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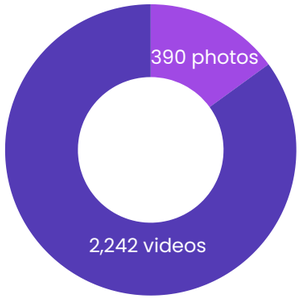
# Impact Report

## Speeding up and supporting Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) diagnosis

NHS Lothian Charity awarded a grant of £9,828 through its Specific Funds and Small Grants Programme to NHS Lothian's Community Paediatric and Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) Team to fund a 12 month vCreate licence. vCreate is a secure video-sharing platform that can be used across a range of health conditions, in this case to support children and their families awaiting ASD assessment. Each year, more than 700 children are referred for an ASD assessment across NHS Lothian, sustained demand has placed significant pressure on services, with access to clinical observations identified as a key source of delay early in the assessment pathway. vCreate helps address this challenge by enabling families, who opt in, to securely share photos and videos of their child in everyday settings via the app.

While face-to-face appointments remain an important part of the diagnostic process, this approach is particularly valuable for children who experience anxiety, distress or communication difficulties in healthcare settings, where their presentation may differ from everyday life. This provides clinicians with valuable assessment information without requiring an in-person appointment. This approach improves both the speed and quality of diagnosis by allowing clinicians to observe behaviours that may not present in clinical settings. Benefits also include reduced waiting times and a less stressful experience for children and their families.

No. of videos and photos uploaded to vCreate by familes.




**468**

families have used or are using vCreate.

**43**

clinicans in the Service have used or are using vCreate to support assessment of ASD.

**£97,520**

has been estimated to have been saved through appointments that were no longer required, based on an estimated average cost of £115 per appointment. There is also potential longer-term social and economic value associated with earlier diagnosis and access to support, alongside reduced stress and inconvenience for children and families.




### What's the impact of a delay in diagnosis?

Long waiting times for ASD assessment are not unique to NHS Lothian, nationwide NHS data published in March 2026 shows that over 270,000 children and young people face waits for ASD assessment and 90% have waited longer than the NHS's recommended 3 month time frame for an initial assessment. A publication from the Public Service Ombudsmen, Improving ADHD and autism services: commissioning with confidence found the impact in the delayed diagnosis goes beyond just health outcomes: "It can postpone access to appropriate support, interventions and educational provision, affecting children's wellbeing, development and school experience while it also creates significant stress, uncertainty and emotional burden for parents and carers seeking answers and support for their child." According to the National Autistic Society children can: "Develop mental health problems like anxiety or depression - and in some cases end up in crisis or even in hospital."

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### Faster assessment and diagnosis

Access to home-based observations earlier in the pathway helps clinicians gather the evidence required for assessment more quickly, reducing delays and supporting earlier diagnostic decisions.

Clinicians report significant reductions in the time required to confirm or rule out a diagnosis."

- Morag Burns, Clinical Lead SLT

I've found it incredibly useful as a clinician, in terms of gathering contextual information that has supported the assessment process in every case I've used it. This has shortened their waiting time."

- Clinician

vCreate allows us to gather contextual information from a young person...that information is then used to populate the DSM-5 (the framework for diagnosing ASD) therefore progressing and speeding up the assessment process."

- Clinician

### Increased clinical capacity

vCreate enables clinicians to gather assessment information remotely, reducing the need for face-to-face observations and allowing clinical time to be used more efficiently, and time and money saved for travel supporting additional financial and environmental savings.

848 scheduled appointments were not needed by families because they used vCreate.

**18%**

of clinicians reported that by using vCreate home visits were not needed.

**28%**

of clinicians reported that by using vCreate nursery or school observations were not needed.

Clinicians can review multiple videos in the time it takes to conduct a single in-person assessment."

- Morag Burns, Clinical Lead, SLT

### Improved clinical decision-making

Videos recorded in familiar settings provide a more authentic picture of children's communication, play and behaviour that's not observed in a clinical environment, leading to quicker and accurate decisions by clinicians, and reduced anxiety and stress for children and their families by reducing need for clinical assessments.

**84%**

of clinicians reported videos were useful or very useful in reaching diagnostic decisions.

We were unable to get clear assessment of child until vCreate allowed her to interact in her own home. It was invaluable in reaching a diagnosis."

- Clinician

The doctor is able to see patterns of behaviour which would otherwise not be seen if we were to attend all appointments in person."

- Family member

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### Reduced anxiety and stress

Clinic appointments can be challenging for many neurodivergent children and their families. By offering more flexible appointment options, this has improved engagement with families who may previously have found it difficult to attend and reduced stress and anxiety associated with attending clinical appointments.

**40%**

of families reported reduced anxiety compared with repeated clinic appointments.

"I think using this service is much easier for all; less stress for my child and myself as a parent."

- Family member

"Having the ability to use this platform has been a positive experience and reduced stress for parents. It avoided the need to bring their anxious child to more appointments than absolutely necessary."

- Morag Burns, Clinical Lead SLT

### Improved quality of care

By offering flexible ways to engage with services and maintain communication throughout the assessment process, vCreate improves the quality of care by enhancing experience for families and strengthening confidence in the service.

**95%**

of clinicians reported vCreate improved quality of care for children and families,

"I've found it useful for building rapport with families and quickly clarifying information from videos."

- Clinician

"It was really easy to use. I appreciated getting a message back from the clinician, it made it seem they were really listening to us."

- Family member

### Decreased impact on personal life

Families can contribute to do assessments from home, reducing travel, travel costs, disruption and the impact of repeated appointments on everyday life.

**20%**

of families reported that vCreate prevented their child missing a day of school.

**22%**

of families reported that vCreate prevented them taking time off work

"It saves time, stress and disruption for our family."

- Family member

### Looking to the future

Future developments will focus on securing sustainable funding, expanding support for families who need assistance using the platform, and continuing to deliver a safe, effective and person-centred service for children and their families. Thanks to Morag Burns, Clinical Lead for Autism Children and Young People's Speech and Language Therapy and the team for collecting and sharing this data. Go to the NHS Lothian Charity website to find out about funding opportunities and support available.

Report compiled by Rebecca Caulfield, Evaluation Manager, NHS Lothian Charity