

# WAAS Bulletin February 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 – my name is Sarah Lyons and I am an Autism Practitioner working within the Wiltshire Autism Assessment Service (WAAS). I qualified as a Speech and Language Therapist in 2004 and have worked as a Specialist Speech and Language Therapist with autistic children for several years. 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 observing your child in school or within a District Specialist Centre, and in the completion of your child's diagnostic profile.



**Tips for screen time**

Give warning about upcoming transitions, e.g. 'Dinner in 10 minutes. Screens will be turned off.'  
'Turning off in 5 minutes. How many minutes?'  
'Time for dinner. Are you able to save it/pause it there?'

★ At this point, adult flexibility + empathy is encouraged. ★

Your child may be a few minutes away from a save point/end of level/song/video. Having their screen turned off at this moment is likely to be very distressing.

Asking them how much longer they need can be a good way to teach time management + planning skills (i.e. learning to choose a short video at the 5-min warning)

Giving those extra few minutes makes the transition easier, and reinforces the message that the child's feelings are important to their adult.

*NeuroWild*

Many parents tell us that their children can struggle managing screen time.

These useful tips were posted online by a mum of autistic children who is herself neurodiverse, and the general principles may be helpful when supporting your child with transitioning from any activity or task to the next.

## 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](mailto: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
3. 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

**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.

Autism Central also offer virtual drop ins with other parents where you can ask questions.

<https://www.autismcentral.org.uk/>

**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)



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)