

# WAAS Bulletin December 2023

Your regular newsletter from the Wiltshire Autism Assessment Service (WAAS). We provide an assessment-only service for children and young people who are showing possible signs of autism.

Welcome to the latest edition of the WAAS Bulletin. We want to provide you with regular updates from our service and ideas about how to access support for you and your child. We hope that you will find it useful.

## Diagnostic assessment update

Parents and carers have told us that it is helpful to have an understanding of likely waiting times for completing their child's diagnostic assessment. This was information that we were able to share when each child and young person followed broadly the same assessment pathway.

You will have seen in previous newsletters that we have been working hard with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and our partners to review our pathways for neurodevelopmental assessments (including autism). We want to make sure that children and young people are offered an appropriate assessment pathway that contains the parts that are required to help us understand them. We recognise that not all children and young people require the same assessments to do this.

We would like to reassure all parents and carers that:

1. all children open to WAAS will continue on their assessment pathway with us
2. we are continuing to accept referrals for autism assessment as usual

If you would like to tell us about your experience with the service, and let us know what would be useful for you, please contact the Wiltshire SPA on 0300 247 0090 (lines open between 9am-5pm, and calls charged at a local rate).

## Meet the autism practitioner

Hello there - I'm Michael Darby-Knight. I qualified as a Speech and Language Therapist in 2012 and joined the WAAS team in 2019. You may already have spoken with me during your initial telephone consultation, or you may meet me in the future at your child's assessment appointment. I may also be involved in the completion of your child's diagnostic profile. Like the other autism practitioners in our team, I am also responsible for presenting evidence to our regular multi-disciplinary diagnostic panel, and for arranging post assessment meetings when required.



This month's newsletter continues below



## Christmas and the holidays

The Christmas period can be a very exciting but often stressful time of the year for many autistic people. It can be a time with lots of change, social interaction and expectations. The National Autistic Society has put together a brief list of resources that may prove helpful in making this festive period as special and stress free as possible for autistic people:

<https://autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/professional-practice/christmas-resources>

The Autism Together website has also put together a list of simple pointers that may help an autistic family member:

[‘How to’... have an autism-friendly Christmas – Autism Together](#)

## Online information sessions

You are welcome to attend our online sessions about the autism assessment pathway. The sessions are held on the first Tuesday of every month and include an opportunity to ask questions at the end. These short sessions (about 30 minutes) will tell you about the appointments that your child will be offered as well as some helpful support and advice while your child is on the pathway. We are also running sessions about understanding emotions and behaviour.

To receive a Microsoft Teams invite to these sessions, please email [familysupport@hcrpgcaregroup.com](mailto:familysupport@hcrpgcaregroup.com) with the date of the session you would like to attend (see table below).

### Upcoming sessions:

Topic	Date and Time (sessions last approximately 30 minutes)
<b>General information about the assessment pathway</b> including information about the pathway, what to expect, and what to do while you are on the pathway, and a question and answer session	Tuesday 6 <sup>th</sup> February – 11am
<b>Understanding emotions and behaviour</b> including understanding emotions and behaviour and advice about where you can go for more help	Tuesday 27 <sup>th</sup> February – 11am

## Additional information and signposting

The **Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPCC)** can provide advice about local sources of support and information for families of children with special educational needs. [https://www.wiltshireparentcarercouncil.co.uk/en/Contact\\_us](https://www.wiltshireparentcarercouncil.co.uk/en/Contact_us)

**Autism Central** offers resources for parents and carers including learning materials, articles and free online sessions. Their “guidance” page offers information on a wide range of topics including friendships, eating, extra support at school. On their “find help” section you can access free online information sessions for families in the South West including topics including all about autism, support in education, sensory processing and anxiety, and virtual drop ins with other parents where you can ask questions <https://www.autismcentral.org.uk/>

Please don’t forget to tell us about any address, telephone number, school, or family changes so that we can keep our records up to date. If you or your child change your mind about continuing with the diagnostic assessment you can call the Single Point of Access on 0300 247 0090 to let us know.

If you wish to unsubscribe from this newsletter, please call the number above or email us on [vcl.wiltshirespa@nhs.net](mailto:vcl.wiltshirespa@nhs.net)