

My journey through the Child Development Centre

A resource to guide families through
the assessment process at the
Child Development Centre

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Welcome

Welcome to the Child Development Centre (CDC) based at Poole Hospital. We provide a specialist assessment service for children with neurodevelopmental conditions. The assessment focuses on the child's strengths and challenges to provide a detailed developmental profile. We can assure you that we want the best possible outcome for your child.

We aim to work closely with each child's local team so that everyone involved in their care has the same level of understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. This ensures everyone follows through on the recommendations made following the assessment. We will liaise with professionals already involved in supporting your child (for example their school and their GP) and make suggestions on how they can best support them.

This pack is intended to provide a brief overview of your journey through the CDC. We know this can sometimes be a daunting and stressful time for parents. The aim of this guide is to make the journey as transparent as possible, so you know what to expect and when you can expect it by. We also hope to provide some useful information to support you through the process. You should also be provided with our 'helpful approaches' booklet which covers some useful information regarding facilitating communication, supporting your child with challenges they face and looking after yourself while navigating the process.

Parent Carers Together

This advice and support pack has been created by professionals working in the Child Development Centre (CDC).

We also held a number of consultation sessions with members of Parent Carers Together, the official parent and carer forum for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, to ensure the pack includes the important information families will benefit from during the early stages of their assessment. Additionally, many forum members' children have been assessed by the CDC, making their experiences and advice valuable. We have proudly incorporated their contributions into the final version of this pack.

Common terms and acronyms

We know that, for many parents, there is a lot to learn and discover when first entering the process of assessment for your child. This involves learning a whole new vocabulary of terms relating to your child's development and the support they need. We hope that this list of common terms and acronyms will help to make this process easier.

Please note that there are times where terminology and language are a personal preference. Preferred language varies from person to person. This is something you can navigate with your child and family, it is important to give your child the freedom to discover what works for them.

ADHD - attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

ASD/ASC - autism spectrum disorder/autism spectrum condition

Asperger's/Asperger's syndrome - Asperger's syndrome was a diagnosis previously given to those on the autism spectrum who had typical-strong verbal language skills and intellectual ability. In 2013 this diagnosis became part of one umbrella diagnosis - autism spectrum disorder/condition.

CAMHS - child and adolescent mental health service

CDC - Child Development Centre

Challenging behaviours/dysregulated behaviours - behaviours that often occur when a child or young person is overwhelmed. These behaviours may not fit typical 'social norms' or may be difficult to manage alongside daily life.

DCD - developmental coordination disorder (previously known as dyspraxia)

DLD - developmental language disorder

EP - educational psychologist

Helpful approaches - this typically refers to different ways of supporting your child. This can also be referred to as 'strategies for support'.

Identity-first - wording about a person that leads with a description of them in the context of a condition e.g. 'autistic person' or 'they are autistic'

Masking/camouflaging - the process of consciously, or subconsciously, hiding certain traits in order to 'fit in'.

Neurodivergent - a term that can be used for individuals whose brain functions differently than the way which is considered 'typical'.

Neurodiversity - a term which refers to the many variations of human brains and minds.

OT - occupational therapist

PECS - the picture exchange communication system

Person centred - focusing on understanding and supporting the individual needs of each person.

Person-first language - wording about a person that leads with the person before a diagnosis e.g. 'person with autism' or 'they have autism'

SEN/SEND - special educational needs/special educational needs and disabilities

SENCO/SENDSCO - special educational needs coordinator/special educational needs and disabilities coordinator

Sensory overload - sensory overload may occur when one or more of the senses become over stimulated from the environment. This makes it difficult for a person's brain to process the amount of sensory information it is taking in. This can lead to changes including discomfort, irritability, pain, and restlessness.

SLT/ SALT - speech and language therapy

Stimming - self-stimulating behaviours including arm or hand flapping, rocking , jumping, spinning, and turning.

