



Specialist Assessment Service based at the Meadow Centre

The Specialist Assessment Service based at the Meadow Centre works with children who have either complex medical and developmental needs or with children and young people where their difficulties may indicate an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). For children with complex medical needs we may also provide coordinated therapeutic work to meet a child's needs.

Service referral criteria are in place to ensure that this service works with the child/young people and their families who need and will benefit from further highly specialist assessment.

FAQ – You may find it helpful to know what parents and professionals have been asking us and the answers we have given

When will a child be seen by the Specialist Assessment Service ?

Many parents and professionals telephone the Specialist Assessment Service at the Meadow Centre to ask where a child is on our waiting list and when the child will be seen. It is difficult to answer this as our assessments are individually planned for each child and some children's assessment work can take longer than other children's. It can therefore be difficult to know how long it will take before we can start each child's assessment. However all children will be seen within 18 of being placed on the waiting list.

I have heard there is a long wait for assessments to start?

This specialist service experiences high demand and an increasing level of referrals. All children will be seen within 18 of being placed on the waiting list.

We will make sure that parents and professionals are made aware if this timeframe changes at all and this will be notified to them at point of acceptance.

I am worried that my child may have Autism but I don't know much about it , where can I find some information?

More information on Autism can be found at:<http://www.autism.org.uk/>

My child does not have the same difficulties at home and at school and I am worried that you will not be able to accept my child's referral because of this

This is not uncommon for a child to present differently at home and at school. Some children find the structured environment of the school day easier to manage and

therefore do not display the same behaviours/needs at school as at home. It is still very important that you discuss these differences with your child's school or with any professionals involved with your child. This is so that you can work in partnership to plan and agree appropriate steps, sharing an understanding of those steps over time. This helps us all create a total picture of what difficulties are presenting, in what environments and when and if additional specialist assessment is required. We require information to be built up over a minimum period of two school terms or 6 months if a child is not in school/nursery. Information may be around the structured conversations you have had or plans and strategies you have shared and implemented.

This information forms part of the assessment process.

Professionals have suggested lots of possible causes for my child's difficulties which I find confusing

It is not unusual for children to present with a range of complex difficulties that do not fit neatly into diagnostic categories. It is often helpful to consider the nature of the difficulties over time, planning how to help and support your child with the professionals involved locally and then to review the outcomes of that support. Once these steps are in place it may become clearer if further highly specialist multi-disciplinary assessment is required or if steps in place will meet your child's needs.

Do I need a diagnosis of Autism to get the help and support that I feel my child needs

A child does not need a diagnosis to get support. It is important that a child's needs are met through the wide range of services available within Education, Health and Social Care before seeking further highly specialist multi-disciplinary assessment.

I am the parent of a very young child who is not yet at nursery and concerned that my child might have Autism, where should I go for help?

If you think your child may have an Autism Spectrum Disorder and you would like information, help or support you can approach your GP or your Health Visitor. When you go to see your GP or Health Visitor, you might like to take along a list of behaviours and characteristics that you are concerned about. This can be a good prompt during your appointment. They will talk through your concerns and may then carry out a screening interview or assessment. There are a range of different tools that they may use. These screening tools will not give you a diagnosis, but are a good way of indicating if your child may need further support, monitoring or further assessment work. The professionals will also be able to help you access some first steps of support before requesting this highly specialist assessment

A professional has suggested an assessment for my child with the Specialist Assessment Service at the Meadow Centre but you have not accepted the referral, what should I do next?

Referrals into the service are considered at our multi-agency referral meeting. This is

held fortnightly and the purpose of this meeting is to carefully consider all presenting information from parents and all services involved with a child and to make recommendations from that overview as to the most appropriate next steps. If your child's referral is not accepted we will recommend the most appropriate next steps for your child from the overview of the information we have considered. We may have not accepted a child's referral because

- They do not have a Solihull GP
- We did not have all the information that we required.
- The child already has a diagnosis
- The evidence does not indicate that this level of assessment is needed.
- The evidence suggests that a different assessment is needed.
- Other services are still building up a picture of your child and meeting their current needs.

A child's referral is closed to this service whilst further information gathered. When the additional information is ready you will need to resubmit your referral.

How long will a child's assessment take?

Each child's assessment is individually planned in partnership with you. The components of the assessment will be discussed and planned with you and will be decided on from the range of information we have already available to us and from listening to your concerns. Some children's assessment will therefore take longer than others. At your first appointment we will give you a clear view on the steps that we will need to complete for your child.

I have an appointment letter from the Specialist Assessment Service but I am only seeing one member of the team why is that?

Each child's assessment is individually planned. A member of the Specialist Assessment Service will take a lead role on the assessment planning and will often meet with you first in order to discuss and plan the assessment process with you. Information is considered from a wide range of sources and environments. The case lead considers all this information and plans the assessment around what else we need to know about a child's strengths and difficulties. Each child's assessment plan is therefore different and the number and type of specialists involved is different for each child.