

Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel

DATE	25/01/2024
REPORT OF	Assistant Director Families, Mental Health & Disabilities, NEL Integrated Care Board
SUBJECT	Neurodevelopmental Service
STATUS	Open

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The Neurodevelopmental Service will contribute to the Council Plan's Vision for Children and Young People to that they can enjoy good health and wellbeing and can reach their potential through skills and learning.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper follows on from previous discussions, workshops, and papers presented to the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel with regards to Children and Young People's (CYP) Autism Assessments.

Navigo CAMHs service is enhancing their offer to create a single point of access for the coordination, screening, triage and assessment of Neurodevelopmental conditions for CYP 0-18 (25) years.

Coproduction, consultation, and engagement continues with parent carers and stakeholders to further shape the service and other Neurodiversity programmes.

The enhanced Neurodevelopmental Service will launch in January 2024 which will be NICE compliant and in line with NHSe frameworks.

The Neurodevelopmental Service will work towards the target of achieving a 18 week wait from referral to commencing a full Neurodevelopmental Assessment once full staffing structure is in place and inductions have been completed.

The feasibility of an all-age integrated care service for Neurodiversity is currently being explored and a review will be completed in 24/25 for consideration.

We are working across the Humber North Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership Mental Health and Learning Disabilities Collaborative Programme with the Neurodiversity Assessment Pathways Workgroup to ensure best practice and to identify any future joint commissioning opportunities.

The programme continues to work across education health and social care to create synergies between work streams and meet the needs of CYP.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

The purpose of this report is to provide a written update of progress.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

The Access Pathway was launched in 2018 as a single access pathway for all Children and Young People (CYP) with additional needs across education, health and social care and has faced much criticism and scrutiny (SEND Inspection 2018).

North East Lincolnshire (NEL) was also heavily criticised about the current assessment approach for the under 5s with developmental disorders and the SEND inspection encouraged NEL to consider reviewing these arrangements and to formally commission pre/post diagnostic support for children under 5 years of age with autism.

The model tried to fill the gaps at Special Education Needs provision and early help which has created a series of stop- starts for CYP and their families on their journey and in some cases created a scenario of sitting on multiple waiting lists to access specialist assessment.

There has been extensive engagement over several years which has highlighted that there is still a lack of clarity about the function and the purpose of the Access Pathway/CDC amongst parents/carers and professionals.

Previous approaches had been planned to replace the pathway in 2020 and in 2022, but due to covid-19 and then the changes to Clinical Commissioning Groups becoming part of an integrated care system, delayed changes.

In March 2023 an abridged business case was presented to North East Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board Health and Care Contracting Group to gain support/approval for a CYP Neurodevelopmental Service with a single identified lead provider. This service will remove the current disjointed offer across the Under 5s and Over 5s pathway for autism assessments moving to one pathway, one point of access and one point of contact for CYP 0-18 (25) years who may require further specialist support or assessments (including Autism and ADHD assessments initially).

This proposal has been approved in principle with approximately 1/3 of the funding identified for 23/24 to enable a phased model of service provision to commence.

The Programme Manager and Clinical Consultant were asked to redefine programme with revised budget and develop a phased approach.

The below summarises the phased approach we have undertaken since April 2023 to enhance the Neurodevelopmental Service as we move towards a single point of access.

Neurodevelopmental Service (NDS)

By enhancing current contracting arrangements with Navigo CAMHs, they will develop their existing specialist assessment team to coordinate and manage the assessment and diagnostic processes for CYP who present with neurodevelopmental needs (0-18 (25) years). We have therefore transferred the North East Lincolnshire Access Pathway and team over to Navigo in May 2023, this will allow for improved collaboration between care teams.

This creates a single point of access to a Neurodevelopmental Assessment Team for the referral and specialist assessment of neurodevelopmental disorders for Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

[NHS England](#) have provided further guidance for ICBs with regards to the operational management of the process and we have aligned the Neurodevelopmental Service to these recommendations.

