

Autism Spectrum Disorder Assessments



We are an independent private psychology practice in Preston.

Why assess for Autism Spectrum Disorder?

Most Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) assessments are conducted because parents are looking for an explanation for a particular set of behaviours or challenges experienced by their child. Researchers worldwide have agreed that the earlier a child is diagnosed the better the outcomes for that child. Diagnosis, although it can be an emotional time for families, is advantageous because it provides clearer information about intervention and can provide families with support in terms of managing their difficulties, as well as financial support in the form of the Helping Children with Autism funding and Carer's Allowance. As children get older and a diagnosis is disclosed to them, it can help normalise their experience to know there is a 'name' for the difficulties they might be experiencing.

How is it done?

Best practice requires a team of professionals to agree on the diagnosis. This means that the child needs to be assessed by a paediatrician (or child and adolescent psychiatrist), a psychologist and a speech pathologist. Once each profes-

sional has completed their assessment process with the child, they liaise with each other to discuss whether or not the child meets criteria for a formal diagnosis of ASD. Usually the child is finally seen again by the paediatrician who will confirm the diagnosis if appropriate.

What role does NCCD play?

As psychologists, comprehensive ASD assessments require us to assess many areas of the child's functioning in order to make a sound diagnosis that relates not only to ASD-specific behaviours and symptoms, but also assesses the child's current level of cognitive functioning and adaptive behaviour in day-to-day life. It's also sometimes important for us to observe children we assess outside of the testing environment or speak with teachers at school or kinder etc. in order to obtain information about his or her behaviour in a less clinical settings.

Usually a comprehensive ASD assessment costs \$1650, which includes the administration of the three typical assessments below, liaison time with all other professionals involved, and a comprehensive report with recommendations.

The typical assessments we conduct are:

- Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS-2) - One hour with the child and a parent
- Autism Diagnostic Interview - Revised (ADI-R) - Three hours with parent(s)
- Cognitive Assessment - One hour with the child only

We may also need to conduct:

- Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scales - \$200
- Observation - \$180 in office or \$220 at school/home/kinder within 10 km of office

Sometimes we don't need to do all aspects of these assessments for different reasons. This will be discussed with parents so they have a clear idea of which assessments will definitely need to be done and which ones may or may not need doing.

How can we minimise the cost?

- Private health fund rebates.
- If the child has a HCWA Assessment referral from their paediatrician they will be able to claim partial rebates for up to four assessment sessions in total through Medicare.
- Carer Allowance - once a diagnosis of ASD is made, parents are entitled to this fortnightly non-means tested payment. The twelve weeks of back-pay granted will likely cover, or significantly contribute towards the psychologist fees involved in the diagnostic process.

Why should we trust the NCCD ASD Assessment Team?

Between us, we have over 25 years' experience working with children with ASD in a variety of contexts. We are a small team and are highly trained and experienced with administering and interpreting all assessments required in the ASD assessment process. However, we also ensure every family who undertakes an ASD diagnosis with us is given a full feedback session to go through the assessment report sensitively, and to discuss options following the diagnosis of their child. We believe in providing a transparent, ethical, professional and friendly service to families.

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