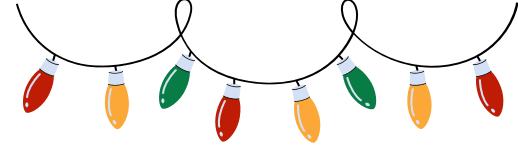




<https://enableireland.ie/services/dunshaughlin-childrens-disability-network-team-eastmeath>

Greetings from CDNT 4



Dear Parents/Caregivers,

As we approach the end of 2024 we would like to take a moment to extend our best wishes to you and your families. We would like to express our gratitude for your continued support and collaboration.

We look forward to continuing our work with you in the year ahead. This newsletter will provide some information about the coming year and tips surrounding neurodiversity during the festive season. Wishing you a joyous holiday season, and a prosperous New Year.

Best Wishes,

Children's Disability Network Team 4, Enable Ireland

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

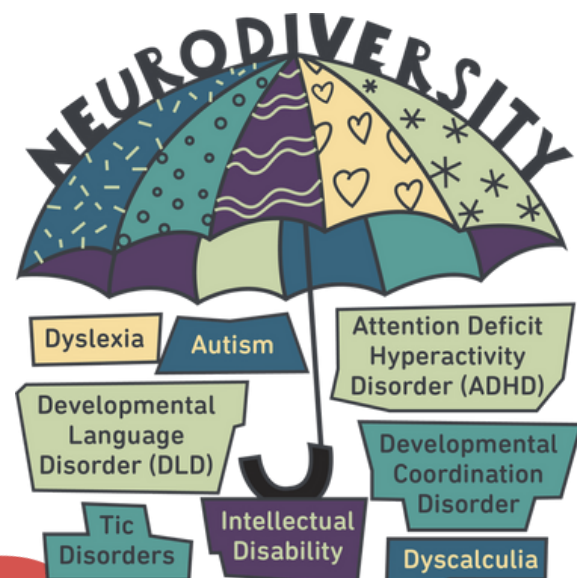
Neurodiversity and the festive season



What is neurodiversity?

Diversity describes the natural variation that we have as humans. This concept of diversity extends to neurodiversity, which recognizes that brains function and process information in different ways. Neurodiversity usually refers to traits and characteristics associated with a number of diagnoses such as Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia and more!

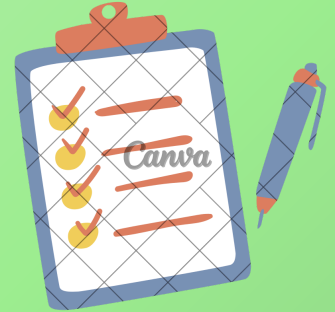
For neurodiverse individuals, the holiday season—especially Christmas—can present unique challenges. These difficulties can arise from the sensory, social, and environmental demands that are heightened during this time. Below are some tips for neurodiverse individuals around the holiday season.



Tips for Neurodiversity around the holiday season



Make a list: Make a list of what your child finds difficult. This could be anything from big crowds, loud noises, surprises or bright lights. Try to think about when they might experience those. How could you avoid those situations? If that isn't an option, consider how you can help your child prepare.



Give space for down time: Christmas events and gatherings are often long and busy, which can be tiring. Schedule regular breaks or quiet times where your child can unwind or engage in a favourite activity without any expectations. This can be especially helpful in social settings, allowing them to recharge.

Involve them in decisions: Let your child have a say in the Christmas decorations around your home. Ask them to help you choose lights, colours and textures that they feel comfortable with.

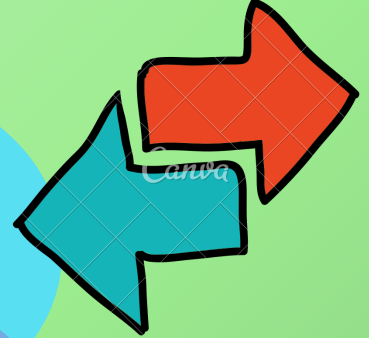


Gift experiences or Interests: Gifts that align with a child's specific interests or sensory preferences can be particularly meaningful. Some Autistic children may prefer gifts they already know and love rather than surprises, so consider asking them directly or providing them a way to let you know what they're hoping for.

