HG Mind Works

NHS West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust

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AUTISM DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT SERVICE

Assessment Day

Everything you need to know for today

Autism diagnostic service delivered by HG Mind Works on behalf of West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust

You may find it helpful to note your appointment details here.

Date:	
Time:	
Location:	
Ask for:	
Parking/Access:	

Today's the day

Many families feel understandably anxious about assessment appointments. This is completely normal. The purpose of today is to gather information about your child's development, strengths and areas where they may need additional support.

Please check in at reception when you arrive. This document explains what to expect during your appointment.

About the assessment

This assessment is delivered on behalf of West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust and follows national NICE guidance for autism diagnosis.

All information shared as part of the assessment is confidential and managed in accordance with NHS data protection legislation and information governance standards.

You gave your permission in the registration form, and we'll check you're still happy to go ahead at the start of your appointment. Where appropriate, Gillick competence will also be discussed.

If information shared during the assessment raises safeguarding concerns, we have a duty to follow NHS safeguarding procedures.

The information gathered will be reviewed by the multidisciplinary team in line with NICE guidance.

If you require information in an alternative format or need reasonable adjustments for your appointment, please contact us in advance.

Talking to your child about the appointment

Children who have some idea of what to expect almost always find the day easier, so it's worth saying something simple and reassuring beforehand. You know your child best – keep it honest, low-key, and matched to their age and understanding.

Some things to say that can help and what to avoid:

A few things that can help:

- Frame it as meeting friendly people who want to get to know them - not a test, and nothing to revise or get right
- Tell them there'll be some activities, games or chatting, and that they just need to be themselves
- Reassure them you'll be close by Let them bring a comfort item or fidget if that helps

A few things to avoid

- Don't coach or rehearse answers - we need to see your child as they naturally are, and that's what makes the assessment accurate
- Don't build it up as something big or worrying

For younger children (around 5–7):

"We're going to meet some friendly people who want to find out how you play and talk. You'll do some fun activities and games. There are no right or wrong answers – you just be you."

For older children (around 8–11):

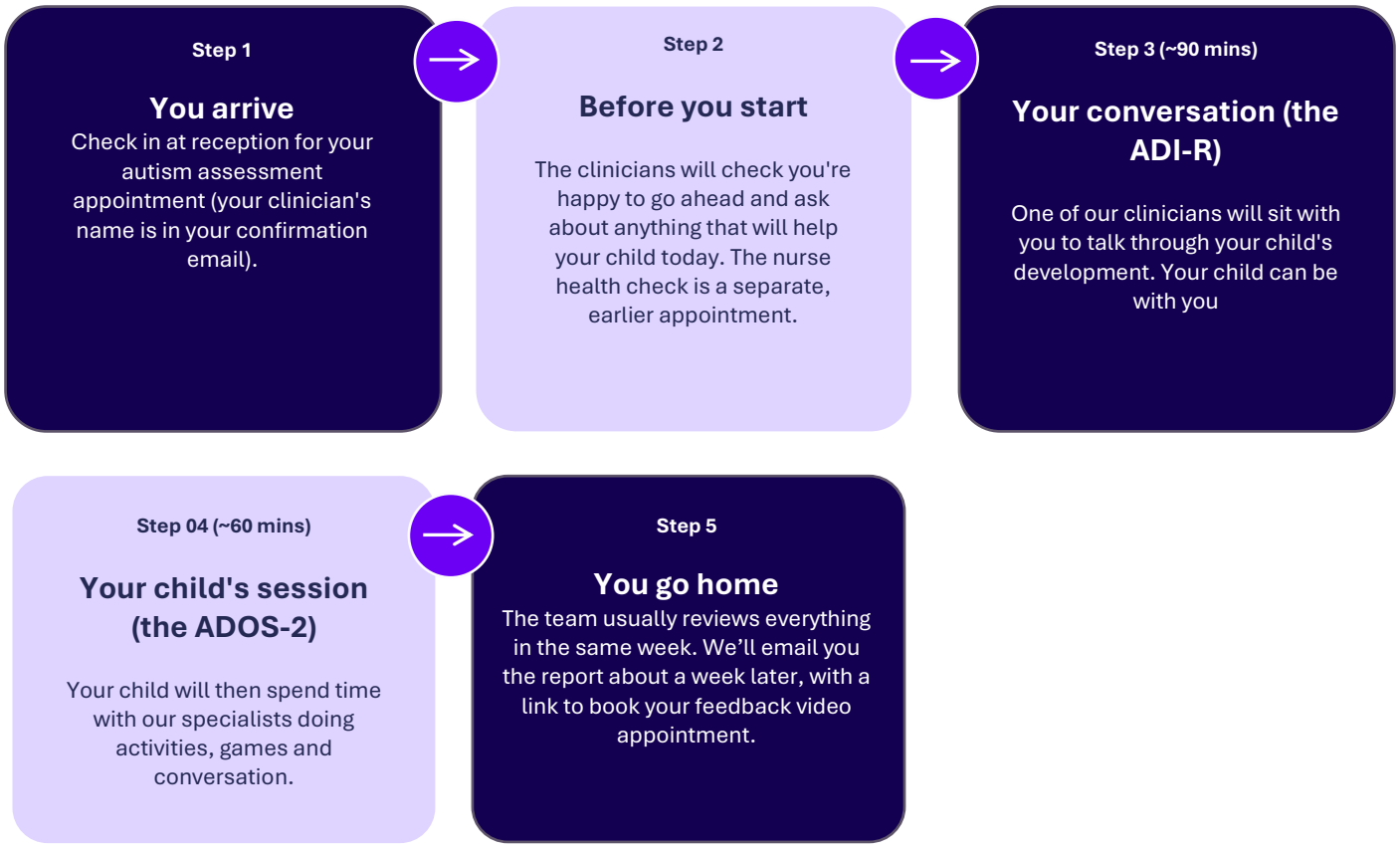
"We're going to see some people whose job is to understand how your brain works – the things you find easy and the things you find tricky. They'll chat with you and do some activities. There's nothing to get right or wrong, and nothing to revise."

