

## **An overview of ESSENCE-D**

International research currently estimates that at least 1 in 10 individuals globally are affected by one or more neurodevelopmental disorders (NDDs), collectively referred to as ESSENCE. Studies also highlight that missing opportunities for early intervention or support can lead to developmental and behavioural challenges.

A newly developed instrument, ESSENCE-D, by a team of researchers at the Gillberg Neuropsychiatry Centre, University of Gothenburg, is set to transform how children and adults with neurodevelopmental conditions are assessed and supported around the world. Based on the ESSENCE concept—Early Symptomatic Syndromes Eliciting Neurodevelopmental Clinical Examinations—the tool builds on a framework introduced in 2010 by Professor Christopher Gillberg, a globally recognised expert in child and adolescent psychiatry.

The ESSENCE concept was developed to meet the growing and pressing need for a more integrated, holistic approach to assessing co-occurring neurodevelopmental conditions. Traditionally, children have been assessed for conditions such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) via separate, often siloed, pathways—leading to fragmented care and long waits for comprehensive support.

Currently being piloted in countries including the United Kingdom, Sweden, Serbia, and South Africa, ESSENCE-D is designed to streamline this process. The user-friendly online platform collects detailed input from parents and carers, through a series of questions based on over 50 years of research. This generates dashboards which vary depending on who is using them: a specialist dashboard for clinicians and a useful summary dashboard for parents, caregivers and other non-clinical users.

Crucially, ESSENCE-D has the potential to remove the need for multiple pathways. By offering a single, unified overview of a child's neurodevelopmental profile, it enables clinicians to consider multiple conditions simultaneously, and means parents and carers can see a holistic summary their child. This integrated approach can lead to faster, more personalised support for children and families.

The tool's development and pilot implementation are detailed in a peer-reviewed paper authored by lead PhD student Sara Landberg, recently published in the international journal [\*Child & Youth Services\*](#).