

1st September 2021

Dear Parent/Carers and Colleagues

Thank you for support whilst we have been reviewing the Autism Assessment Service in Solent NHS Trust. We took an extended pause on the acceptance of new referrals to this service 6 months ago. This was due to the volume of referrals and the ever-increasing wait times for children and young people. I am pleased to be writing to you to advise that in this time we have been able to deliver assessments to over 300 children and young people. At present the longest wait time for an assessment is 18 months, reduced from 2.5 years.

We have also made some important changes to our service that we believe will maximise the capacity we have and deliver a more collaborative service to children, young people, and their parents/carers.

These changes have been made in continual consultation and partnership with parent/carers and other key services and colleagues. Some of these changes include:

- Shortened assessment documents to reduce the time spent on writing reports and increase the time available for assessment delivery.
- Training more colleagues in ADOS – the child/young person observation part of the autism assessment. Increasing our capacity to deliver this.
- Revised referral guidance giving information on how to make a referral. Information is also provided on pre referral input prior to referral for an autism assessment.
- An expectation that a referral form is completed to assist us in having the information we need.
- An enhanced triage system for referrals. We will be phoning each family upon receipt of a referral form to discuss their referral and go through the screening forms.
- Opening the service to referrals from parent/carers where a referral from a professional is not possible.

We are pleased to be writing to you to let you know that we will be re-opening the service to new referrals from Monday 6th September 2021. Included with this letter is the Referral Criteria and Guidance, along with the referral form to be completed. Please note that referral letters will not be accepted, and referral forms will be sent out for completion. We have also worked with parent/carers through Re:Minds who have completed a Q&A Sheet with the Pathway overview, also included with this letter.

Thank you again for your continued support and patience while we have reviewed our service and worked to maximise the capacity we have.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Emery', written over a horizontal line.

Tania Emery
SEND Clinical Lead