During July- September 2023 Navigo have undertaken recruitment or commissioning of additional clinical staff to ensure NICE compliance. All positions were successfully appointed, and will be occupied by late February 2024.

The NDS will be made up of professionals from a range of disciplines who will work together to provide multi-disciplinary assessments. This includes Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists, Clinical Psychologists, Learning Disability Nurses, Speech and Language Therapists, Educational Psychologist, Non-medical Prescriber, ADHD Specialist Nurse and a Paediatrician. Social Care and Family Support from NELC also support the triage and screening discussions.

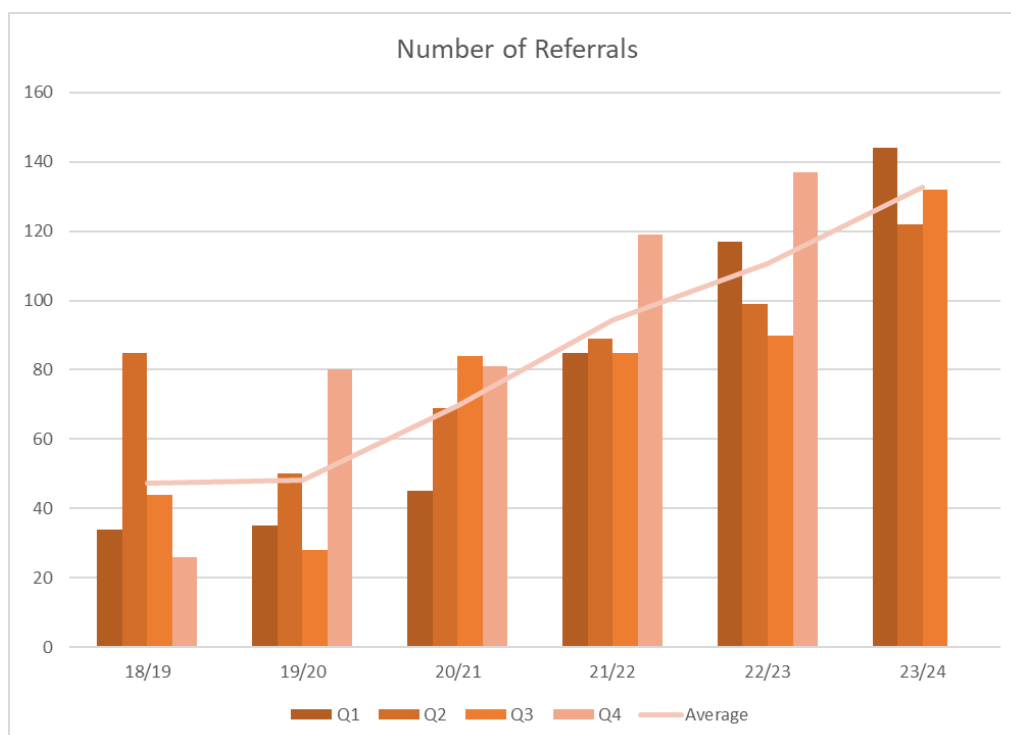
Navigo are currently working on a new section on the [Navigo website](#) which will tell you more about the service and professionals involved.

Waiting Times Initiative – Access Pathway

During Summer 2023 in consultation with parent, carers and professionals we explored how best to close down the current access pathway approach so the enhanced NDS could be launched in Early 2024.

