

The assessment and diagnosis of **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)** in children and young people

Information for Health Visitors and nurseries

This leaflet provides information about what you can do if you have concerns that a child or young person you know may have Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

What is ASD?

Autism is a lifelong developmental condition that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people and the world around them. It is thought to affect at least one per cent of the population. It is a spectrum condition, which means that, while all people with autism share certain areas of difficulty, their condition will affect them in different ways.

What types of difficulties might a pre-school child have?

(Information from SIGN guidance)

- Delay or absence of spoken language
- Looks through people; not aware of others
- Not responsive to other people's facial expression / feelings
- Lack of pretend play; little or no imagination
- Does not show typical interest in or play near peers purposefully
- Lack of turn-taking
- Unable to share pleasure
- Qualitative impairment in non-verbal communication
- Does not point at an object to direct another person to look at it
- Lack of gaze monitoring
- Lack of initiation of activity or social play
- Unusual or repetitive hand and finger mannerisms
- Unusual reactions, or lack of reaction, to sensory stimuli.

How should I raise concerns?

Families may approach you with a specific concern that their child may have ASD. Alternately, concerns may be raised by another professional following developmental review or observations.

It can be difficult for professionals to raise concerns with families. Rather than talking in terms of diagnostic labels, it may be more appropriate to give descriptions of behaviours or developmental concerns. If they do not share your concerns, you may need to make this a gradual process.

Who should I contact to make a request for assistance?

In Lothian we have developed a multidisciplinary pathway for the assessment and diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in children and young people.

This pathway has been developed using national guidelines and aims to provide timely assessment and where appropriate, diagnosis close to home if possible.

The process is usually initiated by a referral to the most appropriate members of the multidisciplinary team.

If not already known to outside agencies, this would involve making a request to community child health and speech and language therapy. Your local team contacts are provided at the end of this information sheet.

What information do I need to gather?

Surveillance tools such as, e.g. mCHAT, ASQ and SIGN guidance can be helpful to ensure relevant observations are collected.

The assessment process involves gathering information about the child and young person in the form of a developmental assessment, as well as clinical and contextual observations.

The local staged assessment process should be implemented as soon as possible. GIRFEC child planning meetings will ensure families are supported regardless of diagnostic labels as well as ensuring a joined up approach between agencies for assessment and support.

Request for assistance

Local Teams:

Edinburgh: Tel:

Community Child Health:

Community Child Health Department,
10 Chalmers Crescent: (Tel: 0131 536 0461)

Speech and Language Therapy:

Sighthill Health Centre: (0131 537 7119)

Gracemount Medical Centre: (0131 672 9456)

Leith Community Treatment Centre: (0131 536 6467)

West Lothian: Tel:

Community Child Health:

St John's Hospital, Livingston: (01506 524 403)

Speech and Language Therapy:

St John's Hospital, Livingston: (01506 524 191)

East Lothian: Tel:

Community Child Health:

Musselburgh Primary Care Centre: (0131 446 4123 / 4129)

Speech and Language Therapy:

Musselburgh Primary Care Centre: (0131 446 4009)

Midlothian: Tel:

Community Child Health:

Musselburgh Primary Care Centre: (0131 446 4131)

Speech and Language Therapy:

Newbattle Medical Centre: for assistance, phone 0131 454 9544
on a Tuesday afternoon (parents and professionals)

The assessment and diagnosis of **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**
in children and young people

Information for Health Visitors and nurseries

in accordance with SIGN, NICE, and the Autism Achieve Alliance.

Printed: March 2016

Review date: March 2017