

**Specialist Assessment Service**

**COVID-19: Our New Ways of Working – Frequently asked questions**

This service provides Assessment and diagnosis for children presenting with difficulties that may indicate an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

**Based at Chelmsley Wood Primary Care Centre. Crabtree Drive, Solihull. B37 5BU**

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| **When will my child be seen by the SAS?** |

Many parents and professionals telephone the service to ask where a child is on our waiting list and when the child will be seen. It is difficult to answer 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. Due to the lockdown restrictions in place during the Covid-19 pandemic a back log of assessments has built up and our waiting times are likely to be longer than was stated on the letter you received when your child was put onto the waiting list. We have been working hard to develop new ways of working in order to restart our assessments to reduce this backlog as quickly as we can.

**Unfortunately** our administrators will not have any additional information as to when your child may be seen so please help us by not telephoning in with this question.

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| **Can my child be seen as a priority? Can my child be moved up the waiting list?** |

**No, all children on the waiting list are seen in strict referral date order.** Many children on our list are experiencing difficulties such as being excluded from school, becoming difficult in terms of their behaviour or becoming anxious. All children are of equal importance and to be fair to all children and their families we will not prioritise one child above another. It is important that your child accesses the right services to meet their needs whilst on the waiting list. Waiting for an assessment does not mean that your child cannot access appropriate services to meet their needs.

**Unfortunately** our administrators will not have any additional information around when your child may be seen so please help us **by not** telephoning in with this question.

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| **My child has waited longer than the time said in my acceptance letter. Why is that?** |

Due to the lockdown restrictions in place during the Covid-19 pandemic a back log of assessments has built up and our waiting times are likely to be longer than was stated on the letter you received when your child is put onto the waiting list. We have been working hard to develop new ways of working and aim to reduce this backlog as quickly as we are able to.

During the year the waiting time does vary. This variation may be because we have had a number of very complex children to assess and their assessment has taken longer than we expected. In addition if the team does not have the full compliment of staff then this will affect the waiting time.

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| **How will my child’s assessment be carried out with social distancing rules in place?** |

As the news of COVID-19 continues to develop, we have been working hard to create the safest possible environment for our children and families as well as staff in these difficult times. You can find full details of our new assessment process on our website [**https://childrenscommunitytherapies.uhb.nhs.uk/specialist-assessment-service/covid-19-our-new-ways-of-working/**](https://childrenscommunitytherapies.uhb.nhs.uk/specialist-assessment-service/covid-19-our-new-ways-of-working/)

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| **How long will a child’s assessment take?** |

The assessment will start with a discussion with parent/s. Each child’s assessment is individually planned in partnership with parent/s. 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. During the initial discussion we will give you a clear view on the steps that we will need to complete for your child.

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| **What do I need to do to have a video appointment?** |

Before your video appointment we will explain to you how to use the technology and what to expect from your appointment.

The video appointment will be run using a system called Vidyo Connect. **This is a trust assured platform** that works a bit like other apps such as Skype and Facetime. The appointment link and instructions will be sent via email before your appointment.

You will need access to;

* a smart phone or tablet or computer with video capability
* an active email address. We need your email address to send you the link for your appointment. Your email address will be saved securely on your child’s file.
* Wi-Fi access for the duration of your appointment. Making video calls without a WiFi connection may impact on your data use which can be very expensive. We recommend that you check you have enough data as you will be responsible for any data usage and costs incurred. If you do not have access to good WiFi we can discuss alternative options for the assessment
* A telephone available for us to contact you on if there is a problem with accessing the video.
* Vidyo Connect app. You will be sent a guide on how to download, access and use this platform before your appointment.

If you have any questions or concerns about using video technology we encourage you to speak to your child’s Case Lead so we can support you or discuss alternative options.

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| **I don’t have access to the internet/a computer for video appointments; will my child still have their assessments?** |

We understand that not everybody will be able to access video appointments. We can assure you that no child will miss out on their assessment due to difficulties with technology. Your child’s Case Lead will discuss with you different options available for your child’s assessment.

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| **Is using Vidyo Connect secure and confidential?** |

Vidyo Connect is a trust assured platform. We are using this platform as it offers a higher level of security than other platforms. UHB NHS Foundation Trust cannot guarantee that it is 100% secure however every possible measure has been taken to ensure security – this includes using a unique access code to join your appointment.

Your clinician will always be in a private space throughout the consultation so that your privacy and confidentiality are respected. We recommend that you are in a private environment to take your telephone or video appointment. You may also wish to use headphones with a microphone.

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| **Will using Vidyo Connect cost me money?** |

Vidyo Connect is a free app to download. You will not need to pay to use it.

Making video calls without a WiFi connection may impact on your data use which can be very expensive. We recommend that you check you have enough data as you will be responsible for any data usage and costs incurred. If you do not have access to good WiFi we can discuss alternative options for the assessment.

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| **Will my video appointment be recorded?** |

No part of the video consultation will be recorded. Change to the Video consultation will not be recorded by the clinician. We request that you do not record, copy or capture the video session. Should you wish to record the session you must discuss this and gain consent from your clinician before recording. If consent is given, recordings should be for your personal use only and should not be shared with any other person or on any media platforms.

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| **What will happen if I miss my video appointment?** |

If you do not attend the video consultation at the time of your appointment we will attempt to call you on the telephone number provided. If you do not attend the video and you do not answer your phone then this will be recorded as a ‘did not attend’ (DNA) and you **may** be discharged from the service. We will always try to make contact with you by phone and by post to discuss why were unable to attend and to provide support for you to attend future appointments.

