



The Memory Assessment Service

Information for GPs about
when, why and how to refer



*Supporting you
on your journey...*

What is the Memory Assessment Service?

The Memory Assessment Service (MAS) is a service for people over 18 who are having memory and/or other cognitive difficulties, e.g. language, attention or visuospatial problems, or experiencing behavioural or personality changes.

The focus of the Memory Assessment Service is to determine whether or not the person has dementia and if they do, which type of dementia it is and to develop a support plan to meet current and future needs.

When to refer for a memory assessment?

- If your patient and/or their family member report memory and/or cognitive problems that have been apparent for at least six months and physical health causes have been ruled out.
- If a family member reports behavioural and/or personality changes – more likely to be the case in people under 65.
- If you notice your patient has memory and/or cognitive problems; this may be because of a recent decline in illness self-management skills, because they have forgotten to attend appointments or because they have failed a cognitive screening test.

What should you include on the referral form?

- Information about the memory/cognitive problems.
- Any risks.
- Medical history and current medications.
- Results from dementia screening blood tests, which should not be more than three months old.
- Next of kin contact details.
- If an interpreter is needed and if so, for which language.

How do you explain to your patients why you are referring them?

Patients need to know that they are being referred for an assessment of their memory/cognitive functioning, which involves finding out about their current difficulties and how these affect them in everyday life.

They need to be aware that while there are lots of causes of memory problems

(including depression or anxiety, side effects of medication, physical health causes), the assessment might find that they have a type of dementia.

If they do get a diagnosis of dementia, we will work with them to develop a plan to support them to live well with their illness.

Whilst other people, including you as their GP, might think it is important for them to be assessed, your patient needs to agree to the referral being made.

The assessment process

There are four components to the standard assessment process:

- pre-assessment counselling to ensure the person understands the reason for the assessment, the possible outcomes and most importantly gives their informed consent
- the assessment, which includes clinical history taking, cognitive testing and neuroimaging, if appropriate
- feedback of the assessment outcome in accordance with the person's wishes
- support planning, which outlines support systems and interventions for the person with dementia and their family.

Why refer? The benefits of referring to the Memory Assessment Service

- Your patient gets an accurate and timely diagnosis.
- Useful information on prognosis.
- Identification of reversible causes of dementia/cognitive impairment.
- Treatment with anti-dementia drugs, if appropriate.
- Access to evidence-based non-pharmacological interventions.
- Access to the dementia adviser service.
- Access to support/psychoeducation groups for family carers.
- Participation in relevant research studies.
- Information on affairs management, e.g. power of attorney.
- Access to support services and benefits.

Please remember it is always worthwhile referring your patient. Psychological interventions, medications and social support for both the patient and their family can ensure the person with dementia lives well with their illness.

Please send all referrals for a memory assessment to our Trust's single point of access:

Fax: 0121 301 4001

Email: bsm-tr.referrals@nhs.net

Tel: 0121 301 4000

If you would like to talk to us about whether or not to refer your patient, please give us a call on **0121 301 5440**. We would be more than happy to discuss it with you.

www.bsmhft.nhs.uk

Main switchboard: 0121 301 0000

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