

Important announcement for families and partners relating to the Assessment and Diagnosis of Autism

Until recently, the Autism Research and Diagnostic Centre (ADRC), based in Southampton, carried out diagnostic assessments for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) for Isle of Wight children and young people under the age of 19 years. Unfortunately, the ADRC has recently announced it is ceasing its assessment of childhood Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and will no longer be providing services beyond 31 December 2017. It has also become apparent that there is a substantial backlog of assessments to be undertaken.

Both the Isle of Wight Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the Isle of Wight NHS Trust are very sorry that this unforeseen situation has arisen and we want to reassure all those who may be affected that we are working together to review the current situation and implement a plan to ensure that those waiting for an assessment are seen at the earliest opportunity possible.

The patient records from ADRC have been received and suitably trained staff are now in the process of reviewing each of these and will contact families directly in relation to these referrals. Once the Trust has reviewed the files on an individual basis, they will inform everyone directly by letter regarding the next steps in their assessment process. We expect everyone involved to have received this individual 'next steps' letter by 22 December.

We understand the stress and concerns of those parents and children who have been referred for an autism assessment and are committed to processing these as a priority. We would please ask you to be patient and to bear with us as we work through the referrals we have received as quickly as possible.

As the Commissioner of the service, the CCG is working closely with organisations representing parents, current service providers in the private, public (including the NHS Trust) and voluntary sectors to put in place a comprehensive diagnostic and support service for children and their parents and carers going forward.

This service will be in line with best practice as identified in the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) guideline published on the NICE website at <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg170>.

Barnardo's, based here on the Island, have confirmed that they can offer family support through their services if it would be helpful to have someone to talk through or receive support or advice in the short term.

Their Family Centres can be contacted as follows :-

- West and Central Family Centre: 01983 529208
- South Wight Family Centre: 01983 408718
- North East Family Centre: 01983 617617

When Barnardo's receive a call, their receptionist will take details and pass them on to a member of the Family Centre Team who will be able to discuss any specific difficulties you may be experiencing and can, if needed, provide parenting strategies to manage behaviours or identify and signpost people on to other services that may be helpful in the interim.

Thank you for your patience and understanding whilst our teams work hard to reduce the backlog of referrals and minimise the time that people need to wait for an assessment.