

Autism assessment and diagnostic service

Who do we offer the autism assessment service to?

Children aged 4-17

Adults aged 18+

Who may have noticed differences?

Parents/carers

Schools

GPs

Self-reflection

Self-reflection

Partners, family members or friends

Work feedback

What characteristics may have been observed?

Diverse learning styles at school - challenges with maintaining attention or understanding instructions

Engaging in repetitive behaviours, such as lining up toys or repeating certain words and phrases

Having unique responses to sensory stimuli, such as being highly sensitive to certain sounds or textures

Different social approaches - challenges when it comes to making and keeping friendships, and adhering to social 'rules' like taking turns

Preferring routines and predictability, and becoming distressed if there are changes to their routine or environment

Challenges in understanding and expressing emotions

Focusing intensely on topics that interest them

Processing language and communication more literally - challenges with interpreting things like sarcasm, non-verbal cues and figures of speech

Preference for structured routines, and becoming unsettled if there are changes to their routine

Having a tendency to speak bluntly or without a 'filter', which may be perceived as tactless or inappropriate

Different understanding of social 'rules' in various settings, such as at work or social gatherings

Challenges in interpreting social cues and expressing emotions appropriately

How do I start the assessment process?

Psychiatrist assessment

For young people with long-standing difficulties, including mental health challenges that may have required hospitalisation and/or medication

CAMHS triage process with therapist/psychologist

For young people without any history of mental health challenges

Psychological assessment

Adults need to have a psychological assessment before entering the process. This will be conducted by either a psychiatrist or a psychologist. We will discuss who should lead this process during your enquiry

What's involved in the assessment process?

1. An initial screening - using the autism spectrum quotient (AQ-10), to help determine whether our full autism assessment is appropriate

2. Diagnostic assessment - depending on who is leading the process, a DISCO, ADI-R or 3Di tool will be used.

For children, this will include a questionnaire being completed by their school/college. Parents will also be interviewed.

Adults will be asked to provide contact details of people who knew them as children, who will be interviewed.

3. ADOS tool - observing and assessing for autism traits. This is conducted and carried out by two trained clinicians, and focuses on behaviours and/or reactions during the session.

For children, this is done without parents/carers present, and primarily involves observing the child at play.

For adults, the standardised assessment involves a semi-structured interview, occasionally prompted by brief table-based tasks.

What happens after the assessment?

A multidisciplinary team (MDT) meeting takes place, to agree on and formalise a diagnosis. This is made up of the clinicians who led the ADOS and ADI-R stages of the assessment.

A detailed outcome report is then produced, including any diagnosis that was reached.

A feedback meeting is arranged to talk about the outcomes of the assessment and provide any recommendations for further support.

The outcome report can be provided to schools/colleges and employers, if necessary.