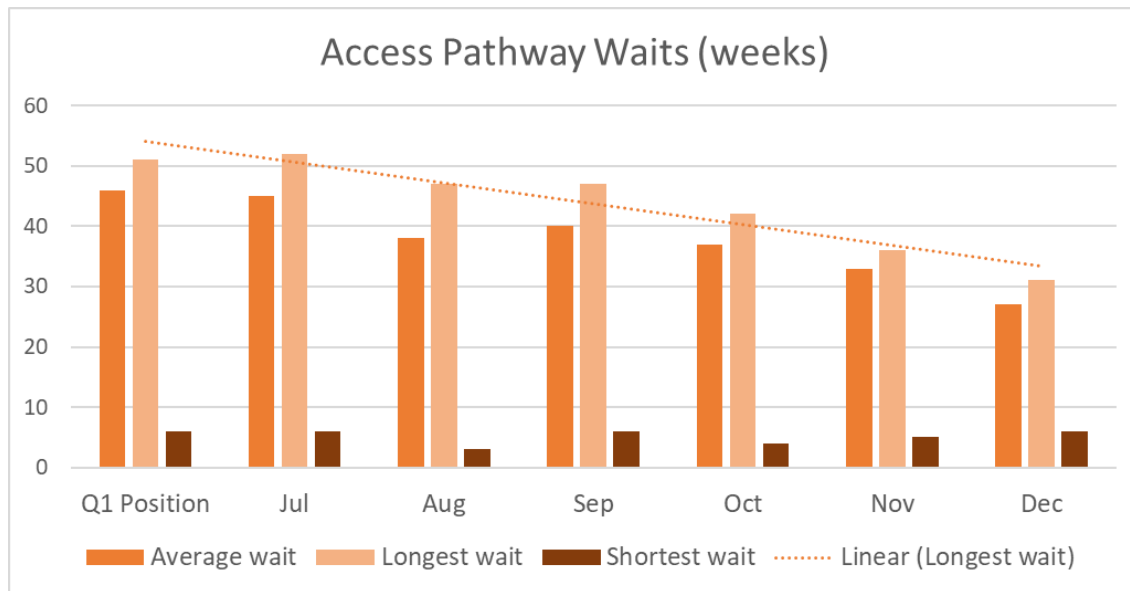
We wanted to ensure that all those CYP with active referrals into the Access Pathway could be screened and triaged without any further delay but knew we had to do something different with the rate of referrals continuing to rise.

Graph 1: Number of Referrals (Access Pathway)



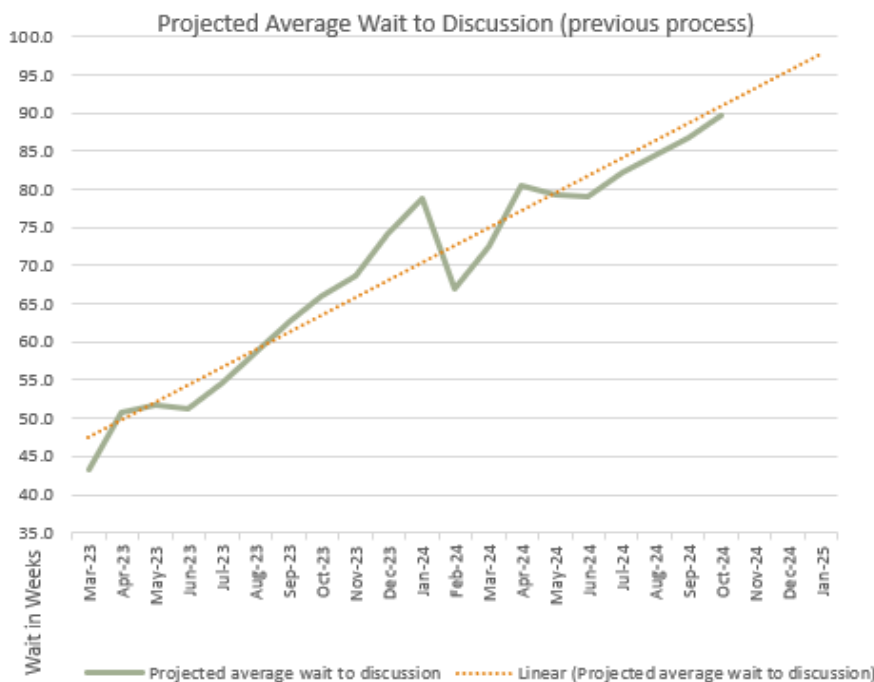
Closely following the [Operational guidance to deliver improved outcomes in all-age autism assessment pathways: Guidance for integrated care boards](#) and supported by NELC children’s services the Multi-disciplinary team have been able to revise the agreed process to increase professional and clinical capacity to improve the timeliness of screening and triage of access pathway referrals reducing the average wait from 46 weeks (Q1 baseline) to 27 weeks (End of December 2023).

