



# Umbrella Pathway

Autism Assessment

After a child's referral to the Umbrella Pathway has been accepted, a number of assessments may be carried out. These will be by professionals who specialise in working with children who are on the autism spectrum. This process may take months to complete .

## What is the Autism Spectrum:

### What do we mean by "the autism spectrum?"

Autism is a spectrum condition which means it affects children and young people in many different ways. Although it is a lifelong condition, with the right support, children can learn, develop and achieve a life style that they choose. Children and young people with autism are able to achieve their full educational potential with the right understanding of how their autism affects them, and with the most appropriate strategies in place.

Children on the autism spectrum have differences in their social understanding, communication, information processing and sensory processing. These differences may cause your child to experience difficulties in the way they interact with the people around them. Their perception of the world can be different from that of other children and adults. These differences are not caused by or considered to be an illness.

There is no treatment to make your child's differences go away, but it is important that the people around them understand how they affect your child so they can get the best help.

Your child's differences may include and affect the following :

- Understanding the communication of others and their ability to communicate with others.
- Development of relationships with other people.
- Understanding and responding to the world around them.
- How to interpret non-verbal communication, for example tone of voice and body language.

- Understanding of humour and sarcasm.
- Understanding and responding to feelings and emotions.
- Coping in specific environments for example crowds, busy/unpredictable environments, strong smells, certain lighting etc.
- Inappropriate or repetitive behaviours and rituals.
- Transitioning between tasks, situations and environments and/or reliance on keeping to a set routine.
- Managing changes to familiar routines.
- Anxiety caused by a variety of things for example worry about misinterpreting signals, others not understanding them and feeling unsafe.
- Sensory processing issues.

Very often, children and young people with autism find the world confusing, which can cause high anxiety - this sometimes can be shown as inappropriate behaviour. However, these actions should be interpreted as communication and we, as the adults should try to identify the cause of stress or frustration.

There are a range of recognised neurodevelopmental conditions The Umbrella Pathway is focussed on assessing for autism spectrum conditions. If the Umbrella Assessment team feel that a child may have other neurodevelopmental difficulties in addition to or rather than autism, arrangements will be made for assessment of these. Examples of these could include Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or tic disorders.

## The Assessment Process

### Why do we need an assessment process?

Children with an Autism Spectrum condition present in many ways and so assessing them can be complicated. We need to properly understand the behaviours that are causing concern. To do this we need experts from different professions to review each child. The professionals involved in each child's assessment process will depend on how the difficulties affect the child in both their daily activities and learning.

## How long will the process take?

In most cases the full assessment process may take about 12-18 months. We need to take this time for a few reasons, for example:

- The order in which each child is seen by the professionals involved may be important, so this may mean it takes longer.
- The information you provide about your child is really important to the assessment process.
- The information may also need to be requested from other people who know your child well e.g. from nursery and/or school.
- Some professionals may see your child in a clinic
- The team of professionals that have assessed each child may need to discuss their findings.
- A group will need to meet to make a final decision so they can offer more explanations as to each child's strengths and difficulties. This may include a diagnosis of autism.

## How will I be involved in my child's assessment?

At the start of the assessment process you will be asked to fill in a questionnaire about your child and you will also be able to talk to all the professional involved about your observations and concerns. This will include giving us information about your child's birth and how they respond to their day to day experiences will be included. Your descriptions of your child's difficulties will form an important part of their assessment. Some professionals will ask to see your child in a clinic. Some may see your child at school or nursery. It is helpful if you can come to the appointments with your child.

In the final discussion meeting the findings relating to a group of about 6-10 children will be discussed and the decisions will be made about the best next steps for each child. Parents don't attend this meeting

## Outcome

A decision about a diagnosis will only be made when the professionals have reviewed all the information about your child. Sometimes the assessment does not result in a definite diagnosis. The professionals may recommend waiting to see how your child develops as they continue to grow and learn. The assessment may need to be repeated when your child is older. However there may be some recommendations following the assessment to help your child with their difficulties.