Tips for Neurodiversity around the holiday season



Offer support for transitions: If you're planning to visit new places or see extended family, prepare your child by sharing as much information as possible beforehand. Visual supports, photos of new locations, and even practicing the steps of the day can provide a sense of control and predictability. If they do not want to attend, honour their voice and provide for an alternative for them other than attending.



Honour predictable routines: Try to maintain as much of your child's regular routine as possible. If events disrupt the usual flow of the day, consider giving your child advance notice or creating a visual schedule. This can make the day feel more predictable and reduce any potential anxiety around unexpected changes.

Manage expectations around expressions: Autistic children may show excitement or gratitude in ways that are different from non-autistic people. It's essential to honour their authentic responses rather than expecting traditional expressions of joy or gratitude. Validate and accept their unique way of experiencing and showing emotions, whatever that looks like.



Create a safe space: Holiday decorations and music can feel overwhelming. Consider discussing decorations together and allowing your child to help choose or place decorations they're comfortable with. Soft lighting, calming music, or a quieter area in the home can also help have a safe space if sensory input becomes overwhelming.



Feedback



Family Forum Feedback



CDNT 4 Family Forum was held on 14th November in Pillo Hotel Ashbourne with 30 parents in attendance. We would like to thank Kieran, our facilitator & our family reps Rachel Martin and Emma Mannering for their involvement & input in this forum. We would like to thank all parents shared their feedback with us.

Topics discussed at the forum were;

- Waiting lists and waiting times
- Staffing
- Services we are providing
- Communications



Next family forum is scheduled to take place on **Thursday 6th February from 10am to 12pm**, venue to be confirmed.

Sensory Processing

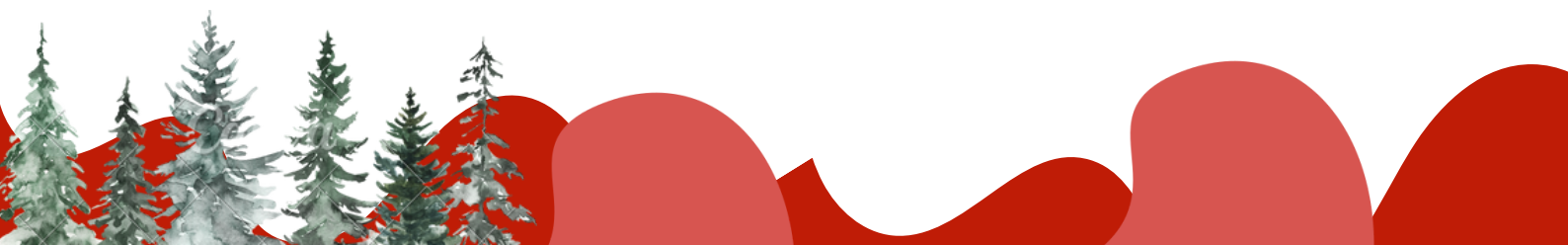
Occupational Therapy ran a parent only sensory processing workshop in November in Balrath. 40 parents were invited to this and 14 parents attended. The workshop was to find out more information on how to best support their child with sensory processing preferences.

Topics discussed at the workshop were;

- What is sensory processing
- The senses
- Strategies for home
- Dysregulation



The overall feedback was positive from parents. The next sensory processing workshop will take place in 2025.





AAC Teacher Training

Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC) Teacher training took place on the 14th of November. 38 schools were invited and over 63 teachers and SNAs attended the online training. This was co-facilitated via Microsoft Teams by Michelle Nolan Senior SLT and Jordan O'Connor SLT. Content included:

- What is AAC
- How to use AAC
- Implementation
- Common Questions
- Questions
- True or False



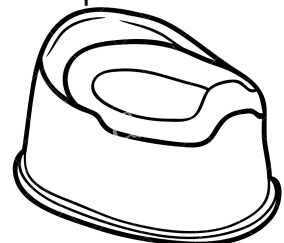
Feedback: Nine teachers gave feedback after the workshop. 90% of the teachers/SNAs found the training to be excellent. Here is a quote from a participant “thank you very much for the workshop. It was very helpful and enjoyable! Great support on this course”.

