

The Social Communication Assessment (SCA) team

**Information for
parents and carers**



**achieving
for children**

Introduction

The Social Communication Assessment (SCA) team provides neurodevelopmental assessments for children with possible autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or other related developmental conditions who are:

- under 5 years of age, or
- over 5 years and have been identified with a severe developmental delay, complex speech and language difficulties and/or complex physical or health needs

What is autism spectrum disorder (ASD)?

An autism spectrum disorder is a developmental condition that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people.

Key features of ASD are:

- difficulties in social communication and social interaction, and
- restricted or repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests or activities, including sensory sensitivities

The referral process

Professionals who have concerns about children showing any of the key features of ASD should initially make a referral to the Integrated Service for Children with Disabilities based at the Moor Lane Centre via the online referral form: <https://kr.afcinfo.org.uk/ISCD>.

Only referrals from professionals who have a good knowledge of the child's difficulties will be considered. All referrals are discussed and triaged at the weekly integrated team around the child (ITAC) meeting.

If the referral is accepted through ITAC, the child will be offered an initial neurodevelopmental assessment (either as a telephone or face-to-face appointment). An outcome of this initial assessment will be a decision as to whether or not the child requires assessment by the SCA team and if so – with consent from the family – the child's name will be added to the SCA waiting list.

Who is in the team?

The Social Communication Assessment team is an experienced multi-disciplinary team comprised of community paediatricians, educational psychologists, occupational therapists and speech and language therapists.

The assessment

Social communication assessments are undertaken at the Moor Lane Centre. Up-to-date information is gathered ahead of the assessment by way of a parent questionnaire and school observation questionnaire - along with information from any other professionals involved with the child's care at that time. This information is then screened by the SCA team to identify which pathway is most appropriate for each child.

There are three main pathways - one of which involves the child being seen for a play based assessment. The play-based assessment will be undertaken by two clinicians using the autism diagnostic observation schedule (ADOS).

With parental consent a video recording is made of the play based assessments. This recording is only for purpose of the diagnostic process and is deleted once this has been completed. Copies are not provided for parents.

Because of the targeted questionnaires we use to request information about the child, sometimes a 'parent interview' appointment with the family is sufficient to discuss and explain the child's developmental profile and clarify our diagnosis.

Most assessments are concluded on the day of assessment, which might involve you having both a morning and an afternoon session. This will all be discussed and explained to you when arranging a date.

Preparing your child for assessment

If the child requires a play based assessment parents can prepare them for the visit using our resources on the website:

<https://kr.afcinfo.org.uk/SCATeam>.

Report and post diagnostic support

A written report is provided four to six weeks after the assessment which summarises the evidence base for the diagnosis together with recommendations highlighting strengths, needs and resources. Parents are encouraged to share the report with key professionals involved to help provide an integrated approach for the child's future support.

Once the social communication assessment is complete there will be no follow up from the SCA team, but parents will be signposted to local and national support and advice available.

Additional needs identified at the assessment, for example emotional and behavioural needs could result in referral to other services and this will be discussed with you during the feedback session.

Parents are advised that, should they have concerns at a later stage about their child's development and/or emotional wellbeing, they can request a referral to an appropriate service via their GP.

SCA team contact information

Sue Williams, SCA Team and Clinic Co-Ordinator
The Moor Lane Centre, Moor Lane, Chessington KT9 2AA
Direct Dial: 020 8547 5750
E: scateam@achievingforchildren.org.uk

Your opinion matters

We welcome parents' views on the service we provide. whilst we aim to work to the highest possible standards, there may be occasions where we do not get it right. We would also like to hear from parents if they think they received a good service.