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.

Latest on assessments
Whilst COVID-19 has undoubtedly proven challenging, we are moving forwards and working as hard as we can to address waiting times.

This is reflected in the progress we are making in offering and booking in assessments with families. In May, a total of 34 children were booked in to commence an assessment with the service, with 39 in June and a total of 43 also booked in for July. We anticipate these numbers will increase month on month as more new members of the team join.

Separate to this, since commencing the additional capacity last month, more than 130 patients have agreed to be transferred to Psicon and Caudwell Children and a total of 32 first appointments have taken place so far.

As previously stated, this additional capacity is prioritising those families who have been waiting the longest or who have the greatest clinical need in terms of offering an assessment and we are pleased with the progress being made, while acknowledging that more work is required.

We appreciate the continued patience and understanding of families and wish to stress our commitment to you.

Recruitment
This commitment is reflected in our work to further bolster the team. We are recruiting to a number of roles, and in the next few weeks we are interviewing for a further Speech and Language Therapist, an Autism Spectrum Condition Practitioner and a Therapy Assistant.

In addition we are out to advert for further psychologists and will be shortly advertising for a full time Consultant Psychiatrist. Meanwhile, we continue to have support from existing CAMHS consultants and a Community Paediatrician to support the caseload.

The involvement of parents/carers on recruitment panels is particularly valuable, so we would ask that any parent/ carer of a child who is in receipt of an autism diagnosis and would like to be involved on an interview panel to call the team on 0300 303 0691 (Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm) or email cypautismservice@mpft.nhs.uk.
Workshops
The team have arranged the following interactive online workshops in response to feedback from the survey for families to take part in from their homes. **As places are limited for these sessions, you are asked to call the team on 0300 303 0691 (Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm) to book your place as soon as possible – thank you.**

The sessions will be hosted by the team using Microsoft Teams. Once you have called the team to book your place, you will be sent 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).

**Surviving Covid**
Friday 10 July, 9.30am-11am
This session is available to parents/ carers and will be targeted around experiences and challenges during COVID-19 and also as we come out of the current lockdown position.

**Introduction to Autism next steps**
Thursday 16 July, 9.30am-11am or Friday 17 July, 9.30am-11am
This session is available to parents/ carers and will be a follow up to the online Introduction to Autism webinar available on the service web page by clicking here (under ‘Workshops’). We request parents/ carers complete the webinar prior to attending the interactive session, which will cover the three main areas of communication, rigidity and social interactions.

**Introduction to Sensory Processing**
Part 1 - Thursday 30 July, 9am-11am
Part 2 - Tuesday 4 August, 9am-11am

This two-part interactive session is available to parents/ carers. NB: You will need to attend both sessions.

Part one will cover an understanding of the eight major senses and sensory integration. How this enables children to engage in activities of daily life, as well as potentially providing important clues on the relationship between the child’s sensory processing difficulties and their experiences in the home, community and classroom.

Part two will offer a practical guide on ways of adapting the child’s environment to meet sensory requirements. **Using a sensory dance** and help you develop strategies to make environments that enable your child to engage in meaningful and purposeful daily life at home and school.

Together we are making life better for our communities.
‘Introduction to Sensory Processing’ – Part 1 (NB: parents/ carers must attend both sessions)

Thursday 6 August, 10am-12pm
This two-part sensory interactive session is available to parents/ carers and will cover an understanding of the eight human senses and sensory integration, how they enable children to engage in activities of daily life, as well as covering the sensory difficulties that some children with autism experience impacting on their emotional and behavioural responses in school, home, community and friendships.

‘Introduction to Sensory Strategies’ – Part 2 (NB: parents/ carers must attend both sessions)

Thursday 20 August, 10am-12pm
This second element of the sensory interactive session is available to parents/ carers where we will work with you to understand your own child’s sensory responses, ‘being a sensory detective’ and help you develop strategies to create routines and environments that enable your child to engage in meaningful and purposeful daily life at home and in school.

Joint working
We’ve spoken previously about how the team works alongside other services within the Trust’s Children’s and Families Care Group to ensure we are working in a joined up fashion and sharing best practice.

We’ve most recently met with the Trust’s Community Speech and Language service to look at how best to utilise the information they hold to support an assessment in order to help reduce duplication for families. Linked to this, we’re also in the early stages of arranging a joint workshop with the service about what communication is and how it can differ for those with autism.

Other resources
A range of resources are available to support children and families via the service web page at www.mpft.nhs.uk/services/children-and-young-people-autism-service.

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

News from our partners: Shape how children with special educational needs and disabilities are supported
Staffordshire County Council and Staffordshire’s Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) are working with others to improve the way children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are supported.
An important part of this is agreeing a set of principles that will guide the way professionals across education, health and social care will support children and young people, as well as setting out the commitments made by our communities and families.

These principles will form Staffordshire’s SEND Strategy. People may have different views around what the strategy should include, so the council and CCGs want to hear from as many people as possible before working with a small group of professionals and parents to write a draft, formally consult on it and then agree it.

Please [click here](https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/SENDstrategy) to complete an online survey – the survey is open until midnight on Sunday 12 July.

Please share this survey with people and groups who have an interest in improving SEND support across Staffordshire. You can do this by sharing the council’s [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com) posts.

If you would like to keep up-to-date with the development of Staffordshire’s SEND Strategy please visit [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/SENDstrategy](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/SENDstrategy).

**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). 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
- 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