



<https://adhdandautism.org/>



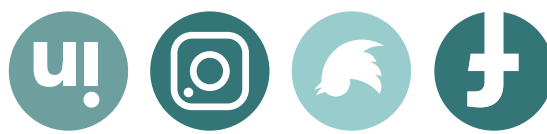
Exploring Autism: Before-Diagnosis Leaflet for Adults



We recognise that language and views in the neurodivergent community are always evolving and aim to reflect that with respect and care.

Note: This booklet was written in June 2025. We try to ensure that the information we provide is accurate at the time of publishing, but some individuals may prefer different language, and language may also have changed since this date, so we are aware this booklet may not be in keeping with these preferences and changes.

This leaflet was created by the Adult Team at CAAS, with input from neurodivergent adults and staff. It aims to provide inclusive, helpful information based on over 25 years of experience and community insight. Our goal is to support, inform, and empower autistic and ADHD individuals, their families, and the wider community, while working to challenge stigma and remove barriers.



Find us
@ADHDandAutism

"A diagnosis is only a piece of paper. It does not come with support, guidance, or understanding. Those were down to me to seek out. The diagnoses were the gateway though, and I truly do not know where I'd be without one." - Tom

You can read more personal stories on how people found the assessment process on our website: adhdandautism.org/get-involved/your-stories/

- 1 Visit GP and ask for referral to Adult Autism Service. Referral Made.
- 2 Clinical Assessment for Autism
- 3 Developmental Assessment
You will be asked to share information about your childhood
- 4 Feedback report / feedback session

Before your appointment, you may be asked to complete questionnaires and share any relevant documents from professionals. If you don't have these, just let the clinicians know.

The practitioner may ask about your childhood and might invite someone who knew you well as a child to contribute. If that's not possible, let them know - they can find other ways to gather that information. They'll also talk with you about your current experiences.

You may be asked to do some practical tasks, but every service is different. If the process hasn't been explained, it's a good idea to contact them.

What to expect in the appointment

Why have an assessment?

You, or perhaps people around you, might be wondering why you might want to go through the assessment process - especially if the GP has told you it may be 2 years or more of waiting. You don't need a diagnosis to access support at CAAS, to learn coping strategies that are tailored to your needs, or to access reasonable adjustments that support you to thrive. However, some people find seeking an autism diagnosis can offer clarity, validation, and a deeper sense of self. Many autistic people spend years feeling different or "wrong," and a diagnosis can bring relief and self-acceptance. You can be diagnosed at any age.

Follow the QR code on the front page for more information about our support.

Top tips at diagnostic appointment

- **You can take someone with you** - if you wish to take someone with you, please let the service know in advance.
- **Prepare notes** - it can be useful to write notes about your experiences in life, you might find it helpful to use the profile in this leaflet.
- **Learn about yourself** - it can be useful to learn about autism through websites, social media and look at what coping strategies are suggested to support people. You don't need to wait for a diagnosis to start looking for support or information.

After the appointment

You may receive your outcome of the assessment at the end of your appointment or later (e.g. via letter). You may also receive a report outlining your strengths and differences and the practitioner's conclusions. If anything in the report seems missing or incorrect, you can contact the diagnostic service to let them know.

If the clinician suggests follow-up support like counselling or therapy, you will be advised how to access this support.

Received a diagnosis?

Check in with your GP afterwards and let them know you received a diagnosis. CAAS services are available whilst you are on the waiting list and after diagnosis. Contact us for more information.

Didn't Receive a Diagnosis?

It may be confusing for you if you haven't received a diagnosis, but you can go to your GP and check if there is an alternative to what you're experiencing.

Email us at adults@adhdandautism.org or scan the QR code to view all our groups and courses.

Support doesn't end at diagnosis, CAAS is here for you every step of the way.



Places of support whilst waiting

We understand that waiting for an autism assessment can take a long time, but you're not alone. There are places you can turn to for support in the meantime:

- **Mental Health Support** - You can speak to your GP or scan the QR code below to find helplines and services available right now if you need mental health support.
- **Further information & resources** - Follow the QR code below for further information that lists all the support we know of in the local area, this board can be accessed via our website.
- **CAAS Support** - We offer support whilst you are waiting for an assessment including
 - Personalised task support
 - Social groups
 - Exploring Autism Group - a dedicated space for those waiting for or considering a diagnosis

"The best thing about coming to Exploring Autism is it allows for sharing ideas, thoughts, challenges and problems with other ND people and covering different topics in a safe space. I find Exploring Autism very useful, probably the best group I attend." - Sabrina

How might autism present?

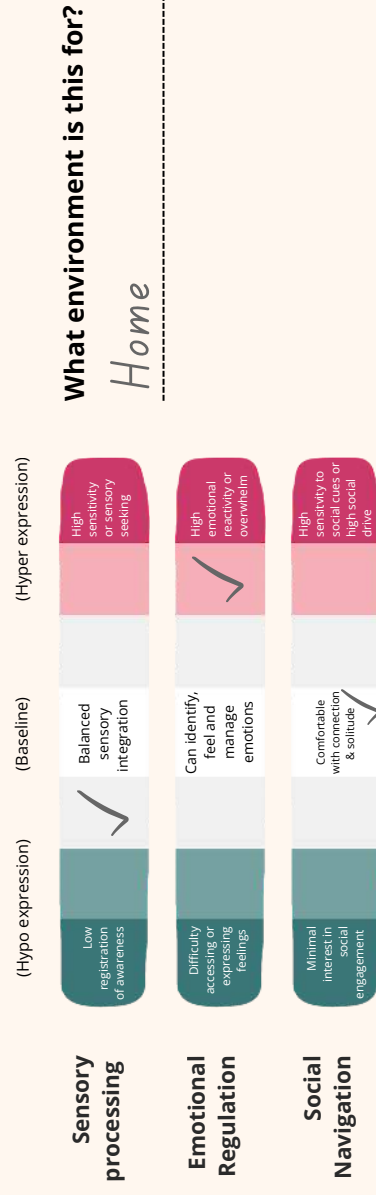
Autism is a lifelong neurodevelopmental condition, sometimes referred to as a neurodevelopmental difference that affects how people communicate, interact, and experience the world.

Every autistic person has a unique profile of strengths and needs - there is no single 'type of autism' or 'way of being autistic'.

EXAMPLE:

This handout helps you reflect on where you sit across a range of typical behaviours and traits. Everyone has a unique mix, and this tool can support self-understanding.

You may find it helpful to bring it to your GP appointment to guide the conversation.



What environment is this for?

Home

- **Hypo = experience to a lesser degree / less sensitivity**
- **Hyper = experience to a greater degree / greater sensitivity**



If you are wondering what other words mean, have a look at our glossary via the QR code.

What does it look like for me?

Think about the environment or situation you are filling this handout out for (e.g. work, family, home etc.) and write it down in the space provided. Then, for each item, tick the box that best represents where you 'sit' on the scale.

DISCLAIMER: *This is a general reflection tool for everyone. It is not diagnostic or specific to any condition like autism or ADHD.*

What environment is this for?

