



ASPECT Assessments

A quick guide for
participants,
families
and carers



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www.autismspectrum.org.au

Autism Spectrum Australia

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a different brilliant[®]

understanding, engaging & celebrating the
strengths, interests & aspirations
of people on the spectrum

To learn more about our Vision, Mission and Values, visit:

www.autismspectrum.org.au/content/about-aspect

Why we do what we do

We believe

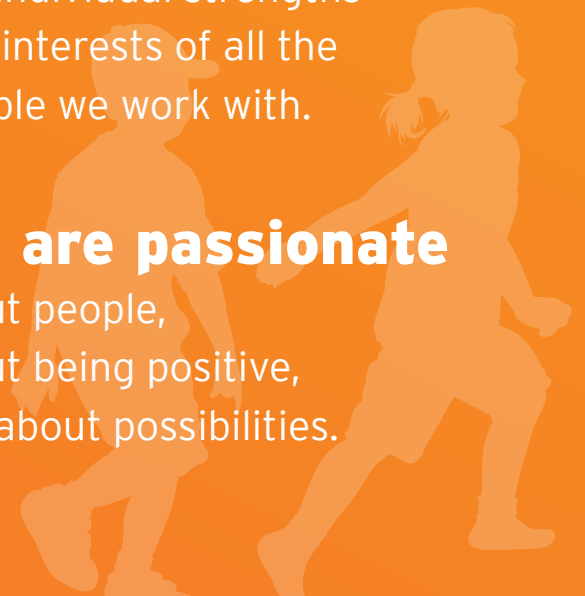
every person with autism
can, and has the right to,
be an active participant
in the community and to
make their own choices.

We celebrate

differences and value
the individual strengths
and interests of all the
people we work with.

We are passionate

about people,
about being positive,
and about possibilities.



How we work

We partner with you

Aspect exists to support and empower our participants to live the best life possible.

We work to understand people with autism, from their perspective.

Our focus is on the strengths and interests of people with autism.

Our solutions are evidence-informed.

Our services are designed around each person and family, for every stage of life
- from early childhood to transition into adulthood.

We are dynamic, flexible and reliable.

We collaborate, respect and trust.

