

# Information for parents and carers

## Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Diagnosis Assessment

Community Paediatrics

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of three overlapping, wavy bands of blue. The top band is a light blue, the middle is a medium blue, and the bottom is a dark blue.

## What is ASD and why has your child been referred to the team?

Your child has been referred for an assessment because you, a health visitor, a nursery or school, or another professional has noticed differences from the norm in your child's development, particularly in their social communication skills, and would like a more detailed understanding of their needs.

As a service, we use the term Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and have done so throughout this leaflet for clarity and consistency. Families may, however, use different terms when talking about their child, and you are welcome to use whatever language feels right for you.

The ASD assessment will be made by a multidisciplinary team of the Community Paediatrics Department using a framework known as DSM 5 (shorthand for the 5th edition of the manual which describes the diagnostic framework used by our service).

## How DSM-5 guides our ASD assessments

DSM-5 sets out the criteria clinicians must use when considering an ASD diagnosis. According to DSM-5:

- Differences in social communication and social interaction are essential for an ASD diagnosis
- Restricted or repetitive behaviours, interests, or activities must also be present
- Sensory differences may be present, but they are not required for a diagnosis

This means that a child can meet criteria for ASD with or without sensory differences, and sensory needs alone do not mean a child meets criteria for ASD.

# Autism assessment pathway

The assessment pathway is a step-by-step process that helps us understand your child's strengths, differences, and needs, and whether an ASD diagnosis is appropriate.

Not all children who are assessed will receive a diagnosis. This is not a negative outcome — the purpose of the assessment is to gain a clear understanding of your child and their developmental profile.

The pathway usually includes the following stages:

- 1. Referral and triaging**
- 2. Gathering information**
- 3. Developmental assessment appointment**
- 4. Further information gathering (if needed)**
- 5. Multi-Professional Meeting (MPM)**
- 6. Feedback appointment**
- 7. Follow-up (if appropriate)**

Not every child will need every stage.

## Referral and triaging

When a referral is received, the information is reviewed by the team (triaged). This helps us decide how best to proceed and what information is needed to support the assessment.

To help us understand your child's development, health, and everyday functioning, we gather information from a range of sources. This may include:

- A detailed developmental history
- Questionnaires such as ASRS (Autism Spectrum Rating Scales) forms sent to nursery or school
- Nursery or school observations

We may also review reports from other professionals, such as Speech and Language Therapists or Educational Psychologists, if these professionals have already been involved by the nursery or school.

## **Developmental assessment appointment**

You and your child will be invited to attend a developmental assessment appointment once sufficient background information has been gathered.

During this appointment:

- We explore your child's development, communication, behaviour, interaction, and play
- The assessment is carried out with an open mind
- Although your child may have been referred with a question about ASD, we may also consider other developmental explanations, such as global developmental delay, learning differences, or other neurodevelopmental or medical factors

Usually one clinician leads the appointment, though other team members or trainees may be present.

## **Further information gathering (if needed)**

Sometimes additional information is needed after the clinic appointment before reaching an outcome. This may include:

- Further nursery or school observations
- Additional professional reports

- An autism-specific assessment (such as an ADOS), if clarification is required

If further assessments are needed, this will be discussed with you.

## Multi-professional meeting (MPM)

Once all relevant information has been gathered, a Multi-Professional Meeting (MPM) is held. At this meeting, clinicians discuss the assessment findings together to reach a shared decision.

## Feedback appointment

After the MPM, you will be invited to attend a feedback appointment. The format may vary slightly between sites, but the purpose is always to:

- Explain the findings of your child's assessment
- Discuss the assessment outcome and whether an ASD diagnosis is appropriate
- Talk through your child's strengths, differences, and needs
- Discuss next steps and sources of support

Only some children will meet criteria for ASD. Not receiving an ASD diagnosis does not mean that your child's needs are not recognised, or that the assessment was unsuccessful.

Families will be signposted to appropriate services and sources of support where relevant and available, based on their child's identified needs.

## Follow-up appointment (if appropriate)

If your child receives an ASD diagnosis, you will usually be offered a telephone follow-up appointment with our ASD Pathway Navigator around six weeks after feedback.

This appointment focuses on:

- Sharing ASD-specific information
- Discussing challenges related specifically to ASD
- Guiding families towards ASD-specific services and resources

This follow-up is not routinely offered when an ASD diagnosis is not indicated, as it is designed to provide ASD-specific guidance. Families whose children do not receive a diagnosis will still have had their child's needs identified and discussed, with appropriate signposting provided.

