

Social Communication Pathway FAQ's

1. What is the Social Communication Pathway or SCP

The SCP is a multiagency team which assesses social communication difficulties in children and young people. If a young person or their family thinks they might be autistic, this team will make an assessment to see if they meet the criteria for a diagnosis of Autism.

2. What is the rollout of the SCP?

The first SCP was set up in South Manchester in 2018. The pathway was put together by a steering group that involved representatives from the Parent Carer Forum. The aim was to have a transparent assessment process which worked in accordance with NICE guidelines and which parents and young people could directly refer themselves to.

We know that there is a huge demand for autism assessments in Manchester (as there is across the UK) and it was felt that the SCP would help make those assessments fairer and be easier for parents and young people to access.

Before 2018 most assessments were being completed in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services but the SCP reorganised where and how assessments were made. The SCP is a community team which is made up of representatives from speech and language, occupational therapy, child and adolescent mental health, community paediatrics and educational psychology. Children receive a multidisciplinary assessment based on their need.

Data from the pilot in south Manchester shows that families and young people have liked the approach taken by the SCP and that once an assessment is started, it is quicker to complete. This is why it has been decided to rollout the SCP across the city to cover central and north manchester.

3. Who is in the team?

The team has a speech and language therapist, occupational therapist, clinical psychologist or mental health practitioner and input from child psychiatrists, community paediatricians and

educational psychology. Each child or young person is allocated a lead clinician for their assessment, often based on their biggest need but they will see other members of the team as part of this assessment.

4. How can I get a referral?

Families or young people are asked to complete a questionnaire to help the team decide if the SCP is the right pathway for them. The young person's school or nursery is also asked to complete a questionnaire. Both of these have been uploaded along with this fact sheet. When both questionnaires are received the multiagency team meet and discuss the information. If the team feel that an SCP assessment is what is needed then the referral is accepted onto the waiting list. Sometimes, the team feel that another service is better placed to meet a child's needs. For example, it may be that a child seems to have Developmental Language Disorder and need to be seen by the community speech and language team first. The SCP will always let families know what is going to happen to their referral.

5. Did you just say there is a waiting list?

Unfortunately there is a waiting list for assessment. This is because demand for assessment has increased and because assessments have taken longer to complete during lockdown.

The SCP will be looking to form a steering group (hopefully with members of the Parent Carer Forum) and this will be a key issue that will need addressing.

We are in complete agreement that waiting lists are not acceptable and that we need to find ways for children in Manchester to receive timely assessment.

6. What can I expect if I do get an assessment with the SCP?

The team follows NICE guidance and the process is outlined in a flowchart that we have attached with this fact sheet. Whilst the foundation of the assessments is the same, there is some variation between assessments based on each child's needs.

7. Do I need an assessment before pursuing an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)?

No. Your child's EHCP is about what they need. It is not necessary to have a diagnosis of autism or otherwise to receive an EHCP. If you have more questions about this please ask your child's teacher or the SENCO at their school or nursery.

8. Are assessments virtual or face to face?

The SCP has been completing assessments during lockdown but they have been taking longer than usual. We have used a mixture of virtual and face to face appointments.

9. Where are the teams based?

The south team is based at the Carol Kendrick Centre. The new central and north teams location is still to be decided at the time of writing this document.

10. My child is already on a waiting list for assessment at CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) – what will happen?

We will ensure that any children or young people waiting for assessment by central or north CAMHS will be transferred to the new SCP in their area and will be seen in order of the date their referral was received.

11. How can I get involved with service development?

The SCP needs you as part of its steering group! If you are wish to contribute to ongoing service development please get in touch with the Parent Carer Forum and let them know. We are probably going to have 3 steering group meetings a year lasting 2 hours each. This initially will be on a virtual platform.

Social Communication Pathway Team