Your time at the Child Development Centre



Meet the team

Paediatricians:

The paediatricians in our team are involved in the initial consultation with families and children. They determine what information is required to form a comprehensive picture of a child. This may include further assessments from different professionals and questionnaires from a child's school or family. Once they have gathered enough information, they use this to come to a conclusion.

Occupational therapy:

Occupational therapists (OTs) are interested in participation in occupations (activities) that are meaningful to an individual. They look at how the person, environment and occupation work together to support a person to take part in the activities they want to do. This allows them to gain an overall view of a child's wants and needs and promote independence in areas that are important to them.

Physiotherapy:

Physiotherapists will explain how the child's development might be affected and work with them to plan a programme of physical development. This activity programme will look at particular difficulties and help parents to work towards achievable short-term physical goals. Many parts of a physical development programme for the child can be done through play.

Psychology:

At the Child Development Centre, the Psychology Team are involved in assessing a child's developmental history. This might involve a discussion with the child's parent about what their child was like when they were growing up. They may also do a cognitive assessment with the child to build a better picture of their strengths and weaknesses. Psychology offer pre and post-diagnosis parent workshops that are pre-recorded and can be watched online.

Speech and language therapy:

Speech and language therapists are involved in assessing a child's communication. They complete structured observations and assessments of a child to determine whether they may have a neurodevelopmental condition. They provide recommendations on how to adapt your language to support their understanding, facilitate their social skills, and adapt their environment to aid communication.

What to expect: the typical pathway through the Child Development Centre

Initial meeting

Your first appointment will be with a paediatrician who will gather background information such as: family history, presenting challenges, medical information, any risky or challenging behaviour. They might discuss whether there are any other services that may be able to support you. In this meeting the paediatrician will let you know of other professionals who will be involved in your child's assessment and any assessments or questionnaires that will need to be completed.

Pre-diagnosis online workshop

Many children who are referred to our service show behaviours which can have a significant impact on their day to day lives - this can be for a range of reasons. Often this can be challenging for parents to make sense of and manage.

For all accepted referrals, we offer parents and carers a pre-diagnosis online workshop. This workshop focuses on understanding 'challenging behaviour' and introduces helpful approaches you can put in place to help your child. You will be given the link to watch the pre-diagnosis workshop online.

Questionnaires

You might be asked to complete standardised questionnaires which help to provide a better picture of your child's strengths and challenges. Typically we will ask you to complete questionnaires at home and return them, however, if you need support with filling these out, please ask and we can talk you through them.

We also might send questionnaires to school for them to complete too

Other professionals involved

A number of professionals need to be involved to ensure accurate conclusions are drawn about each child. Your child might be seen by **speech and language therapists** to assess difficulties with social communication and interaction. You and your child might be seen by a **clinical psychologist** who will ask questions about the developmental history of your child and have a discussion about your child's behavioural, emotional and learning needs. An **educational psychologist** may also be involved. They will observe your child in a school setting (where possible) and complete cognitive assessments to assess learning needs and a child's strengths and weaknesses. You will receive reports of the assessments completed by the different professionals. As with many NHS services we unfortunately have long waits for professional assessments. We can only apologise for this and thank you for your patience in this process.

How do we feedback?

Once the results from questionnaires have been analysed and the information from other professionals has been gathered, the paediatrician will carefully consider all the information. You will be invited to a feedback appointment where the outcome of the assessment will be discussed, along with the next steps to take. You will be provided with a letter detailing everything that was discussed in the appointment.

ASC post-diagnosis online workshop

If your child receives a diagnosis of autism spectrum condition/disorder you will be given the link to watch a post-diagnosis workshop online.

This will provide you with an introduction to what autism is and how it can affect people. It will provide helpful approaches you can use at home to support your child.

What happens if my child does not receive a diagnosis?

It is possible your child might not get a diagnosis. If this is the case, do not worry - there is still support for you and your child. The result from the assessments and questionnaires carried out during your time at the Child Development Centre will also provide a detailed insight into your child's strengths and challenges. They also provide recommendations that can be used by family members and professionals, so they know how to best support your child.

