

TACKLING THE AUTISM ASSESSMENT AND SUPPORT CRISIS

Guide for Child Health Colleagues

The problem

- Long waits for autism assessments leads to child difficulties becoming entrenched, where initial concerns are forgotten or normalised.
- Diagnosis being prioritised over early intervention and support leads to mental health problems and school exclusions for these children, and families are left frustrated and exhausted.
- Inequities in diagnosis and lack of advocacy means girls and children from ethnic minority backgrounds are disproportionately affected.

What you can do as a child health practitioner

- **Adopt a 'needs-led' approach** by supporting CYP showing signs of developmental differences – even without a diagnosis.
- **Engage in multidisciplinary CPD training** on autism, especially the different presentations in girls and ethnic minority groups.
- **Advocate for effective data sharing** using tools like NHS numbers to bridge gaps between health, education, and care services.
- **Participate in place-based solutions** by tailoring strategies to your community's cultural and social contexts.
- **Build cross-sector teams** with schools to deliver assessments on-site and co-design tailored support plans.

Evidence-based insights

There has been a **306% increase** in the number of children waiting for an autism assessment since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Autistic people have a **shorter life expectancy by up to 30 years** and **4 in 5** have co-occurring mental health conditions.

Examples of good practice that you may wish to explore:

SUCCESS Project

Multi-disciplinary teams conducted assessments in schools, reducing barriers, and missed appointments.

Tailored approaches to places

Approaches are adapted by place, offering guidance and methodologies to help local providers create tailored programmes with and for their communities (e.g., Cambridgeshire Girls Pilot, Nottinghamshire Early Identification of Autism).

Psychoeducation for autistic CYP

A programme designed to help autistic children build on their strengths by supporting advocacy, improving professional practice, and creating inclusive environments.

Oral health approaches for autistic CYP

A co-designed autism-sensitive oral health support and training package that addresses the complex challenges of tooth decay prevention and aims to reduce health inequalities through accessible, tailored interventions.

Check out the innovative approaches outlined in this briefing and **consider taking inspiration from these approaches to reflect on how you can help create positive change.**



Scan the QR Code for the report

Please share this guide and start a discussion with your colleagues about how we can all play our role in building a country that works for all children and young people.