

Breaking Down Barriers

Family Law Advice for the Neurodivergent
Community

Sir Andrew McFarlane

With thanks to



Hosted by

FRESHFIELDS

All About Me Toolkit

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All About Me – Adults



FLANC
FAMILY LAW ADVICE FOR THE
NEURODIVERGENT COMMUNITY

All About Me

Section 1: About Me

Name (preferred/chosen name):

My pronouns:

My diagnosis/neurodivergence:

If you need an interpreter, please confirm which language:

If you have a go-to person to help you, please confirm who:

How my diagnosis/neurodivergence affects me:

In this section, write about how your diagnosis influences how you understand language, communicate with others, if it affects your wellbeing and whether there are any specific medical needs resulting from your diagnosis.

It takes a lot of mental effort for me to filter through information to pick out the important bits, and this can be mentally and physically exhausting. This might come across as me 'not listening'. The exhaustion can cause me to 'burn out' and affect my ability to engage.

Section 2: Communication

How you should communicate with me:

In this section, write about how you would like others to communicate with you. For example use visual aids, give me extra processing time, writing things down for me to refer back to, use clear and unambiguous language.

I struggle to understand implied meanings and other people's intentions. Things have to be clear for me to understand them, and they have to make logical sense to me.

Common mistakes people make communicating with me:

For example, assuming I don't understand because I don't use mouth words, giving me too much information in one go, saying things that you don't mean (like sarcasm), not using every-day language, use loud voices.

Even though I do make eye contact with people (because this is what is expected in society), it feels very uncomfortable, intrusive and invasive to me.

Please try not to presume how I am feeling; I show my emotions differently and most of the time when someone tries to guess how I am feeling, they are wrong. Please instead ask me how I am feeling and I will tell you.

If I start to fidget a lot, change position or turn my head/look around, this is a sign that I am starting to feel overwhelmed or that I am struggling. This usually means I'm not sure where to look, or that I feel 'attacked' and am trying to get myself out of the 'firing line'. If at this point the situation doesn't change, I will become upset and try to leave the room – not because I'm angry but because I feel overwhelmed.

How I communicate with you:

In this section, write about how you communicate with others. For example, I prefer writing over talking, I like to use visual aids like rating scales, I find it hard to communicate in big groups, I prefer 1:1 conversations, I use clear and direct language, I look away when I am concentrating, I like/dislike eye contact.

I struggle in conversations – I spend a lot of time trying to work out when it's my turn to speak. I find it difficult knowing how to enter and exit conversations.

I need time to think, process and respond without you interrupting me.

Please avoid confrontational language and command words.

Please use visual tools, such as visual timetables or pictures to help me focus and understand things (a visual timeline of next steps).

Section 3: Sensory Profile

A sensory profile is really useful because everyone has sensory needs and preferences, and these can impact how we communicate, feel and behave. Everyone experiences the world differently, and it is important to be mindful of this. With many neurodivergent conditions, sensory processing is often affected. A person can become dysregulated due to sensory overload (too much sensory stimulation) or exhibit sensory under responsivity (not enough sensory stimulation). When a person's sensory needs are not appropriately met, this can lead to states of distress.

My sensory needs:



In this section, write about any sensory needs. For example, are there any textures or sounds that you find comfortable or uncomfortable? Do you like bright lights or dim lights? Are there any environments that are supportive or unsupportive for your sensory needs? Do you have any stimming behaviours you want other people to understand? How do your sensory needs affect your wellbeing? Are there any actions you do that show other people you may need support? Do you have any sensory aids or strategies that you use to help?

I struggle in enclosed spaces and with lots of people looking at me/being in people's eye-line. In Court I would ask to be able to sit in a row behind everyone else.

I would also ask to be able to sit at the end of the row, so that I have an easier path to the door as this will help me feel less trapped.

I would ask to be able to use my fidget toys during hearings to help me focus.

All About Me – Child

All About Me

Please indicate in each section if this has been completed by you, a responsible adult, or a combination of both.

