

# Child 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 your child be autistic?

You may have learnt something about autism and think that it makes sense of some of your child's life experiences. You may have started to recognise early signs of autistic characteristics in your child and are wondering about how to access a diagnostic assessment.

## Benefits of a diagnosis:

- It may help your child to understand and value themselves and their experience of the world.
- It may help others around your child to understand and support them more appropriately.
- It may provide insight into any co-occurring conditions and the most helpful support required.
- Your child will be entitled to reasonable adjustments from public services.
- 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 assessment**. However, some service providers may not accept private diagnoses that have not followed NICE guidelines.

Depending on your local area's developmental assessment pathway children can be referred for an autism diagnosis by their paediatrician, their nursery or school, their parent, GP or health visitor. You can **make an appointment with the relevant professional** to discuss this in more detail. The professional will need a reason to refer your child for diagnosis, so it is important to explain things as clearly as you can. You can bring someone to support you if that would be helpful.

**Explain why** and/or document why you think your child may be autistic and give some examples of differences you have experienced in areas such as social interaction, communication, sensory differences and need for routines or structure. If your child is at school, speak to the school SENCO about what they may have noticed. They may have some information about how your child is doing at school, and they may be able to offer evidence of need and put suitable support in place.

If your child is referred, they should ideally be referred to a multi-disciplinary team which might include psychiatrists, psychologists, speech and language therapists and occupational therapists. These professionals should have experience of diagnosing autism to ensure that your child is accurately assessed. Whilst your child is waiting for their autism assessment it can be useful for them to be referred to other teams such as speech and language or occupational therapy who may be able to identify and support some of their needs.

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](http://www.nhs.uk))**

If a professional decides not to refer your child, you can ask for the reasons why. You can also ask to have an appointment with another professional. 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 such as the ADOS, DISCO, ADI-R or 3Di.

An autism assessment will usually involve questions around your child's developmental history, reports from different settings, a physical examination, and assessments for other conditions where appropriate.

### **After the assessment**

If your child is not diagnosed, the assessment team may send them 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 your child has 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 child's autism diagnosis and you may experience a range of different emotions at different times. Some people like to explore post diagnostic support for their child where they can learn more about their autism, what services they can access and how they can meet other autistic peers and their families. It is important to share your child's diagnostic report with your GP and their educational setting so that they can understand your child's needs and recommended support can be put in place.

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

There are some helpful resources below for further information.

## **Resources**

Books:

***Autism in Childhood: For parents and carers of the newly diagnosed by Luke Beardon***

Websites:

**<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg128>**

**<https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/information-about-autism/early-years/parent-toolkit>**

**[AWM post diagnostic support for parents and carers information sheet link](#)**