



Riding the Rapids

About the course:

Riding the Rapids is a free course for parents and carers of children who have a diagnosis of Autism, learning disabilities, neurodevelopmental conditions or complex physical disabilities.

The course aims to help parents to understand and support their child's behaviour, in the context of additional needs.

Research shows that parents and carers who attend Riding the Rapids can:

- Develop effective strategies to promote wellbeing and change behaviour.
- Increase their coping skills and confidence, reducing stress.

Each weekly session covers a different aspect of understanding behaviour and supporting autistic young people and/or young people with a learning disability.

Parents and carers start the course by deciding on a target behaviour they would like to understand and focus on, to improve their child's quality of life, and then putting together a plan to tackle it using a variety of strategies.

Parents and carers develop strategies through discussion, direct teaching, practising ideas and watching videos of other parents talking about what strategies they use. Parents and carers put strategies into place between sessions.

Courses for parents/carers of secondary aged children also include sessions on puberty and developing independence skills.

Dates:

This course is run 3 times a year; in January, after the Easter holidays and in September. The next dates the course are running are:



Primary:

- Thursday 24th September – Thursday 3rd December 2026 with a break over half term)

Secondary:

- Tuesday 22nd September – Tuesday 1st December 2026 (with a break over half term)

Practical information:

Our courses are facilitated by colleagues in the Link LD/A team who have been trained in Riding the Rapids.

Our courses are split into two age groups:

- Primary: for parents/carers of primary-aged (reception to year 6) children.
- Secondary: for parents/carers of secondary aged (school years 7-11) children.

The course will run for 2 hours a week, for 10 weeks (with breaks for school holidays). All parents/carers are expected to attend a minimum of 8 sessions.

There is a follow up meeting 2-3 months after the course has finished to discuss how everyone is finding things and to provide an opportunity to answer any questions.

Frequently asked questions

1. Can I bring my small child to the session?

No, we find people can concentrate more easily when there are only adults in a room

2. How often are the courses held?

We run primary and secondary courses three times a year; in January, at Easter and in September

3. Where are the courses held?



We rotate where the group is held each time, but it is a mixture of online on Microsoft Teams and in-person. Because we offer these courses for any parents/carers in Somerset with a child of primary or secondary age, we try to do some in-person sessions in the West of the county and some in the East.

4. Can I bring my partner/ mum etc to the course?

Yes, but please check with one of the facilitators first so we know how many people to expect.