

Glossary of professionals

Before, during and after the diagnostic process you may be involved with a variety of different professionals from many different areas. Parents have told us that this can sometimes be overwhelming and confusing and in some instances it can be difficult to understand what the person's role is.

In order to help you navigate through this we have compiled a list of some of the professionals you may come into contact with as well as some commonly used abbreviations.

General Practitioner (GP)

The professional title for your local doctor, for some people this may be the first step to getting a diagnosis. GPs are responsible for the general health of their patients and are able to make referrals into specialist services.

Speech and Language Therapist (SALT)

The main role of the SALT is to assist and offer support in dealing with difficulties around communication. They are often referred to as SALTS.

Occupational Therapist (OT)

OTs can work in a variety of different environments - but for you it will be an OT that understands sensory processing differences in autistic individuals. The OT will help identify sensory differences and advise on therapeutic approaches.

Health Visitor

Health Visitors are trained nurses who specialise in the development of pre-school children. In some cases they may be the ones to highlight any early concerns in relation to your child's development.

Portage Worker/ Portage Home Visitor

Portage Workers provide a home visiting play-based service for pre-school children with a developmental delay in three or more areas. They also run groups in some areas.

Family Support Worker

The role of a family worker is to give emotional and practical advice to families experiencing short or long-term difficulties.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

The CAMHS service offers a range of therapeutic services for children, young people and their families who experience moderate to severe emotional / mental health problems (for example self-harm, depression, anxiety, bipolar). Direct therapeutic work offered includes cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), group work, play therapy and family therapy. They may be involved in the initial diagnosis but don't usually provide post-diagnostic support for autistic children and young people.

Children and Young People's Service (CYPS)

CYPS provides a single service to all children and young people aged 0-18 years living in South Tyneside, Newcastle, Northumberland, Gateshead, and Sunderland who present with mental health difficulties. CYPS are a tier three service whereas CAMHS is a tier two service. Depending on the level of need you may be referred to CYPS if you live in one of the above areas.

Clinical Psychologist

Clinical Psychologists are involved in the diagnostic process and can provide recommendations for support.

Educational Psychologist (Ed Psych)

Educational Psychologists would consider the child's development from an educational perspective and may also be involved in the diagnostic process.

Paediatrician

A trained doctor who specialises in childhood development.

Social Worker

Social Workers will assess you and your family's care needs. If you were eligible, they would be able to advise you on a range of services including respite (short breaks) provision. Social Workers operate across a variety of settings, the one your family would most likely be involved with would be from the Children's Disability team.

Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO)

A member of staff in a school / nursery who is responsible for ensuring the setting follows the SEN (Special Educational Needs) code of practice for all children, young people in the school who have additional needs. The SENCO would be heavily involved in any implementation of Education and Health, Care Plans (EHCP).

Team around the family (TAF)

TAF stands for Team Around the Family. A TAF is a multi-agency way of working out what extra support you and your family may need. A TAF ensures everyone is working together to identify needs and strengths of your family. This then helps to identify extra support you may need. To get a TAF you can ask any professional working with you or your family.

Early Help

Early Help is a service that offers families advice, support and interventions at the earliest point of identified needs. Early Help supports families by providing strategies to implement before problems escalate, therefore, decreasing the chances of the family needing a statutory intervention.

Education Health Care Plan (EHCP)

EHCP stands for education and health care plan: this is a legal document which replaced the 'statements of special needs' in 2014. These plans are for people aged up to 25 who require more additional support than what is given in a mainstream setting. The plan identifies educational, health and social needs and what's needed to support these needs and the effect this will have on the child or young person.