

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

CAMHS over 5's Neurodivergent Pathways.

For Parents and Carers

Key Messages

- ✓ CAMHS remains available for children and young people with specialist mental health needs.
- ✓ Autism, ADHD or neurodivergence does not prevent access to CAMHS.
- ✓ Existing CAMHS patients will continue to receive support.
- ✓ The change relates only to autism and ADHD assessment-only referrals where there is no associated specialist mental health need.
- ✓ In Sandwell, partnership working through the MAA arrangements will continue for a further three months whilst future pathway arrangements are agreed.
- ✓ BCHCFT acknowledges that a formal written communication should have been shared earlier and apologises for this omission.

1. What has changed?

From 1 August 2026, CAMHS in Wolverhampton and Sandwell has returned to the commissioned service specification.

Specialist CAMHS will continue to assess and support children and young people who have a mental health difficulty that meets the threshold for Specialist CAMHS intervention, including where that difficulty is associated with autism, ADHD or other forms of neurodivergence.

CAMHS will no longer routinely undertake autism or ADHD assessment-only referrals where there is no associated specialist mental health need.

2. What hasn't changed?

- Children and young people with mental health difficulties that meet Specialist CAMHS thresholds can still be referred to CAMHS.
- Children and young people who are autistic, have ADHD, or have other forms of neurodivergence can still access CAMHS where there is an associated mental health need.
- Existing CAMHS service users will continue to receive support in line with their assessed needs and care plans.

- CAMHS will continue to work closely with schools, GPs, local authorities, family hubs, social care services and other partners.
- Neurodivergence alone does not exclude a child or young person from receiving treatment from CAMHS.
- Crisis, risk and urgent mental health presentations will continue to be assessed and responded to through existing CAMHS pathways.

The change relates specifically to autism and ADHD assessment-only referrals where there is no associated specialist mental health need.

3. Does this mean children and young people can no longer access CAMHS if they are autistic or have ADHD?

No.

CAMHS remains committed to supporting children and young people with mental health difficulties, including those who are autistic, have ADHD or have other neurodevelopmental differences.

4. Is CAMHS stopping support for neurodivergent children and young people?

No.

The change does not remove access to mental health assessment or treatment.

It clarifies that Specialist CAMHS is commissioned to provide assessment and intervention where there is a mental health need requiring specialist support.

5. Why has this change been made?

The service is returning to the original commissioned service specification.

This ensures Specialist CAMHS resources remain focused on children and young people who require specialist mental health assessment and treatment, whilst wider neurodevelopmental pathways continue to be developed across the local system.

6. Will CAMHS still undertake autism and ADHD assessments?

CAMHS will no longer routinely accept referrals solely for autism or ADHD assessment where there is no associated specialist mental health need.

Alternative assessment pathways remain available through local neurodevelopmental services and partner agencies.

7. My child has autism or ADHD and their mental health is getting worse. Can they still be referred to CAMHS?

Yes.

CAMHS will continue to assess and support children and young people whose mental health difficulties meet Specialist CAMHS thresholds, including where those difficulties are linked to autism, ADHD or other neurodevelopmental differences.

8. How will professionals decide whether my child meets the threshold for CAMHS?

Each referral will be considered individually.

CAMHS will assess:

- Mental health symptoms
- Emotional wellbeing
- Risk and safety concerns
- Impact on day-to-day functioning
- Whether specialist mental health intervention is required

9. My child is awaiting an autism or ADHD assessment. What happens now?

Families will continue to be directed to the most appropriate local assessment pathway.

Existing referral will currently remain on the CAMHS waiting list. If you have questions about an existing referral, please contact the service managing that referral.

10. What happens if my child has autism or ADHD and is struggling with their mental health?

CAMHS will continue to assess and support children and young people where there is a specialist mental health need.

Examples may include:

- Anxiety disorders
- Depression
- Self-harm
- Eating disorders
- Obsessive compulsive difficulties
- Significant emotional dysregulation
- Other severe or complex mental health presentations

11. My child has been declined by CAMHS. Does that mean they cannot get support?

No.

Other support may be available through:

- Neurodevelopmental pathways in other health services
- Early Help services
- Education services
- Family support services
- Voluntary and community organisations
- Primary care services and Right to Choose pathways

Where CAMHS is not the most appropriate service, families should be signposted to alternative support.

12. Will children already receiving CAMHS support be discharged?

No.

Children and young people already receiving support from CAMHS will continue to receive care in line with their assessed needs and agreed care plans.

13. What if my child is on a waiting list and develops mental health difficulties while waiting?

A referral to CAMHS can still be considered if concerns arise regarding a child's mental health.

Parents, carers and professionals should seek support promptly if mental health needs emerge or increase.

14. Does this change affect Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)?

No.

This change does not alter rights under SEND legislation or access to support through education and local authority processes.

15. What is happening in Sandwell?

CAMHS will continue to work alongside partners through the Multi-Agency Assessment (MAA) arrangements for a further three months whilst pathways, referral processes and future service arrangements are further developed.

16. Why have families only just been informed?

We recognise and apologise that a formal written communication was not shared more widely before implementation.

Whilst the proposed arrangements and service specification requirements have been discussed extensively through partnership meetings, commissioning discussions and system

governance processes, a formal stakeholder communication should have been issued sooner.

17. Who can I contact if I have questions?

Please contact:

- Your local CAMHS team
- Your GP
- The professional who made the referral
- The service managing your child's assessment pathway