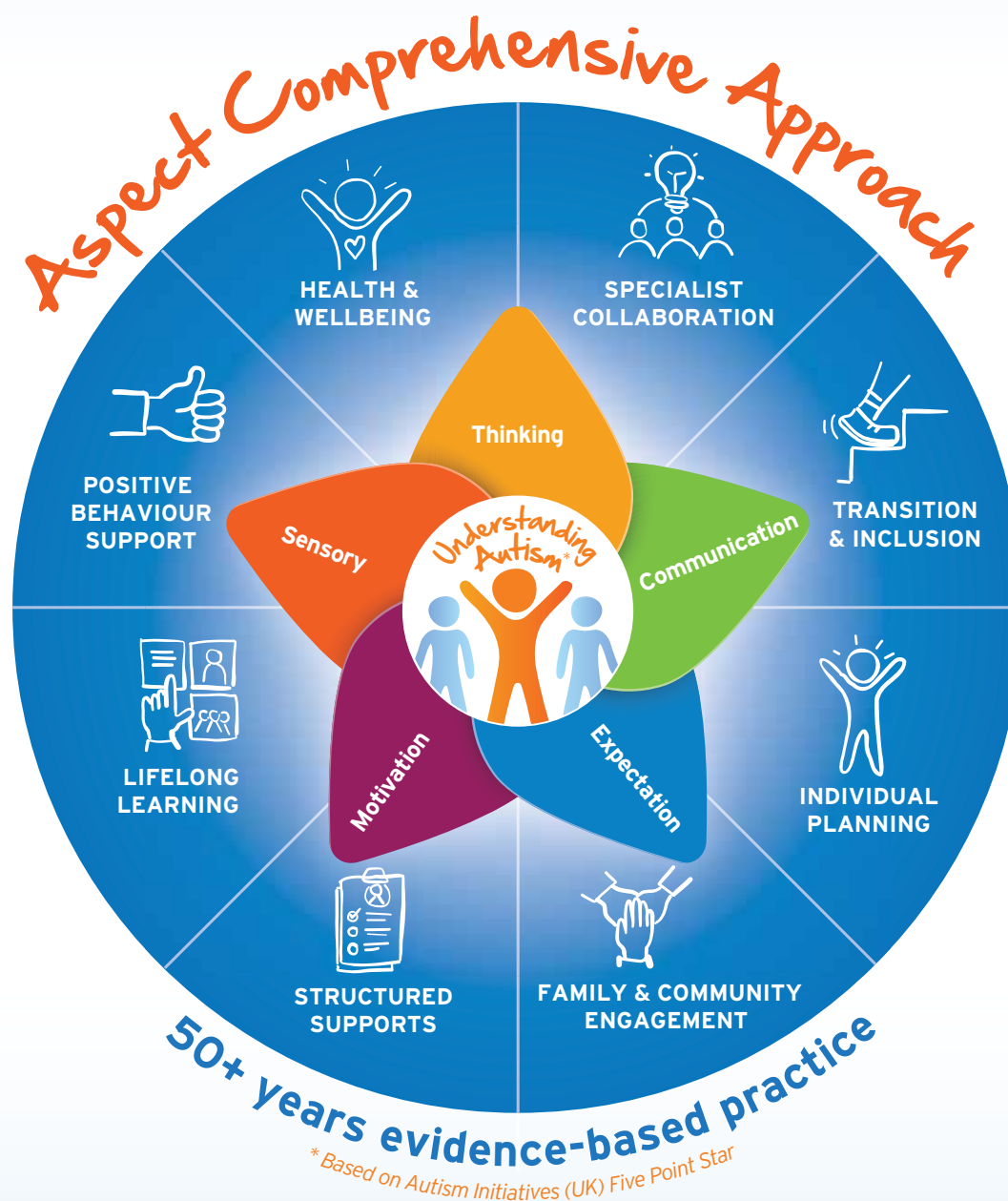
We work through solutions together.



How we work

Our comprehensive approach

The Aspect Comprehensive Approach (ACA) is our commitment to a consistent, evidence informed approach to service delivery.



How we work

Our commitment to you

- ✓ We will work with you to make sure that a thorough assessment is conducted.
- ✓ We will use the assessment tools and processes most suitable for you as an individual.
- ✓ We communicate with you via your preferred means and use interpreters as required.
- ✓ We will take the time to explain the outcome of the assessment to ensure you fully understand.
- ✓ We will provide a report regarding the outcome of the assessment to you within 4 weeks of the assessment.
- ✓ We will help you understand what the next steps might be and what other resources might be available to you.

Diagnosing autism

Why and how

For someone who has autism, a diagnosis can help them and those close to them understand isolating, confusing or upsetting behaviours.

Young children diagnosed with autism are able to access the types of services that significantly improve their prospects for a meaningful life (early intervention).

Adolescents and adults, who may have disguised or compensated for their communication or other impairments prior to the diagnosis, are able to access services that will support their ability to interact socially, improve their employment opportunities and their ability to have meaningful relationships.

Aspect Assessments provides initial and review assessments for autism across the lifespan.

Our assessment services are delivered by Clinical Psychologist or Psychologist with experience and post-graduate training in the diagnosis of autism.

We follow the “National Guidelines for the Assessment and Diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder”, and use gold standard diagnostic tools.

Our comprehensive assessments help identify developmental difficulties and determine what interventions, strategies and supports will assist to reach a person’s potential.

They also include information about an individual’s strengths, talents and interests, so a support plan can be tailored to their particular goals and aspirations.

Autism assessments (diagnostic assessments)

What it involves

Autism assessments help diagnose autism and reveal precious information about a person's strengths and support needs.

Our comprehensive assessments identify developmental difficulties and the types of interventions, strategies and supports that will best assist a person to reach their potential.

They also focus on an individual's strengths, talents and interests, so a support plan can be tailored to their particular goals and aspirations.