## **Important information about our service**

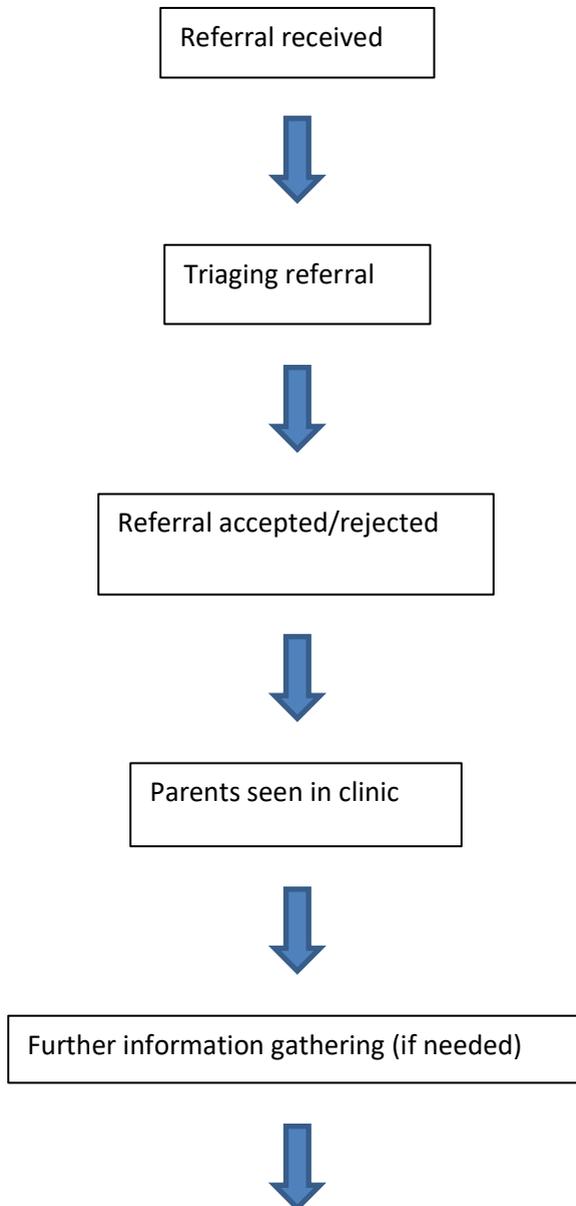
Our team provides a diagnostic assessment service only. Our role is to assess, identify, and diagnose social communication and developmental differences.

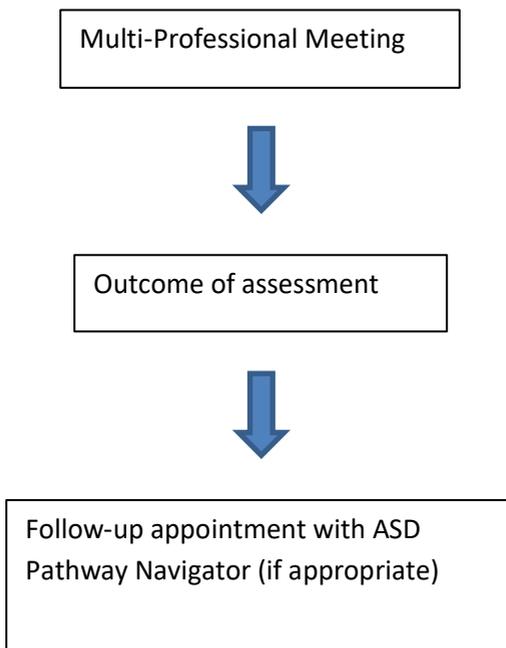
Please note:

- We cannot provide ongoing therapy or treatment following assessment
- We are unable to help with Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) applications and are not involved in decisions about whether an EHCP is issued.
- We cannot provide behavioural therapy or medication
- We cannot give direct advice or recommendations to schools regarding support, staffing, or placements

We can signpost families to relevant services, community resources, and professionals who may be able to offer further advice and support.

## ASD referral process – flowchart





## Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please telephone:

Community paediatrics, Ashton Health Centre, **01772 777223** or **01772 777222**.

Community paediatrics, Broadoaks CDC, **01772 215560** Option 8.

## Sources of further information

[www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk)

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

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

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

[www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/veteran-aware](http://www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/veteran-aware)

<https://bepartofresearch.nihr.ac.uk/>

**Community Paediatric ASD Padlet** - This resource library provides a collection of educational materials about autism for children, young people, parents, and carers. It also includes signposting to trusted services, supports, and further information.

<https://padlet.com/ASDinfo/community-paediatrics-autism-support-and-resource-library-kxlbqwkwecetnftd>



## **SLEEP**

**North Lancashire Directions Group Parent Carer Network**

<https://www.northlancsdirectionsgroup.com/sleep>



**The Sleep Charity**

<https://thesleepcharity.org.uk/information-support/children/common-sleep-problems-in-children/>



**Cerebra Sleep Advice Service**

<https://cerebra.org.uk/get-advice-support/sleep-advice-service/>



## SENSORY DIFFERENCES

### **National Autistic Society – Sensory processing explained**

<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/about-autism/sensory-processing>



### **Beyond Autism - Understanding your child's sensory needs**

<https://www.beyondautism.org.uk/resource-hub/understanding-sensory-needs/>



### **Sensory advice**

<https://www.locala.org.uk/services/sensory-occupational-therapy-service/talking-sense-training>



## EATING

### **32 Steps to eating**

<https://padlet.com/ASDinfo/community-paediatrics-autism-support-and-resource-library-kxlbqwkvecetnftd/wish/PVKBQO1y771VWj5x>



