

# Autism spectrum disorder in under 19s: recognition, referral and diagnosis

Information for the public

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[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

## Recognising autism in children and young people

More than 1 in 100 people in the UK have autism, a condition that affects how people behave, communicate and interact with others. Signs of autism can vary widely, even in the same child at different stages of their development, so it can be difficult to recognise. It may also go undiagnosed in children who have other conditions like learning disabilities or ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) – despite being more common in these children.

We want this guideline to make a difference to children and young people with autism and their families by making sure:

- doctors and other professionals recognise signs of autism
- your child is referred for assessment and support to a local specialist autism team – this should include a paediatrician, speech and language therapist and a clinical or educational psychologist
- a full assessment is carried out and the results explained to you
- your autism team talks to you about sharing this information with your child's teachers, GP and any other professionals who support them.

## Working with families

Autism teams working with families during assessment and diagnosis should give you clear information and listen carefully to your views and concerns. They should also:

- choose a member of the team to be your main contact and answer your questions or worries during assessment
- give you information and support if your child is diagnosed with autism, and arrange a follow-up visit within 6 weeks to talk about what happens next
- tell you about local services, like support groups and where to get advice about benefits.

If you can't understand the information you are given, tell your professional.

## Where can I find out more?

The [NHS website](#) has more information about autism.

Find your nearest local [Healthwatch](#).

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [Ambitious about Autism](#)
- [National Autistic Society](#)

You may also find the following organisations useful.

- [Autism Education Trust \(AET\)](#), 0207 903 3650
- [Mencap](#), 0808 808 1111

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

We wrote this guideline with people who have been affected by autism and staff who treat and support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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