Graph 2: New Process (Access Pathway Screening and Triage Wait)



It should also be noted that referral forecasts indicated up to 100 week wait by January 2025 if we didn’t start to do things differently (graph 3).

Graph 3: Projected wait to discussion (Access Pathway Screening and Triage)



It was estimated that this period of closedown would take approximately 18-22 weeks to complete.

During December 2023 55 referrals were submitted to the access pathway which is 48% increase in the expected referral rate (compared to 22/23). The Neurodevelopmental team are working very hard to triage these by the 31st January 2024 when the Neurodevelopmental Service and new referral form will officially launch.

All changes have been communicated out to parent carers and stakeholder who have submitted an access pathway referral and general updates have been communicated through a new dedicated [Neurodiversity Newsletter](#), which we will continue to issue until the service is full embedded.

Navigo are also currently working on the public facing information on the their website for the [Navigo Neurodevelopmental Service](#).

Waiting Times Initiative – Specialist Assessments

In developing the approach to review referrals submitted to the access pathway for screening and triage we were also very mindful about the impact this would have upon the number of children waiting for a specialist assessment with Navigo - Young Minds.

Therefore, to reduce the length of waiting Navigo have commissioned an external provider to undertake additional Autism Assessments. The provider is The Owl Centre. These assessments commenced from the 16th September 2023 and approximately 100 ASD assessments in partnership with NAViGO CAMHS (Young Minds Matter) by the 31st March 2024.

The ASD assessments carried out by The Owl Centre complies fully with the NICE guidelines (National Institute for Clinical Excellence). The Owl Centre is a recognised private provider commissioned by the NHS & is also registered with the Care Quality Commission.

The additional autism assessments has positively impacted on the waiting times for reducing from a projected 13.8 months for the assessment to commence is between 7.6 months and 7.8 months (December 2023).

SystemOne is still being revised to be able to record and pull YMM KPI data for ASD and ADHD assessments and this information will be available to commissioners in due course.

As we move forward with the enhanced Neurodevelopmental Service we have set an aspiration of achieving a target of an 18 week wait from referral to commencing a full Neurodevelopmental Assessment once full staffing structure and inductions have been completed.



Waiting Times Initiative – waiting well

Throughout this process we have continued to signpost to sources of support or interventions for those CYP with neurodiverse needs or for those waiting for an assessment regardless of a diagnosis.

We continue to work in partnership with colleagues in SEND services to ensure that we

respond develop new approaches and programmes of work. An example of this is the Autism in Schools Project that has worked intensively with 12 schools to make them more autism aware and encourage meaningful coproduction with our parent carers.

The project has been particularly successful in bringing together parent carers and SENCOs in a safe place to work together on strategies and training to better support the CYP in schools at home with additional needs. This forum has recently been named by the parent carers and SENCOs as [SPACE \(Settings, Parents and Carers for Education\)](#) and is now welcoming all educational settings to become part of their approach.

 End of project comments from Parent Carers and School Champions 

“It’s all thanks to the Autism in Schools project that I’ve felt the courage to put myself forward for the NELPCF.” *Parent carer*

“I’ve gained confidence, made connections and accessed training that I wouldn’t have been able to access otherwise.” *Parent carer*

“I’ve got more from the forums that I expected.” *Parent carer*


“I like that parent carers and SENDCos can get together to talk and collaborate.” *Parent carer*

Liked: “Gaining an understanding of parents’ perspectives.” *School Champion*

“It’s always nice to share views.” *School Champion*

“If it wasn’t for the training I went on I wouldn’t have known that my daughter didn’t need a diagnosis to access the support she needed.” *Parent carer*

Liked: “The ideas, thoughts and support from others.” *Parent carer*



2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

There are significant challenges within the system which North East Lincolnshire are also impacted by, these are also regionally and nationally.

