

Information for parents

Process for Assessment of Autism Spectrum Disorder

What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?

Autism spectrum disorder is a lifelong neurodevelopmental disorder that affects how people perceive the world and interact with others. People with autism spectrum disorder see, hear and feel the world differently to other people. Autism spectrum disorder is a lifelong condition; autism spectrum disorder is not an illness or disease and cannot be 'cured'. Often people feel that having autism spectrum disorder is a fundamental aspect of their identity.

How to be referred for assessment

If you are concerned that your child may have autism spectrum disorder, please approach your GP for a referral to a Community Paediatrician. Other health or education professionals can also make a referral to the Community Paediatrician. Across Cumbria we have a very experienced team of Community Paediatricians that can explain the assessment process.

What happens after the referral?

The Community Paediatrician will look at the referral in detail, so it is very important the referrer sends as much information as possible detailing concerns. If the paediatrician feels that your child would benefit from an assessment, you will be sent a questionnaire. This should be completed by you with as much detail as possible and sent back before your first appointment, so that the paediatrician can build up a picture of your child's strengths and needs.

What happens at the first appointment?

Your first appointment with the paediatrician will last for approximately one hour, during which time you will be asked all about your child's birth history and developmental progress. The paediatrician will examine your child and observe them whilst they play. The paediatrician will also try and engage and interact with your child. At the end of the appointment, the paediatrician will discuss their thoughts with you. If the paediatrician believes your child should have an autism spectrum disorder assessment they will explain this to you and provide you with written information on what to expect during the assessment. This is the start of the autism spectrum disorder assessment.

Assessments

If a report has not already been received, after the initial appointment, the paediatrician will ask for a nursery or school report which will describe how your child is learning and interacting socially with their peers. The paediatrician will also ask for information from any other professionals already working with you and your child. Sometimes the paediatrician will request specialist assessments and reports from other professionals, such as Speech and Language Therapist and Educational Psychology, if they do not feel there is sufficient information about your child's strengths and needs. As this is a time of gathering information from a variety of professionals working with your child this process may take some time. You will receive a written update on assessment progress. If you do not hear from us please contact on the numbers given further on.

It is very important that you attend all the appointments you are offered and contact the service if you are not able to attend. Failure to attend will mean that the process cannot continue and your child may not be able to be seen for further assessment, the autism spectrum disorder assessment may get delayed or stop and your child may get discharged from the assessment process.

What happens after the assessment process?

After the assessment process has been completed you will be invited to a face to face appointment with the Community Paediatrician, or another member of the assessment team, to discuss the outcome of the process. From this appointment a brief report explaining the outcome will be provided for you. Regardless of the outcome you will receive advice and information according to your child's needs.

Carlisle and Eden

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