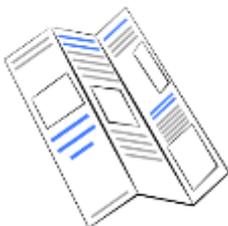


Template Information and Guidance for creating an information leaflet to help individuals with autism access CAMHS services.

Communication challenges can vary for individuals with autism. Many individuals prefer to access information through visual means, including the written word.

General points about making information written information accessible for individuals with autism:

- Make information easy to understand by being clear and direct
- Avoid visual / written use of metaphor or any information that could be ambiguous
- Use short sentences
- Use bullet points
- Uses an uncluttered layout e.g. don't combine too many different mediums on one page.
- Use / offer low arousal colour / print options
- Use 'real' photos rather than cartoon/drawings/picture scenes
- Some individuals may prefer to have information in 'easy read' format also



## **Guidance for Creating an Autism-friendly Leaflet about CAMHS services**

We suggest that the leaflet addresses the following:

1. What is this leaflet about?
2. What is CAMHS?
3. What is mental health?
4. Information about appointments
5. Information about treatment and intervention
6. CAMHS contact information

### 1. What is the leaflet all about?

We suggest the front cover needs to contain the following:

- 3-5 photos, depicting staff working with young people in relevant contexts, photos representative of relevant age and gender differences. Make photos unambiguous.

- Service and Trust information
- Strap line / vision statement, etc.
- Explain what the leaflet is about?, for example:

‘Information about mental health services for children and young people who have autism or similar challenges’

‘This leaflet is for any young person who wants to find out about what to expect from [*insert name of service*] usually referred to as CAMHS’

‘This leaflet explains about what mental health is and how we can help you’

## 2. What is CAMHS?

**CAMHS** means **C**hild and **A**dolescent **M**ental **H**ealth **S**ervices. These services work with children and young people who have mental health difficulties that affect their life and their emotional well being.

## 3. What is Mental Health?

What is mental health?

Mental Health is about how you think and feel about yourself. Good mental health makes people feel happier about themselves and their lives. Mental health can change and sometimes children and young people can have problems with their mental health.

Like physical health, when people think about looking after their bodies; it is also important to think about looking after how you think and feel about yourself. CAMHS can support with a mental health problem and help you to be as healthy as possible.

What is a mental health problem?

A mental health problem is sometimes also called a mental health condition. A mental health problem is when you might feel upset, worried or scared a lot of the time **and** when you might not feel like following your normal routines or doing things you normally enjoy. Sometimes mental health problems can affect your appetite and sleep patterns.

Why do some people develop mental health problems?

A mental health problem can happen to anyone. **Sometimes** a problem may develop after something traumatic has happened, like the death of a loved one or being bullied. **Sometimes** mental health problems can just ‘start’ and the reasons for them are difficult to understand.

1 in 10 young people will experience problems with mental health and well being. Some of these people will use CAMHS services to help them understand and feel better about themselves and to manage their feelings.

Remember, children and young people with autism are entitled to full and appropriate care from their health provider, in the same way as any other child or young person.

#### 4. Information about appointments

This information needs to be presented as a step by step guide.

How do you get an appointment with CAMHS?

These people can all help you to get a first appointment with CAMHS:

- Your parents / carers.
- Your doctor
- Your teacher / tutor
- The school nurse
- A social worker
- A healthcare practitioner

They will ask you to talk about the kinds of difficulties you are experiencing so that they can think about what sort of help you need.

You can also refer yourself by telephoning the duty team – *[insert number]* or fill in a form on the website *[insert link]*

A CAMHS referral might lead to *[list possible options]*.

Your first appointment.

- usually people have to wait for their first appointment. *[insert any guidance being mindful of timeframes being interpreted literally and lack of engagement and trust that can follow if services are perceived to not do what they appear to say they are doing]* CAMHS will see you within X weeks of a referral. If you need to be seen urgently CAMHS can see you on the day you are referred.
- usually appointment details are sent in a letter to the place where you live.

What you can choose to do whilst waiting for an appointment.

Offer suggestions such as:

- links to websites that offer information and support for young people
- create a resource list for individuals and direct them to it. Be mindful of autism friendly websites being more useful.
- talk to the person who referred you, for advice on helpful things to do while you wait.
- it might be useful to think about the thing(s) that you would like CAMHS to help you with – maybe write these down.
- you might have some questions or things you want to say or ask at your first appointment – you can write this down

Where will my appointment take place?

- offer clear information about where this is or what the choices maybe. Add a link to a website page with photos and addresses.
- reference length of time this will take. May need to say usually an hour but can be longer or shorter depending on what you want to say.

Who will come to my appointment?

- carefully explain about this process, e.g. If you're under 16, it is helpful for your family / carers to be involved in the process. There will always be an opportunity for you to speak to CAMHS staff on your own at the appointment, if you want to. If you are older than 16 years, you can discuss with CAMHS staff about who you would like to come to the appointment with you.
- There are different staff in CAMHS. [*offer a title, generic photo and brief description of each role*]

What else happens at the first appointment?

- CAMHS will talk to you and ask you questions like:
  - What difficulties are you currently experiencing?
  - How long have you known about the problem?
  - What is school life like for you? And are you getting along with other people / friends?
  - What are you good at doing and what do you enjoy?

Reference:

- goal setting,
- agreeing targets / aims together
- helping you start to feel better

## 5. Treatment and Intervention

What sort of things can CAMHS do to help?

Explaining treatment options – in a step by step way:

- explain how CAMHS will explain what the treatment involves,
- how CAMHS agree outcomes and why
- how will CAMHS review progress and why
- how CAMHS will help if the treatment is not helping.

How long will treatment last?

- explain no set limit, as CAMHS like to wait until you feel better.
- explain how some people get better more quickly than others and this is okay

Offer clear information about the following:

- what happens to the information?
- what happens when the treatment finishes?
- contact lists
- what to do if there are more questions or things that still are not clear about how CAMHS can help