

Upcoming changes in the Children and Young Peoples NHS Neurodevelopmental Assessment Pathways in Doncaster

March 2025

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why are you making changes to the service?

There is a need to change the way that Neurodevelopmental Assessment pathways are delivered in Doncaster, to ensure that children and young people can access quality and timely support for neurodiverse needs.

There are currently a very high number of children on the waiting lists for assessment. To make sure we are supporting these children, we need to change some parts of the process.

These planned changes have been informed based on feedback received from Doncaster families and professionals, which made clear the need for a service which focuses on:

- Ensuring the right support (e.g. accessing services, information, advice and guidance) is available for families and individuals before and after neurodevelopmental diagnostic assessment
- Delivering services in the community, in settings comfortable for children and young people
- Reducing the waiting time for an Autism and/or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) diagnostic assessment

2. Will the changes apply to my child?

All children who were aged 5 or over at the original point of their referral to Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (DBTHFT) for an Autism assessment will be transferred to the new service pathway, which will be delivered by Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humberside NHS Foundation Trust (RDaSH) from 1st April 2025.

3. What will the key changes be with the new provider?

Referral pathway

The new pathway for 5- to 18-year-olds will support a single route of referral into RDaSH. Each case will be reviewed by a neurodevelopmental trained clinician or via a panel of specialists, to determine whether they feel that your child would benefit from an assessment.

Where this is the case, your child will then be added to a single waiting list for diagnostic assessment.

Additional support will be available for you and your child whilst you are on the assessment pathway (please see section 5).

Dual Assessment

Where your child is aged 7 years or over, the provider will deliver an assessment for both Autism and ADHD at the same time, where this is deemed clinically necessary.

Please note that due to national guidance, children aged between 5 and 7 years of age will be eligible for Autism assessment only.

Please be assured that a close link will continue to be maintained with the Doncaster Community Paediatric service(s) at DBTHFT, should any additional developmental needs be identified as part of the assessment which require further investigation.

Location

The service for 5- to 18-year-olds will be delivered in a community setting; this may be an NHS building, the child's school or the family home, depending on preference and appropriateness.

Clinical notes

The clinical notes relevant to your child's Neurodevelopmental Assessment are being transferred from DBTHFT to RDaSH, because RDaSH will need to have access to all the relevant clinical information in relation to your child. This will help to avoid duplication, and to ensure that RDaSH has the information prior to your child's assessment. If you have any questions or concerns in relation to this, please use the contacts at the end of the FAQs.

4. Does this mean my child will need to wait longer for an assessment?

Although current waiting times for diagnostic assessment will not be immediately impacted by these changes, RDaSH will be working to reduce the length of time children need to wait for this service, as soon as possible.

It is important to understand that any children who are impacted by this service change, will retain their existing place in the waiting list with the new provider, based on the original date of their referral for assessment.

5. Where do I go for support whilst awaiting an assessment?

The plan is for a designated Neurodiversity Support Worker to be available to work closely with you and your child, to provide personalised intervention and support whilst you are on the assessment pathway. RDaSH are currently in the process of recruiting to these roles. They can also signpost you to information, advice and services which will help you to further support your child's needs.

Contact details for both DBTHFT and RDaSH have also been provided within this FAQ document and covering letter.

6. Is there more information available about the service being delivered by the new provider?

An information booklet has been provided with this Frequently Asked Questions document, which provides further details on what you and your child can expect before, during and after the appointment for neurodevelopmental assessment with RDaSH.

7. Who can I contact for more information?

We hope this FAQ document provides you with all the details that you require at this stage, however if you need any further assistance or would like to discuss these changes further, please contact:

- For queries relating to the new Neurodevelopmental Assessment Pathway for 5 to 18-year-olds: Doncaster Neurodevelopmental Service, RDaSH, Telephone: 01302 796191
- For queries relating to the current Neurodevelopmental Autism Assessment Pathway: Anne Donkin, Service Manager, DBTHFT, Telephone: 01302 648168, email: anne.donkin@nhs.net