Assessments follow the national guidelines for the "*Assessment and Diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder*" and involve observation and interaction with the person, and a clinical interview with parents/carers and relevant contacts.

Assessments are conducted face-to-face or via telehealth by one of our specialist staff experienced in the use of gold standard diagnostic tools. They will provide information, prompts, and support you throughout the process.

An autism assessment may involve

- **A comprehensive parent interview** using the Autism Diagnostic Interview-Revised (ADI-R)
- **Formal observation** using the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule - Second Edition (ADOS-2)
- **An assessment of adaptive functioning** (everyday living skills and independence) using the Adaptive Behaviour Assessment System - Third Edition (ABAS-3)
- **Cognitive or developmental assessments**
- **Information from preschool or school staff**
- **A feedback session** outlining the outcomes of the assessment, including an opportunity for questioning and clarification
- **Recommendations** for therapies or any other services that will best serve the person
- **A report** (summary or full) within 4 weeks of the assessment with the outcomes and

Diagnostic tools we use

ADOS-2

The Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule Second Edition (ADOS-2) is a semi-structured and standardised clinical observation tool.

This observation-based assessment typically takes 45 minutes to 1 hour.

The ADOS-2 assesses current social skills (e.g. non-verbal communication, social initiations, social responsiveness) and any potential restricted and repetitive interests, activities and behaviours (e.g. strong interests, compulsions or rituals, repetitive behaviours).

For children, it primarily includes play-based activities. For adolescents and adults, the assessment is structured as a discussion between the clinician and the individual on a range of topics.

Diagnostic tools we use

ADI-R

The Autism Diagnostic Interview-Revised (ADI-R) is a comprehensive parent/carer interview.

The interview takes 1.5 to 2 hours and covers:

- Background information (i.e. family, pregnancy, health, education, previous diagnoses, prescribed medications)
- Current concerns
- Developmental milestones (i.e. walking, talking, toilet training)
- Current language level
- Play skills (i.e. imaginative play)
- Social skills (e.g. interest in peers, friendships, social interactions, empathy, use of eye contact, facial expression and gestures)
- Restricted and repetitive interests, activities and behaviours (e.g. strong or unusual interests, sensory and repetitive behaviours, difficulties with routine changes...)

For individuals over 5 years old, the ADI-R asks the parent/carer to answer the questions based on the individual's behaviour at the age of 4 to 5, as well as their current behaviour.

It can be useful to look through the child's "blue book" or preschool/school reports. Bringing other past reports (e.g., speech pathology, occupational therapy, paediatrician, psychiatrist etc.) may also be helpful.

Diagnostic tools we use

ABAS-3

The Adaptive Behaviour Assessment System - Third Edition (ABAS-3) is a standardised parent/carer self-report tool that provides a picture of an individual's adaptive skills across the lifespan.

A link to the ABAS-3 is sent to via email prior to the assessment, and it may take 20 to 45 minutes to complete.

Its aim is to assess an individual's adaptive skills (otherwise known as daily living skills or functional skills), including their ability to complete daily activities in areas such as social functioning, academics, community use, self-care, health and safety and, if relevant, functioning at work.

Diagnostic tools we use

Cognitive assessment

A cognitive assessment or intelligence test helps determine an individual's learning capability by identifying cognitive strengths and weaknesses, and can assist with the development of individualised intervention and learning plans.

A cognitive assessment generally takes 1 to 1.5 hours.

We use different versions of the *Wechsler intelligence scales* depending on the age of the person assessed:

- for children aged 2.5 to 7 years, we use the *Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scales of Intelligence* (WPPSI-IV).
- for children aged between 6 and 16 years, we use the *Wechsler Intelligence Scales for Children* (WISC-5).
- for individuals aged 17 and over, we use the *Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scales* (WAIS-III).

The activities involved vary depending on the age, and include a series of tasks designed to provide insight into how a person thinks, reasons and processes information.

Some are pencil and paper based tasks, and others involve completing puzzles, answering questions, and solving problems.

