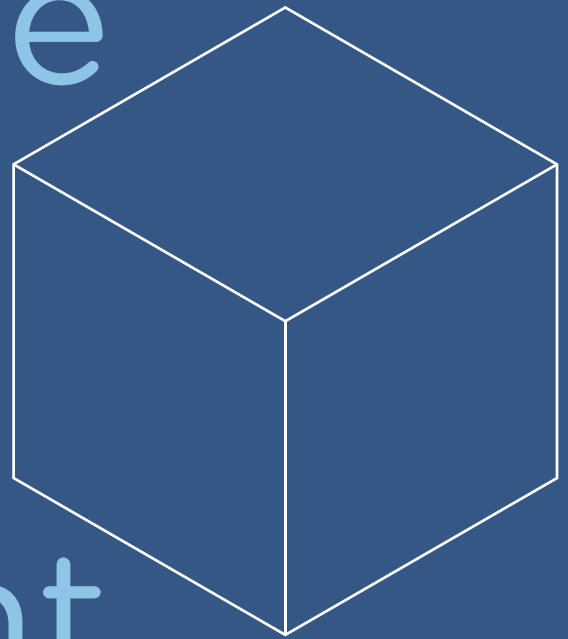


# Newcastle Blue Room Treatment



The Newcastle Blue Room Virtual Reality Treatment is a novel and safe treatment for situation specific anxiety and fears/phobias in 7-17 year olds with ASD and average ability. Treatment comprises four sessions of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy within a personalised immersive virtual reality environment, equipping young people to manage their anxiety.

Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust (CNTW) provide a range of specialist autism spectrum disorder (ASD) services on a regional and national basis. Within these services NTW employ highly specialised health professionals who have considerable formal academic and practice experience in providing care, assessment and treatment of young people who have ASD.

CNTW has a well-established 'track record' of providing nationally recognised and commissioned ASD services in collaboration with locality teams across the UK.

As part of these services CNTW provides the Newcastle Blue Room Treatment – a novel treatment for situation specific anxiety, phobia and fear for children with ASD aged 7-17 years inclusive.

# CNTW provides the Newcastle Blue Room Treatment through a multidisciplinary specialist ASD team. The treatment has been shown to:

- Be acceptable for most young people with ASD and their families
  - Lead to improvements in situation specific anxiety, phobias and fears for most children, meaning real life functional improvements for activities that were previously not possible
  - Have a lasting effect – from the research and clinical information available at present, most children who benefit continue to do so after 12 months
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## What is the Newcastle Blue Room Treatment?

- The treatment is modified cognitive behaviour therapy delivered by a healthcare professional within an innovative immersive virtual reality setting. No goggles are required. A video showing the treatment can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9U-rRC8jc28>
- The treatment is made up from:
  - o Initial preparatory work around emotional understanding and planning therapy/treatment, undertaken at home
  - o Treatment takes place at the treatment suite, run by the local company Third Eye, who work in partnership with the NHS
  - o During treatment, the young person sits inside the 'Blue Room' with a therapist. Projected images on the walls, floor and ceiling of the Blue Room are made to replicate the young person's individual situation specific anxiety – for example, a specific home, school or community based situation that can be visually represented, and causes them anxiety
  - o The health professional works with the young person on cognitive and behavioural strategies that are likely to be helpful in dealing with their anxiety. Parents/carers are able to watch and listen from another room, so they learn about the strategies too and see the therapist implement these

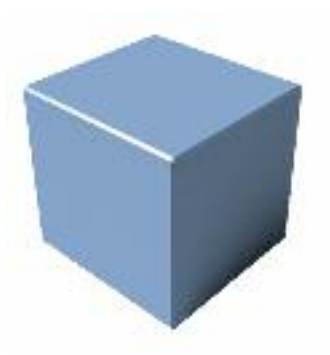


# The Newcastle Blue Room Treatment package includes:

- Detailed and expert assessment of children and young people with ASD to inform the Blue Room Treatment plan
  - o Initial telephone or skype call to discuss treatment
  - o Home visit to discuss and start to plan treatment, work on understanding emotions, and think about which treatment strategies are likely to be effective for the individual child
  - o A meeting with the clinical team, including one of the consultants leading treatment
  - o 4 personalised treatment sessions, each lasting 20-30 minutes – two sessions are carried out on one day, with the next sessions 2-4 weeks later
  - o Initial post treatment discussion with the clinical psychology team
  - o Post treatment discussion with one of the consultants leading treatment
  - o Regular liaison with the local clinical team regarding progress and advice

