



Merry Christmas

FROM MCT DURHAM x

OUR GUIDE TO SURVIVING CHRISTMAS

**MCT DURHAM PCF**

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 MakingChangesTogetherDURHAM

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Registered Charity Number 1202217

This Christmas MCT Durham PCF ( Parent Carer Forum) have sent this digital Christmas guide as we know many SEND families find this time of year hard. This guide includes some tips, laughs, activities and links to get you & your family through this festive period.



**VICTORIA'S  
TOP TIP**

If your child wants mayonnaise or tomato sauce on their dinner that's ok. If they want chicken nuggets rather than the traditional Christmas dinner that's ok too.



**AMY'S  
TOP TIP**

Do Christmas YOUR way! Don't feel pressured into doing anything just because it's considered traditional.



"Christmas gives us the opportunity to pause and reflect on the important things around us"

"The smells of Christmas are the smells of childhood"

"Christmas is a togethery sort of holiday. That's my favourite kind!"

"Gifts of time and love are surely the basic ingredients of a truly Merry Christmas"

KAY'S  
TOP TIP

Plan your day. Use a visual timetable / now, next and then cards to keep the day predictable and so your child knows exactly what to expect.



# PREPARING FOR CHRISTMAS



LOUISE'S  
TOP TIP

If your child hates the unwrapping of presents don't wrap them! Just leave presents laid out or put inside a Santa sack or a big box.



- Try to involve your child as much as possible e.g. let them choose some of the decorations or help decorate the tree - This will take away the element of surprise and will help to eliminate some of their anxieties.
- If your child dislikes change ; try putting your decorations up gradually in order to avoid overwhelming them. Think about bringing your Christmas tree into your home / getting it out a few days before decorating it. That way your young person has time to process and adjust to the changes that are about to happen. Sometimes parents / carers feel it's easier to put decorations up while their children aren't at home- be aware some children may be unsettled by returning home and seeing their home looking completely different. Also taking decorations down in gradual stages may be beneficial for your child too.
- Use visual tools to help explain to your child that the Christmas tree & decorations will be a temporary fixture in your home. Consider introducing a Christmas visual timetable (as suggested in Kay's top tip above) to show what's happening when, and countdown to each event.
- We know sometimes it isn't possible but try to prewarn your child about ANY changes that will happen whether with routine or surroundings This will help eliminate added anxiety and avoid sensory overload.
- If possible, show your child pictures or videos of your home decorated from previous Christmases. This may help trigger their memories & prepare them for what their home will look like over the Christmas period.
- Remember - It's also Ok **NOT** to put up Christmas decorations at all. We know many families choose not to as their child can't cope. Do Christmas YOUR own way!



ANDREA'S  
TOP TIP

If a child is happiest in their room with lego. So what.

If they just want chicken nuggets and tomato sauce. Let them be.



CRACKER  
JOKES

SARA'S  
TOP TIP

Don't be afraid to tell relative & friends that you want a quiet or surprise free Christmas.



Why did Santa get a parking ticket?  
He left his sleigh in a snow parking zone.



Which animal is best at wrapping gifts? A Velociraptor



Where do Santa's reindeers drink their coffee?  
Star-bucks



What's an elf's favourite type of music? Wrap!



What makes a candy cane a collector's item? It's in mint condition!



Who is Santa's favourite singer?  
Elf-is-Presley!



What do you call a greedy elf?  
Elfish!



What is Santa's favourite snack?  
Crisp Pringles.



How do sheep say, "Merry Christmas"?  
Fleece Navidad



Makaton YouTube link

ROMITA'S  
TOP TIP

Let your child (or yourself) escape to a "safe sanctuary" (bedroom, pre designated quiet area) when things get overwhelming



# RELAXATION TIPS.

Christmas can be a stressful time of year. Below are some relaxation tips to help look after yourself when you're feeling stressed or worried.

## Take a break

Just stepping away from something stressful for a few minutes can give you enough space and distance to feel calmer.

- Read a book or a magazine, even if it's only for a few minutes.
- Run yourself a bath, have a cuppa, listen to some music, have a shower, watch a film or try a new recipe.

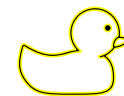
## Get active.

Gentle exercise can help you relax too.

- Take a walk - whether long or short. Even a few minutes of walking can help you to feel relaxed.
- Try something new e.g. yoga, Pilates or gentle exercise.

## Get creative

- Try painting, drawing, making crafts, playing a musical instrument, dancing, baking or sewing.
- Try not to worry too much about the finished product. Just focus on enjoying yourself.



## Spend time in nature

- Take a walk in a green space if you can, taking time to notice any trees, flowers, plants and animals you see on the way.
- Spend some time in the garden. Whether that's in your own garden or taking part in a local project. You can find projects and outdoor activities to suit whatever level of mobility you have.

## Focus on your breathing

It takes just a few minutes and can be done anywhere.

- Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Try to keep your shoulders down and relaxed and place your hand on your stomach - it should rise as you breathe in and fall as you breathe out.
- Count as you breathe. Start by counting 'one, two, three, four' as you breathe in and 'one, two, three, four' as you breathe out. Try to work out what's comfortable for you.

## Have a break from technology

- Try turning your phone off for an hour, if you can.
- Step away from the TV or have an evening where you don't check emails or social media networks. Use the time to do something relaxing. You could try some of the ideas above.



# FAMILY CRAFT AND ACTIVITY IDEAS

Christmas is a time for family fun. Below are some fun festive activity ideas and downloads to occupy the whole family.

- NORAD Santa tracker - <https://www.noradsanta.org/en/>
- Downloadable & printable colour in design your own Christmas tree.  
<https://www.crayola.com/free-coloring-pages/print/christmas-tree-coloring-page/>
- Paper snowflake making - <https://www.itsalwaysautumn.com/cut-snowflake-video-tutorial-free-templates.html>
- Printable Christmas colouring in cards- Download [HERE](#)
- Downloadable & printable colour in wish list for Santa <https://www.crayola.com/free-coloring-pages/print/wish-list-to-santa-coloring-page/>
- Downloadable & printable colour in calendar <https://www.crayola.com/free-coloring-pages/print/christmas-countdown-calendar-coloring-page/>
- Downloadable & printable colour in Christmas tree <https://www.crayola.com/free-coloring-pages/print/christmas-gifts-under-the-tree-coloring-page/>



## COLLEEN'S TOP TIP

Do what makes things easier for you not other people.



## MCT TOP TIP

It's fine if your child doesn't want to wake up early on Christmas morning OR doesn't want to open presents at the same time as everyone else.



# THE 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS.

Watch a video of the song on YouTube [HERE](#)

On the first day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
A partridge in a pear tree.

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On the second day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.

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On the third day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.

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On the fourth day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.

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On the fifth day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Five gold rings,  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree



On the sixth day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Six geese a-laying,  
Five gold rings,  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.

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On the seventh day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Seven swans a-swimming,  
Six geese a-laying,  
Five gold rings,  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree

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On the eighth day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Eight maids a-milking,  
Seven swans a-swimming,  
Six geese a-laying,  
Five gold rings,  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.



On the ninth day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Nine ladies dancing,  
Eight maids a-milking,  
Seven swans a-swimming,  
Six geese a-laying,  
Five gold rings,  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.

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On the tenth day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Ten lords a-leaping,  
Nine ladies dancing,  
Eight maids a-milking,  
Seven swans a-swimming,  
Six geese a-laying,  
Five gold rings,  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.



12 days of Christmas  
activity number tracing  
printable [here](#)

On the eleventh day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Eleven pipers piping,  
Ten lords a-leaping,  
Nine ladies dancing,  
Eight maids a-milking,  
Seven swans a-swimming,  
Six geese a-laying,  
Five gold rings,  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.

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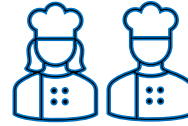
On the twelfth day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Twelve drummers drumming,  
Eleven pipers piping,  
Ten lords a-leaping,  
Nine ladies dancing,  
Eight maids a-milking,  
Seven swans a-swimming,  
Six geese a-laying,  
Five gold rings,  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree!



# EASY ICED CHRISTMAS BISCUIT RECIPE

Makes around 20 biscuits.

Preparation time 10 minutes + cooking time 10 minutes.



## METHOD

### • STEP 1

Put icing sugar, vanilla extract, egg yolk and butter into a mixing bowl and stir together. Add the flour and mix to a firm dough. Shape the dough into two flat discs and wrap them. Chill for 20-30 mins. Heat oven to 190C/fan 170C/gas 5 and line two baking sheets with non-stick baking paper.

### • STEP 2

Roll out the dough on a lightly floured surface to about the thickness of two £1 coins. Cut out Christmassy shapes (use a cutter if you like) and place on the baking sheets. Bake for 10-12 mins until lightly golden.

### • STEP 3

Lift the biscuits onto a wire rack to cool. Meanwhile, mix the icing sugar with a few drops of cold water to make a thick, but still runny icing. Colour with edible food colouring if you like & spread it over the cooled biscuits decorate as desired.

## INGREDIENTS

- 140g icing sugar, sieved.
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 egg yolk
- 250g butter
- 375g plain flour, sieved.

### To decorate

- 200g icing sugar, sieved.
- Optional - Edible food colouring and decorations e.g. silver balls.



# DISABILITY FRIENDLY ACTIVITIES & EVENTS

We have a photo album on our Facebook page of local SEND friendly activities over Christmas. We will be adding more regularly. If you have any activities to add, just email us at [info@mctdurham.co.uk](mailto:info@mctdurham.co.uk) and we can add them. Link to our Facebook album [HERE](#)

Fun and Food County Durham public Facebook group [HERE](#)

## MCT TOP TIP

Accessing events that are disability friendly is not only great for your child but also a great chance to chat with others who just get it.