Toileting workshop

The Step by Step Toilet learning workshop took place in November 2024. 16 parents were invited and 12 parents attended. Workshops are usually held 3 times per year; this is dependent on demand for support in this area and parental acceptance of workshop invites.

Who was this for?

- All children with complex needs aged 2.5-5yrs.
- Parents first time to engage in toilet learning strategies
- If toilet learning had been highlighted as a goal / priority through IFSP or parent request.





Feedback & Upcoming Supports



Embracing Autism



Embracing Autism took place every Wednesday from the 6th of November to 4th of December for 5 weeks. 70 families were invited and 23 confirmed attendance. The content included;

- Neurodiversity affirming practice
- Exploring communication preferences
- Emotional regulation (self & co-regulation)
- Sensory preferences
- Benefit of physical movement
- Parental self-care
- Community supports



Feedback included parents learning more neuro-affirming language, learning more up to date information and understanding autism.

Upcoming Supports

Sib Shop

The 'PALS Sibling Workshops' are fun workshops for siblings of children with complex needs. As well as having lots of fun it provides a great opportunity for siblings to get together and chat about some of the difficulties and the positives of having a brother or sister with additional needs. It could not take place in October due to a staff absence but will be rescheduled to new dates in 2025. If a sibling is interested in attending such a workshop in the future, please let us know.



Upcoming Supports



Planning for your future

Planning For Your Future physical disability is a research project that is being run by Dr Jennifer Ryan of the RCSI (University of medicine and health science). This is a research project which will look at the transition for young people with cerebral palsy and other disabilities from child services to adult services between the ages of 14-18 years of age. It is being implemented by our team in CDNT4 taking children in our service that are suitable to partake. Information will be gathered from areas such as transition and transfer, my health and function, ways to influence your health and well-being, rights entitlements and advocacy, mental health and emotional well-being and finally social network. Caitriona O'Shaughnessy our clinical specialist physiotherapist is heading this initiative which will take place over several weeks between January and February 2025.



An estimated 150 babies receive a CP diagnosis in Ireland each year and an estimated 3,000 children and young people have CP with 9,500 adults living with CP in Ireland.



Parents Plus Early Years Group

The aim of the group is to support parents of children with a diverse range of disabilities and needs by providing them with a non-judgmental, safe space for sharing their personal experiences, thoughts and challenges.

The group provides parents with new strategies and comprehensive support to enhance their relationships with their children, better understand tantrums and meltdowns, reduce stress, boost self-esteem, promote reflective parenting, and establish positive daily routines and parental self-care.

Parent plus early years programme 0-6 dates:

Information session - 22/01/2025

Parents plus: 05/02/2025 to 26/03 2025





Additional News



Exciting News: Your Generosity in Action!

We are thrilled to share that we recently received generous donations to support our team. Thanks to the incredible kindness of two supporters, we have been able to use this funding to make a meaningful impact.

Here's how we put your donations to work so far:

Our first donation was raised and gifted to the team by Sarah Kavanagh. Sarah ran the Dublin women's mini marathon in June and has generously raised money for the team. Physiotherapist Dominic will be running a sports exploration program which allows children with physical disabilities to explore adapted sports. Sarah's donation allowed us to purchase Boccia sets. The Boccia sets purchased with Sarah's donation will be used as part of this programme. We want to extend our heartfelt thanks for your continued support. Thank you Sarah!



***Sarah Kavanagh running
the VHI Mini Marathon***



Additional News



Exciting News: Your Generosity in Action!

Our second donation was generously given from funds raised by Mary Deery. Mary sold two paintings and gifted the proceeds to our team. Mary's granddaughter is a service user. Mary's donation will go towards two events. The first event is a sports organising demonstration day for children in Meath with Physical Disabilities. The second event is our physiotherapist Dominic's sports exploration programme as previously mentioned. We want to extend our heartfelt thanks for your continued support. Thank you Mary!

Together, we are making a real difference, and we couldn't do it without you! Stay tuned for more updates, and thank you once again for being part of our mission.



Mary and her Granddaughter Mia



Mary Deery's painting



Mary Deery's painting