Most situations that can be visually and audibly represented can be treatment targets. As examples, here are some of the young people's situations/ phobias we have treated in the Blue Room:

- Shopping and managing public spaces
- Going in to school
- Flying, Heights, Balloons and Lifts
- Dogs, Insects
- Crowded buses
- The dark
- Thunder and lightning



# The Newcastle Blue Room Treatment is led by:

Jeremy Parr, Consultant in Paediatric Neurodisability and Senior Lecturer  
at Newcastle University

Together with Newcastle University colleagues, Jeremy Parr designed the Newcastle Blue Room treatment and the research that led to the NHS treatment.

Dr Parr will see children and young people referred for treatment, and supervises the collection of information about children's progress.

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Dr Vicki Grahame, Clinical Lead, Consultant Clinical Psychologist  
and Honorary Senior Lecturer at Newcastle University

Vicki Grahame leads CNDS. Together with colleagues, Dr Grahame has led NHS Newcastle Blue Room treatment delivery.

Dr Grahame will see children and young people referred before and after treatment and will supervise the treatment sessions delivered by clinical psychologists and other staff.

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Morag Maskey, Manager and Research Associate at Newcastle University

Morag has worked with families to plan their treatment for the last 4 years. Morag will lead initial discussions with young people and children, and meets them at home, arranges treatment and collects information about anxiety from young people and parents.

Morag works very closely with Dr Parr and Dr Grahame, the clinical staff undertaking treatment, and the providers of the Blue Room suite.

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Young people and parents will also meet a member of the clinical team who will undertake treatment with the young person in the Blue Room. This might be a specialist nurse, clinical psychologist or assistant psychologist. For continuity, the same person will treat an individual young person throughout the treatment and follow up sessions.

# The Multi-disciplinary team that assists with the delivery of the Newcastle Blue Room Treatment includes:

- Consultant Clinical Psychologist
  - Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist
  - Consultant Neurodisability Paediatrician
  - Clinical Psychologists and Assistant Psychologists
  - Occupational Therapists
  - Speech and Language Therapists
  - Nurse Specialists in ASD
  - Specialist ASD Teacher
  - ASD Parent Support Advisor
  - Administrative Staff
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## Making a referral

### Who can refer for Newcastle Blue Room Treatment?

- Referrals are accepted from all over the UK
  - Referrals should be from locality Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and Child Health/ Paediatric Services, or General Practitioners
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### How to refer, and payment:

- Referrals are accepted by post, fax or secure email using the electronic CNDS referral form which can be accessed online at [www.cntw.nhs.uk/cnds](http://www.cntw.nhs.uk/cnds)
- Telephone enquiries are welcomed before referral

Once a referral has been received, we will contact the young person's local clinical commissioning group (or equivalent) regarding payment for treatment.

## Referral criteria:

- Young people must have a clinical diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder or Asperger syndrome; be aged 7-17 years (under 18 years); be able to understand and use sentence level speech. We will be happy to discuss any questions about eligibility

As the treatment is new, clinical outcomes will be systematically measured to increase the available evidence about its effectiveness.

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## Referral must include:

- Completed Blue Room CNDS referral form
- Details about the young person's situation specific anxiety, phobia/fear (including specific details about the situation that provokes anxiety, frequency of occurrence, impact on the child and family)
- Summary of current diagnoses/formulation

Referrals for Blue Room Treatment are regarding intervention for situation specific anxiety, but not other healthcare needs. Clinical responsibility for other assessments, or management of other health/mental health needs remains the responsibility of the local clinical team.

If you have any queries regarding a referral please contact us on:

Tel: 0191 287 5260

Fax: 0191 287 5261



For further information please contact:

Complex Neurodevelopmental Disorders Service (CNDS)  
Walkergate Park  
Benfield Road  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE6 4QD

Tel: 0191 287 5260

Fax: 0191 287 5261

Secure Email: [CNDSAdmin@cntw.nhs.uk](mailto:CNDSAdmin@cntw.nhs.uk)

Website: [www.cntw.nhs.uk\CNDS](http://www.cntw.nhs.uk/CNDS)