

WAAS Bulletin November 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. You will have seen in previous newsletters that we currently do this by letting you know the referral month and year of the children we are seeing each month.

We are 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 needed to help us understand them. We understand that not all children need the same assessments to do this.

Over the next few months, we will be keeping you updated about how we are moving forward to make sure that each child is on the most appropriate assessment pathway. This means that each child will have a different expected timescale for their assessment and the assessment journey will look different for each child.

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).

We are currently booking in the final autism assessments for children who were referred in February 2021.

Meet the specialist

Hello, I'm Helen Ortnier. I'm an autism/communication and interaction specialist and lead the Specialist SEN Service in Wiltshire Local Authority working with parents, carers and schools to support young people with autism or suspected autism. I have worked with young people with autism in both mainstream and specialist settings from pre-school to post-16 and have a particular interest in supporting behavioural challenges and mental health needs. In April 2022 I started a part-time secondment with HCRG Care Group to further develop the neurodevelopmental pathway and enhance connections between Health and Education. I work closely with my colleagues in the WAAS team to support the assessment process. You may have spoken to me for additional advice about meeting your child's needs following your initial telephone consultation.



Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

Parents and carers sometimes ask whether a diagnosis of autism is required in order to apply for an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Your child does not need a diagnosis for a request for an EHCP to be made or for an EHCP to be issued following an assessment. Our Local Offer website has information about making a request for statutory assessment in Wiltshire - <https://localoffer.wiltshire.gov.uk/article/4302/Education-Health-and-Care-Needs-Assessments>

Online information sessions

You are welcome to attend our online sessions about the autism assessment pathway. These short sessions (about 30 minutes) will tell you about what happens as part of the autism assessment pathway, as well as some helpful signposting while your child is on the pathway.

To receive a Microsoft Teams invite to these sessions, please email familysupport@hcrgrcaregroup.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)
Information about the assessment pathway 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 5 th December – 11am
Information about the assessment pathway	Tuesday 6 th February – 11am
Understanding emotions and behaviour including understanding emotions and behaviour and advice about where you can go for more help	Tuesday 27 th 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



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/>



Autism Central recognises that as parents/carers of autistic children, young people and adults, it can be hard to find help when you’re trying to get the right support.

Autism Central aims to make it easier to learn more about autism and services available to you. Click on their ‘events’ section to see what virtual and face to face sessions are running. These are available to families whether or not a diagnosis of autism has been confirmed.

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