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

**New contract launched**

This week marks the formal launch of the new contract from the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) covering Stafford and Surrounds, East Staffordshire, Cannock Chase, and South East Staffordshire and Seisdon Peninsula to provide improved services for children and young people with autism in South Staffordshire.

We have spent the past several weeks mobilising the service and have continued to develop the service in line with the new specification, alongside continuing to provide the interim contract supporting children, young people and their families and carers.

This has proved challenging due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. However, we are delighted to have formally launched and thank the CCGs for allowing us to deliver a new autism service in the south of the county that will support a greater number of children, young people and their families.

As mentioned when the news of the new contract was announced in March, the new service has been provided with a 30 per cent increase in investment from the CCGs. We are significantly expanding the size and composition of the team and have a NICE compliant multi-disciplinary team operational.

The service now has 50% more clinical staff in post than the workforce who transferred over, with more clinicians due to start in the next few months (please see below news of a new addition to the team). All registered colleagues have received training in 'gold standard' autism assessment tools including Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS) and Autism Diagnostic Interview Training (ADI-R).

We continue to work closely with Trust colleagues from CAMHS, Learning Disabilities and other paediatric services to ensure families get the right support from the right team and, where necessary teams will share care or offer joint appointments.

The team have developed a range of resources to support children and families (available via 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)) and have rapidly adapted to provide remote consultation by telephone and video and digital versions of previously face-to-face workshops. A professional is available by telephone on 0300 303 0691 Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm to offer help and support to families.
The new service has been extended to cover 0-19-year-olds and also now covers interventions for young people up to the age of 25 with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP). Each child or young person will have a designated key worker to oversee and coordinate their care and support their requirements.

We’re keen to build on the relationships we’ve formed with parent groups and to involve parents and service users more in how the service is developed.

We also remain committed to continuing to provide high quality care and doing everything we can to address the current assessment backlog.

**More information on extra service capacity to provide additional assessments**

In the most recent update we announced that we had secured assessments with Staffordshire-based charity Caudwell Children Autism Service, and also sub-contracted specialist provider Psicon to offer additional capacity.

We have been contacting those families who have been waiting the longest for an assessment or who have been prioritised as having the greatest clinical need, to offer appointments with these providers.

As highlighted in the most recent update, this involves obtaining consent from families wishing to take up this offer to transfer any records we have. Once this consent is acquired we will hand over this information in a secure way to the provider, who will then contact the family to discuss next steps.

For both providers, this involves obtaining further information from parents and schools prior to offering appointments. It is important to stress that, whilst the providers are delivering their assessment in a slightly different way, both are compliant with NICE guidelines and are subject to the same quality standards and monitoring.

It is also important to stress that families who receive a diagnosis from either provider will continue to have full access to our autism service’s workshops, resources, the duty worker and other tailored interventions where clinically indicated.

A number of parents have been in touch to ask for more information concerning this extra provision, which we are happy to provide.

**More on Caudwell Children Autism Service**

Caudwell Children Autism Service is based at Caudwell International Children’s Centre at Keele Innovation & Science Park which is on Keele University site in Newcastle-under-Lyme.
The purpose-built centre was designed in consultation with people with autism and is served by free car parking, with a frequent bus service available from Stoke-on-Trent bus and railway stations.

Caudwell is due to commence face-to-face assessments from 12 June. As mentioned above, Caudwell will be speaking directly with those families who have provided their consent, to talk about arrangements prior to their appointment to ensure any risk is reduced regarding COVID-19.

Caudwell’s diagnostic assessment consists of:

- Two-day child centred assessment led by their multi-disciplinary team. Two parents/carers are asked to attend this appointment where possible to enable best assessment outcomes.
- Individual two hour feedback appointment, where a member of the multi-disciplinary team and a family support assistant will provide feedback from the assessment, recommendations and create an action plan to support the family following their feedback.
- Families who receive a diagnosis of autism will be invited to attend Caudwell’s two-day workshop programme 'Making sense of autism'. The first part is for two parents/carers to attend for one day and covers introduction to autism, ASD and family, and ASD and behaviour. Part two occurs about three months later and is for the two parents/carers to attend and also for the child diagnosed with autism. Topics covered typically include sensory needs, social interaction, communication and developing and managing daily life skills. The workshops are designed to be responsive to the needs of families and provide an opportunity to meet with and talk to other parents as well as to members of the clinical team.
- Families whose child receives a diagnosis of autism will also receive 12 months of telephone family support throughout the process from preparation for the appointment, through the assessment itself, and post-assessment follow up, as well as workshops. The family support assistants provide practical support and signposting to local services.
- A copy of the report will be sent to the Trust as the referring authority, and to the child’s GP.

**More on Psicon**
Psicon will be working in our buildings in South Staffordshire to provide multi-disciplinary assessments, with some of these appointments possibly taking place at weekends.

Established in 1998, Psicon supports the NHS with providing specialist autism services in other parts of the country, including Kent, Surrey, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.
Its assessments are NICE guideline compliant and involve a multi-disciplinary team of a clinical psychologist, speech and language therapist and paediatrician or psychiatrist. Psicon’s assessment process will consist of:

- Collating information from schools and families ahead of assessment
- An ADOS assessment conducted by two clinicians
- A separate appointment with a Psychiatrist for a developmental history
- A follow up telephone appointment with the family to go through the outcome of the assessment.

Participating families are welcome to speak with Psicon’s admin team before their assessment if they have any questions about the process and will have the opportunity for feedback from the assessing doctor and also from the team once they receive their report.

**Recruitment**

We are also delighted to welcome Occupational Therapist (OT) Janice Harrison (pictured) to the team this week. Janice qualified as an OT in 1982 and has worked in a number of OT roles, including with children and young adults.

In her role, Janice will carry out full occupational therapy assessments, which will also include understanding the child’s sensory processing needs and the impact on their daily life. From this, goals will be developed alongside recommendations to improve and support their home and school life, as well as within their community.

Janice will be supporting the team with assessments and interventions in her role and we’re sure you will join us in welcoming her to the team.

**Contacting the service**

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](http://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus).

- 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). The service web page features:
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- 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
- 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 number to call for people living in South Staffordshire is 0300 555 5001 (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.

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
- Telephone: 01785 783026
- A website form is also available by clicking here