

Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC)

The current wait for an initial assessment from point of referral is approximately 24 months, we apologise in advance, but we are unable to provide specific waiting times on an individual basis at this time

Autism describes a specific pattern of strengths and difficulties that affects more than 1 in 100 people. Individuals with autism have many strengths. For example, they have a unique view of the world, are often very honest and good at noticing details.

People with autism particularly struggle with social communication and interaction.

They might find it hard to use or understand e.g. facial expressions, body language or jokes and to make sense of other people's thoughts and feelings.

They might find it hard to understand unwritten social rules and to know how to make friends. People with autism often also struggle to respond to changes in routine and to cope in unfamiliar situations. They are often over- or under-sensitive to e.g. sounds, smells or light.

Their different processing of the world may sometimes become overwhelming for them. Noticing that they are different might cause difficult feelings, too. They might show how they feel through what they say or do. If coping with these feelings becomes particularly difficult for an individual with autism and their family, they might need some professional support.

From the information provided we feel further screening of ASC would be beneficial, your child has therefore been placed on our Initial Assessment waiting list we will contact you when an appointment becomes available.

In the meantime we kindly ask for parents to complete the enclosed developmental history questionnaire and return to our department as soon as possible via post or email pcn-tr.hymburyresource@nhs.net please note this email address is for sending/receiving resources and questionnaires only and cannot be used for general queries. We ask for the questionnaire to be returned prior to your child's initial assessment appointment, if this is not received it will result in a delay in the assessment process.

What happens during an assessment

The initial assessment will provide an opportunity to gather further information from you about your child and also provide an opportunity to observe the child's communication, social interaction and interests. Prior to the appointment we will also review the information provided from the questionnaires completed before the assessment and from other professionals who know your child. At the end of the appointment we will discuss whether your child's assessment information needs to be reviewed by our Multi-disciplinary Team (MDT) or if we can understand your

child's presentation in a different way and further assessment of ASC is not supported. We may also provide recommendations on any outstanding support needs regarding your child's wellbeing.

If we feel the assessment information needs reviewing by the MDT they will be placed on our MDT waiting list, following this you will either be invited for a feedback appointment or we may require further information, this may include arranging a school observation or Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS) waiting list. The ADOS is a semi-structured assessment of communication, social interaction and play (or imaginative use of materials). Following gathering further information your child will be expedited on the MDT waiting list and following discussion you will be invited to a feedback appointment.

What happens after the assessment

The assessment may lead to a diagnosis of autism. If this is the case we will provide information about further sources of support and make recommendations for the support your child should receive. We will also make a referral to First Point, the commissioned service for post diagnostic support. Unless your child has any outstanding mental health needs which meets our threshold for input, following feedback/recommendations your child will be discharged from the service to first point.

A number of children that come in for an autism assessment will not receive a diagnosis of autism. If this is the case we discuss your child's strengths and difficulties and make recommendations about further sources of support your child could receive.

After the assessment, we will write a detailed report to summarise our findings and include all our recommendations for supporting your child both at home and in school.

If your child has other difficulties in addition to or instead of autism that may need further assessment, we may make recommendations or refer your child onto the relevant service.

Additional Support

You can find additional support online by visiting:

PCS (Parenting Special Children) provides advice on autism, ADHD, looked after and adopted children, sleep issues, with parenting programmes available.

Visit the bury directory for information on your local offer.

Further options regarding support will be discussed at your initial assessment. In the meantime if you have concerns whilst waiting for an appointment please contact your GP or the person who made the referral to discuss these.

If school feel they require further advice or support they can access the following:

- Discuss the child anonymously at the SENCO network meetings
- Discuss the child on an informal basis with their outreach link worker
- Make a referral for additional needs service input; this can be done to the team directly or through partnership

If the child/young person has a learning disability, complex health needs, speech, language and social communication difficulties, physical health problems, sensory difficulties, long term difficulties, visual/hearing impairments or social emotional mental health needs which are impacting on the child's education we would recommend considering applying for an education health care plan (EHCP) needs assessment.

Please note schools will need to follow the graduated response utilising delegated budgets to support children with SEND and all resources need to be exhausted before an EHC needs assessment is considered.

If school would like any further support in considering whether a EHCP application is appropriate please contact the SEN team via email; senteam@bury.gov.uk or telephone 0161 253 5969.

Parents are also able to apply directly to the local authority for an EHC needs assessments. Parents do not need a report from educational psychology or support from the child's school to do this. An EHCP is for children and young people aged from 0 to 25 who need more support than is available through special educational needs support. It identifies educational, health and social needs and sets out the additional support to meet those needs. For further advise and support parents can contact the Bury SENDiass team on 01706769634. Further information on their service can be found on their website: <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/services/bury-sendiass>.

For children with identified special educational needs and/or disability parents and school are able to access the Educational Psychology help line which is available on Mondays between 13.00 and 15.30 and Wednesday between 9.30 and 12.00. The helpline contact number is 0161 253 6406.

Types of EP advice and support available could include:

- Anxiety, stress and related issues arising from being out of school/returning to school/COVID 19/missing friends etc.,
- Loss and bereavement – EPs provide Critical Incident support, but the helpline may identify where this support is needed.
- Transitions – particularly for those children starting reception/year 7.
- Advice on routines/behaviours because of changes to routine.
- Reassurance/advice on academic progress and expectations once children are back to school.
- Advice on EHC needs assessments and annual reviews.

You may of course have other educational questions or concerns that are not included on this list, so please do not hesitate to call, no matter how small your

question or concern is. Please note that EPs may sign post to other services as part of the support but will not become involved beyond the advice and support of the phone call.

In the interim, if you have concerns regarding your child please contact duty on 0161 7161100, out of hours please call NHS 111 or 999 in an emergency.

Pennine care also run a helpline for mental health, learning disability and autism service users and carers, of all ages, who are experiencing increased mental health needs during the coronavirus. This is run by experienced mental health professionals who can:

Listen to you and help you work through immediate problems

Work with you to find ways to move forward or suggest ways of working

Give you information about other services that may be helpful to you or the person you care for

The helpline is open 24 hours a day, 7 days per week on 0800 014 9995