

WAAS Bulletin January 2024

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.

Meet the autism practitioner

Hi there – I’m Lara Harris and I’m an Autism Practitioner working within the Wiltshire Autism Assessment Service (WAAS). I qualified as a Speech and Language Therapist in 2000 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.



I have recently been listening to the “Autism Journeys” podcasts, which parents and carers may find interesting and useful:

<https://www.autismjourneys.ie/radio-show/>

Visual support strategies

It has been shown that children and young people who may be autistic can benefit from increased use of visuals both within learning, and day to day activities. The National Autistic Society has a useful page giving information about a range of visual supports:

<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/communication/communication-tools/visual-supports>

Wiltshire Council’s Local Offer website also offers useful information about visuals – click on the link below and scroll to page 8:

<https://localoffer.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/2854/Support-in-Wiltshire-for-Autism-School-Strategy-SWASS-2013/pdf/Support-in-wiltshire-for-autism-school-strategies-swass.pdf?m=637148580421270000>

Arrival at school		
1		Take off coat
2		Open Backpack
3		Take out work
4		Take out lunch
5		Hang up coat
6		Hang up backpack

Online information sessions

You are welcome to attend our online sessions about the autism assessment pathway. The sessions 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.

To receive a Microsoft Teams invite to these sessions, please email familysupport@hcrpgcaregroup.com with the date of the session you would like to attend (see table on next page)

Upcoming sessions:

Topic	Date and Time (sessions last approximately 30 minutes)
General 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 6 th February – 11am
Understanding emotions and behaviour including some strategies you can try at home and where you can go for more help	Tuesday 27 th February – 11am

Input from young people needed for new project

We are working with Wiltshire Centre for Independent Living (CIL) to explore how we can involve young people with their assessment process. We want to find out what young people want to tell us, and how they want to tell us. If you think your young person would be interested in being part of a focus group, please email getinvolved@wiltshirecil.org.uk for more information.



Our assessment pathways

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 continue 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

We are grateful to parents and carers who have contacted us since our last issue and we would like to further reassure all parents and carers that the time required to complete diagnostic assessments will not be made any longer as a result of the ongoing pathway review.

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).

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, free online sessions and a newsletter. 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