Diagnostic tools we use

Developmental assessment

A developmental assessment provides an overview of functioning across a range of developmental domains and are administered to very young children (under 2) or children under 6 who are not able to complete a formal cognitive assessment.

The information obtained during a developmental assessment helps to determine whether the child is delayed in any areas, and whether they would benefit from interventions and supports.

The Aspect Assessment team uses either the *Bayley Scales of Infant Development* or the *Griffiths Mental Development Scales*. Both assessments are play-based and typically take around 60 minutes to complete. They help gain an understanding of the child's speech and language level, cognitive skills, fine motor skills, gross motor skills, and social skills.

Where an assessment is being conducted via telehealth (rather than face-to-face), we use the *Developmental Profile 3 (DP-3)*. This assessment provides information about a child's current functioning in the areas of fine and gross motor skills, daily living skills, cognitive abilities, social emotional skills, and communication abilities.

Face-to-face assessments

My Early Development assessments (under 2 years old)

My Early Development assessments are for very young children where parents are concerned about their developmental progress.

These assessments provide information about the child's functioning across all developmental areas and help determine whether or not early signs of autism are present.

For some children, it is possible to arrive at a diagnostic decision, or a full developmental profile and interventions may be recommended.

As autism cannot yet be definitively ruled in or out, a review assessment at a later date is generally recommended.

What does a Face-to-face Early Development assessment day look like?

An assessment of the child's overall development is conducted, followed by a short break while the clinician scores the developmental assessment.

And ADOS-2 is then carried out, followed by a break for the clinician to score the ADOS-2 and the family to have lunch.

The clinician will interview the parent/carer interview, followed by a break for the clinician to collate all of the information gathered.

Following the break, the clinician will then usually give feedback and recommendations for interventions and/or supports for the individual.



Face-to-face assessments

Autism assessments (age 2 and upward)

An autism assessment helps determine whether an individual meets the criteria for autism and to provide information about their presentation and support needs.

These assessments are suitable for individuals not previously diagnosed with autism or when conflicting opinions are expressed by professionals and clarification is sought.

Autism Assessments can be used to assist in applications for funding (e.g. NDIS eligibility, Disability Support Pension, school supports) and include information to assist with support planning.

What does a Face-to-face autism assessment day look like?

A clinical observation using the ADOS-2 is conducted, followed by a short break while the clinician scores the ADOS-2.

An ADI-R is then be carried out followed by a longer break to allow the family have lunch and the clinician to score the ADI-R and collate all of the information gathered.

Following the break, the clinician usually gives feedback about whether or not the individual meets criteria for a diagnosis of autism and recommendations for interventions and/or supports for the individual.

Note: If you have requested a cognitive assessment as well (IQ test), this will typically be done at the beginning of the day, before starting the autism assessment.



Face-to-face assessments

Review assessments

A review assessment is for individuals previously diagnosed with autism.

These assessments are very useful at times of transition e.g. when commencing primary school or high school or post-school planning) or to assist in applications for funding (e.g. NDIS eligibility, Disability Support Pension, school supports).

They are designed to provide updated information about an individual's strengths and challenges and include recommendations to assist with support planning.

What does a Face-to-face review assessment day look like?

A clinical observation using the ADOS-2 is conducted followed by a short break while the clinician scores the ADOS-2.

A parent/carer interview is then carried out followed by a longer break to allow the family have lunch and the clinician to collate all of the information gathered.

Following the break, the clinician will usually give feedback about the individual's current functioning and recommendations for interventions and/or supports for the individual.

Note: If you have requested a cognitive assessment as well (IQ test), this will typically be done at the beginning of the day, before starting the review assessment.



Assessments through telehealth

... or "teleassessment"

What is telehealth?

Telehealth is an online video service, so you can see, speak to, and interact with the clinician in situations where access to face to face services is unavailable.

Telehealth is used widely for diagnosis and treatment in both medical and allied health services. Aspect Assessments has been delivering high-quality autism diagnostic service online for several years to regional and remote families.

The platform that we use is either HealthDirect Video Call or Zoom, and we will give you the full details on how to access and use the system before the assessment.