Section 1: Who Am I

Insert picture here

Name (preferred/chosen name):

Age:

My pronouns:

My trusted adult:

If you need an interpreter, please confirm which language:

Where I live and who I live with:

The people working with me (for example, teachers, social workers, guardian):

Name	Where they work	What they do with me

How I describe myself to other people (for example, what you like/don't like, your personality, things you're good at, things you find hard):

Things that make me feel safe and comfortable:

My comfort items:
 In this section, write about any things you like to keep with you (for example, toys, objects, foods, sensory items) and what you might feel if you lose or forget them.

People who help me feel calm are:

I feel safe when...

Adults can help me feel safe by...

Accessing the All About Me document

[Resources and training – FLANC – Family Law Advice for the Neurodivergent Community](#)

FLANC x Our Family Wizard

Separated Parenting and Neurodivergence

A practical guide

Caroline Croft
Katie Deans

Purpose of the collaboration

- To provide tools and resources for separated parents can use to tackle some of the most common issues encountered when there are issues of neurodivergence.
- Tools and resources for separated parents of neurodivergent children.
- Tools and resources for separated parents where there is parental neurodivergence.

How the tools will work

- Identify the issue.
- Look at how it might be solved.
- Show how existing tools can support neurodivergent children and parents in practical, accessible ways.
- Aim is to support parents to find solutions.

Examples

Issue	Recommendation	Practical Tool
<p>Changing or conflicting schedules can increase anxiety and confusion.</p>	<p>Neurodivergent children often benefit from predictable routines.</p>	<p>OurFamilyWizard Calendar</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One shared plan for everyone • Colour-coded for clarity • Child access independence • Timestamps reduce confusion
<p>Unequal access to information or one parent missing key updates</p>	<p>Make sure both parents can access the same updates and records.</p>	<p>The Info Bank</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One shared place for information • Stores reports, letters, timetables and care details • Timestamps show what's new • Professional access keeps everyone aligned

Where to find the tools and when

- Will be published summer 2026.
- Will be available free of charge on the FLANC Website.
- Will be available free of charge on the OFW Website.
- In the meantime, please watch the FLANC x OFW seminar from November 2025 available via QR code



FLANC x FLiP

FLiP Family Law
in Partnership

Non-Court Dispute Resolution (NCDR) Toolkit

Jenny Beck KC
Elizabeth Fletcher



How to use this toolkit

Who is this toolkit for?

This Toolkit is for all family law professionals working to support families to move forward and resolve their family law disputes.

What is the toolkit?

The toolkit is made up of 3 key elements:

- Identifying individual needs and screening: using the 'All about Me document' a framework created by FLANC for helping clients identify their specific and individual needs
- The Barriers to Participation tool: a way for family law professionals to work through the options available to them when meeting specific needs of a neurodivergent client
- The Agreement of Process framework: a document recording what has been agreed by all parties to support the neurodivergent client to enable them to maximise their participation in NCDR

How to use the toolkit?

This toolkit is designed to enable family law professionals to work with neurodivergent people to co-create a framework that will support and maximise their ability to participate in an NCDR process. The aim is that whenever this work is carried out it will accompany the neurodivergent person throughout their NCDR journey and could also be used if there is any need to enter the court system.

Some professionals will be able to go straight to the Agreement of Process and work through this with their clients to create a document that will underpin their experience of NCDR. In this case the NCDR professional would start with the Agreement of Process. For other individuals it will be necessary for the NCDR professional to support them to think about what their needs are. Even when a client is aware of their needs, the Screening Tool can be used by family law professionals to think about the options available to them in responding to those needs in their specific NCDR setting.

So, the message is please dip into this toolkit and use it at any point in your client's journey. We have created it to be helpful at any stage.

NCDR Toolkit for Practitioners

- www.flanctoolkit.org
- Aimed at mediators and practitioners not the public
- Options and tools to enable mediator to tailor process to clients
- Aim to maximise participation

How Does It Work?

1. Screen for specific needs to support clients' participation; then
2. Identify adjustments needed; then
3. Propose an agreement of process regarding those adjustments that can be agreed between the participants, (their advisors) and the mediator.