## MCT TOP TIP

Add batteries to toys BEFORE wrapping them. It will save your child having to wait for them to be added on Christmas day & will help keep them calm.



**MCT  
TOP TIP**

For those struggling for Christmas

Buy them something they'd like  
Something they need  
Something to wear  
And something to read

Spend day with loved ones  
We don't need belongings,  
It's love that we need



**MCT  
TOP TIP**

Sometimes everything at once  
can be overwhelming.  
Staggering gifts, guests, even  
decorating for Christmas can really  
help a child adjust to the changes  
this season..

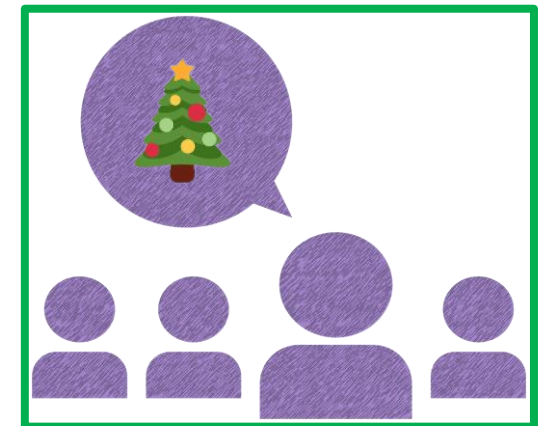


**ZOOM PARENT CARER  
CHRISTMAS COFFEE &  
CHAT SESSION.**  
Wednesday 13th December 2023  
7Pm - 8pm

MAKE A CUPPA OR POUR A DRINK AND HAVE  
A CHAT, ASK QUESTIONS, GAIN  
INFORMATION AND GET SUPPORT.

**WIN** Win an Amazon voucher.  
Any County Durham parent carers welcome.  
Link to pre register on our website or Facebook page.

Link to book [HERE](#)





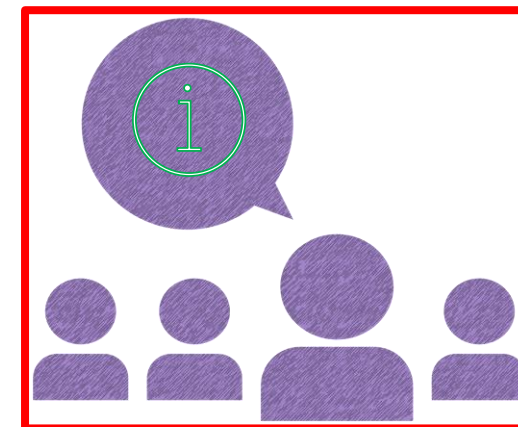
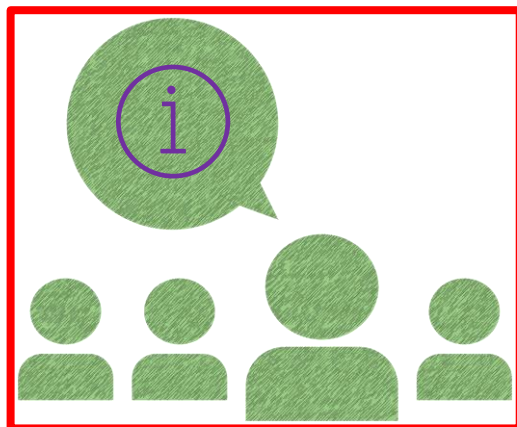
☆☆☆☆☆ SAVE THE DATE ☆☆☆☆☆

Thursday 11th January 2024.  
10am- 2pm. Durham Town Hall.











☆ Workshops and information sharing ☆


Sendiass, Wills & Trusts & Sensoryworx.  
Refreshments & dinner provided.


Further details on how to book will be sent  
via our email mailing list & shared on our  
website and social media soon.



# LINKS TO SOME MORE HELPFUL INFORMATION

- Examples of Christmas social stories - [HERE](#) 
- Christmas Calm Down kit - Download [HERE](#) 
- 9 calming Christmas activities for kids - [HERE](#) 
- Gingerbread Christmas Deep Breathing - Download [HERE](#) 
- Christmas Counting Printable Booklet - Download [HERE](#) 
- Printable visual timetable - Download [HERE](#) 
- Christmas in Europe learning sheet - Download [HERE](#) 
- Toby Henderson Trust. How to make your Christmas Autism Friendly. View [HERE](#) 
- Tree Tops Occupational Therapy weekly top tip for children who find the festive period particularly challenging. [HERE](#)
- Durham Local offer website - [HERE](#) 
- Durham - [Help for families - your virtual Family Hub HERE](#) 

Makaton "We wish you a Merry Christmas" video [HERE](#) 

Relaxing fireplace with crackling fire sounds 12-hour video [HERE](#) 

Nonstop YouTube Christmas song playlist [HERE](#) 

This festive season MCT wish you and your family love, joy and peace.



Wishing you and your family a  
Merry Christmas and best  
wishes for 2024.



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[www.mctdurham.co.uk](http://www.mctdurham.co.uk)



[Find us here!](#)