



# WOLVERHAMPTON MULTI-AGENCY ASC ASSESSMENT PATHWAY

## INFORMATION FOR REFERRERS

Thank you for considering referring a young person to our Over 5s Multi-Agency Autism Spectrum Condition Assessment Pathway (ASC Pathway).

### What is the ASC Pathway?

The ASC Pathway is comprised of a range of agencies and services, including CAMHS, Educational Psychology, Paediatrics, Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language Therapy. The purpose of the pathway is to determine whether a young person's presentation is best explained with a diagnosis of ASC, or whether other reasons offer a more accurate formulation, such as early trauma, attachment difficulties, sensory needs, social considerations, relational factors or mental health issues.

### Why might you refer someone?

You should refer someone into the pathway if, in your professional opinion(s), the young person presents with differences and, based on your knowledge of them, ASC could be an explanation for these differences. The pathway uses the term 'Autism Spectrum Condition' in line with service user preference, however diagnoses are made in line with ICD10 criteria, which remains 'Autism Spectrum Disorder'. Autism Spectrum Disorder is the overarching term used to refer to a range of conditions, namely: Autism, Asperger's and PDA (Pathological Demand Avoidance).

People with ASC may:

- struggle with social situations
- have high expressed emotion
- have sensory needs (heightened or dulled)
- have difficulties with social cues
- rely on strict routines to feel comfortable
- be quite rigid in how they think about different situations
- have abnormal or impaired development prior to the age of 3 in receptive or expressive language
- have difficulties with functional or symbolic play
- have difficulties in reciprocal social interaction
- have high use of idiosyncratic or repetitive use of words or phrases
- a literal understanding of vocabulary, reduced use of facial expression or eye gaze, unusual body postures or gestures and a preference for solitary time.

### Referral Criteria

- **Aged 5 to 18.** If you are referring someone who is currently younger than 5 years old, please refer them to the Under 5s Pathway. Equally the adult Neurodevelopmental pathway accept referrals from 16+.
- **Wolverhampton GP.** If the GP is outside of Wolverhampton, the young person will need to be referred to the pathway that supports their GP.
- A fully completed **referral** must be completed by the referrer demonstrating sufficient evidence of ASC which also contains **signed consent** by the parent/carer or young person.





## Referral Process

- The professional completing the referral form will be considered the **primary sponsor** for the referral and they must be from a specialist service. Primary referrers are; Paediatricians, CAMHs, Psychiatry, Educational Psychology, Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy and Outreach
- A named **second sponsor** can be from any service (e.g. all indicated as primary sponsors plus: SENCO, Head Teacher, Class Teacher, GP, social care etc.). The secondary sponsor should come from a different specialism but can be from the same area (e.g. Educational Psychology and SENCO can support a referral; CAMHS worker and Psychiatry can support a referral; Paediatrics and GP can support a referral).
- A **summary of the current presentation** that has led to the query of ASC and the referral.
- Completed **school report** template. It is essential that we have information from the young person's school.
- Consider using our **ASC Tick Sheet** that can be downloaded at <https://www.blackcountryminds.com/about-your-camhs/ascpathway/>.

## Incomplete referrals

If a referral is incomplete, it will be returned to you. We will not be able to register the referral on our waiting list until all necessary information is received. If you need any support with the referral, please contact us and ask to speak to a member of the ASC Pathway Team.

## The Pathway Process

- Once a referral is accepted, you will receive a confirmation letter.
- The family will also receive a letter notifying them that the referral has been accepted.
- The family will receive information about what to expect during the Pathway process.
- The young person will be placed onto our waiting list from the date of referral
- Once the young person is close to the top of our waiting list, the family will be assigned a Key Worker who will remain with them throughout the assessment process.
- The Key Worker will be the main point of contact with the ASC Pathway for any questions you or the family may have after the referral has been accepted.
- The Key Worker will collate and review existing assessment evidence.
- The Key Worker will organise additional assessments as appropriate.
- The assessment process concludes with this information being presented to the Multi-Agency Panel by the Key worker (the family do not need to attend the Panel presentation). The Panel will discuss the case and a final diagnostic decision will be made (= Autism, Asperger's, ASC, PDA or No ASC type diagnosis).

## After diagnostic decision

After a diagnostic decision has been made, the family will be contacted by their Key Worker within two weeks of the Panel meeting. This is normally by phone call. The family will be given an opportunity to come in and discuss the outcome of the Panel presentation. For many people, this will mark the end of their ASC Pathway journey. The discussion with the family about the decision will determine any follow-up support that is suggested, such as Wolverhampton Outreach, Teen Life, Early Birds, other health-based referrals. Initial support is offered in terms of getting this post-diagnostic support underway with other services. A letter will then be sent to the family to confirm their diagnosis, and a letter is also sent to the young person's school. A post-diagnostic information pack will also be provided. This will be tailored to the needs of the young person. As the primary referrer, you will also receive a letter to confirm the outcome of the Panel decision. There is an appeals process should you and/or the family not agree with the conclusion from the Panel.

## Explaining the Pathway to young people and their family

We understand that young people being referred to our Pathway may be anxious. We do our best to accommodate the needs of any young people referred, for example sending out a letter with a picture of their Key Worker, meeting them with a professional





they are already comfortable with, or speaking with their parents first to know how best to engage with them. Please encourage family members and professionals to contact the ASC Pathway Team on 01901 444 021 should they have any concerns or requests to facilitate the process.

### Appeals

We aim to offer a transparent service that listens to families and teams supporting a young person, recognises their concerns, and offers a formulation that best accounts for the information we receive. If someone (parent, care giver or professional) feels that the formulation does not best account for the needs of a young person, our pathway has an appeals process:

- An appeal can be made at any point between 28 days and 12 months following the Panel date to allow families time to process the outcome. After this period, a new referral would need to be made.
- To submit an appeal, please send a letter either via post or via email (details) outlining your concerns.
- When considering an appeal, we would be looking for indication that 1) At least one professional supporting a young person feels strongly that the outcome is not representative of their presentation/ does not best account for their difficulties; 2) Some information or evidence was missing from the assessment process that may change the perception of the Panel; 3) The interventions recommended by the Panel have not had the outcome expected; 4) There is significant new information or change.
- The appeal will then be discussed with the Panel team and the individual appealing will be notified of the Panel decision - whether to accept the appeal or not.
- If an appeal is accepted, the young person will be placed at the top of the waiting list to be allocated to the next appropriate key worker. They will not be given the same key worker as previously, to ensure a fresh perspective.
- The appeal process will involve the new Key Worker reviewing the information already held, then meeting with the young person and gathering additional information where suitable.
- The case will then be re-presented to the Panel.

### Age of referral

The over 5s ASC pathway supports individuals from age 5 to 18. We only accept referrals up to the young person's 18th birthday, rather than including the year-period in which they are 18 years old. It is important to note that we have a waiting list, and for young people approaching 18 or already turning 18, referrers may want to consider encouraging the GP to refer for an adult autism assessment, which can be found here and accept referral from age 16+:

<https://www.blackcountryhealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services/adult-adhd-autism-service>

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