These challenges have been summarised below:

- Recruitment and retention - Challenges in recruitment of staff with relevant skills and competencies: vacancies at all levels across the health care system as well as significant staff movement leaving significant gaps in services.
- Acuity and complexity - Increase in acuity and complexity of presentation
- NHS England funding – One off/short-term pots of funding create further challenge in the system in the longer term (e.g., difficulty recruiting to fixed term posts)
- Humber North Yorkshire ICS versus NEL place – Ensuring that the priorities of NEL remain key in service delivery and development, however also aligning to the wider HNY ICB priorities.

There are also many opportunities moving forward to continue to improve and develop local services to meet the needs of children, young people, and families:

- All age Neurodiversity Service – we have begun to explore the feasibility of an all-age integrated care service for Neurodiversity Service and review will be completed in 24/25 for consideration.
- Closer working with the Humber North Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership Mental Health and Learning Disabilities Collaborative Programme with the Neurodiversity Assessment Pathways Workgroup will ensure best practice and learning is shared and provide joint commissioning opportunities.

3. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

NEL ICB are working with Navigo to ensure clear and consistent messaging for children, young people, families, and professionals so they are aware of the services available to support. An action plan is in place with ICB and Council's communications service with regards to the transformation of CAMHs service which the Neurodevelopmental Service features.

This work also programme connects at place into wider transformation programmes (e.g., Mental Health and SEND) and there is an emphasis on proactive communications across key stakeholders and children, young people and families.

4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The budget for Children's Neurodevelopmental Service is managed through the Navigo CAMHs contract as part of NEL ICB arrangements. Therefore, there are no additional funding requests to be considered within this report.

5. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

This programme of work has been developed to improve outcomes for children with Neurodevelopmental needs in North East Lincolnshire. The vision is:

- 'Children, young people, and their families can access positive, personalised support which meets their needs and encourages both the individual's personal growth and family stability.
- Access to support is clear, straight forward, and timely, with simple information easily available to families, with or without a diagnosis.
- Families understand the options available to them and feel empowered to work with professionals to identify the right support at the right time.
- Professionals have a good understanding of the available support and can respond positively and proactively the child/ young person's needs and keep relevant partners informed or involved.
- Children, young people, and families who access the pathway understand their lifelong conditions and their impact, as well as how to manage them.
- Children and young people with neuro difficulties have a positive sense of identity and acknowledge their strengths and progress, as well as being valued and celebrated by those around them.
- Their experiences and goals are well understood, and these form the heart of their care and support.
- Transitions of all types are planned for and straightforward, with children and young people feeling supported appropriately as their circumstances change.'

Therefore, it is imperative that Navigo works across health, education, social services and third sector to meet the Neurodevelopmental needs of these CYP and better understand each child's presentation in the wider context of external and intrinsic factors.

Ultimately, all children and families should experience joined up support, based on the single child's care/ support plan, with professionals from different agencies working together.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

In the opinion of the author, this report does not contain changes to climate change and environmental implications.

7. MONITORING COMMENTS

7.1 In the opinion of the author, this report does not contain recommended changes to policy or resources (people, finance or physical assets). As a result no monitoring comments have been sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer (Chief Legal Officer), Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance) or Strategic Workforce Lead.

8. WARD IMPLICATIONS

All wards affected as children with SEND live and attend schools across place

9. NEL.BACKGROUND PAPERS

[NHS England » A national framework to deliver improved outcomes in all-age autism assessment pathways: guidance for integrated care boards](#)

[NHS England » Operational guidance to deliver improved outcomes in all-age autism assessment pathways: Guidance for integrated care boards](#)

10. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

- Michelle Thompson, NEL Integrated Care Board, Assistant Director (Families, Mental Health and Disabilities)
- Lauren King – NEL Health and Care Partnership, Programme Manager

MICHELLE THOMPSON – ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, FAMILIES, MENTAL HEALTH & DISABILITIES