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COGNITIVE ASSESSMENTS FOR CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS, AND ADULTS

INFORMATION ON THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

One of the specialist assessments we are able to offer at NeuroDiverse Online is a cognitive assessment. This is often completed as part of a wider assessment process. For instance, as part of an assessment for autism or ADHD. Sometimes a cognitive assessment may also be completed as a standalone assessment to help explore someone's strengths and difficulties in learning.

This leaflet provides some additional information about cognitive assessments. Feel free to ask any questions you may have about this.

What is a cognitive assessment?

'Cognitive' means to do with thinking, reasoning, and memory. A cognitive assessment is a series of puzzles and questions which helps find out about your strengths and any difficulties in these areas. This is different to the type of testing you do in school exams, which is to do with how much you have learnt about a particular subject.

Why is it useful?

Cognitive assessment is sometimes recommended as part of a diagnostic process. This can be the case when people coming for assessment, or clinicians, wonder if differences in thinking, reasoning, or memory might help explain some of the concerns people have. We know that differences in thinking, reasoning and memory are much more common in people who are autistic or have ADHD. Sometimes getting a clear picture of someone's profile of strengths and difficulties in these areas helps point to the right diagnosis.

For some people, cognitive assessment can help make sense of past experiences. This can be the case where people have had a tough time at school for example. We know that for some people, traditional school-based teaching just isn't the best way for them to learn, and exam results underestimate their skills (lots of extremely successful people did badly at school for this reason!) Sometimes, cognitive assessment can help highlight skills and help understand why these haven't been recognised by traditional testing.





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Cognitive assessment can also suggest practical strategies to help make things easier. This can include making recommendations for school and the workplace. For example, if we find someone has strengths in understanding visual material we could recommend supporting learning through visual strategies. Some people do best if they are allowed plenty of time to think about things due to differences in their processing speed, so we might recommend not rushing through tasks. Understanding your profile, or your child's profile in detail, can help us understand how to help you or your child reach their potential.

Who can have a cognitive assessment?

Cognitive assessments can be completed with people of almost any age. Even if someone has difficulties in areas such as reading, language, or concentration, it is still usually possible to complete an assessment. We will only suggest a cognitive assessment if we think this will be helpful for you – not everyone needs one.

What happens during a cognitive assessment?

Before we complete a cognitive assessment, we will have met with you to gather background information and hear about your concerns, and about your or your child's strengths. This helps us plan what tests will be most helpful.

A cognitive assessment is completed with one clinician. It may be completed remotely or face to face, or a combination of both. It can take between one-and-a-half and three hours, depending on which tests we need to use. During the assessment you will be asked to complete a series of puzzles and tasks, and answer questions. Most people find this an enjoyable process – it's nothing like a school exam! You can take a break if you need to. Sometimes we need to complete the test over two sessions. We want people to feel as relaxed and comfortable as possible in the assessment as this will help us get the best picture of your profile of abilities.

What tests do you use?





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The most common test we use are the Wechsler Intelligence Scales for children and adults, which give a broad and detailed picture of someone's cognitive abilities, looking at areas including memory, visual reasoning, verbal reasoning, and processing speed. We sometimes also use other tests to look at particular areas in more detail.

These tests can generate lots of different scores. Sometimes people ask about IQ scores. The tests often do provide an IQ score which we would include in the report – but we think it's often more helpful to look at your detailed profile of strengths and challenges. You can't sum a person's skills up in one score!

If we are completing the test remotely, we may send you some paperwork or other materials in advance of the appointment.

After the assessment, the clinician will look at your results and give you some feedback either immediately or in a follow-up appointment. The results, and recommendations from what we have found out, will be included in your final report.

Are your cognitive assessment reports recognised by schools and the NHS?

The tests that we use in our reports are the same tests as those used by psychologists in the NHS and are also often used by educational psychologists in the education system. We follow best practice guidelines and present our findings in a way which can be easily understood and used by other professionals in the NHS and in education. We are all very experienced and highly trained in using these tests, and all of our team are also experienced in working within education and the NHS, so we know what sort of recommendations are sensible and helpful.

We would recommend our reports be shared with schools, and feedback shows that these are valued and often used to help support planning for support in school. Reports can be included as part of the evidence for an EHCP, and can be used to help provide evidence where adjustments will be helpful in exams.

