

Children and Young People's 0-16 Social Communication Pathway (including Autism assessment and diagnosis)

Lincolnshire Parent Carer Forum's Week of SEND
27 January 2023

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Lincolnshire County Council

What is it?

- For children and young people up to their 16th birthday
- Where parents or professionals have concerns about a child's:
 - Social communication skills (particularly related to verbal and non-verbal skills)
 - Social interactions, and/or
 - Concerning/unusual behaviours, such as associated with Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Referrals are triaged by a team of health professionals:
 - Community Paediatrician
 - Clinical Psychologist, and
 - Speech and Language Therapist
- If accepted, your child will go through assessments with professionals to find out whether a diagnosis is applicable
- You may also be advised or referred to appropriate support for you and/or your child from other appropriate services

Where do I go?

- If your child is under 5 (not at Primary School):
 - Speak to your pre-school/nursery setting about your concerns, or
 - Contact the Health Visiting service on 01522 843000
- If your child is school-age (5-15):
 - Speak to your child's school about your concerns
 - Schools have access to a range of services and support that may be available regardless of diagnosis and they will be required to provide input before an assessment by a Community Paediatrician is considered
- If your child does not attend school (e.g. home educated):
 - Contact the Children's 0-19 Health Service on 01522 843000, they can offer advice and signposting or refer you to the Community Paediatrics Service
- You can visit your GP to discuss your concerns but they may tell you to speak to your child's school, who can provide professionals with much more information about your child's social communication skills, social interactions and behaviour

What do I need to do?

- As part of the referral, we ask for you and someone appropriate in your child's early years setting or school to complete a referral and consent form, as well as parent and teacher questionnaires (available on the Local Offer)
- Early Years settings (such as pre-schools or nurseries) and schools are the preferred source of referrals because, besides you, they often know your child better than any other professional, both as individuals and alongside their peers
- This usually makes them the best placed to know and help understand your child's needs, how these may be impacting on their behaviour within school and at home, and discuss whether a referral is required
- If your child is not in education for whatever reason, referrals using the same forms can be made by Health Visitors, Family Health Workers, Children and Young People's Nurses, and GPs

