



Oxford Health
NHS Foundation Trust

Adult

Psychological Therapies

Buckinghamshire Adult Autism Diagnostic & Intervention Service

What is autism spectrum disorder (ASD)?

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a condition that people are born with, but it often does not become apparent until later in childhood, or even sometimes until adulthood. ASD can present in different ways, often because people have developed ways of masking or compensating for their difficulties. Clinicians are now much more aware of masking and also the different ways ASD can manifest in women. Despite these differences, people with ASD usually share a number of similar challenges such as:

- finding social situations difficult to deal with
- struggling to understand what other people intend or mean
- finding it difficult to deal with changes in their environments or lives, even changes some people might consider small
- preferring to follow rules and routines
- becoming absorbed in interests to an extent that can interfere with relationships or activities
- being very sensitive to certain sensory stimuli (e.g. sounds, lighting, smells or textures)

As a result, people with ASD may have difficulties managing educational and employment opportunities and developing and keeping social relationships.

They may have been referred to specialist health or social care services during childhood, or had extra help in school for support with these difficulties. Some may have developed emotional problems, such as anxiety or depression.

Stage 1: The referral process

Some people find that these sorts of difficulties do not have a big impact on their lives and may decide that finding out whether or not they have ASD will not make much difference, or could cause complications (e.g. at work or in the family). In this case they may decide not to go ahead with a referral to the diagnostic service. It is important to think about the consequences of pursuing a diagnostic assessment and whether or not it will help to know, one way or the other.

Other people find these challenges have a big impact on their lives and decide that a diagnostic assessment would be helpful. If this is the case for you, you can discuss a referral with your GP. Your GP will ask about your personal history, development and current situation to help decide whether a referral to this service is right for you. They will also ask you to complete a questionnaire about some of your current strengths and difficulties and will fill in a referral form. Please ask your GP to state your preferred mode of contact on the referral form (e.g. post, email or telephone).

If you wish to go ahead with a referral, your GP (or other referrer) will contact the Bucks Adult Autism Diagnostic & Intervention Service asking for an assessment.

Stage 2: Reviewing the referral

Clinicians in the service triage all referrals to decide whether or not to progress to further screening. If we decide we are not the correct service, we will ask your GP to inform you.

Sometimes referrals are held up because the necessary information has not been provided. You can ask your GP practice to give you a copy of the referral form so that you can check the correct information was provided to us.

If the referral progresses, you will receive an email or letter with some questionnaires to complete. We will include instructions with the questionnaires and a stamped addressed envelope, or return email address, so that you can return the forms to us. If we do not receive the forms back from you we will assume you do not wish to go ahead with an assessment and will close the referral.



Stage 3: The diagnostic assessment

Clinicians will review your responses and decide whether a full diagnostic assessment is indicated. Due to a high demand for autism assessments, you are likely to have to wait for some time for an appointment, possibly in excess of 12-18 months, although we do all we can to keep waiting times as short as possible.

An ASD assessment involves finding out about your current difficulties but also about what you were like as a child.

The first part of the assessment involves gathering information about your childhood. We will ask if you have a parent, or someone else who knew you well as a child, who can provide detailed information about your early development. With your permission, this person will be contacted separately to answer questions by telephone or via an online appointment. This can take anywhere between 1-3 hours. If there is no one that can provide this information, please let the service know. It may still be possible to proceed, although it will be harder to be certain about whether or not you have ASD. Other information from your childhood, such as clinic reports and school reports, can provide helpful information.

The second part of the assessment involves you attending the clinic in person, or having an online video appointment. We will talk to you about aspects of your life, your strengths and difficulties and ask you to undertake various tasks that are part of a standardised assessment for autism. This part of the assessment lasts anywhere between 2-4 hours, but you will be able to take breaks.

Feedback about the diagnosis is usually provided straight after the second part of the assessment. However, if the assessor feels that further consideration is needed they will inform you of the next steps.

Stage 4: After the assessment

The team will write to you and your GP after the assessment with detailed reports of the different parts of the assessment and the outcome. They may also send copies of the reports to other professionals involved in your care, but will discuss this with you first. If you do not wish for all the information gathered to be shared with your GP, or others involved in your care, please discuss this with the clinician at the point of assessment.

If you are diagnosed with ASD, you will be offered a place in our short-term Post-Diagnostic Group, or you will be sent an information pack if you prefer. You will then be discharged from the service.

Further information and support

Autism Bucks (www.autismbucks.org) is a local charity providing support groups, information and training.

The National Autistic Society (www.autism.org.uk) is a leading national charity providing guidance, support and advice.

For more general support with mental wellbeing you can visit www.bucksmind.org.uk and click the 'How can we help?' tab. There is a lot of helpful information about looking after your mental health and ways to contact Safe Haven if you require urgent help.

Concerns and complaints

We aim to provide you with a high quality service at all times. However, if you have any concerns, complaints or comments about your experience of our service then please tell a member of the team or contact the patient advise and liaison service (PALS) and complaints team on freephone 0800 328 7971.

Contact the Bucks Adult Autism Diagnostic & Intervention Service

Email: externalbucksadultasd@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk

Telephone: 01865 901532

If you would like to have information translated into a different language, please contact the Equality and Diversity Team at: EqualityandInclusion@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk

Arabic يُرجى الاتصال بنا إذا كنتم ترغبون في الحصول على المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بتسويق مختلف.

Bengali আপনি এই তথ্য অন্য ভাষায় বা আলাদা আকারে

পেতে চাইলে অনুগ্রহ করে আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন।

Urdu اگر آپ یہ معلومات دیگر زبان یا مختلف فارمیٹ میں چاہتے ہیں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

Chinese 若要以其他語言或格式提供這些資訊，請與我們聯繫

Polish Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie, skontaktuj się z nami.

Portuguese Queira contactar-nos se pretender as informações noutra idioma ou num formato diferente.

Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
Trust Headquarters
Littlemore Mental Health Centre
Sandford Road
Oxford
OX4 4XN

Switchboard 01865 901 000
Email enquiries@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk
Website www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk

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