

ASPERGER SYNDROME AND HIGH FUNCTIONING AUTISM



DIAGNOSTIC SERVICE

ESPA provides a diagnostic, assessment and advice service for adolescents and adults.



THE CORE TEAM IS:



Consultant Psychiatrist:

Dr. Tom Berney; MB ChB DPM FRCPsych FRCPC, has been a consultant in developmental psychiatry who is accredited in both child psychiatry and in learning disability psychiatry. Trained at the Fleming Nuffield Unit in Newcastle where he was a consultant and a member of the regional assessment team. He was also a consultant at Prudhoe and Northgate Hospitals until he retired in 2008 to take honorary appointments with the NHS and Newcastle University. Over the last thirty years he has specialised increasingly in autism across the whole range of age and ability. He is a trainer in two of the principal diagnostic instruments, the ADI and the ADOS and has worked in a variety of research programmes. He is a member of the council of the National Autistic Society and chaired the working party of the Royal College of Psychiatrists that produced its policy document on 'Psychiatric Services for Adolescents and Adults with Asperger Syndrome and other Autism Spectrum Disorders'.



Consultant Psychologist:

Mrs. Lynne Moxon; BA MSc PGCE C.Psychol AFBPsS, trained as an Educational Psychologist but has specialised in autism spectrum disorders since 1980 moving to working with adults as well as children. She currently works in independent practice providing specialist consultancy to Education and Services for People with Autism (ESPA), training for schools, voluntary organisations and Health Trusts. ESPA, a Sunderland based charity, runs an independent specialist college for young adults with Asperger Syndrome and autism where Lynne teaches courses in socio-sexual skills, psychology and emotional literacy. Lynne is a Senior Lecturer and Course Leader for the Masters Degree in Autism at Northumbria University



Senior Speech and Language Therapist:

Mrs. Yvonne Houghton; BSc Hons RCSALT HPC, is a Speech and Language Therapist who has specialised in autism spectrum disorders since 1999. She worked for the NHS as a generalist therapist, then specialised in ASD and worked in paediatrics across Hartlepool and East Durham area. She was part of the diagnostic team that formed the Autistic Spectrum Clinic (ASC) in Hartlepool, she also organised local parent support groups. She currently works with adults in ESPA and is also an independent therapist in Darlington. She is especially interested in sensory processing in relation to autism and is a member of the Sensory Integration Network UK.

ASPERGER SYNDROME AND HIGH FUNCTIONING AUTISM :

- are part of the natural continuum of abilities that merge into the normal range
- do not automatically prevent a person from developing life long relationships but they may need some help
- a diagnosis is usually sought when the social impairments become a significant barrier to a person's quality of life, especially with regard to employment and relationships
- clinical experience suggests that the majority of clients look upon their diagnosis as a positive event in their life

THE PROCESS

Clients will be encouraged to come with others (parents, older siblings or family friends) who might be able to provide a background account of the person, now and in growing up. Alternatively they may be interviewed by telephone. All information remains confidential to ESPA, the client and the referrer (unless there is information suggesting a child is at risk).

Prior to the assessment its purpose will be defined as far as possible and background information sought through the client (reports of previous assessments, incidents, difficulties etc.).

Basic diagnosis - the client will be interviewed using appropriate formal tools for making a clinical diagnosis. Should the assessment suggest the presence of additional disorders that require medical investigations, this will be referred back to the client's GP. Others present may also be interviewed about the person as part of the process.

Further assessment may include:

- psychometry to analyse the person's cognitive abilities and any other learning, educational or occupational difficulties which the person may be concerned about. Social difficulties or sensory problems can also be discussed.
- a communication assessment

Post assessment - The assessment is a multi-disciplinary process and at the end the assessment team meet in order to discuss their findings and conclusions. These are discussed with the client and then put into a written report which is sent to the client for correction before a final version is prepared and sent to the referrers.

The ESPA diagnostic centre is not part of the National Health Service and does not receive any direct government funding. However, funding for appointments will be sought through the statutory authorities.

People wishing for assessment should arrange referral and funding through their GP or Consultant Psychiatrist who should write to:

Mrs. Gillian Linfoot

Centre Co-ordinator, ESPA, 6-7, The Cloisters, Sunderland, SR2 7BD

Telephone: 0191 510 2611 **Email:** gill.linfoot@espa.org.uk

ESPA is a registered charity that provides a variety of services for people with autism spectrum disorders

www.espa.org.uk

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