

COVID-19 update on *Neurodevelopmental Assessments* provided by the Open Minds Partnership

The Open Minds Partnership (OMP) provide neurodevelopmental assessments for children and young people to identify whether or not they have an underlying neurodevelopmental condition, such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). “*Open Minds*” is the new name for Calderdale CAMHS.

The assessment process normally includes specialist clinicians working face to face with a child or young person. As a result of UK Government COVID-19 guidelines and social distancing restrictions, most face to face appointments were temporarily placed on hold from March 2020.

The Open Minds Partnership knows these appointments are important to children, young people and families, but our priority is keeping everyone, including staff, safe during the pandemic. Any changes to local or national guidance, and local outbreaks, will have a direct impact on whether, when and where, face-to-face appointments are provided.

Services restarting from July 2020

- **Face-to-face neurodevelopmental assessments:** A reduced number of face to face appointments will re-start in July. A smaller number will be available compared to before COVID-19 because extra time is needed between appointments to clean rooms, and also because the number of people in our buildings needs to be limited, in line with social distancing guidelines. This is to keep children and young people, families and staff safe.
- **New assessments:** initially these will be provided for older children. As assessments for older children are conversation-based, they can be carried out safely, in line with social distancing guidelines.
- **Assessments on hold:** A number of children and young people who began their assessments before COVID-19 have experienced a pause because of the pandemic. The Open Minds Partnership has continued to work with these children’s assessments, where possible, via telephone appointments, gathering information from other services, or by providing socially distanced face-to-face appointments. Appointments to complete their assessments will be held when it is safe to do so through social distancing and/or using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Before appointments with the Open Minds Partnership, families will receive information about infection control, how many people can attend appointments and the use of any Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). This advice is kept under regular review.

Services still under review

- **Assessments with younger children:** as these are play-based, it is not possible to hold these under social distancing guidelines. This is kept under constant review. There is a plan to trial clinics with younger children from September 2020, with the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and help from parents/carers where appropriate.

Advice for children, young people and families

- The Open Minds Partnership offers support to parents, carers and families who are waiting for an assessment of ASD/ADHD. Call the **First Point of Contact** on 01422 300 001 for details on how to access this support.
- The **Open Minds website** (www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk) has a range of helpful emotional health and wellbeing resources, including some useful information about how to manage concerns and anxieties about coronavirus.
- **The Calderdale Local Offer website** (Search 'Calderdale Local Offer' in your web browser or access via <https://www.calderdale.gov.uk/v2/residents/education-and-learning/local-offer/send>) provides information about all the services and support available to children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities from birth to 25. It includes a section for children with social communication needs.