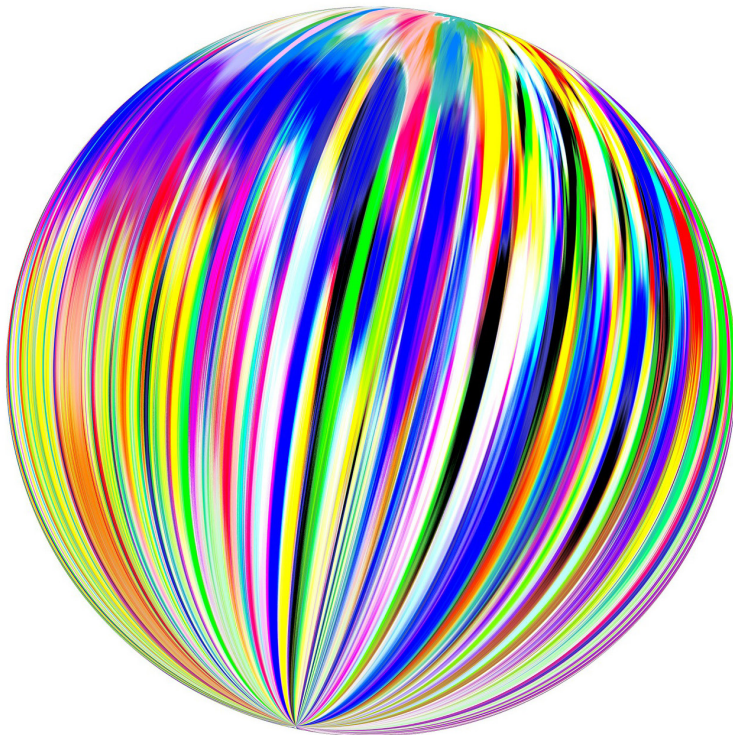



The ASD Assessment



This leaflet provides information about how the NHS in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly assesses and diagnoses children and young people who may have Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

This initial appointment is the first step and may be the only appointment needed to give the team the information it needs to decide if the child or young person has an ASD.



What happens in the assessment?

The Assessment Team is made up of many professionals including Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, and CAMHS professionals. You may not see all of the professionals listed during the assessment.


There is no specific test to diagnose ASD. Instead information is gathered from a number of sources with your consent and this can take a few months to collate. We generally ask your child's school or setting for a detailed report describing how they present there, and consult any other professionals that may have contact with your child (e.g. Educational Psychology, Occupational Therapy, Youth Worker). We might visit your child in school to see them "in action".

2 or more professionals experienced in Autism assessments will usually see you and your child at the first appointment. They will ask you to tell your and your child's story including information on their early development, their life now and information about the wider family. This appointment will usually last around 2 hours.



On the day, the team will initially meet with you and your child to ask a few questions and then one of you will go into a different room. Your child will undertake more detailed assessment with one of the professionals. They will chat about what they like to do, be shown some pictures and even play. You will be asked more specific questions by the other professional.

Sometimes, the two parts of the assessment will be done in separate appointments, rather than on the same day.



It was easier to share information about the challenges we experience at home when the speech therapist took him into another room

The assessment with your child may be in the form of an ADOS assessment.

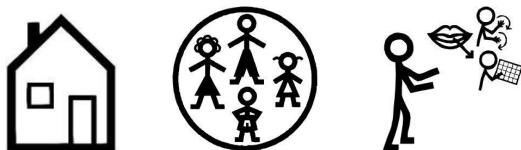
ADOS stands for Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule. It is a standardised instrument used for the diagnosis and assessment of autism in children and adults.

The ADOS assessment is a semi-structured assessment using a mixture of both play and conversation between the clinician and the young person.

Most children will be seen on their own for this assessment (unless they are under 6 years old).

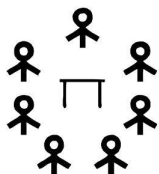
There may be another observer in the room making notes. The examiner will also make notes as they go along, whilst they see the child or young person. The assessment may or may not be video recorded for reliability purposes, though this will be discussed with you fully and consent would need to be obtained.