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| **My child has not attended school since the start of lockdown, will they still be seen for assessment?** |

We work closely with schools throughout our assessment process. Teachers and SENCOs provide valuable information to help us understand the strengths and area of difference of the children and young people we are working with. We understand that many schools and teachers may not be able to provide the same level of information as they usually would due to the long period of school closures however we will continue to work with schools to gather as much information as possible, even if some of this information is from before the pandemic.

The restrictions placed upon the way we can currently work does mean there maybe times when there is insufficient evidence for an ASD diagnosis and further work to explore this, for example observing a child in school, may not be possible.  When children are back in school we will discuss with school how we gather the information we require. We will also discuss this with you and for some children we can complete a report with recommendations for support and a further assessment can be requested at a later date.

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| **Why do you need to see my child face-to-face as well as over video?** |

The video appointments with children and young people are just one part of an extensive assessment process. We consider information from a variety of different sources when thinking about whether a child meets the criteria for an Autism Spectrum Disorder. The information we gain from you, your child’s school and any other professionals are all essential to our assessment process. In some cases, this information alongside a video call will be enough for us to complete your child’s assessment. In cases where we are unable to conclude the assessment based on video alone we will discuss having a face-to-face appointment with you and your child to move the assessment forward.

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| **My child has a face-to-face appointment, what measures are in place to keep us safe?** |

Prior to face-to-face contact you will be asked some questions to help us assess if it is safe for you to attend. This will include thinking about the potential risk to any family members you have who are shielding. If we agree that it is safe for you to attend we will book an appointment with you. If we agree that it is not safe for you to attend we will discuss different options for how we can continue the assessment.

The day before you appointment a member of the team will phone you to check it is safe to continue with your appointment.

**Safety measures in place at Chelmsley Wood Primary Care Centre**

* Your clinician will greet you at the main door of the building so that you do not have to wait in the waiting areas. You will be asked some Covid screening questions before you are able to enter the building.
* You will be asked to wash your hands/use hand sanitiser on arrival and at points throughout your visit. Please do not attend wearing gloves - UHB promotes good hand hygiene and gloves become contaminated very easily.
* Adults should wear a mask/face covering. We will provide you with a mask if you do not have one. Some people do not need to wear a face mask, this includes;
  + Young children under the age of 11 (Face coverings are not recommended for children under the age of 3 for health and safety reasons)
  + Not being able to put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability
  + If putting on, wearing or removing a face covering will cause you severe distress
  + If you are travelling with or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading to communicate
  + To avoid harm or injury, or the risk of harm or injury, to yourself or others.

Please discuss with your lead clinician if you think one of these exemptions applies to you.

* Only one adult should attend the appointment with your child. If more than one adult has attended they will be asked to remain outside of the building. Please do not bring other children to the appointment.
* Your clinician will escort you through the building to the clinic room, while maintaining social distancing.
* The appointment will be carried out within a designated clinic room set up to maintain social distancing.
* Your clinician will be wearing appropriate PPE for your appointment in line with current Trust guidance.
* Clinic equipment will be kept to a bare minimum, including walls and clinic surfaces to allow staff to maintain a high standard of cleanliness as required by the Trust and prevent the spread of infection.
* All equipment and surfaces will be cleaned before and after each appointment.
* At the end of your appointment your clinician will escort you back out of the building.

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| **Someone in my household is showing symptoms of coronavirus but I don’t want to miss my child’s appointment. What should I do?** |

Keeping the families we work with and our staff safe at this time is our top priority. **It is essential that you do not attend any appointment** if you, your child or another member of your household is displaying any of the symptoms of coronavirus.

These are;

* a high temperature
* a new, continuous cough
* a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste.

If you someone in your household has these symptoms you should telephone the service on **0121 722 8010**.

Your child will remain open to their Case Lead until you and your family are well and your appointment will be rebooked. We will not discharge children who do not attend clinic because they or a member of their household has symptoms.

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| **Do I need to attend a mask to attend the appointment?** |

Adults should wear a mask/face covering. We will provide you with a mask if you do not have one. Some people do not need to wear a face mask, this includes;

* Young children under the age of 11 (Face coverings are not recommended for children under the age of 3 for health and safety reasons)
* Not being able to put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability
* If putting on, wearing or removing a face covering will cause you severe distress
* If you are travelling with or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading to communicate
* To avoid harm or injury, or the risk of harm or injury, to yourself or others.

Please discuss with your lead clinician if you think one of these exemptions applies to you or your child.

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| **Will the clinician be wearing PPE?** |

Your clinician will be wearing appropriate PPE for your appointment in line with current Trust guidance. This may include a surgical mask, apron, gloves and visor. The level of PPE your clinician wears may vary depending on what they will be doing during your appointment.

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| **Can I bring my other children to my child’s assessment** |

In order to reduce the number of people entering the building we are only able to allow the child who is coming for assessment, accompanied by one adult, to attend the appointment. If this is going to cause difficulty for you we encourage you to discuss the issue with your child’s Case Lead.

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| **My child started their assessment before lockdown but it has not yet been completed, what will happen next?** |

Prior to lockdown, a small number of children/young people started their assessments but these were unable to be completed. These children are a high priority for us now we have restarted the service and your child’s Case Lead will be in contact with you to discuss next steps in the assessment in the near future.

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| **My child has been seen by the SAS and is waiting for a review appointment, when will they be seen?** |

All children who have been waiting for a review remain on our review list. Due to the delays caused by the lockdown restrictions reviews may be carried out at a later date that was originally agreed following your child’s previous assessment. We will offer review appointments in date order. When you child is at the top of the review list a Clinician will review their file and will contact you to find out what has changed since your child was last seen and let you know what the plan will be.

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| **Safeguarding children and young people** |

If during the assessment process information is disclosed in relation to the child’s well being or the well being of others the clinician has a duty of care for safeguarding the child, family and the public. This will be discussed and may require referral onto the appropriate services for support.

**We hope you have found this information helpful.**