Feedback

"I've used the toolkit with many clients and have had a lot of positive feedback and gratitude that their specific needs were being listened to and accommodated"

Caroline Bowden, Anthony Gold Solicitors


Professionals Meeting Toolkit

Alia Lewis
Dr Tom Grange

Professionals Meeting Toolkit

- Encourages interagency communication
- Progresses care planning and case management, maintaining momentum
- Sets out key professionals
- Provides an example agenda

Agenda

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Professionals Meeting Agenda re [child]

Via [online] on [date] at [time]

(Meeting will be transcribed by [])

Microsoft Teams meeting Link

Attendees & email addresses

- Chair – Child's Solicitor/LA Solicitor/IRO/Other
- Social work team
- Children's Guardian

Health

- GP
- School Nurse
- SEND Occupational therapist/speech and language therapist
- Educational psychologist
- CAMHS
- Clinicians
- Integrated Care Board (ICB)

Education/SEND

- Head teacher
- Class teacher/specialist teacher(s)
- SENCo
- Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Virtual School
- Short Breaks/respite
- SEND/Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) team

WWW.FLANC.ORG.UK

- Attendees / Email Addresses
- Apologies
- Agreed List of Pre-Reading
- Purpose of Meeting
- Discussion Points
- Summary of Key Points Flowing from Meeting
- Agreed Actions

FLANC Professionals Meeting Toolkit

Feedback

“fully appreciates the value of this type of professionals’ meeting, it has clearly been of great help to everyone and the court on the recently concluded case”

Her Honour Judge Lazarus

“The approach advocated by Alia was for an early professionals meeting identifying all of the team around the child and setting out an agenda for us to contribute to. This really helped in focusing the litigation on the welfare aspect rather than the threshold issues. It squarely put this child’s needs at the forefront of the litigation rather than focusing on the pleadings of neglectful parenting.

The minutes stemming from the professionals meeting helped parties, including the social work team, I believe, to draw together the strengths and weaknesses of the child’s situation”

Jonathan Jonas, Children’s Solicitor



Best Practice Guidance

The Family Justice Council Guidance on Neurodiversity

Caroline Croft
HHJ Maclachlan



Family Justice Council Guidance on Neurodiversity in the Family Justice System for Practitioners

January 2025

Aim and Core Principles



- Aim: to ensure that barriers to participation are identified and overcome.
- Core principles:
 - Consider neurodivergence at the earliest stage.
 - Understand the person you are working with.
 - Are there barriers to participation?
 - What adjustments can be made to overcome those barriers to participation?
 - Adjustments must be person and situation specific.
 - Collaboration and consent.
 - Keep adjustments under review.

What else is needed?



Best practice guidance is essential but to ensure access to justice for neurodivergent children, adults and families and a neuroinclusive and neuroinformed family justice system we also need:

- Increased awareness and understanding of neurodivergence.
- To ensure that neurodivergent people are listened to and understood.
- The confidence to ask questions and be open to new approaches and ideas.
- Mandatory training for family justice professionals.
- Training for the judiciary.



Breaking Down Barriers

Fairer Solutions for the Neurodivergent Community

Claire Evans
Jenny Beck KC
Alia Lewis

Neurodiversity Informed Practice: Training for the Family Justice system



Anna Freud
building the mental
wellbeing of the
next generation



What difference can training make?

*Case studies from The National Autism
Trainer programme*



Anna Freud

“The training has acted as a catalyst for a culture shift within the service -including within senior leadership, who attend the training alongside frontline staff. Several practitioners have discussed feeling inspired to adapt their approach and make changes to better support the children and young people they work with. The NATP training has helped produce many lightbulb moments where staff reflect and think “I remember that child and perhaps I could have done things differently”. This culture shift has led to several small changes and a newfound acceptance and understanding that everybody has different needs. That has been the most powerful impact of the training.”

“We have seen a reduction in complaints about the experience of assessments at the service, a fantastic early indicator that the team is providing a better experience for autistic children and young people, and their parents and carers.”



Anna Freud



“After the training, colleagues have a deeper understanding of thinking differences, chronic stressors that contribute to mental illness or dysregulation, and how to communicate with young people. As a result, our team is more flexible and creative with their approach to working with young people.”

“Many autistic people relate that they have had negative experiences of trying to access services. Many have just not been able to explain themselves or they have struggled to understand the process and engage meaningfully in the therapeutic process. As such I have taken special care to reframe the overarching narrative in assessments to highlight that it is our service that needs to adapt to support autistic people, rather than the other way around. This has been tremendously well received by my clients, who have often just felt that they are a complex problem.”



Anna Freud





Anna Freud

How can you help?



Any Questions?

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