



**University
Hospitals Sussex**
NHS Foundation Trust

What happens when your child has an autism and social communication assessment

Paediatrics

Patient information

What is this information about?

This information is about why your child needs an autism and social communication assessment, and what happens before, during and after the assessment.

You will also find a list of useful resources and support at the end of this information.

Why have I been given this information?

Your child has been referred to the Child Development Centre (the CDC) so that our team can give them an assessment.

This information will help you to understand what to expect when you come for the assessment. You can also share this information with your child, and other people who look after them, to help them know what to expect.

What should I do if I have already had an independent assessment for my child?

If you have already had an independent assessment for your child, please send a copy of their report to uhsussex.communitypaediatrics@nhs.uk

How long will it take to be seen for an assessment?

Your child is on a waiting list and may wait over 18 months to be seen.

Why does my child need an assessment?

Our assessment considers a wide range of things, including whether your child has Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Autism is a life-long condition that affects individuals in different ways. It may impact language, communication, friendships, understanding social cues and use of gesture and eye contact. Some people experience rigid or repetitive behaviours (for example, needing to stick to the same routine) and sensory difficulties. However, many people experience some of these issues but do not have autism.

Our assessment is tailored to your child. Sometimes a diagnosis can be made at the first clinic visit. Sometimes several stages of assessment are needed over several months. Not everyone who is assessed will have autism.

The assessment will help you, and other people who care for your child, to have a better understanding of their needs and strengths.

Who should come to the assessment?

It is important that, if possible, both parents or carers come to the assessment. It is very useful to hear both viewpoints and for both to be involved in the assessment process.

If only one parent or carer is available, you might find it helpful to be supported by another family member or friend, who knows your child well. However, we do understand that this is not always possible.

What happens during the assessment?

- Your child will have their medical history taken, and have a physical examination. Detailed developmental, educational and family information are all considered.
- Gathering information. We will gather information from other professionals involved with your child such as nursery or school, to help us understand how your child behaves and acts in other settings.
- Further assessment may be undertaken by Speech and Language Therapists or Clinical Psychologists in nursery/school or the CDC.
- We will then look at all the information we have gathered, and the assessments that have been carried out, to come to a conclusion for your child.

What happens after the assessment?

We will send out a report to you and your GP. We will include a spare copy for you to share with your child's school or nursery. We aim to send out the report within six weeks of the final assessment.

What support will we receive after the assessment?

If your child is diagnosed, this will be discussed in a follow up call by the specialist nursing team.

If there is no diagnosis, you will have a feedback appointment with the doctor and signposted appropriately.

Where can I look for advice and guidance?

Support and information while you are waiting for neurodevelopmental services in Sussex:

Sussex ICS NHS

www.sussex.ics.nhs.uk/our-work/cyp/special-educational-needs-and-disability-send/waiting-neurodevelopmental

Reaching Families

www.reachingfamilies.org.uk

Childhood sleep problems – Health visiting

www.sussexcommunity.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/services/health-visiting-service

Toileting: ERIC, the Children’s Bowel and Bladder Charity

<https://eric.org.uk>

Early Help Integrated Front Door

01403 229900 <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/>

West Sussex Parent Carer Forum

office@wspcf.org.uk 01903 726188

How can I contact the Child Development Centre?

Child Development Centre

Worthing Hospital

Lyndhurst Road, Worthing BN11 2DH

uhsussex.communitypaediatrics@nhs.net

**Today's research is tomorrow's treatments.
That's why UHSx is proud to be a research-active Trust.**

Find out how you can get involved. Visit our website
**[www.uhsussex.nhs.uk/research-and-innovation/
information-for-patients-and-public](http://www.uhsussex.nhs.uk/research-and-innovation/information-for-patients-and-public)**
or scan the QR code



This leaflet is intended for patients receiving care
in Worthing and St Richard's Hospital.

Ref. number: 2604
Publication date: 08/2025
Review date: 08/2028

© University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust Disclaimer:
The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way
intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.

