



## **This is Me**

### **Frequently asked questions for parents and families**

#### **What is This is Me?**

'This is Me' is a new tool that looks at a child's strengths and needs, focussing on neurodivergence.

A neurodivergent child's brain processes information in a different way to most people. They may have sensory differences, difficulty sleeping or adapting to a change in routine. They could find it hard to sit still, make friends or say how they feel. All of these things can make school very challenging.

A professional will complete a 'This is Me needs summary', together with the child and their parents, after observing them and talking to them. The professional could be a teacher, special educational needs coordinator (SENCO), family liaison officer or another professional who works closely with your school and has been appropriately trained.

The 'This is Me needs summary' looks at nine different areas. They are: speech and language; energy levels; attention and impulse control; emotional regulation ability; motor skills; sensory skills; adaptability and flexibility; empathising and systemising; and cognitive abilities.

#### **How will 'This is Me' benefit my child?**

'This is Me' will help you and your child's teachers to have a better understanding of your child's needs and strengths.

This will help everyone to understand your child's differences and meet their needs at home and at school. That could involve making adaptations, such as introducing additional breaks, changing the environment or doing more outdoor learning.

#### **Where is 'This is Me' being introduced?**

Colleagues from health and education are working together to implement 'This is Me' in all mainstream schools in Maidstone during this academic year. We then plan to introduce 'This is Me' in schools across Kent and Medway.

#### **Has this been tried anywhere before?**

Yes, this approach has been used successfully in Portsmouth for more than 18 months, with positive feedback from both families and schools. We tested the service

in five schools in Tunbridge Wells, where families and schools also had a very positive response.

**My child is on the waiting list for an autism or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) assessment. Will we lose our place on the waiting list by taking part in 'This is Me'?**

No. If your child is waiting for an assessment for autism or ADHD, they will not lose their place on the waiting list by taking part in 'This is Me'.

**Can my child still get referred for an assessment?**

When 'This is Me' has been introduced in a school, it will be the only method of referral. This means your child will get access to support from a new community team long before they have an assessment, which may not be needed once the support is in place.

Many children will not need a diagnosis at all as 'This is Me' provides personalised support based on a child's needs.

**Why are you changing the way children are referred?**

Over the last few years, demand for autism and ADHD assessments in England has risen at such speed that services are unable to keep up.

In Kent and Medway, some children are waiting many years for an assessment and not getting the support they need. We are changing the process so that we offer support first, rather than children spending many years on a waiting list without help.

Many children may not need to join a waiting list for a diagnosis as they will already have the support they need.

**I think my child has ADHD and needs medication. Will 'This is Me' stop me accessing that?**

No. Many children do not need medication but if your child does need it, 'This is Me' will not stop that happening.

'This is Me' will help parents and schools to manage the needs of children who may have ADHD, which may mean medication is not needed.

**Who do I contact for more information about 'This is Me'?**

Please get in touch with your point of contact at your child's school. They will be able to give you more information and answer any questions you may have.