



The Mid and West Essex ASD Diagnostic Service INFORMATION FOR WEST ESSEX GPs

The Service: -

- Aims to provide a timely and appropriate clinical diagnostic service for adults of 18 years or over identified by their GPs as having a possible Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), who are not already receiving a service from a Community Learning Disabilities Team (CLDT) or a Community Mental Health Team (CMHT)
- Provides a single point of entry for GP referrals
- Offers a diagnostic assessment through the Clinical Team (the Team) that is in accordance with NICE Guidelines and may include input from a range of professions including Clinical Psychology and Psychiatry.
- Includes time-limited support from Independent Advocates during the assessment process and afterwards to implement recommendations from the diagnostic Report.
- Care management responsibility remains with the referring agency throughout the assessment process: the aim of the assessment is to provide a diagnosis and recommendations that will enable the GP and other health and social care professionals to provide the best and most autism-friendly service possible to the referred person

An Autism Spectrum Disorder is: -

- A lifelong, neurodevelopmental condition that involves a different pattern of brain development and activity and is believed to occur in around 1% of the population.
- Characterised by difficulties with language and social communication, together with some rigidity or liking for sameness, narrow or intense interests. Many people with Autism also report a range of sensory issues, including hyper and hypo- sensitivities.
- Neither a learning disability nor a mental health condition, although mental health conditions are more common among people on the Autism Spectrum and it is estimated that 1 in 3 adults with learning disability also have Autism
- Believed to be of genetic origin in some, but not all, cases
- More often diagnosed in males than females, although there is increased awareness of the need for further research about how women on the Autism Spectrum may present

When and how to make a referral: -

- All referrals should be emailed to Midandwest.essexasddiagnostic@nhs.net

- A referral should be made if a GP suspects that someone may have ASD and the individual requests an assessment
- The patient can be referred to the team if they:
 - (a) Are over 18y old
 - (b) Are not open to either the CMHT or CLDT or currently in crisis *NB: if they are, the GP should direct the referral for assessment to the relevant CMHT or CLDT.*
 - (c) Score more than 6 out of 10 on the AQ10. *NB: if, exceptionally, the GP believes that there are good reasons why a patient who scores less may meet the criteria for ASD and should be considered for an ASD assessment by the team, they can ring the Team to discuss.*

In order to refer to the Team, the GP should send the completed AQ10 form to the Individual Funding Request Panel (IFR), together with a letter explaining the difficulties that the person has with (a) Social Interaction; (b) Social Communication; and (c) Rigid or Repetitive Behaviours or Resistance to Change, which have led the GP to consider possible ASD - and the impact of these difficulties on their day to day life.
- Once received, the Team will review the referral.
- Following that review they may: -
 - Request more information
 - Accept referral and begin to process it
 - Decide that ASD assessment is not appropriate and write back to explain why.

Once the referral has been accepted by the Team, the ASD assessment process is as follows: -

- An Independent Advocate will contact the referred person to assist them to complete some screening questionnaires if they wish.
- If the screening questionnaires suggest that further assessment is indicated, an appointment will be offered with one or more members of the Team for assessment
- The assessment will be carried out using one or more standardised measures to back up the clinical judgement of the Team. It may last for a good part of the day. Advocates can support, as needed.
- When the assessment has been completed, the information gathered and a possible diagnosis will be discussed at a monthly meeting of the Team
- A Report will be written which will explain how the diagnosis was reached (or not) and will include recommendations. A meeting will be arranged to give verbal feedback and a copy of the Report to the referred person, and a copy of the Report will be sent to you.
- The case will be closed to the Team
- An Independent Advocate will offer time-limited support to signpost and assist the client to access the support that has been recommended, as far as possible

The Royal College of General Practitioners provide an on-line training programme in ASD's which they recommend that GP's should undertake, and which provides information to enable GP's possible ASD. The link to this website is: <http://elearning.rcgp.org.uk/course/index.php>

Venues: -

Assessments for West Essex referrals will usually be carried out at The Latton Bush Centre, Southern Way, Harlow CM18 7BL, but occasionally, at Tekhnicon House, Springwood Drive, Braintree, CM7 2YN. Parking is available on both sites.