Equipment needed for a teleassessment

All you need is access to the internet and a computer or tablet (e.g., iPad) with a microphone and camera.

We may also ask you to put together a few recommended toys for your child to use during the assessment (note: we you will not need to purchase any toys and can use whatever you have at home).

We offer all the same high-quality diagnostic or review assessments through telehealth as we do face-to-face.

We also encourage parents to forward to us any short video clips that they have of their child socialising or interacting with other children, as this gives us further insight into their social skills.

Unfortunately, cognitive (IQ) assessments cannot be offered via telehealth as they require specific equipment and must be done in a face-to-face context.

All other components of the assessment, including a functional assessment, can be conducted via telehealth.

Assessment summary / full report

What they include

Within 4 weeks of the assessment, we will provide a report to the participant/parents/carers as well as the referring agency or practitioner.

Summary report

Autism assessments include provision of a summary report, i.e a diagnostic letter with general recommendations.

A diagnostic letter includes:

- **Diagnostic conclusion**
- **Severity Level**
- **General recommendations regarding appropriate interventions and/or supports**

Full report

A full diagnostic report is highly recommended for second opinion assessments or where there are complicating factors such as other disabilities or mental health problems or complex family backgrounds.

It contains all of the information included in a diagnostic letter as well as:

- **Summary of family, medical, developmental, and educational history**
- **Summary of previous interventions and diagnoses, if relevant**
- **Summary of presenting difficulties, as well as strengths**
- **Full record of information obtained from assessment instruments and from other sources (e.g. teachers)**
- **Tailored recommendations**
- **Functional and support needs table, useful for NDIS planning purposes**

Accessing our services

Our locations



We offer face to face services in

New South Wales

Chatswood, Baulkham Hills
Alstonville (Far North Coast)

