

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The answers to these questions have been provided by the Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust Neurodevelopmental Service (health) in partnership between Education, parent/carers and commissioners of services.

We hope these FAQs are helpful. You can find out more about the Neurodevelopmental Services team here at: <http://cwrise.com/neurodevelopmental-meet-the-team>

What are the waiting times for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) assessments in my area?

The waiting times for ASD assessment in Coventry and Warwickshire are around three years and whilst we recognise this is not acceptable they are in line with waiting times across the country.

Why can't I have an exact timeframe for my child's ASD assessment?

We are sorry but we are unable to provide a precise timeframe for this as timescales may change whilst your child is on the waiting list. This is due to the prioritisation process we undertake which balances the number of assessment required and the capacity we have to undertake these assessments.

What is being done about the waiting times?

We recognise that the current waiting times are too long; we are working with our partners across the Coventry and Warwickshire Health and Care System to address waiting times.

Why do you have prioritisation criteria?

Prioritisation criteria are used to ensure we undertake assessments for the most 'at risk' children. These criteria have been agreed to take into account the social complexities for children who may be in between care placements or whose current placements may be at risk due to their needs not being met.

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Can I go privately for an ASD assessment?

Yes, you can go privately, however:-

- a. The NHS is unable to contribute to the cost of this private assessment
- b. The assessment must be undertaken by a qualified and registered professional and follow NICE guidance (<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs51>)
- c. The assessment/report will need to be verified by the NHS in order for a private diagnosis to be recognised by education professionals across Coventry and Warwickshire.

If you would like information about where to find a qualified and registered professional who can complete a private assessment, please contact the National Autistic Society Helpline on 0808 800 4104 or look on their website www.autism.org.uk

Will my child get the help he or she needs in school without a diagnosis?

A diagnosis does not tell you what help a child with social communication difficulties may need at school so it is important you speak to your child's school about how they support children with autism and social communication needs

The majority of schools in Coventry and Warwickshire have access to additional training on supporting students with autism and social communication needs. All children are unique individuals in terms of their strengths and needs, and those with social communication difficulties are no different. School and other Special Educational Need services can provide the right help, by assessing the child's autism and learning needs and putting in place strategies based on these. Children do best when schools and parents work closely together – the school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) is usually the main point of contact between parents and schools.

Does my child need a diagnosis of ASD to have an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA)?

No. All schools receive extra funding to help provide special educational provision for children with additional needs including autism and social communication difficulties. EHCNA's were introduced in to the Special Educational Needs system to support children and young people with significant additional needs, regardless of whether or not they have a diagnosis. Having a diagnosis for your child will not guarantee they are granted an Education Health and Care Plan or a specialist education setting. More information about your school's policies can be found on its website. If you would like information regarding this process please contact the Special Educational Needs Disability Information Advice Support Service (SENDIASS) in your area.

Coventry – <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/iass>

Warwickshire - <https://www.kids.org.uk/warwickshire-sendias-front-page>

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Does having a diagnosis mean that my child can't be excluded from school?

No, it does not, as decisions to exclude a pupil are not made on the basis of whether or not a child has a diagnosis, but on a wide range of factors. Schools are required to support children with additional needs by making reasonable adjustments such as adapting the curriculum and learning environment. There is statutory guidance on the exclusion of pupils from school, which sets out the legal responsibilities of schools, governing bodies, and local authorities. Rigorous processes are in place, and parents/carers have the right of appeal against the decision to exclude, including access to an independent review panel, with the involvement of a Special Educational Needs expert. However, it is important to acknowledge that some children with a diagnosis may be excluded and it may be that the school environment (for example physical, social, sensory factors) is not appropriate for them

Will a diagnosis of ASD be the key to receiving lots of support?

No, as most agencies no longer require a diagnosis of ASD in order to accept referrals. School based support from SEN services is now open to all and is based on need and not diagnosis., For information about support and services in your area please review the SEND local offer.

Your child will be the same child after the assessment as before, with the same individual strengths, personality and challenges. There is no known cure for ASD and the main focus following a diagnosis is therefore to enable children/young people and their families to understand how ASD impacts on their daily lives and how to use strategies to support them more effectively. If children need on going services, it is typically due to additional needs, such as mental health concerns often associated with ASD, for example anxiety, depression and ADHD. Parent-led groups in most areas are a valuable support. The CWPT Neurodevelopmental Service will offer advice both before and after diagnosis.

Coventry - <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/sendlocaloffer>

Warwickshire – <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/send>

What support is available whilst I am waiting for an ASD assessment?

With your acknowledgment of referral we have included details of our how to help sessions, online resources and dimensions tool all of which can be accessed pre assessment.

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Can I claim Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) without a diagnosis?

DLA for children and PIPs are awarded based on a person's needs in comparison to another person of the same age. There are set eligibility criteria and thresholds which apply, regardless of a diagnosis. Many people with ASD would not qualify for these benefits as they are able to go to school/work, take care of themselves and need very little support from others. It is worth checking the criteria to see if your child might qualify given his or her individual circumstances. The following website provides further information:

<https://www.gov.uk/disability-living-allowance-children>

What if I am concerned about my child's mental health whilst waiting for the diagnostic assessment?

We acknowledge that children with neurodevelopmental disorders often present with additional mental health concerns. If you are concerned we suggest the following:

1. Review the self-help resource that is available – information on local mental health services on these can be found the RISE website (www.cwrise.com).
 2. Discuss your concerns with the school
- If you remain concerned please make an appointment to see your local GP

What happens next?

Your child is on our waiting list for assessment. We will contact you when we are in a position to offer them an appointment by sending you our pre-assessment pack. This will include forms for you and school to complete to provide the clinician with up to date information before the assessment. If your child is no longer school aged or home schooled, just note this on the forms and return them to us. You can find out information about what happens in the assessment here; <https://www.cwrise.com/your-autism-assessment>.