Neuropsychological assessment clinic

Information for families and professionals

Ealing child and adolescent mental health service - Learning disabilities (CAMHS-LD)

August 2014
What is a neuropsychological assessment?

A neuropsychological assessment is a measurement of an individual’s ability to perform mental functions, such as remembering things, concentrating, reasoning, visual-spatial abilities and verbal skills, using special tests designed to measure these abilities.

A neuropsychological assessment is appropriate when there is a query about brain function in the context of acquired brain injury, neurological disease or disorder (e.g. brain tumour, epilepsy) or neurodevelopmental disorders (e.g. Autism Spectrum Disorder).

In this way it is different from an educational psychology assessment, which aims to assess cognitive skills in the context of learning and education.

Neuropsychological assessment may also be appropriate if there is marked regression in cognitive or adaptive skills (e.g. loss of language or motor skills), and/or behavioural changes.

What does a neuropsychological assessment involve?

A neuropsychological assessment involves an initial meeting with parents and the young person (if appropriate) to find out about current concerns and any historical information relevant to these.
Following this meeting, the young person is asked to complete a range of tests designed to measure different mental functions (e.g. memory, language skills).

Tests can be verbal, written or require drawing or building with blocks.

A standard comprehensive neuropsychological assessment takes approximately 4 hours (including breaks). Ideally it is completed in one day but it can be split into separate appointments if necessary.
Referral criteria

Children and young people being referred for neuropsychological assessment must:

- Be aged between 4 and 17 years
- Be already known to a health care professional in ESCAN or Ealing CAMHS
- Have a diagnosed neurological, chromosomal or neurodevelopment disorder such as epilepsy or autism spectrum disorder, or a history of acquired brain injury

OR

- Be undergoing assessment for neurological or neurodevelopmental disorder

Who can refer to the neuropsychological assessment clinic?

The service will accept referrals from:

- Other CAMHS professionals
- Consultant community paediatricians from the child development team
- Educational psychologists
Why refer to the neuropsychological assessment clinic?

There are a number of reasons why a neuropsychological assessment may be helpful including:

1. **To clarify strengths and weaknesses in a young person’s mental functions** in order to help parents/professionals understand cognitive difficulties and develop strategies to improve skills.

2. **To contribute to understanding of behavioural problems** in order to help clinicians to develop better treatment plans or behavioural strategies for the young person.

3. **To inform treatment plans** e.g. modification of therapeutic interventions or treatment programmes to account for cognitive difficulties.

4. **To help understand a regression in cognitive skills or behaviour (when other causes have been ruled out)** e.g. to contribute to diagnosis or to clarify the level of deterioration in cognitive abilities and monitor decline or improvement over time.
How do I request a neuropsychological assessment?

As a parent or carer, you can request a referral from your consultant community paediatrician or CAMHS worker.

Referrers should send a letter or email explaining the reasons for requesting a neuropsychological assessment to:

**Neuropsychological Assessment Clinic**  
Clinical Psychology  
Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service for Learning Disabilities  
Ealing Services for Children with Additional Needs  
Carmelita House  
21-22 The Mall  
London  
W5 2PJ

**Tel:** 020 8825 8700  
**Email:** s.howley@nhs.net

**Confidentiality**

It is often very useful to share neuropsychological assessment results with school and relevant care providers. However, we will not disclose information to anyone else unless this is agreed with the young person and the family.

The only exception to this rule is if we have concerns about the safety of the young person or others. Where possible, parents/carers will be informed of this.
We store information in paper files and on a secure electronic database called RIO. We will be happy to give you more details about this computer database if requested.

Health Records

You can have access to your own health records (Access to Health Records Act 1990).

We can advise you how to do this if requested.

Your notes

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