

Neurodivergence early needs identification pilot: Q&A document

Version 1: Jan 2025

The following questions and answers draw on queries received by the project team during the development of the [neurodivergence early needs identification pilot](#), which launched in October 2024.

This a 'live' document and further questions and answers may be added over the course of the pilot.

We are grateful to all the parent carers and other partners who shared questions and feedback with us during the development of the pilot.

Questions related to schools

1. How are you going to ensure that schools complete the profile?

Participation in the pilot is voluntary and schools who have agreed to take part are committed to completing the profiles of all participating children.

2. How would a school identify which children need to have a profile carried out?

During the pilot schools will focus particularly on children and young people who have been assessed by clinicians as having the highest level of needs, as well as those who have been waiting longest. They will also ensure the sample is representative of their school population, including children from a range of backgrounds and ethnicities.

3. What do parent carers do if they feel school hasn't fully/properly listened to their feedback when completing the tool?

Parent carers will be asked to review the profiling document and will have an opportunity to raise any concerns with the school before agreeing it. A review date will also be agreed at this time and there will be further opportunities to make updates at the review.

4. How will school staff have capacity to deliver this?

Participating schools have opted in to the pilot and their experience will help us understand capacity requirements for other schools and whether it could be rolled out further if it proves successful.

5. How does this differ to the current process of identifying needs in school? Or is this alongside that process?

This will complement existing processes in place in schools.

6. Who pays for the additional support that might be needed in school?

We would expect the recommendations in the profiling document to be delivered using existing resources. If extra funding were required, an application would need to be made through local authority routes.

7. How would the child's profile be transferred if they transitioned to a new education setting?

The child's profile would be included as part of the normal sharing of a CYP's information and documentation across educational settings.

8. How can I make sure school have gathered my child's voice properly? Especially if my child is masking or I have a bad relationship with school?

See Question 3.

9. Some schools have very inflexible behaviour policies- how will this work in these schools?

The school, alongside parent carers and young people will be asked to sign the document to agree the content and actions including a review date at the time. By signing the document the school commits to putting in place the actions in the document. The contents of the document are to be agreed by the school, parent carer and young person and additionally there will be a future opportunity to make any updates at the review.

Questions on project logistics

10. Good schools are already profiling children through My Plans etc - the struggle is schools having the training, & capacity to support those profiled children with strategies - how do we address this?

We recognise that resourcing is always a consideration for schools and one of the goals of the pilot is to understand whether the scheme would be sustainable were it to be rolled out more widely.

11. How do parents access an assessment for their child if the school doesn't support the scheme?

All schools taking part in the pilot are doing so on a voluntary basis. We will use the pilot to understand any issues which might affect more widespread take-up.

12. Who starts this process? When I talk to school, they say all is okay, but what we see at home is not okay.

Schools have volunteered to be part of this pilot and will approach families who are on the autism or ADHD waiting lists. Parent carers will contribute to the profile and will be given the opportunity to include behaviours seen at home in the profile. Parent carers will be asked to sign the document to agree the content and actions including a review date at the time. In addition there will be a future opportunity to make any updates at the review.

13. Will we be told what schools will be chosen to run this pilot in October?

Yes, schools have been shared on parent carer websites.

14. For children out of education and in alternative learning, who will complete the profile?

The pilot will include a number of children not in school and their profiles will be completed by staff from the Neurodiversity Support Team.

15. Won't those at the top of the wait list be the most likely to get an assessment already?

Children and young people who are likely to receive an assessment during the pilot will, where possible, not have been selected for profiling.

16. Do school staff need training and what happens if they leave?

Training has been provided to relevant staff in all participating schools. Schools are not limited to the number of staff that can access training. If staff leave, those replacing them will receive training to continue the profiling.

17. Will there be a legal requirement for schools to implement support for needs identified on the profile?

No, there is not a legal requirement. All recommendations are based on the discussion held with school and family. This will then be reviewed at the next profile.

18. Who do we contact if schools aren't doing what they should?

Any concerns should be raised with the school in the first instance.

19. One of the challenges I've faced are that the school has such a high turnover of staff/absence that they don't know or understand my child and their challenges/needs

See 11 – we will be considering this issue as part of the pilot evaluation.

20. Is this part of the PINS project?

No this is separate to this PINS project.

21. When does the process of using the tool start exactly?

The process started in October 2024

22. On the ground what impact has this made to Portsmouth schools and their SEND families?

Portsmouth schools and families have benefitted from:

- Early identification of needs
- Strategies to help manage those needs identified with support from the family and educational setting
- Professionals having a greater understanding of recognition of need and how to support
- Getting timely support without waiting for a diagnostic assessment

23. Does this mean that less children are going to be diagnosed through this and there just going to be told they have additional needs and written off

The formal assessment and diagnosis service will continue to operate – the pilot scheme is intended to complement this by providing an additional, early understanding of a child's needs together with targeted support to help families access advice, guidance and support. Some families may conclude, having taken part in the pilot process, that their needs are met and that further assessment is not necessary but this will be for them to decide. Anyone who wishes to remain on the waiting list for a diagnostic assessment and meets the criteria for one, will remain on the list.

24. Will the profiling tool ultimately help schools to better understand the needs of neurodiverse children and young people?

Yes, the hope is that the tool will help schools, health and care professionals and families to all better understand the needs of neurodivergent children and young people.

25. In future pilots will it be possible to include children who live between multiple local authorities? Eg who live, go to school and have GP in different local authorities?

Potentially yes, but the purpose of the pilot is to test the model to understand if it has benefits for children, young people and families. We expect to adjust the model in line with learning and have not yet made any decisions to roll out further.

26. How will you help autistic parents understand the process?

Schools will work with parent carers on the profile and this will include supporting parent carers to be informed about and understand the process.

27. How will not being diagnosed support my child in understanding who they are?

Having needs identified and discussed with the child may help them with understanding themselves (e.g understanding things they are good at and things they might find difficult) while they wait for their diagnostic assessment. Children taking part in the pilot can remain on the waiting list for an assessment. Participation in the pilot will not affect children's eligibility for autism or ADHD assessment, or their position on the waiting list.

28. Were autistic voices or neurodiverse voices involved in Portsmouth and will they be here?

The Portsmouth model is a collaboration which includes those with neurodiverse voices and parent carers of neurodiverse young people. We are working with parent carers in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire, and Barnardo's, to ensure that autistic and neurodiverse voices are involved.

29. Will all information be shared with parents as sometimes hard to get copies of information?

Yes, all information will be shared.

Questions about Support plans or EHCPs

30. Will schools be able to amend needs and provision within EHCPs based on the profiling?

Not for the pilot period although schools may share the profiling as evidence of identified strategies.

31. How will it fit with Education, Health and Care Plans and other support plans?

The pilot will inform how this may develop in the future.

Questions about the Local Area support plan

32. Is this replacing the Bristol support plan or feeding into it?

No, but we are working with Bristol City Council to understand how the pilot affects the Bristol support plan

Other topics and questions

33. If I have a child that present a danger to themselves, and others where can I get help right away?

Please follow the existing routes available.

34. What will happen to those children who have been on a pathway for years and now reaching 17.5 years old and needing to move to the adult services?

The transition process will remain unchanged and if a young person has reached 17.5 years they will be referred to Bristol Autism Spectrum Service, in line with the current process.