Additional file 3

*Parents’ experiences prior to their child’s diagnostic ASD assessment*

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| Themes | Subthemes |
| Noticing worrisome behaviours in child | Behaviours challenging – not normal* In comparison to other children
* Parents Sib+: also in comparison to older sibling with ASD diagnosis

Questions on child-rearing practices (less in parents Sib+) |
|  | Concerns about parents’ responsibility toward behaviours* By parents
* By others
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| ‘Bidirectional’ involvement of professionals  | Parents ask for professionals’ opinion |
|  | Professionals mention their concerns to parents |
| ASD mentioned and diagnostic ASD assessment arranged  | Need of early diagnosis – but other people criticizingWish for ‘the best’ for childTension Uncertainty about* What ASD is
* Match between ASD and child (gradually less doubts in parents Sib+)
* Child’s behaviour part of personality vs. due to ASD

Awaiting conclusive answers from professionals |
| Ambiguous feelings about (consequences of) diagnosis | Anticipated negative implications (already experienced by parents Sib+)* ASD ‘for life’ (but less ‘fixed’ than ID)
* Stigmatising and stereotyping
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|  | Anticipated positive implications (already experienced by parents Sib+)* Treatment-related: educational approach – entitlement to treatment services
* Psycho-relational: understanding – recognition – reduced expectations – exculpation
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