There will be support from schools directly. A school special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) will co-ordinate additional support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and liaise with their parents, teachers and other professionals who are involved with them. School nurses work with children, families, school staff and other agencies to support the health and development of school-age children across Dorset.

Support services and advice can also be found at the following council webpages:

Family information directory:

BCP

<https://fid.bcpcouncil.gov.uk/welcome-to-the-fis>

<https://fid.bcpcouncil.gov.uk/family-information-directory/directory>

Dorset

www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/children-families/get-help-for-your-family/family-information-service

<https://familyinformationdirectory.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/kb5/dorset/fsd/home.page>

SEND local offer:

<https://fid.bcpcouncil.gov.uk/send-local-offer>

www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/children-families/sen-and-disability-local-offer/dorsets-local-offer

We aim to provide a comprehensive picture of each child who comes through the Child Development Centre. However, if following your assessment you feel your concerns have not been fully addressed, it is possible to go to your GP and they can advise you on how to go about getting a second opinion.

Planning for your appointments



Preparing for your appointments

What to bring:

- Many parents find it useful to bring snacks and toys for their child to have during the appointment.
- You may wish to bring reports and information with you to remind you of information you wish to share.
- It can be helpful to come with another adult. This can be helpful practically, for example, if your child needs to leave the room or take a break. This can also be helpful for emotional support and to help process information discussed in the appointment after you leave.
- Lots of information is covered during your appointments - you will receive a letter summarising the appointment, but many people find it useful to bring a notepad and pen to take notes of key points to think about following the appointment.

Parking:

For families who need close access to their appointments, there is parking available in the car park directly outside the Child Development Centre - you will need a permit for these spaces, and this can be collected from the Child Development Centre reception upon arrival.



There are also two disabled spaces for blue badge holders.

We are aware that parking is very limited and it may be that you will need to park in the hospital multi-storey car park (payments for this are made in the main hospital entrance after your visit) or in parking facilities in the local area, searching 'parking near Poole hospital' on Google brings up options of on street parking nearby.

When you arrive:

When you arrive you will be asked to sit in the waiting room. You will be called in when your clinician is ready to see you.

Depending on your appointment type, a healthcare assistant or nurse may ask to take weight, height and blood pressure measurements for your child before their main appointment. This is for medical information and to monitor development.

If this is something your child may find difficult, you can discuss this with the member of staff involved and they can make adaptations. Alternatively, you can decline this service and discuss with your clinician in the main appointment to find out more about whether measurements are essential in your case (for example, for medication monitoring).



Photographs of the Child Development Centre

Often children can feel anxious about visiting new places. Sometimes it can be helpful to show visuals of the environment so they know what to expect. Hopefully these photos of the Child Development Centre, reception, waiting room and clinic rooms can help you and your child to prepare for your appointment.

