

What does a cognitive assessment look like in PPALS?

Information for children and young people

A cognitive assessment is a test which looks at your thinking skills and behaviour. This helps us to understand certain difficulties you have, such as:

- Remembering things
- Concentrating or paying attention
- Carrying out certain activities on your own.

We want to find out your strengths and difficulties. We also want to give you some useful tips that could help the people around you understand how to best support you. The assessment has questions to answer, things to look at or remember, puzzles to do and problems to solve. Sometimes it is a bit like schoolwork.

What will appointments/the assessment involve?

Usually, a cognitive assessment takes place over several appointments. Each appointment can last between 1-2 hours, and sometimes longer if you live further away.

During your appointment, you will be asked to complete different tasks, puzzles, and questions. This helps us to find out about how your brain works.



We find out about your brain's **verbal abilities**. Verbal abilities are your brain's understanding of words or language and ability to express yourself.



We learn about your brain's **visual abilities**. This is how you understand pictures, patterns or solve problems that do not use words.



We look at an area called **memory and learning**. This is how well your brain uses information that you have to remember – like doing sums or remembering what you went into the kitchen for.



We explore your **reasoning and ability** skills. These tell us how well your brain can solve puzzles.



We also look at your **processing speed, attention, and concentration**. This area lets us know how fast your brain can think. It is the time it takes for you to learn new skills.



We may ask you to do some other tasks too such as schoolwork (e.g., maths, reading or writing).



We will also ask your teacher and parent/s or caregiver to complete some questionnaires. This information helps us learn more about the things you might find easy or tricky when you are at school and at home.

What will happen after these appointments?

Once you have finished the assessment, we will go away and look at the results. We will then invite you and your parent/s or caregiver back for another appointment to talk through the results and any strategies that could be put in place to help with difficulties (e.g., help at school with maths). We will write a report and give you a copy of this to your parent/s or caregiver. Your consultant and other relevant professionals (e.g., your GP), will also get a copy of the report. It is also useful for us to share this information with your school so they can offer support. Sometimes it might be helpful for the psychologist to join a school meeting or refer you to another team for further support. We will always talk about this during our feedback appointment with your parent/s or caregiver first.

Things to remember for your appointments:

If you use glasses or hearing aids, please bring these with you to the appointment.



You might find some things easy and some things tricky, this is normal.



You are very welcome to ask questions or ask for a break during your appointment.



You can bring a drink and a snack with you for your break.

We are interested to hear from you about the things your brain is good at and the things your brain finds harder.

**Everyone's brain works differently,
and we're interested in finding out how your brain works!**



Adapted by the Paediatric Psychology and Liaison Service (PPALS) at the Royal Hospital for Children and Young People, Edinburgh. With thanks to CAMHS, NHS Lothian.