

Walsall Child Development Service

Multi-agency assessment

What is multiagency assessment?

Multi-agency assessment is when a team of professionals work together with your child and you to understand your child's needs. Key carers know their children the best and so are fully involved in all aspects of the assessment. Professionals bring areas of specific knowledge to the assessment process.

We will ask questions to find out about your child's development and about how your child interacts, plays and communicates at home. WE will also ask you about your concerns and what you hope to come out of the assessment

We will observe your child as they play and engage in the environment around them.

We will listen and talk with each other and with you and other key carers. Together we can gather a picture of your child's strengths, needs, learning style and then identify next steps.

Multi-agency assessment usually happens over a long period of time and is made up of individual and team appointments.

Who is in the team?

The team may include:

- Parents/carers
- Childminder, nursery or school staff
- Advisory Teachers
- Clinical Psychology
- Occupational Therapy
- Paediatrician
- Specialist Health Visiting Team
- Speech and Language Therapy

What is the assessment for?

Your child has been referred for multi-agency assessment due to concerns about some or all of the following:

- Shared attention
- Play skills
- Social communication
- Language development
- Sensory responses

You may have concerns that your child is developing differently from other children or you may think your child has a specific diagnosis such as autism or global developmental delay.

How long will it take for the assessment to be completed?

We understand how frustrating it can be to have worries and to want to have immediate answers. Young children are developing and changing all of the time. For some children reaching a diagnosis may happen fairly quickly whilst for others the team may suggest that a longer period of observation, teaching and assessment is undertaken. It is important that if a specific, life long, diagnosis is given that it is the right one.

You will have received a letter to say that your child has been placed on a waiting list for multi-agency assessment. This means that you and your child will be invited into the centre with a number of team members working together. There will be a wait for this appointment. This wait is important because during that time we can begin to learn more about your child, trial strategies and see how they change and develop. This means that when you attend the appointment at the centre we already know lots about your child and the progress that they have made since the initial referral.

How do you know if my child has a diagnosis of autism?

We learn about your child through:

- Developmental history
- Parents observations
- Liaison with nursery or school
- Observation
- Assessments
- Learning profile

For some children the assessment may lead to a specific diagnosis but sometimes what may first appear to be autism can be due to other causes or developmental delay. Once we have gathered lots of information we use we use criteria from recognised diagnostic manuals to inform a diagnosis.

Some children may end up with a different diagnosis from autism depending on what we learn about their needs. In a small number of cases children may have more than one diagnosis.

Some children may never have a formal diagnosis and this can feel confusing or frustrating. For all children the most important role the team can play is to identify the child's needs and agree a plan to support the child to reach their full potential.