Welcome to the latest update from the Children and Young People’s Autism Service in South Staffordshire.

We remain committed to continuing to provide as full a service as possible during Covid-19 and would ask that you continue to follow national guidance in relation to staying alert and practicing social distancing. You can find out more at www.nhs.uk/coronavirus.

**Recruitment**

The team has been further bolstered over the past couple of weeks, with James Lafferty *(pictured right)* having joined us as an Assistant Psychologist – meaning we now have 4 full-time Assistant Psychologists in the service to support families with a range of interventions and supporting elements of the assessment pathway. James has been working as an Assistant Psychologist at the Huntercombe Group in Birmingham since 2018 and brings with him a range of experience in delivering 1:1 and group therapy sessions, including anger management, mindful coping, problem solving and ‘all about me’ autism awareness groups.

We are also delighted to welcome James Rowland *(pictured left)* to the team as a Trainee Clinical Psychologist on a 6-month placement. James will be supporting assessments and interventions for families across South Staffordshire, having previously worked with families in Leicester CAMHS fulfilling a similar role.

**Assessments**

As well as the appointments being provided to families by our team, Psicon and Caudwell Children continue to offer additional capacity and we’re pleased to report the feedback we continue to receive has been positive.

We would stress that any family who has received a diagnosis from either Psicon or Caudwell Children will of course continue to have full access to our autism service’s workshops, resources, the duty worker and other tailored interventions where clinically indicated.

We continue to see a number of appointments not being attended. There is a collective commitment to reduce waiting times and would again request that anyone who is unable to attend an appointment please contact the team as soon as possible to ensure this can be offered to another family.

Any family currently awaiting an assessment appointment for **new assessments only** and are happy to receive a late notification are asked to email the team at
**Engagement**

The service, along with senior members of the Trust’s Children and Families Care Group, attended the latest South Staffordshire Autism Partnership Group meeting, alongside a number of parents, parent representatives and commissioners, who chair the meeting. It was a very constructive session, with a number of really good ideas shared by those present. These suggestions are being discussed as part of the work taking place to both develop new resources for the benefit of families and carers and increase the profile of the service. We came away from the session with food for thought and a real sense that all partners are committed to working together to develop a service that children, young people and their parents can be rightly proud of.

**You said: we did – streamlining assessment processes from Paediatrics to Autism**

We have heard clearly from parent feedback that it is frustrating to have to tell your story more than once and that services are at times not joined up.

During the Covid-19 pandemic one of our experienced Paediatric doctors has worked some of their week in the Autism team. This has enabled a really thorough review of the pathway between the two services.

Often children and families start their journey within community paediatrics, particularly if concerns are in the context of developmental delays (e.g. late speech). As part of the assessment within paediatrics, children will often have had observations within nursery or home settings, developmental histories taken by pediatricians and often other assessments such as speech and language assessments. The outcome of these assessments at times provide evidence of a very clear autism profile, but traditionally would have to start a new autism assessment pathway which may duplicate some of these observations or assessments.

We know these children need access to early intervention, particularly if they are due to start in full time education in the next academic year. We have therefore developed a pathway to ‘join up’ this information with the Autism team and autism assessment. The development of this pathway by the Trust assists in meeting its obligation to support, safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

NICE guidance has been reviewed and multi-disciplinary team discussions taken place to reach the proposed pathway. This pathway was piloted from July-August 2020; in this time, 30 children went through this pathway, with 10 having minimal further assessment (e.g. an
ADI-R structured interview with parents) and as a result diagnostic conclusions were reached, 14 needed further assessment (e.g. an ADOS play based observational assessment) and 6 appointments offered but not taken for various reasons – giving a 1/3 success rate for early diagnosis and intervention.

Following this successful pilot this approach is being continued and formalised a pathway between Community Paediatrics and the Autism team.

**Feeding back on your experience of using the service**

The feedback we receive from users of the service, whether that’s through forums such as the partnership group meetings, other parents groups or through comments from individual parents or carers is absolutely critical to helping us develop the service.

Alongside the positive feedback we receive, we recognise that we may not always get things right, but where this is the case we want to learn so we can improve services. We want to assure you that this feedback is both welcome and valuable and would encourage you to continue to provide this. We can assure you that providing us with feedback will in no way negatively impact on the care or support you or your family receive.

You can do this through the Trust’s Customer Services Team, which as well as providing advice and support is also on hand to listen to your concerns, questions or queries. The team is happy to receive any comments and suggestions you may have to improve the Autism service, or any other service provided by the Trust. You can find out more at www.mpft.nhs.uk/service-users-carers/complaints-concerns-and-compliments.