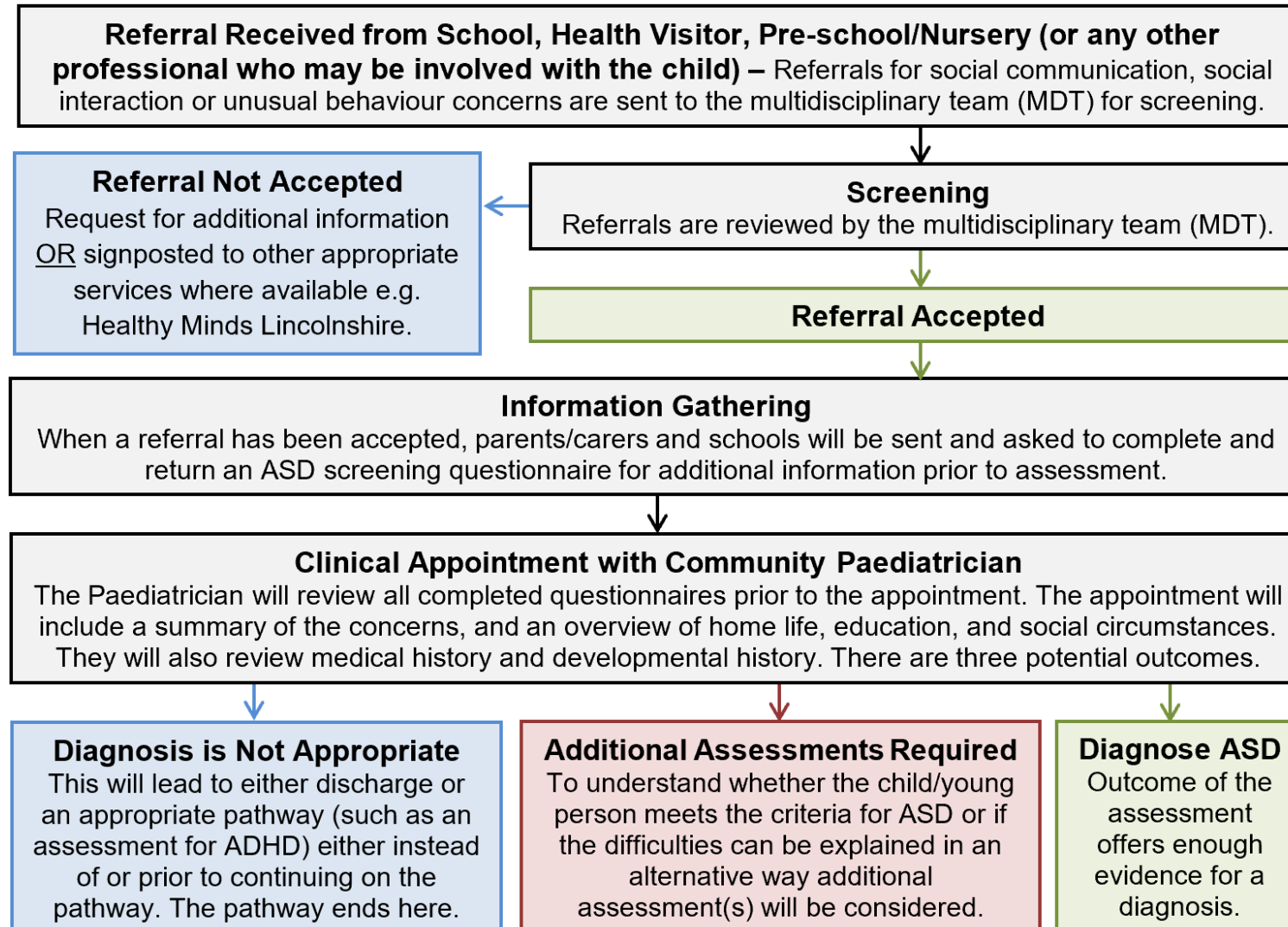
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- Please work with your referrer to ensure that referral forms and questionnaires are fully completed and submitted alongside the referral in order to stand the best chance of being accepted onto the pathway as quickly as possible
- Trying to refer without fully completing the forms will only lead to delays
- Having the best quality information as soon as possible allows the professionals involved to make an informed decision about which would be the most appropriate course of action
- This information will also be used as part of the assessment process and professionals need the best information possible to reach their conclusions, as an Autism diagnosis can have life-long implications

