

Adult Autism Diagnosis

The autism diagnosis process can seem like a long and overwhelming experience. This information sheet is designed to give you a step-by-step guide to what you might expect to happen throughout the process.

Could you be autistic?

You may have learnt something about autism and think that it makes sense of some of your own life experiences.

It is up to the individual themselves whether they would like to seek a diagnosis. Some people are happy being self-diagnosed.

Benefits of diagnosis

- It may help you understanding yourself and your experience of the world.
- It may help others around you to understand and support you more appropriately.
- It may correct a possible past misdiagnosis. It may also provide insight into any co-occurring conditions and the most helpful support required.
- You will be entitled to reasonable adjustments from public authorities and employers.
- It may help you to get access to benefits and services.

How to ask for a diagnostic assessment

You can pay to have a **private diagnosis**. However, some service providers may not accept private diagnoses that have not followed NICE guidelines.

You can **make an appointment with your GP**. Your GP will need a reason to refer you for diagnosis, so it is important to explain things as clearly as you can. It might be helpful to make notes. You can bring someone to support you if that would be helpful.

Explain why you think you are autistic and give some examples of differences you have experienced in adulthood and childhood in areas such as social interaction, communication, sensory differences and need for routines or structure.

If your GP agrees to refer you, you should ideally be referred to a multi-disciplinary team which might include a psychologist, psychiatrist and speech and language therapist. However, this may not be possible in all areas, so you may be referred to an individual psychologist or psychiatrist. They should have experience of diagnosing autism to ensure that you are accurately assessed.

Access to **Right to Choose** through your GP might be a possibility worth exploring. Decisions regarding access to this will be made on a local basis, but it may help avoid lengthy waiting times.

Your choices in the NHS - NHS (www.nhs.uk)

If your GP decides not to refer you, you can ask for the reasons why. You can also ask to have an appointment with another GP. If you would like to complain about the referral then you can make a complaint.

The diagnostic assessment

There are several different diagnostic tools that can be used. The clinician will usually ask questions around your developmental history and may ask you to complete some tasks. They may also ask if there is someone who knows you well such as a family member or close friend, who can answer some questions about you.

After the assessment

If you are not diagnosed, the assessment team may send you for further assessment for another condition. If you do not agree with the outcome of your assessment, you can go back to your GP and ask for a second opinion. However, it is important to remember that the second opinion may reach the same conclusion.

If you have been diagnosed as autistic, you may be sent a written report. The team of professionals may also give you information on what services and support are available to you after diagnosis. However, this may not happen for everyone.

You may have lots of questions about your autism diagnosis and you may experience a range of different emotions at different times. Some people like to explore post diagnostic support where they can learn more about autism, what services they can access and how they can meet other autistic people.

“When I was diagnosed at the age of 37. It felt like I had to reorganise my brain. It was as if all my memories both good and bad had been spilled on the floor and I had to reorganise them into different boxes in my brain, of things that wasn’t my fault, where I should have been offered support, where I was happy.”
(Autistic adult)

If you have any questions about your diagnosis, you can call the **Autism West Midlands information helpline on 0121 450 7575.**

Resources

Books and audiobooks:

So you think you're autistic: A workbook for the confused person who's just trying to figure things out by Samantha Stein

Autism in Adults - Luke Beardon

Unmasked: The Ultimate Guide to Autism, ADHD and Neurodivergence by Ellie Middleton (available as audiobook)

Websites:

NICE guidelines: Autism spectrum disorder in adults: diagnosis and management - <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg142>

<https://embrace-autism.com/>

Podcasts:

<https://squarepeg.community/podcast/>

<https://thomashenley.co.uk/media/thoughty-auti-the-autism-podcast>