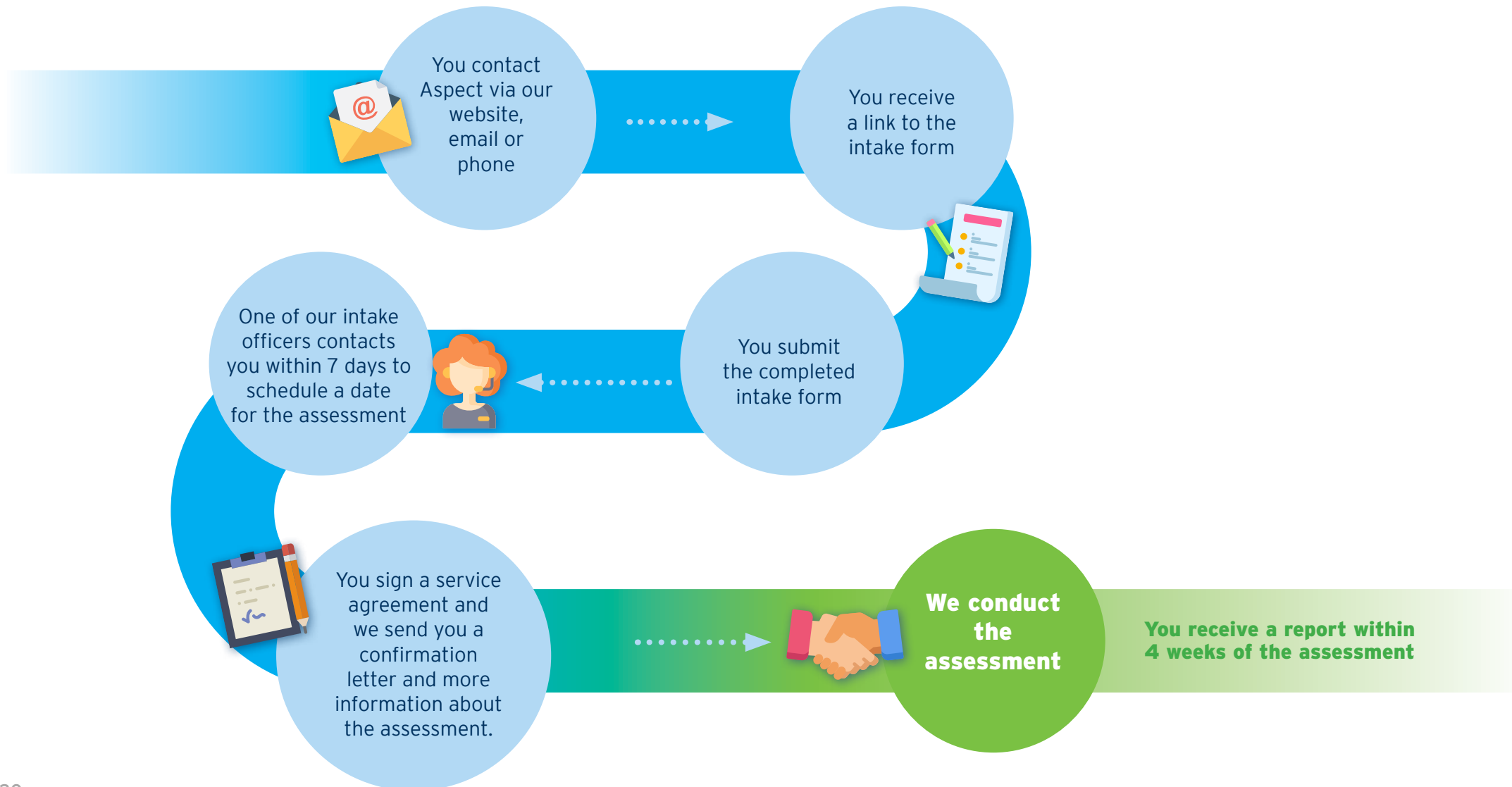
and **Victoria**

Flemington (Melbourne, Victoria)

We also deliver telehealth services across Australia in locations where technically possible.

