Children and Young People’s Autism Service

Happy New Year – we hope you enjoyed the festive season. The team are continuing to work as swiftly and as hard as they can to carry out assessments and interventions for children and their families awaiting an appointment. Detailed reports are being provided to families whose assessments have been completed and follow-up appointments are being offered to families in receipt of a diagnosis to discuss next steps.

We wanted to clarify that only actively open case files for assessment or intervention were transferred from the previous provider – all families should have received a letter from us in October. If you haven’t received a letter or if you are unsure and would like confirmation of your file being transferred then please contact the team on 0300 303 0691 between 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday or email cypautismservice@mpft.nhs.uk.

The service continues to offer open access to families in receipt of a diagnosis. A self-referral form for interventions is available on the service web page on MPFT’s website at www.mpft.nhs.uk/services/children-and-young-people-autism-service or can be forwarded by contacting the team directly. Confirmation of the diagnosis is required alongside the self-referral form.

The team are receiving a high volume of calls from families asking about the progress of their appointment or referral. We are responding to queries as soon as possible and thank everyone for their continued patience during this interim period. Our daily clinical duty worker remains on hand to offer urgent telephone advice if required.

Alongside this work, we are in the process of arranging a range of workshops in the east and west of the county to enable as many families as possible to access support and advice. We would encourage families to take advantage of these workshops as they provide an excellent opportunity to link directly with the team and gain expert advice on any current issues their child may be having.

The upcoming ‘Me, Myself and Autism’ workshop is aimed at children and young people aged 9-14. This is a two-session workshop, with the first session being held on Friday 17 January from 9.30am-11.30am and the second on Friday 31 January from 9.30am-11.30am at Rugeley Community Centre, Burnthill Lane, Rugeley, WS15 2HX.

It will focus on understanding autism for the child, the difficulties that may affect them and advice and support around how to manage these issues. NB: A parent or carer must attend with the child. There will be an opportunity for parents to speak to the team following the workshop to answer any questions around upcoming workshops and specific advice for their child. Please call the team on 0300 303 0691 or email cypautismservice@mpft.nhs.uk to book a place.
Further workshops are being arranged and will cover issues around sleep, managing challenging behaviour, speech and language, occupational therapy and introduction to autism for parents. We also welcome any suggestions or feedback from families around specific workshops that would meet the needs of their child and would be happy to set up new workshops where there is a demand.

A new assessment referral form has been developed and is available on the service web page at [www.mpft.nhs.uk/services/children-and-young-people-autism-service](http://www.mpft.nhs.uk/services/children-and-young-people-autism-service). We hope this will assist referrers in ensuring all relevant and appropriate information is included to support a referral specifically for autism. If you have commenced a referral using the previous form, this will still be acceptable rather than transferring information to the new form.

The team welcome a referral from any professional for an autism assessment; this includes schools and other professionals, with schools being an excellent referral source into the service. Any professional is very welcome to contact the service should they wish to discuss a potential referral.

**Tips for managing behavioural difficulties in children with autism**

- Rule out any physical or medical problems – some children may express pain through crying or having a tantrum
- Follow the ABC for understanding behaviour – antecedents/triggers; behaviour; consequences (management of rewards and motivators)
- Find the function of the behaviour, patterns and triggers before choosing strategies – children with autism may struggle to identify and express their emotions and needs with words and this can be reflected in their behaviour
- Safety first – having a ‘safe space’ in the house may help; e.g. a corner with pillows or a ‘sensory area’ to unwind
- Transition times – allow the child to have some time for processing the information required when changing location; e.g. from school to the home environment
- Expression beyond words – the child may use a ‘worry box’, sensory and emotional cards, drawings, diaries etc to express how they are feeling
- The power of visual cues – to create individualised cards or posters, a visual timetable etc as visual aids and cues to help the child with transitions and support effective communication
- Teach the child the skills needed to cope with situations using a step-by-step approach, modelling etc and relaxation techniques when ready
- Behavioural change requires parents/carers/adults support, coherence, consistence and patience until the child learns to manage the emotion – keep a behavioural diary and consult a health professional for further support.
Further information and advice can be found by visiting the National Autistic Society’s website at [www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk) or Autism West Midlands’ website at [www.autismwestmidlands.org.uk](http://www.autismwestmidlands.org.uk).

**Contacting the service**

Telephone: 0300 303 0691 (9am-5pm, Monday to Friday; excluding Bank Holidays)
Email: [cypautismservice@mpft.nhs.uk](mailto: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). The service web page 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 that provide more information both to current and new users of the service
- Information should urgent help be required
- Contact details for a number of other useful services and organisations
- Workshop information
- Previous weekly updates.

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.

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

The Trust’s Customer Services Team is also available for advice and support and provides information on NHS and social care services. They can be contacted by:

- Email: [palsandexperience@mpft.nhs.uk](mailto:palsandexperience@mpft.nhs.uk)
- Telephone: 01785 783026
- A website form is also available by [clicking here](http://www.mpft.nhs.uk/services/children-and-young-people-autism-service)