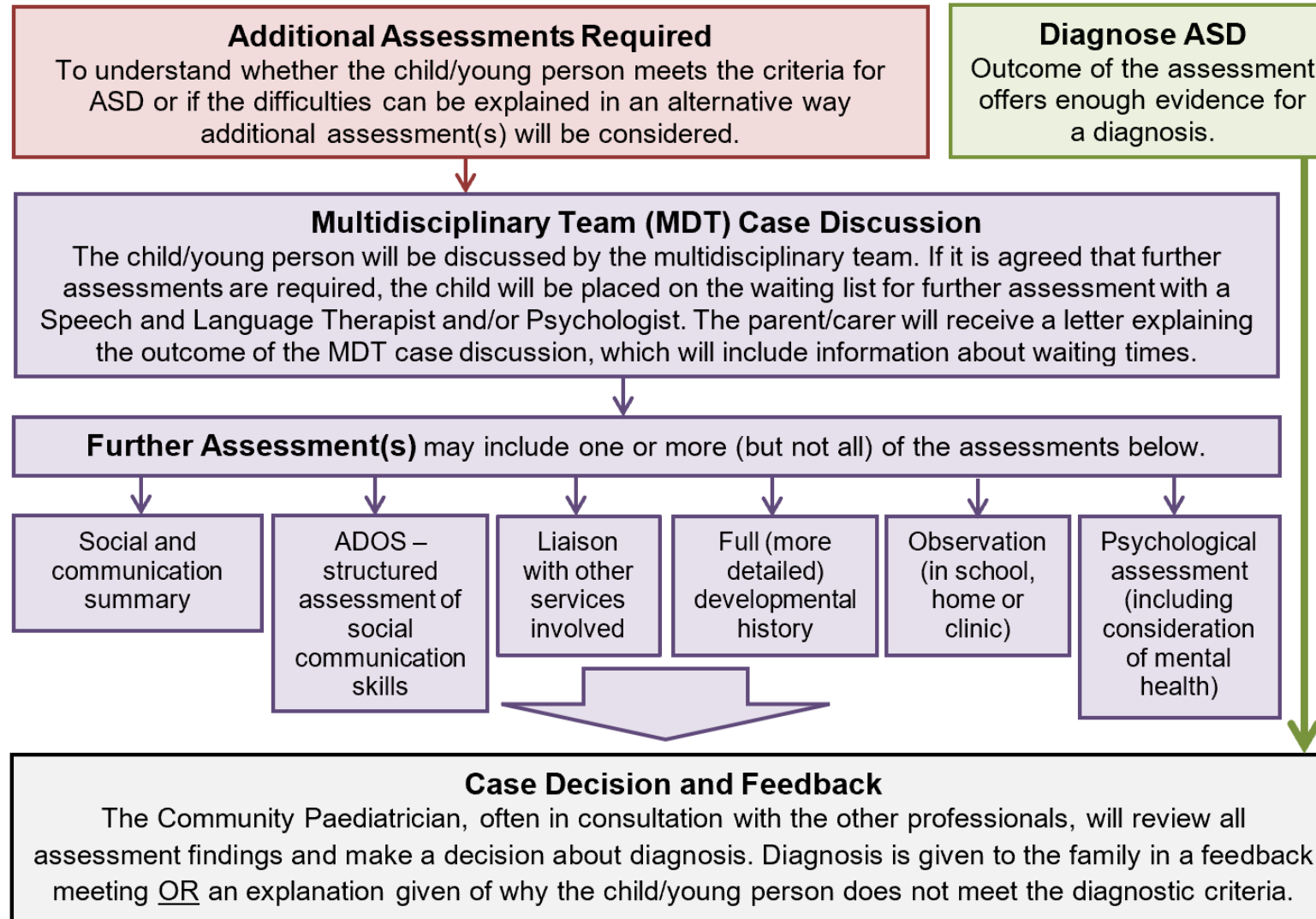
Who will be involved?

- Community Paediatricians:
 - Medical professionals who act as the coordinators of the children's social community pathway in Lincolnshire
 - A Paediatrician is the first professional who will review the information available with your referral, including the parent and teacher questionnaires, and they will arrange an appointment to meet and ask you about your concerns as well as record a detailed developmental history
 - They will decide whether further information/assessment is required and will provide feedback on the outcome following assessment
- Speech and Language Therapists:
 - Offer specialist input regarding social communication difficulties
 - Lead on completing Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS) assessments
 - Help to understand whether social communication difficulties are present, and if they are related to Autism
- Clinical Psychologists and Assistant Psychologists:
 - Contribute to the multidisciplinary team (MDT) to help to interpret the large amount of information that is gathered throughout the assessment process
 - More likely to become involved if the child is also having difficulties in relation to their mental health, such as high levels of anxiety, or if there is evidence of significant early adverse experiences or developmental trauma
 - Help understand the support needs of children where both mental health difficulties and Autism are present, but also help understand where difficulties are more likely to be understood as a mental health difficulty, rather than Autism

What will happen?



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What support is available?

- During the referral, triage or assessment process, or following the assessment outcome, professionals may identify needs for your child that could be supported through various services:
 - Healthy Minds Lincolnshire or CAMHS may be able to support your child if they also have emotional or mental health concerns in addition to being Autistic, since we know that Autistic people are at a higher risk of mental health problems
 - If your child is struggling at school with social communication, interaction or they are Autistic, the school can get support from the Working Together Team to identify how they can better support your child
 - Similarly, the Behaviour Outreach Support Service can support the school if your child is struggling due to concerning or unusual behaviours
 - There are a number of national and local charities or organisations that are either Autism specific or pan-disability that may be able to offer support if your child is suspected or confirmed as being Autistic

What's next?

- We recognise that further improvements are needed around assessment, diagnosis and support for Autism in Lincolnshire:
 - Plans are in place to begin providing routine Autism assessment/diagnosis for 16 and 17-year-olds as an addition to the current adult diagnostic pathway
 - Longer-term, Lincolnshire Autism Partnership Board are leading a review of Autism diagnosis and developing a community support offer across all-ages, alongside producing a new Autism strategy for Lincolnshire

Questions?