Accessing our services

Steps before the assessment



Accessing our services

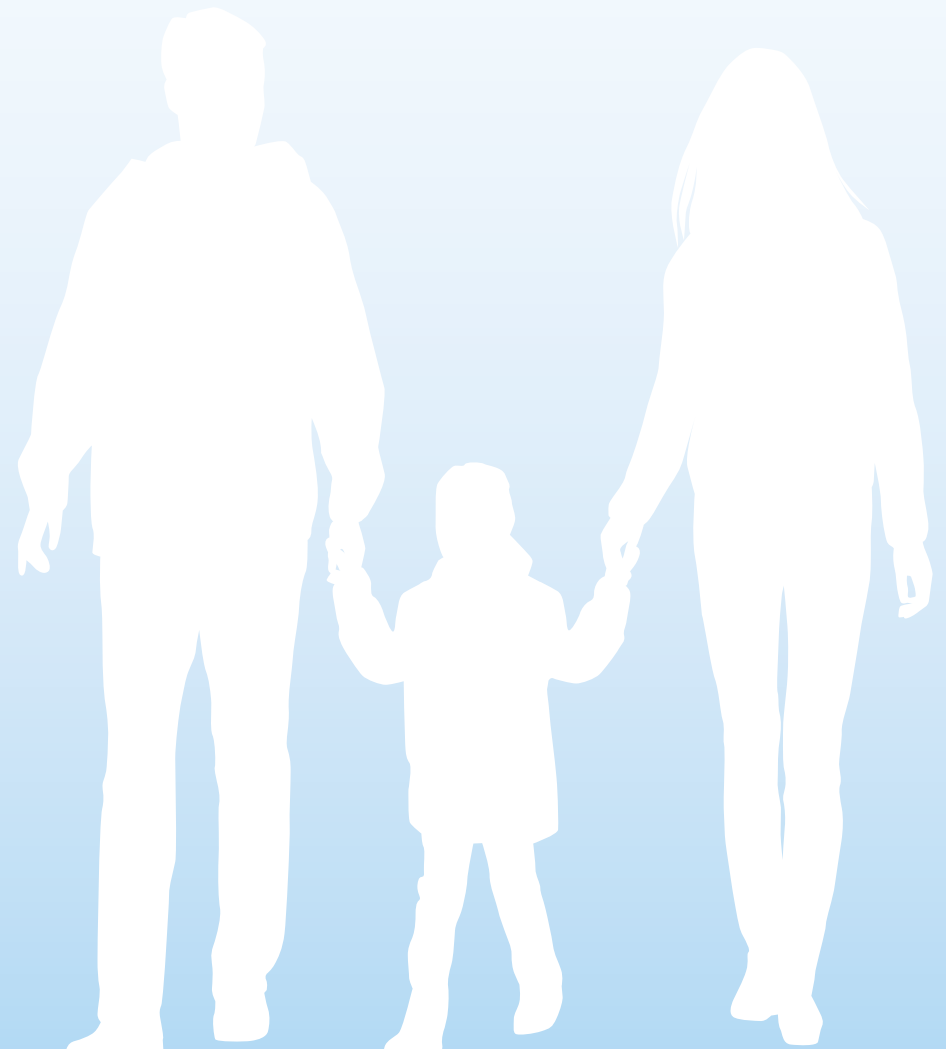
About our waitlist

We value and understand your needs and desire to use our assessments services.

Sometimes we may have high demand for our service and length of waiting lists varies.

We will keep you informed on how we are progressing you through the waitlist.

We will communicate through your preferred style of communication to keep you informed on how we are progressing.



Accessing our services

Supporting you in your language

Assessments

Our assessments are usually conducted in English.
One of our staff member is able to deliver assessments in Cantonese or Mandarin.
For other languages, we can arrange for a translator to be present if required.

Information about our services, how we do our work and our policies

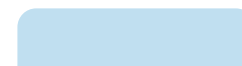
The information on our website and in our brochures is accessible both in:

- Standard English
- 'plain English' / Easy English, with pictures.

To support our non-English speakers who need assistance with interpreting, we use the National Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS).

To learn more about accessing our information in your language, please visit:

www.autismspectrum.org.au/accessibility



Standards and Policies

Good practice for providing supports and services



Aspect is committed to following the NDIS Practice Standards and the National Standards for Disability Services (NSDS).

Aspect complies with all the standards set by the Australian and state governments to make sure you receive a quality service from us.

These standards ensure:

- Individual rights are respected,
- Quality and safety,
- Services are delivered competently.

It includes things like:

- Risk management
- Expected qualifications and competencies for employees
- Complaints systems
- Effective and inclusive governance
- Specialist behaviour support
- Implementing behaviour support plans
- Early childhood supports

For an easy read version of the NDIS National Standards, you may visit: <https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au>

Standards and Policies

Your privacy & confidentiality



Aspect collects only the information we need to provide you with appropriate services and to do our work.

We will not provide your personal information to anyone else without your consent, except when we have to by law.

With your consent, Aspect may use the information you provide to refer you to other services.

The support we give may be limited if you choose not to provide all the information we need to deliver a service.

We may also use your information to report to funding bodies and for research and evaluation without identifying you.

You can review information Aspect keeps about you by requesting an Aspect staff member or manager of the Aspect service you use, to show it to you.

A copy of Aspect's Privacy Statement is available at any Aspect office or [on our website](#), or you may download our [Easy English Privacy Statement](#).

Standards and Policies

Safeguarding the people we support



Aspect is committed to a culture of safety and wellbeing, providing an environment free from abuse, neglect and exploitation of the people we support.

Our staff considers the safety, protection and wellbeing of all people involved in Aspect's services of fundamental importance.

Staff have a duty of care to ensure that reasonable steps are taken to prevent any harm and to promote the wellbeing of all individuals in our services.

This includes being safe online or when you use the internet so you have a positive experience.

Information to keep yourself safe and make good decisions when using the internet can be found at:

www.esafety.gov.au

Information in your language can be found at:

www.esafety.gov.au/languages

Our *Safeguarding the People We Support* policy upholds Aspect's intention to promote ethical, respectful and safe service delivery which meets legislative requirements and achieves positive outcomes for people we support across all Human Rights principles & conventions, as well as relevant state and national legislation.