The team is open 8am-6pm, Monday-Friday and can be contacted by:

- Email: palsandexperience@mpft.nhs.uk
- Freephone: 0800 783 2865
- A website form is also available via the website link above

Linked this this, if you have received a service from the CY P autism service, we would also encourage you to complete an online feedback form that seeks your views, comments and suggestions – whether that’s an appointment, workshop or anything else linked to the service. Please visit http://surveys.mpft.nhs.uk/Survey486/Create?channel=15181 to share your views.

**Workshops**

One of the things we are really proud of is the range of workshops we are holding – the subjects of which have been based on the feedback we received following our recent survey and which are being delivered virtually as Covid-19 continues.
A two-session **Sleep workshop** is being held on Monday 16 November from 10am-12.30pm, with session two on Friday 20 November from 10am-11am. This workshop is for parents/caregivers only and provides advice around sleep management and strategies. The second session will review strategies and answer any questions that may have arisen from the first workshop.

There are a few places left for our latest **Introduction to Autism workshop** on 2 November from 9.30am-11.30am. This interactive workshop provides an excellent opportunity for parents and families to understand their child’s diagnosis; whether for families with a recent diagnosis or those looking to refresh their knowledge.

Due to the exceptional demand for places on the **Managing Behaviours that Challenge workshop** we have added an additional date for Friday 18 December from 10am-11.30am. This workshop will explore how and why different behaviours challenge, review behaviours and the messages behind them, and understand how to respond and the approaches to managing behaviours that challenge.

We would ask that anyone who has booked a place for any of our workshops and is unable to attend to please get in touch to let us know so we can offer your place to a family on the waiting list – thank you.

Any families wishing to attend any upcoming workshops are asked to email **cypautismservice@mpft.nhs.uk** to book their place. The sessions will be hosted by the team using Microsoft Teams. Once you have called the team to book your place, you will receive a web link to access the appropriate session *(NB: You do not need to have Microsoft Teams installed on your computer to join this meeting. Click 'watch on the web instead' to view via your web browser)*.

**The Autism Toolbox**

We are pleased to announce **The Autism Toolbox** – a 10-week course that is coming soon. We are working with families to ensure these workshops are developed to meet the needs of all our families, both with a recent diagnosis and those that have received a diagnosis several years ago, but would like support with current concerns or issues from the clinical team and may also like to link in with other families that have lived experiences they wish to share.

It continues to be an incredible journey working with families to build this new service, looking at new ideas on how best to support families across South Staffordshire. Working with our families and looking at the frequent issues that occur from our duty calls we are building a group of 10 sessions utilising the range of specialists we have within the team. This course will include sessions on the autism diagnosis and what this means, sensory behaviour, communication and interaction, sleep, managing behaviours that
challenge, autism and anxiety along with a range of other supporting strategies for families to help support their child or young person in the home environment. We'll be sharing more on this as soon as possible.

**Free OpenHouse on Autism webinar – how to help your school help your autistic child**

The Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health is holding a free OpenHouse on Autism webinar on Wednesday 11 November from 5pm entitled on how to help your school help your autistic child.

The format combines an expert presentation followed by hosted discussion to discuss and address questions raised. Attendees will receive a top tips action plan that can be adapted to your needs, to help put the key insights from the event to use. To find out more and register your place please visit [www.acamh.org/event/free-webinar-openhouse-on-autism-how-to-help-schools-help-your-autistic-child](http://www.acamh.org/event/free-webinar-openhouse-on-autism-how-to-help-schools-help-your-autistic-child).

**Other MPFT resources**


A duty professional is available on 0300 303 0691 Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm to offer help and support to families.

**Contacting the service**

- Telephone: 0300 303 0691 (9am-5pm, Monday to Friday; excluding Bank Holidays)
- Email: cypautismservice@mpft.nhs.uk

More information about the service can be found via MPFT’s website at [www.mpft.nhs.uk/services/children-and-young-people-autism-service](http://www.mpft.nhs.uk/services/children-and-young-people-autism-service), which features:

- Referral information (NB: Referrals into the service can only be made by a professional who has met with the child and family)
- Frequently asked questions
- Information should urgent help be required
- Contact details for a number of other useful services and organisations
- Workshop information
- Previous service updates
- Voice for Change session feedback
- Resources
- Videos
If you need urgent help between the hours of 9am-5pm from Monday to Friday, you can contact the Single Point of Access directly on 0300 303 0691, or call First Response (social care and health) on 0800 1313 126.

If you need urgent help out of hours (evenings, weekends or bank holidays) please contact:

- NHS 111, who have access to on-call mental health professionals; or the
- First Response Emergency Duty Team on 0345 604 2886
- In the event of a medical emergency please go straight to A&E.

The Trust’s 24/7 urgent NHS mental health service provides telephone support, advice and triage for all ages. The Freephone number to call for people living in South Staffordshire is 0808 196 3002 (NB: this telephone line cannot provide advice on Coronavirus symptoms).

Should a parent/carer have a specific question relating to the care of their child, we ask that they email cypautismservice@mpft.nhs.uk.