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FASD Referral: A Guide for GPs

When and where to refer a child for FASD assessment, based on NICE QS204 and SIGN 156.

FASD Compass · fasdcompass.co.uk/for-your-gp/

This family has brought you this page because they are concerned their child may have Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). **You are not being asked to diagnose FASD.** You are being asked to consider a referral for assessment.

When to Refer

📜 NICE QS204 Statement 3

"Children and young people with probable prenatal alcohol exposure and significant physical, developmental or behavioural difficulties are referred for assessment." (NICE QS204)

SIGN 156 also recommends referral, made sensitively, when there are significant physical, developmental or behavioural concerns and probable prenatal alcohol exposure (SIGN 156).

🍷 Probable prenatal alcohol exposure

- Reliable clinical observation
- Self-report, or report by a reliable source
- Medical records documenting positive blood alcohol concentrations
- Treatment for alcohol-related problems

Confirmation is not needed when all three sentinel facial features are present: short palpebral fissures, smooth philtrum and thin upper lip.

🧠 Significant difficulties

For example problems with learning, attention, memory or language, poor problem solving, difficulty learning from consequences, social difficulties, small head circumference, or vision or hearing impairment. "Significant" means the difficulties disrupt the ability of the child or family to manage daily life.

Where to Refer

🏥 Local services

NICE suggests referral to community paediatrics, a child development centre or CAMHS, for assessment by a professional with additional training in FASD. Please state the prenatal alcohol history in the referral letter and ask for FASD to be considered. It is often missed in children already diagnosed with ADHD or autism.

🗺️ If there is no local pathway

Many areas do not yet commission an FASD pathway. UK clinical guidelines for alcohol treatment note that children can be referred to the National FASD Clinic (Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust), which accepts referrals from across the UK. Check its website for current referral and funding arrangements.

Recording and Coding

💻 SNOMED CT codes for FASD

Please record the history of prenatal alcohol exposure in the child's notes and share it with other professionals when referring. NHS England introduced these codes in April 2024 (NHS North East and North Cumbria):

- FASD with sentinel facial features: 1894471000000108
- FASD without sentinel facial features: 1894461000000101
- At increased risk of FASD: 2078801000000102

Sources: NICE QS204: nice.org.uk/guidance/qs204 · SIGN 156: sign.ac.uk/media/1092/sign156.pdf · National FASD Clinic: sabp.nhs.uk/fasd · UK alcohol treatment guidelines: gov.uk/guidance/clinical-guidelines-for-alcohol-treatment · FASD coding for GPs: northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk/media/w3yn5qy0/fasd-coding-for-gps.pdf · National FASD for GPs: nationalfasd.org.uk/learn-more/practitioners/gps-and-healthcare-professionals

Last reviewed: November 2026 by Dr Inyang Takon, Consultant Neurodevelopmental Paediatrician. For information only. Clinical decisions remain with the treating clinician.