

Berkshire Healthcare NHS Trust and NHS East Berkshire Clinical Commissioning Group
Commissioning of Healios Autism Assessments

Information sheet for parents/carers/professionals January 2019

Rational for Healios Assessments

Nationally there has been an increase in the numbers of children and young people referred for an autism assessment. This has been evident in East and West Berkshire where over 1200 children and young people are referred annually for an autism assessment by the Autism Assessment Team.

Due to the high levels of demand, there is a long wait for an autism assessment with waiting times of up to 20-22 months. We understand that this can be a difficult and frustrating time for children, young people and their families but also believe that a lot of support and help can be provided prior to an assessment and regardless of diagnosis. Other health services such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and specialist CAMHS are accessed by a significant number of children and young people whilst they are waiting for an autism assessment. We have also been working closely with charities such as Autism Berkshire, The Autism Group and Parenting Special Children to provide pre-assessment support and information as well as running a waiting list helpline within Berkshire Healthcare. Support is also available for parents and carers of children on the autism waiting list, as well as post diagnosis, via Berkshire Healthcare's online support service SHaRON Jupiter. As well as looking at ways of offering support whilst families are waiting for an assessment, we also strive to continuously improve our services and reduce waiting times wherever possible. Therefore, as part of a new pilot, Berkshire Healthcare is contacting a number of families to offer them the option of a more immediate appointment through Healios.

How Healios Assessments Work

Healios utilise modern technology to provide interactive assessments via video conferencing as an alternative to clinic based appointments. Assessments are with qualified clinicians who have experience of autism assessment and diagnosis and who are trained in ADI-R (Autism Diagnostic Interview-revised) and ADOS (Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule), two nationally recognised autism assessment tools.

If a family chooses for their child to have an assessment with Healios, one of their highly experienced and qualified clinicians will connect with them and their child via the Healios secure, online clinical platform. They will be able to see and interact with their Healios clinician, take part in a number of interactive tasks and questionnaires specifically designed for autism assessments – all from the comfort of their home. The online assessment is comprehensive and includes an initial meeting, a developmental history assessment (informed by the ADI-R) and an individual assessment with the child/young person (based on ADOS). There is then a final feedback appointment.

All sessions are recorded and stored on the secure platform so that they can be reviewed when concluding the assessment and Healios clinicians hold a multi-disciplinary discussion prior to concluding and feeding back the outcome of the assessment to the family and young person.

All assessments will be written up on a report with both Berkshire Healthcare and Healios Logo's and are endorsed by Berkshire Healthcare.

The benefit of Healios assessments is that they can be conducted from the home, they can be conducted at evenings and weekends and they can also be conducted from more than one home at a time on two screens if parents/carers are unable to attend together. Clinicians can also conduct the assessment from anywhere in the country increasing the clinical capacity that we are able to access directly through the Autism Team.

Governance and Safeguarding

Healios processes have been reviewed by Berkshire Healthcare including governance, IT and safeguarding. Healios clinicians have access to local safeguarding leads and services and conclude risk assessments on all their assessments.

Information stored on the Healios secure platform can only be accessed by the parents/carers, Healios clinicians and Berkshire Healthcare's Autism Assessment Team. Reports that are written will be shared with parents/carers and their GP as well as other indicated professionals. A copy of the report will also be kept on the young person's medical file as with any assessment written by the autism assessment team.

Screening and Suitability for Assessment

Not all children and young people would be suitable to be seen via Healios. All referrals are triaged by Berkshire Healthcare before sending the letter to parents/carers offering them the option of a Healios assessment. Children who will not be offered Healios assessments include all children under five, children who are on child protection plans, care orders or who are looked after, children with significant speech and language difficulties, children with self-harming behaviours and/or co-morbid mental health difficulties (especially if no other service is involved), children and young people with YOS (Youth Offending Service) involvement and/or any child where a face to face assessment is indicated due to the complexity of the referral.

When a child is suitable for a Healios assessment the parents/carers are sent an opt in letter, with the choice to have a Healios assessment or remain on the waiting list for a face to face assessment. When they have given their consent for a Healios assessment the screening information that is already held by the Autism Assessment Team in Berkshire Healthcare is uploaded onto the Healios platform to help inform their assessment.

What if a parent/carer or young person does not agree with the outcome of an assessment?

In the unlikely event of a disagreement about the outcome of the assessment the information will be reviewed and discussed by the Autism Assessment Team in collaboration with Healios. If required the Autism Assessment Team in Berkshire Healthcare will gather more information before giving a second opinion. This may be via reviewing the Healios assessment online, requesting a school observation or gathering information directly from the child, young person or parents/carers as well as a multi-disciplinary conversation.

The report written by Healios has been combined with the reports given by the Berkshire Healthcare Autism Assessment team and will include all the information given in our reports about local services and supports, SHaRON our online support service, relevant reading material and national websites.

**If you have any queries about the above then please get in touch by email:
AAT.Healiosenquiries@berkshire.nhs.uk**