

A Service Evaluation to Review the Current CAMHS ASD Team Referral Process- Executive Summary

Author: Alice Keenan (Trainee Clinical Psychologist)

Contributors: NSCHT CAMHS ASD Team, NSCHT R&D team, Staffordshire University

Aims

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) team are a specialist service within North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS trust (NSCHT) who provide ASD assessment for children and young people (age 0-18) across Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire. The current service evaluation aims to explore parent and carers perception of the CAMHS ASD teams' referral process and screening questionnaire.

Method

16 participants completed a mixed methods questionnaire. The questionnaire asked participants about their perception of the CAMHS ASD teams' referral process, screening questionnaire, waiting time, communication regarding the referral outcome, awareness of available support and if anything else should have been asked in the questionnaire. Quantitative responses were analysed using excel. Qualitative responses were analysed by identifying themes across participants' responses to each individual question. Overall themes across responses and questions were identified via content analysis.

Results

Overall perceptions of the referral process appeared to be quite positive. 69% thought that the referral process was clear because they understood the process. Others identified that a lack of accessible information contributed to it being unclear. The referrers' awareness of

the process and approach to referring impacted upon participants' perceived clarity of the referral process. Participants identified positives of the process and made suggestions for improvement. 88% thought that the screening questionnaire was clear and easy to complete. Others highlighted challenges to completing the questionnaire. Positives and suggestions for improvement were also identified. 56% were aware that nursery or school filled out a questionnaire and 44% received feedback regarding this. All respondents thought receiving feedback would be useful. 56% were satisfied with the waiting time from referral to outcome. Others identified that waiting times were too long and referral issues contributed to waiting times appearing longer. 80% thought that the referral outcome was communicated in a clear, approachable and compassionate manner. Others identified that the decision and communication of it was not compassionate. Participants suggested that increased direct contact could improve their experience. 37% knew where to seek support whilst awaiting the referral outcome. Participants' suggested additional service evaluation questions and identified additional service concerns. The content analysis revealed four themes regarding the process: the referrer influenced participants' perception of it, further information and more direct contact would be useful, waiting times were lengthy and a reduction of waiting times is desired.

Recommendations

1. Provide further information about the referral process to referrers, potential clients, parents, and carers.
2. Consider providing more direct contact to clients and families during the process.
3. Future service evaluation to understand referrers' perception of the process.