The Child Development Centre



Car park



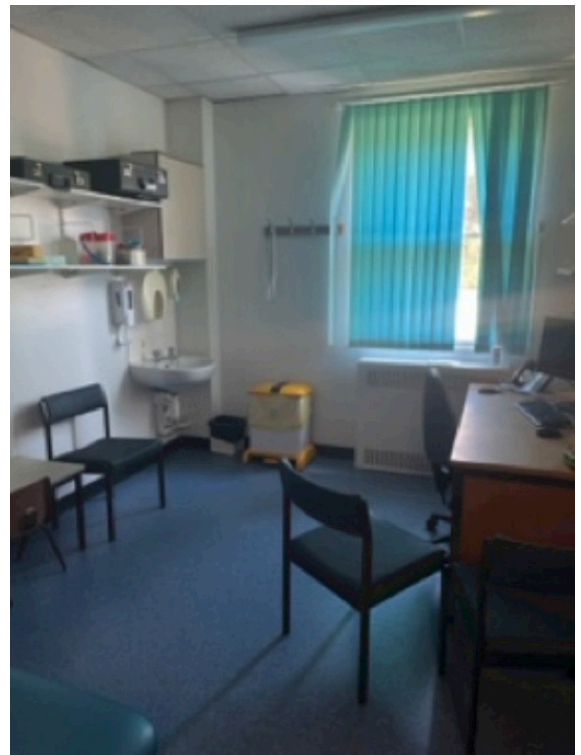
Waiting room



Corridor



Clinic room



Hospital easy read

This document is known as an 'easy read', it can be used to help explain to your child what they can expect when coming into the hospital. You can go through it together and answer any questions they have. This pack also has pictures of the waiting room and a clinic room you can show to your child too. This document is a basic hospital appointment document so you may wish to make an adapted version including specific information for you and your child. Websites to support with making easy read documents can be found at the end of this booklet.



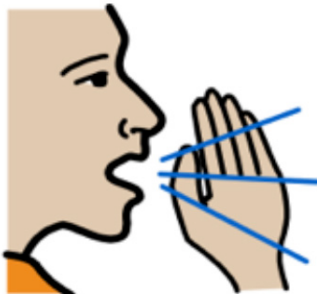
You are coming to hospital for an appointment.



When you arrive, the adult you are with will tell the receptionist you are here. The receptionist will ask you to wait for the appointment.



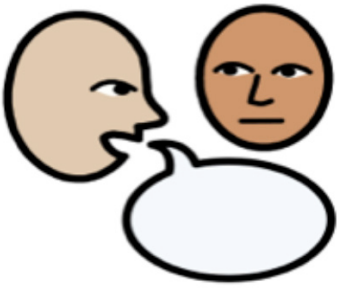
You can sit in the waiting room until your appointment.



When it is time for your appointment, we will call your name or someone will come and get you.



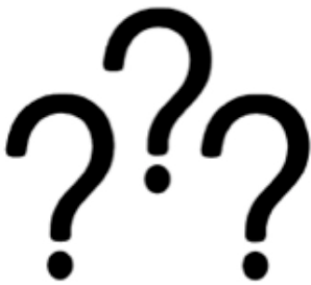
The doctor will say hello to you and the adult you are with. They will ask you all lots of questions.



Don't worry about saying the wrong thing, there are no wrong answers!



The doctor will explain what will happen next.



If you or the adult you are with have any questions, you can ask the doctor. It is a safe space.



If you have no other appointments, you can leave.



The doctor will write a letter to your parent or carer saying what happened at the appointment. This letter will also go to your GP.

Useful websites and resources



Websites and resources

You may find that taking some time to browse some of the information below will be helpful as you move through the assessment process.

Not all of the links on this page will be appropriate for you and your child. Some are tailored towards children who are diagnosed as autistic or have a learning disability. However, these websites have links to resources and advice that you could try out to see if they work for you and your child.

Useful websites for education and resources

NHS website:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/caring-for-children-and-young-people/how-to-deal-with-challenging-behaviour-in-children

Challenging Behaviour Foundation:

www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk

Young Minds:

<https://youngminds.org.uk>

Dimensions:

<https://dimensions-uk.org/what-we-do/challenging-behaviour-2>

Mencap:

www.mencap.org.uk/learning-disability-explained/conditions-linked-learning-disability/challenging-behaviour

The National Autistic Society:

www.autism.org.uk

Parent support groups open to all (regardless of diagnosis)

Living with teenagers:

www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/parenting-support-courses?p_l_back_url=%2F-search%3Fq%3Dliving%2Bwith%2Bteenagers

Living with parents:

www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/parenting-support-courses?p_l_back_url=%2F-search%3Fq%3Dliving%2Bwith%2Bteenagers

Challenging behaviour workshops:

<https://services.actionforchildren.org.uk/dorset-services/parenting/behaviours-that-challenge-us-information-sessions>

The mix group:

Tesco Community room, Tower Park, Poole.

