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Dear Parent

You have recently indicated that you would like your child to be referred to be assessed for a diagnosis of Autism.

Autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurological and developmental disorder that affects how people interact with others, communicate, learn, and behave. Although autism can be diagnosed at any age, it is described as a developmental disorder because symptoms generally appear in the first 2 years of life.

The Child Development Centre (CDC) provides autism assessments for children from 18 months to 8 years of age.

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) provides autism assessments for children between 9 and 17 (up to 18th birthday).

Both services need specific information about your child's behavioural and linguistic problems, educational needs and any behavioural approaches that have been tried so far.

As the school (or nursery) observes and teaches your child day to day, they are able to supply the information that we do not have and so are best placed to make the referral. The GP only gets involved in the process if the child has significant medical problems.

We recommend that you speak directly to your child's school (or nursery) and if it helps, you can show them this letter.

The most appropriate person at the school to make the referral is the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo). They will gather the appropriate information from your child's teachers; they also understand the referral process and exactly what it is that CAMHS needs to know, so are more likely to have a referral accepted.

CAMHS or CDC will then consider the information and arrange an appointment for a formal assessment if they agree it is going to be helpful for your child. Unfortunately there is a lengthy wait for appointments.

Best wishes

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