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.

A duty professional remains available via the service contact number on 0300 303 0691 Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm to offer help and support to families.

Assessments
A key priority for the service has been reaching the target of offering an appointment to a family to commence an autism assessment within 12 weeks of a referral being accepted.

We’re delighted this target has been achieved – not only for our families and service users whose patience and understanding we very much appreciate, but also for the dedication of the team, who have worked extremely hard throughout the pandemic.

We remain committed to offering a service in South Staffordshire that each and every family we support can be proud of and, as we move into 2021 will continue to improve and go further.

As a reminder, 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 cypautismservice@mpft.nhs.uk with their details so that we can get in touch should an appointment become available at short notice.

Online Art Gallery
The service is launching an online art gallery for young people, families and carers to share an image about what autism means to you. This image can be in any medium; i.e. paint, pencil, photo etc.

Selected artworks will be exhibited in a virtual gallery on our web page, so you can see what other people have been getting up to creatively. We hope this will be a bit of fun as well as a source of inspiration for everyone and an opportunity to exhibit your work.

Together we are making life better for our communities
If you’d like to take part, please email photos of your artwork to cypautismservice@mpft.nhs.uk (please use the words 'Online Art Gallery' in the subject header).

The gallery is open to young people under age of 25 with a diagnosis of autism living in South Staffordshire.

An entry form, including a range of FAQs and help on how to get help with submitting work is available by clicking here. The closing date to enter is 14 March 2021.

**You said, we did**

Feedback was received from a parent whose child would struggle to engage with professionals where she was unable to clearly see their face, causing anxiety and lack of engagement during appointments.

With current Covid restrictions it is a requirement for appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – in this case a face mask –to be worn at all face-to-face appointments, to safeguard both professionals and families. Therefore, to assist with the appointment, arrangements were made to access a limited supply of NHS approved clear face coverings.

We only have a limited availability of these masks, therefore this would not be an option for all appointments; however if a specific need is highlighted then we will review the availability of these masks at that time.

**Your feedback**

As a reminder, there are a number of ways you can provide feedback on your experiences relating to the service:

1. Families are provided with a feedback form following completion of their assessment, intervention or when attending a workshop. We would be grateful if these could be returned as your comments and ideas provide valuable knowledge of what we are doing well and where we can review or improve.
2. An online feedback form, which is available at http://surveys.mpft.nhs.uk/Survey486/Create?channel=15181
3. The Trust’s Customer Services 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
Workshops
Due to the exceptional demand for the Managing Behaviours that Challenge workshop on Friday 18 December we have added additional places. 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. For families wishing to book a place please email cypautismservice@mpft.nhs.uk.

Our Sensory Processing workshop held last week was very well received; however 50% of the families who booked a place did not attend. Places are limited and we would kindly ask parents to inform us if they will not be attending to enable other families waiting to be allocated a place.

The sessions are hosted on 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).

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, which features:

- Referral information (NB: Referrals into the service can only be made by a professional who has met with the child and family)
- Meet the team section
- Resources
- Workshop information
- Information should urgent help be required
- Previous service updates
- Frequently asked questions
- Voice for Change session feedback
- Contact details for a number of other useful services and organisations
- 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.