during the Week of SEND.

Membership to LPCF is free. You can join through their website [LPCF Home](#) which will enable you to sign-up not only to the Week of SEND sessions but free live online workshops throughout the year. Their website has a huge number of resources and information. By signing up, you may be eligible for a MAX card which offers discounts to families with children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities.

A selection of the organisations presenting are:

- Early Years Alliance – Best Start Service
- Dyslexia Outreach
- ADHD Lincs
- Working Together Team
- Children and Young People Services
- LIAISE

