East Sussex Autism Spectrum Diagnostic Pathway – 11-18th birthday

This is your step by step guide to the Autism Diagnostic Pathway. The exact pathway will vary according to your child’s individual needs and it can sometimes be a long process. Observing your child over time helps to ensure the right diagnosis and support for your child. Schools and settings should support your child’s needs whether or not you get a diagnosis and you can access support throughout the process at the SEND Local Offer webpages.

If you have a concern about your child’s development or mental health

If you think your child might be on the autism spectrum, or you have concerns about their development/mental health, you can talk to your GP, child’s school/college, school nurse or a professional involved with your child to discuss these concerns. If, following that discussion, it is felt a further assessment is needed, you will be asked for your consent for professionals to share information about your child in order to start the assessment process by referring to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

CAMHS Clinicians review the referral

A CAMHS Clinician will look at the information about your child contained in the referral and will decide whether they need to collect more information from health and education services or whether an appointment will be offered. This may depend on whether an Autistic Spectrum (ASC) assessment has been requested or if the referral has been for assessment of other mental health concerns e.g. anxiety. You will receive a letter to let you know what will happen next. Your child might receive an appointment with a CAMHS clinician at this stage or you may be sent an information pack which will include screening forms for you to take to your child’s school or college for the most appropriate person there to complete.

1st appointment with CAMHS clinician following referral for mental health issue

This will take place at one of the CAMHS clinic locations. The CAMHS clinician will meet you and your child to explain what will happen in the session. You will have the opportunity to talk to the clinician both with your child and on your own and your child will also have the opportunity to have time alone with the CAMHS clinician.

If during this session an ASC assessment is considered then you will be given the information pack as described above.

Completed Information Pack is returned to CAMHS

The returned information will be screened by a CAMHS psychologist who will decide whether formal assessment is indicated or not.
If a formal assessment is not indicated:

An appointment will be offered with a CAMHS clinician who will discuss the most appropriate pathway to support your child’s mental health needs.

This could be further assessment/treatment at CAMHS or referral to a more appropriate service.

You will receive a letter after the appointment with a summary of what has been agreed.

If a formal assessment is indicated:

An appointment will be offered with a CAMHS psychologist for formal assessment.

This could be the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS), which involves chatting with your child, and/or an Autism Diagnostic Interview (ADI), a standard set of questions about your child.

Appointment with CAMHS Psychiatrist and Psychologist

During this appointment you will receive a report with the outcomes of the assessment which the psychiatrist and psychologist will discuss with you and a formal diagnosis will be given if that is indicated.

If your child is diagnosed with ASC you will be given information regarding support services available.

Following the assessments, the CAMHS professionals will make a plan with you and, with your agreement, share this with education and health staff involved with your child.

Further appointments at CAMHS will only be offered if mental health issues have been identified.

This document is intended to be shared with parent/carers by a health or education professional at the point that the child is referred onto the pathway.

We would like to thank the parent carers from iContact (www.icontactautism.org) for their time and advice in the production of this leaflet.