Standards and Policies

How we handle incidents



While Aspect is committed to safeguarding the people we support at all times, there are occasions when an incident may occur.

An incident is an event where:

- an accident occurs that hurts, nearly hurts or causes distress to someone and/or
- someone hurts, nearly hurts or causes distress to another person.

If you are not satisfied with how Aspect handles an incident, the support given or if you have any other concerns, you can follow our [feedback and complaints process](#) or find further support using the [List of Advocates](#).

If an incident does happen, we follow the following steps:

Communication and Support

We let you know what is happening, and who you can talk to or ask questions. We help you find help and support inside and outside of Aspect (including advocates).

Respond

We check everyone is okay and provide first aid if needed. We put in place support for all people involved.

Report

We write an *incident report*, and communicate with other people as required (e.g. police, government, etc.)

Investigate

We look for why the incident happened and what we can do to stop it happening again.

Analyse

We act to fix any problems from the incident and put in place changes to make it better.

Check

We regularly check the changes or fixes are still working.

Standards and Policies

Feedback and complaints



Aspect treats complaints seriously, sensitively and in a timely manner, having due regard to procedural fairness, confidentiality, and privacy.

Your feedback is important to us and provides an opportunity for us to further refine and develop our practices.

We are committed to resolving the matter for the person or people concerned where practicable.

All feedback and complaints are treated with confidentiality and stored subject to applicable privacy laws.

For more information, see our [feedback and complaints process](#).

How can I give Aspect my feedback?

There are many ways to give us feedback, including:

- talking in person directly to Aspect staff
- calling our main office on **1800 ASPECT (1800 277 328)**
- emailing a particular Aspect staff member directly, or emailing Aspect's Customer Service at: customerservice@autismspectrum.org.au
- writing or drawing a letter addressed to Aspect
- contacting us through our social media channels
- filling in a feedback or complaint form - available at your local school or service; or using the contact form on [Aspect's Contact Us page](#).

Standards and Policies

Advocacy



Advocacy for people with disability is acting, speaking or writing to promote, protect and defend the human rights of people with disability.

Advocacy ensures full and equal enjoyment of all human rights, enabling community participation by:

- acting in a partisan manner (being on their side and no one else),
- being primarily concerned with their fundamental needs,
- remaining loyal and accountable to them in a way which is empathic and vigorous (whilst respecting the rights of others),
- ensuring duty of care at all times.

Advocacy services are available through the Department of Social Services (DSS).

The ***Disability Advocacy Finder*** is a web-based application developed to assist people with disabilities, carers and families to search for government funded disability advocacy agencies.

More information about advocacy services on our website at: [List of Advocates](#).

Frequently Asked Questions

When will I be able to know about the assessment outcome?

The clinician conducting the assessment will usually give feedback about the outcome of the assessment on the day.

When more information is required (e.g. from school or therapists), the clinician will ask for consent to speak with the appropriate people. Contacting the other informants will typically take one or two weeks, depending on their availability.

The clinician will then call you to provide feedback and recommendations.

Who do I speak to if I have further questions after the report?

At the end of the feedback session, or upon receiving the written report, you may have further questions for the clinician.

If this is the case, you should always contact the clinician again, and have your queries addressed.

Sometimes it can be hard to take in all of the information provided at once, so don't hesitate to contact the clinician if you need to.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do Medicare rebates apply to assessments?

Children under 13 referred to Aspect for a face-to-face or telehealth autism assessment by a Paediatrician or Child Psychiatrist are eligible for a partial rebate through Medicare under the Helping Children with Autism Package (approx. \$340.00).

To apply for a rebate through Medicare, a written referral letter from the Paediatrician or Child Psychiatrist must be provided to Aspect prior to the day of assessment.

What about private health rebates?

If your private health insurance includes psychological assessment as part of your “extras” cover, you may be able to claim a rebate for telehealth psychological services. It is best to contact your health insurance company to find out whether you are eligible.



We thank you
for taking the time
to read this guide
and we look forward
to working with you...