If you feel that your child might struggle with this then we can provide pictures of the team member they will be seeing or arrange an advance visit to the building. You are welcome to bring a family friend or family member to stay with your child if you feel that this will be needed. Generally the children are happy to join in with the assessment.



Please speak to your child about why they have come to see the team. Additional information is provided with this leaflet about talking to your child.

What happens next ?



Sometimes we will let you know the outcome on the day of the assessment. Sometimes we will need to arrange additional assessments from other members of the team. When this happens, all of the information collected by the team will be discussed at a multi professional meeting and the outcome agreed. This could be that we say that:

- Your child has an Autism Spectrum Disorder ,
- We feel that their behaviours have a different explanation.



You will be called by one of the team in the week following the diagnostic meeting. The reports summarising the assessment and diagnosis will then be sent to you and shared with involved professionals with your consent.

In the event that a diagnosis of ASD is made we will provide your contact details to the support team in the council who will contact you with details of the services they offer.

Talking to your child about the Assessment



Discussing the Assessment process in advance can help put your child at ease

The age of your child may determine how much and in what way you discuss the assessment

Once you've decided to get your child assessed it's important to talk to them about the process and the potential outcomes. You don't want them to be anxious or confused. Here are ideas to get the conversation rolling, depending on how old your child is.

Younger Children

Discuss what's fun and what's hard at school and home. Start out by talking about what your child enjoys. Then ease into the question: "What's hardest?" It doesn't matter if your child identifies the issues you're most concerned about. They can mention anything that's challenging. The point is to let them know that the assessment will help find ways to help.

Explain the process. Point out that the assessment is a series of activities and the team will speak to mum and / or dad and school. You can also say that some of the activities will be fun. Make it clear to your child that there is no right or wrong but also encourage them to try hard because the information will help everyone understand them

Talk about the team. Additional information can be provided about who is in the team and photographs of the building and the individual clinicians can be sent ahead of the appointment

We have included an example of a social story to help you to have a discussion with your child about the assessment, if you think it would be helpful for them.

You can change the pictures or add photos, and add your child's name. If you would like an electronic version of the form, please email us.

Older children

Young people are usually aware that they are different from their peers and possibly struggling with some areas of their lives. It is important to identify and acknowledge these as part of this discussion

As a parent you need to explain that the assessment will look at different areas of their life e.g. friendships, behaviour, language, their development, school and home to decide if the differences add up to Autism. They can look up what this is on the National Autistic Society website. (<http://www.autism.org.uk/about/what-is.aspx>) .This might NOT be what the team decide but they will share what they do find. You also need to discuss with the young person if they would welcome a diagnosis now or ever.

If your child is old enough to understand and make important decisions, we have a legal obligation to consider their wishes in terms of undertaking an assessment which might result in a diagnosis. Their understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorders and their thoughts about diagnosis will be discussed with them in the assessment, and they will be asked for their consent to carry out the assessment. It is, therefore, very important that you have discussed this with them beforehand.

Children under the age of 16 can consent to their own assessment or treatment if they're believed to have enough intelligence, competence and understanding to fully appreciate what's involved in their treatment. This is known as being "Gillick competent". If they are over 16, they are automatically assumed to have the capacity to give their own consent to assessment / treatment.

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Consent-to-treatment/Pages/Children-under-16.aspx>

Try to remember that the goal of this conversation is to make your child feel comfortable about the assessment. They should understand that this is the best way for you and the team to come up with a plan that will give them the help they need. You and your child may also need to talk through their concerns about the process.

As for the younger children we are able to provide information about the team and the venue on request. You might want to use the attached social story to introduce the discussion with them.

Contact Information

Telephone 01872 221400

E-mail: earlyhelphub@cornwall.gov.uk

Comments and Concerns

We welcome your views, feedback and suggestions and how we can improve the service. Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) 01208 834620 or by Email: cpn-tr.Palscft@nhs.net



To get this information in another format email:

cpn-tr.communications@nhs.net