## **Food Chaining**

<https://padlet.com/ASDinfo/community-paediatrics-autism-support-and-resource-library-kxlbqwkvecetnftd/wish/PR3NWxgb77L3Zb0O>



## **Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder – Information**

<https://www.cntw.nhs.uk/resource-library/avoidant-restrictive-food-intake-disorder-arfid-simple-suggestions-series-how-can-schools-support-a-child-with-arfid/>



## **GENERAL**

**Local Offer** - This is helpful as is a bank of resource in which you can access- [Special educational needs and disabilities - local offer - Lancashire County Council](#)



If you have Facebook it's easier to follow on there  
[www.lancashire.gov.uk/SEND](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/SEND)



**'Break time'** offer – respite for parents  
[Break Time short break activities - Lancashire County Council](#)



**Family Wellbeing service** – They may be able to support as well as yourself- [Find a children and family wellbeing service - Lancashire County Council](#)



**Family Hubs** - part of the Family Wellbeing (refer to above link)

**Young Minds** - [YoungMinds | Mental Health Charity For Children And Young People | YoungMinds](#)



**Children Action North West** - <https://canw.org.uk/what-we-do/support-children-and-young-people/emotional-health-and-wellbeing/>



**National Autistic Society** - [https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/what-is-autism?qclid=EAlalQobChMlmaS1o-vq\\_wlVAJODBx0YpQnsEAYASAAEgIDGfD\\_BwE](https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/what-is-autism?qclid=EAlalQobChMlmaS1o-vq_wlVAJODBx0YpQnsEAYASAAEgIDGfD_BwE)



**Clinical Partners Support Hub** - There are resources available to parents, via this link, which you may find useful, and you can access these regardless of a diagnosis. Parents can register to receive information around Blogs, Podcasts and videos on a variety of topics, such as Behaviour, Sleep and Anxiety around School for example - [Autism Unlocked: Lancashire and Cumbria autism support hub - Lancashire County Council](#)



**Parent Support** - Lancashire and South Cumbria Autism Support Hub – Clinical Partners <https://www.clinical-partners.co.uk/>

**Ambitious about Autism** - Ambitious about Autism is the national charity for autistic children and young people.  
<https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/>

**Carol Gray Social Stories** - [Home - Carol Gray - Social Stories \(carolgraysocialstories.com\)](http://carolgraysocialstories.com)



**Aspris Children Services** – Oliver House, a specialist Autism Provision are offering free training to parents in Bamber Bridge – different topic each month – ring to check when next date/ to book on them. **01257 220011**

**Youth groups TAAG** - Activity group for young people 8-18 with ADHD/ASD. No diagnosis is needed. [taaglancashire.co.uk](http://taaglancashire.co.uk)

**Kooth** - <https://www.kooth.com/> online Mental health service for children

**Bee Unique Autism** – activities <https://bookwhen.com/beeunique>

## PARENT SUPPORT

**Lancashire Minds Parents group-** <https://www.lancashiremind.org.uk/>  
again on FB run by parent/ carers



**Lancashire Parent Carer Forum -** Working group to try and make a difference <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/children-education-families/special-educational-needs-and-disabilities/getting-help/carer-support/lancashire-parent-carer-forum/>



**Navigate: emotional support for parents | Disability charity Scope UK-** <https://www.scope.org.uk/>



## SCHOOLS

**SENDIAS -** These can help when it comes to meetings with school, advice around support [SENDIAS Home - Lancashire SEND \(lancssendias.org.uk\)](http://lancssendias.org.uk)



Tel: 0300 123 6706 email: [information.lineteam@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:information.lineteam@lancashire.gov.uk)

**SEND Helpline** -The Local Authority SEND helpline number – **01772 533900** can be used to have a SEND query resolved as quickly as possible. You can use it to ask how to make a request for statutory assessment (EHCP), find out who the plan writer is for your child or find out how to ask for a review of your child's plan. You could also book a SEND surgery slot with a SEND case manager for more complex issues or case specific enquiries. Mon – Fri 10 – 4.

**Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is not responsible for the content of external internet sites.**

All our patient information leaflets are available on our website for patients to access and download:

[www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets](http://www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets)

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals is a smoke-free site. Smoking is not permitted anywhere on any of our premises, either inside or outside the buildings. Our staff will ask you about your smoking status when you come to hospital and will offer you support and advice about stopping smoking this will include Nicotine Replacement Therapy to help manage your symptoms of withdrawal and the opportunity to speak to a nurse or advisor from the specialist Tobacco and Alcohol Care Team.

If you want to stop smoking, you can also contact Smokefree Lancashire on Freephone **08081962638**

**Please ask a member of staff if you would like help in understanding this information.  
This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.**

Our patient information group review our leaflets regularly, if you feel you would like to feedback on this information or join our reading group please contact on email address:

[patientexperienceandinvolve@LTHTR.nhs.uk](mailto:patientexperienceandinvolve@LTHTR.nhs.uk)

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