If your child asks why:

"Everyone's brain works a bit differently. This helps us understand how yours works, so you can get the right kind of help with anything you find tricky."

How the appointment works

Today has two parts – your conversation with us and a separate session for your child. They run one after the other or sometimes overlap. Your child's nurse health check is a separate, earlier appointment. Here's the shape of the day:



Your conversation - what to expect

A clinician will sit with you and talk through your child's development from the very beginning right up to now. This is called the ADI-R. It's a relaxed conversation – not an interview. There are no right or wrong answers.

The conversation will cover things like early milestones, how your child plays and communicates, how they get on with other children and how they manage day to day at home and school. It usually takes between one to one and a half hours.

Can't remember every detail? That's completely fine.

The clinician will guide you gently. You won't be expected to have perfect recall.

If you've brought notes or any reports, this is a good time to have them ready.

Your child can be in the room and there will be a second clinician there to listen in and keep them entertained.

Your child's session - what to expect

Your child will spend time with our specialists doing activities, games and chatting. This is called the ADOS-2. The Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule, Second Edition (ADOS-2), is a standardised assessment tool used as part of autism diagnostic pathways.

It is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. Your child cannot pass or fail. The activities are tailored to their age and how they communicate – they might involve toys, books, puzzles, pretend play or just having a chat.

For some children, we ask parents to leave the room during the session. This is because children often respond differently when a parent is in the room – and we need to see your child's natural responses. If your child needs you there to feel safe, please let the clinician know so appropriate arrangements can be made.

If you stay in the room

If you do stay in the room – for a younger or more anxious child – we may ask you to sit to the side and not join in. This isn't a reflection on you. It's so we can observe your child's natural reactions.

Video recording

We will ask your permission to record the session. This helps the clinicians score the assessment accurately afterwards and won't be shared outside the team. You can say no – it won't affect the assessment at all.

Things to do – and not to do - today

Please do (✓)	Please don't (✕)
• Bring snacks and drinks for your child (no nuts) • Bring a comfort or fidget item if your child uses one • Let your child wear familiar, comfortable clothing • Tell us about any sensory needs when you arrive • Let us know about any medication your child has taken today • Tell us if your child is unwell or unusually tired	• Don't coach your child on what to say or do • Don't try to help your child during their session if you're in the room • Don't worry if your child refuses or struggles - that's still useful information for us • Don't bring other children if you can avoid it; if you must, please bring another adult to supervise them so you can focus

If your child becomes upset, overwhelmed or refuses to engage, that is completely okay. This is a common part of assessment, and the clinician will proceed at your child's pace.

If you're running late or need to cancel

If you are running late, please call us on 020 8126 8767 (option 3) as soon as possible so we can advise you.

If you cannot attend, let us know as early as possible and we'll offer you the next available appointment, which may be some time away.

If a third appointment is missed, your child's referral will be returned to West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust – which could mean a new referral and a further wait.

Phone Number	**020 8126 8767 option 3**
Email	**westsuffolk@hg-mindworks.com**
Visit	**hg-mindworks.com/wsft**

After you leave today

Today is the information-gathering part.

Our multidisciplinary team reviews everything in line with NICE guidance before any outcome is confirmed – usually in the same week as your assessment.

We'll then email you your child's report by a secure link, usually about a week later, with a link to book an online feedback appointment.

You will not receive an outcome on the day of assessment. For what the outcome stages involve, see the "After the day" guide.

Compliments, complaints or concerns

You can contact our service team on 020 8126 8767 (option 3) or westsuffolk@hg-mindworks.com, Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm.

For complaints, please contact the Integrated Community Paediatric Services team NDDdatatransfer@wsh.nhs.uk or West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) https://www.wsh.nhs.uk/contact-and-feedback/pals#contact-pals.

HG Mind Works

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Thank you for coming today

If you have any questions before your feedback appointment, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Get in touch with us

Address
hg-mindworks.com/wsft

Email
westsuffolk@hg-mindworks.com

Call
02081268767