



Levels of Care in the NHS

There are a number of ways that disabled children and young people will come into contact with the health system. This handout contains some basic information will provide a brief overview of the main pathways into the system, and provide links to more detailed resources.

Levels of Care

NHS services are organised according to levels of care, depending on how specialised a service is.

Primary Care:

This is universal healthcare provided for a local community that is accessed directly.

It includes professionals and services access through a general practice including GPs, practice nurse and some community health professionals such as community children's nurses or community dentists, podiatrists and opticians. Accident & Emergency Departments also provide some elements of Primary Care.

A GP (General Practitioner): GPs are responsible for looking after the health needs of their local population. They work in GP's surgeries with a range of health professionals including other GP's, nurses, healthcare assistants and health visitors to provide health services in their area.

Everyone is entitled to register with a GPs Surgery. Information about local GP Surgery and how to contact them is available on NHS Choices. As a parent you are entitled to register and request appointments for your child.

When your child is born you will be given your baby's NHS number and a "pink card" or FP58 form that is used to register your baby with a GP. If you are not registered with a GP and don't have a "pink card" or NHS number for your child then you can still register and all the information about finding your local GP is available on NHS Choices.

<http://www.nhs.uk/chq/Pages/1095.aspx?CategoryID=68&SubCategoryID=158>

GP's cannot refuse to register you or your child unless they have reasonable grounds to do so. Reasonable ground may be that you live outside the Practice's catchment area or the practice is not accepting any new patients. If you cannot register with a GP for this reason you can register with a different GP in your area. If you still cannot do this you need to contact your local Clinical Commissioning Group who will register you with an available GP in your area. You can find your Clinical Commissioning Group using the NHS Choices website.

<http://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Clinical-Commissioning-Group/LocationSearch/1>

Health visitors: Provide health education and health promotion advice. They can also provide supportive care to you and your family. Some areas have specialist health visitors who have particular experience and expertise supporting families with very young children with an identified condition or disability

School nurse: Every school will have a named school nurse. They provide health promotion and education to school aged children. If your child attends a special school the school may have its own nurse. These nurses are able to give medication and nursing care to your child whilst at school.

Accident and Emergency: A&E services are emergency health services based in hospitals that specialise in emergency medicine. They should only be used for serious health problems or incidents that need immediate attention, and can be accessed by an ambulance or by turning up at the A&E centre.

The Commissioning

Primary Care is commissioned by NHS England (also known as the NHS Commissioning Board)

School Nursing is commissioned by the Local Authority

A&E services are commissioned by your local Clinical Commissioning Group, supported by NHS England.

If you wish to see a GP out of hours then this service maybe Commissioned by your local Clinical Commissioning Group, depending on their contractual arrangements with NHS England.

Secondary Care:

This is more specialised healthcare that requires a referral from primary care to access. In most cases your GP will be responsible for providing a referral to a secondary health care professional. This secondary care maybe based in a community health setting or a local hospital. Secondary Care professionals may include:

Community Paediatricians: a children doctor based in a community setting or a local hospital. They work closely with the other doctors and specialists involved with your child, ensuring that your family's needs are managed and supported at a local level.

Outpatient services including a wide range of therapy services such:

Occupational therapists: Work with children using play and other activities to maximise their abilities in all aspects of daily living, including education. They will assess your child for any equipment required such as wheelchairs, bathing aids and adaptations to your child's environment.

Physiotherapists: Help and support your child if he or she has difficulties with mobility, movement or breathing, caused by illness or surgery. They will assess your child's needs and abilities, set achievable goals and help you to carry out a physical management programme for your child.

Speech and language therapists: They will assess your child's communication ability and advise you on how to offer support.

Secondary Care may also include professionals such as audiologists, specialist feeding teams, continence nurse, clinical psychologists, clinical nurses, wheelchair services

Child Adolescent and Mental Health Services: Most CAHMS are secondary care services and include multidisciplinary teams comprising psychiatrists, community psychiatric nurses, psychotherapists and

psychologists, sometimes social workers and other types of therapists such as speech and language.

The Commissioning

Most secondary health services will be commissioned by the local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

Tertiary Care:

This is highly specialised healthcare services that requires a referral from primary or secondary care, normally this will be your GP or community paediatrician, but may include other secondary health professionals. Tertiary healthcare will normally be based at a more distant hospital or major regional centre and may include:

- Specialist diagnostic services, such as genetics services
- Acute clinical services or specialist emergency services such as a range of paediatric surgery or children's cancer services.
- Specialist treatment centres for children and young people with low-incidence, high cost conditions.

Consultant paediatrician (specialist hospital): This will be a children's doctor based in a larger regional hospital who specialises in a specific type of medicine, e.g. a Consultant Paediatric Oncologist (children's cancer specialist) or a Consultant Paediatric Surgeon. They will lead on your child's treatment when they have a serious health condition. They will play an important role in working with other health professionals in arranging and delivering care for your child.

Specialist nursing teams: These are nurses who have had extra training in certain areas of care. The type of specialist nurses may vary between hospital teams

Child Adolescent and Mental Health Services: Some children and young people may need to use tertiary CAHMS. These services care for more complex mental health problems and include specialised multi-disciplinary services and day unit, highly specialised out-patient teams and in-patient units. They are accessed by a referral from secondary CAHMS.

The Commissioning

Specialist Tertiary services are commissioned by NHS England.