Contact Sara **07966 971983** or **themix14@outlook.com**

MumsNet:

www.mumsnet.com

Dorset Youth:

<https://dorsetyouth.com/send-for-parents>

Parent support groups (SEND specific):

SEND violent and challenging behaviour:

<https://yvonnenewbold.com/resources-on-send-vcb/violent-challenging-behaviour-the-basics>

The Umbrella Group:

www.helpandkindness.co.uk/service/1276/The-Umbrella-Group-%28Autism-specific%29

Parent carer forums

Parent Carers Together Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole:

www.parentcarerstogether.org.uk

Dorset Parent Carer Council:

www.dorsetparentcarercouncil.co.uk

Youth groups and activities open to all children (regardless of diagnosis)

Broadstone youth club:

<https://fid.bcpccouncil.gov.uk/family-information-directory/directory/activities/youth-clubs/broadstone-youth-centre-poole>

Limelights Youth Centre:

www.facebook.com/LimeLightsYouthCentre

RELATE:

<https://www.relate-bournemouth.org.uk/children--young-peoples-counselling.html>

The Remix:

<https://activateperformingarts.org.uk/project/the-remix-and-premix>

Youth groups and activities (SEND specific)

Diverse abilities youth club:

<https://diverseabilities.org.uk/awesome-nights>

The Chatterboxes:

<http://ymcabournemouth.org.uk/youth-centres/disability-youth-projects>

Dorset ability counts football:

www.dorsetfa.com/players/disability/dorset-ability-counts-league

For more youth groups and activities visit:

<https://fid.bcpccouncil.gov.uk/family-information-directory/information/activities>

<https://familyinformationdirectory.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/kb5/dorset/fsd/home.page>

Useful websites and resources

The Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council SEND local offer:

<https://fid.bcpccouncil.gov.uk/send-local-offer>

Dorset Council SEND local offer:

www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/children-families/sen-and-disability-local-offer/dorsets-local-offer

SENDIASS:

BCP Sendiass: www.sendiass4bcp.org

Dorset Sendiass: www.dorsetsendiass.co.uk

School nurse:

www.dorsethealthcare.nhs.uk/school-nursing

Carer support:

www.bcpccouncil.gov.uk/ASC-and-health/Carers/Carers.aspx

www.carersupportdorset.co.uk

Diagnosis specific websites

ADHD UK:

<https://adhduk.co.uk>

ADHD Foundation Neurodiversity Charity:

www.adhdfoundation.org.uk

The National Autistic Society:

www.autism.org.uk

Ambitious About Autism:

www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk

National Organisation for Foetal Alcohol Syndrome:

<https://nationalfasd.org.uk>

PDA is not currently recognised/diagnosed as a stand-alone condition in Dorset. We recognise some parents find the following websites helpful:

The National Autistic Society Pathological Demand Avoidance Information:

www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/diagnosis/pda

Pathological Demand Avoidance Society:

www.pdasociety.org.uk/life-with-pda-menu/family-life-intro/diagnosing-pda-children

NHS websites:

Autism:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/autism

ADHD:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd

FASD:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/foetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorder

Intellectual/Learning Disabilities:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/learning-disabilities

DCD:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/developmental-coordination-disorder-dyspraxia

Creating visual supports

Widget online:

<https://widgitonline.com>

Easy on the i:

www.learningdisabilityservice-leeds.nhs.uk/easy-on-the-i

Do2Learn:

<https://do2learn.com>

Makaton:

www.makaton.org

Other useful links and tips

Dorset Max Card:

www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/-/dorset-max-card

Accessing sunflower lanyards (for hidden disabilities):

<https://hiddendisabilitiesstore.com>

Sleep support and advice:

<https://cerebra.org.uk/get-advice-support/sleep-advice-service>

Being safe online:

www.getsafeonline.org

Magdalen Farm:

<https://magdalenfarm.org.uk>

Young Sibs (support for Siblings):

www.youngsibs.org.uk

ADHD UK:

<https://adhduk.co.uk>

Social media: There are many different parent carer support groups created on social media, particularly Facebook these may be useful to connect with people going through a similar process to your family.

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