## How will I find out about my child's diagnosis?

All parents will be asked at the start of the process how they would like to be told the outcome of their child's assessment. This can be by letter, telephone call or a clinic visit. Parents are free to change their mind about this at any stage in the pathway. There is a telephone number on the back of this leaflet and an email address. You can use these to request updates at any time during the assessment process.

A report will be written and will be shared with parents, and also the person who referred your child. You will also be sent a copy of each of the individual specialist's reports about your child. These will come directly from the professionals involved with your child. We can notify your child's nursery or school if you have given us permission to do so.

## Professionals involved in the assessment pathway.

### Who might be involved in my child's assessment?

There are several professionals who may see your child during the assessment process.

These include any of the following depending on the difficulties your child has:

### **Clinical Psychologist**

Clinical Psychologists are specially trained to assess and treat children and young people whose thought patterns and behaviours may affect their health, wellbeing and development.

### **Community Paediatrician**

Community Paediatricians are children's Doctors who specialise in childhood behavioural disorders, childhood disability and complex medical conditions .

### **Occupational Therapist (OT)**

Children's Occupational Therapists assess and advise children and families on how they can participate in daily activities to enable them to become as independent as possible. This includes general self care, school, work and play dependant on the age of the child. They may also investigate sensory processing difficulties.

**Specialist Teachers for Autism** (Babcock Prime, commissioned by the Local Education Authority to be part of the umbrella assessment process).

Specialist Teachers for autism assess children and young people to identify their strengths and difficulties with an autism focus in school or other educational setting. Further advice and guidance from the Autism/Complex Communication Needs (CCN) Team can be accessed on request by the school.

### **Speech and Language Therapist (SLT)**

Speech and Language Therapists assess children to identify why children and young people may have speech, language or communication difficulties. They identify what support families and schools can provide to enable the child to communicate and understand to their full potential.

## **Umbrella Pathway Flow Chart:**

Referral is received through triage. Consent is obtained from parents. Information is requested from the current educational setting and Patient/Carers. Referral is accepted if appropriate to do so.

The child/young person is seen by at least two professionals for the Umbrella Pathway team dependant of their difficulties.

Information is collated Umbrella Pathway Coordinator.

Professionals meet to review information and make a decision about whether criteria for autism is met. Recommendations are always made whether diagnosis or not.

Feedback is given by a key professional from the assessment team to parents and carers.

A diagnostic report is sent to parent and carers.

## Further information is available from:

[www.hacw.nhs.uk/our-services/childrens-community-health-services/umbrella-pathway/](http://www.hacw.nhs.uk/our-services/childrens-community-health-services/umbrella-pathway/)

[www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20287/special\\_educational\\_needs\\_and\\_disabilities\\_information\\_advice\\_and\\_support\\_service/1162/health\\_matters/3](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20287/special_educational_needs_and_disabilities_information_advice_and_support_service/1162/health_matters/3)

For further information about autism please see: [www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk) [www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk](http://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk)

## To contact someone about your child's assessment

Telephone: 01905 681019

Email: [WHCNHS.CommPaedsSCP@nhs.net](mailto:WHCNHS.CommPaedsSCP@nhs.net)

## Do you have a concern, complaint or comment?

Contact: Patient Relations Team, Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust 2 Kings Court, Charles Hastings Way, Worcester. WR5 1JR  
Tel: 01905 681517 Email: [Whcnhs.pals@nhs.net](mailto:Whcnhs.pals@nhs.net)

## Do you have a communication or information support need?

If so please contact the person who gave you this leaflet so that those needs can be recorded and responded to.

## Do you need to know about accessibility?

Read our detailed guides at  
[www.AccessAble.co.uk](http://www.AccessAble.co.uk)



**Do you get stressed, anxious or have low mood?**

Visit [www.hacw.nhs.uk/healthyminds](http://www.hacw.nhs.uk/healthyminds) to find out more or call **01905 766124**.



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