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Further information

- Read Sue Gerrard's blog at: <https://movingonfrombowly.wordpress.com/>
- Parents Protecting Children is on Facebook at: www.facebook.com/PPPC.UK
- Professor Tommy MacKay is at: www.tommymackay.com
- View the Coventry Grid at: www.drawingtheidealself.co.uk/drawingtheidealself/Downloads_files/Coventry%20Grid%20Version%202%20-%20Jan%202015.pdf



“People who don't know enough about autism find it all too easy, she maintains, to label autistic behaviour as an attachment disorder”

“There's no question that childhood experiences of abuse and neglect can affect behaviour and mental health later in life,” she explains.

“But it's important to recognise that it doesn't work the other way round. Not everyone with behavioural difficulties will have been treated badly as a child.”

Professor Tommy MacKay: “The process of diagnosing autism shouldn't be affected by anyone's personal bias”



Professor Tommy MacKay is clinical director of the National Diagnosis and Assessment Service for Autism Spectrum Disorders in Scotland and co-founder of the National Centre for Autism Studies at the University of Strathclyde.

He says that the process of diagnosing autism shouldn't be affected by anyone's personal bias, as all professionals have to follow international guidelines when they assess patients.

“Autism is a recognised neurodevelopmental disorder,” he says. “It's not meant to be diagnosed by a single practitioner, but by a multi-disciplinary team. “The role of the psychologist on the team

is critical, as you need a formal assessment of any learning difficulties.

“They also need to rule out attachment disorders and to be aware of things like Fabricated and Induced Illness or malingering.

“Usually, these are easily distinguished, except in very difficult cases. However, even specialist teams should gather information and look for a second opinion if something is not clear.”

“It's not meant to be diagnosed by a single practitioner, but by a multi-disciplinary team”

Spelling out differences

Heather Moran, a consultant child clinical psychologist working in the Midlands, got so fed-up with people confusing autism with attachment problems that in 2010 she published 'The Coventry Grid'. It's a chart for professionals to refer to, which spells out the differences between the two conditions.

She suggests that worried parents take someone with them to all meetings concerning their child and, where possible, get things in writing. “If someone starts suggesting there's abuse or neglect, say you want evidence, not opinions.”



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