



 Health Partners

Autism Diagnostic Assessment

Employee journey

September 2024

This information sheet details how an Autism Diagnostic assessment works and what you can expect with the process. This document has critical information to ensure your assessment can go ahead as planned. Please take time to read this document fully and prepare for your assessment.

What is autism?

Autism is a lifelong neurotype that influences how some people communicate and experience the world. The autistic spectrum is broad and diverse, with various characteristics and traits. No two autistic people are the same, and not everyone will relate to all characteristics. Autistic individuals might prefer routine, experience sensory differences, enjoy focused interests, and have unique communication styles and emotional regulation. They may also face executive functioning challenges affecting organisation, planning and flexibility.

Recent awareness has highlighted more subtle autistic presentations. Initially, research focused on women and girls, but it's now understood that more internal autistic experiences can apply across the gender spectrum. Regardless of gender, unmet needs or unrecognised traits can have significant impacts. An external presentation of autism means visible differences in behaviour compared to neurotypical individuals.

It's important to recognise that autism may not always be visible. Traits might be masked, misunderstood or misinterpreted for years. A formal diagnosis can be a crucial and affirming step, helping individuals understand themselves and their experiences better. It also aids others in recognising their unique strengths, differences, and preferences, ensuring appropriate support is provided.



What is an Autism diagnostic assessment?

Your autism assessment is a comprehensive evaluation process designed to determine whether you meet the full diagnostic criteria for a formal diagnosis. The assessment process involves a series of interviews, an interactive observation session and completion of questionnaires.

Our assessments are completed in line with NICE guidelines and therefore are delivered by a multi-disciplinary team meaning sessions are completed by clinicians from different professional backgrounds. The goal is to understand your experiences from your early development, throughout your lifetime and how some of the traits you are experiencing have and continue to impact on you. By gathering such a breadth of information, the multi-disciplinary team will be able to reach a decision as to whether an autism diagnosis is the best fit for you.

What happens before my assessment?

- Our admin team will be in contact with you to book your assessment dates, you will then receive an email confirming the date and time of your assessment, and the internet link to join the virtual appointments.
- You will then receive a pre-assessment questionnaire plus some additional standardised screening questionnaires to complete and return to the wpateam@healthpartners.uk.com inbox. Please return the questionnaires 5 working days prior to your assessment. Please set some time aside to complete the questionnaire as fully as possible, this information is important. All the pre-assessment information provided will be reviewed by your assessing team prior to meeting you.
- Before the assessment it will also be helpful to discuss this with someone who may be able join you for one of the sessions. This will ideally be someone (an informant) who has known you since childhood, a parent or sibling. Or a partner or close friend
- You will receive text message reminders for your assessments prior to the date.

Important!

Before your assessment, please make sure you have:

- A quiet space, free from disruptions and interruptions
- Good lighting, this can be natural or artificial
- A good internet connection
- A personal device with audio and a microphone
- A drink of water

If you have any questions or require some adjustments, please contact our admin team on the email wpateam@healthpartners.uk.com



What happens during my assessment?

The assessment is separated into multiple appointments with two different clinicians:

- Session 1: Initial information gathering – 90 minutes
- Session 2: Clinical Interview, ideally also attended with an informant – up to two and a half hours
- Session 3: Interactive observation session – up to 60 minutes
- Session 4: Feedback session – 30 minutes

In some cases – you may be asked to complete an additional session before a decision is made to allow the clinicians to gather some further information or clarify things that were shared previously.

Session 1: 90 minutes

- This session will last up to 90 minutes and is an opportunity to meet one of your clinicians and share information about what has led you to the assessment process and review your completed questionnaires.
- You will be asked questions about your early life experiences, school and current employment, explore how the potential traits you experience have in the past and continue to impact you in different areas of your life.
- You will be asked some questions about your current mental health and wellbeing.
- This session will also be a chance to confirm if someone who knows you well will be joining for the following session.

Session 2: up to 2hrs 30 mins

- This is more detailed ‘clinical interview’ which is also ideally attended by your ‘informant’.
- Lots of areas will be explored in more detail relating to your experiences, interests and preferences from early childhood to currently. If an informant cannot attend, the appointment can still go ahead.

Session 3: 45-60 minutes

- In this session you will meet your second clinician who will have a more informal conversation with you about your experiences.
- You will also complete some brief activities by looking at different pictures and visuals. These will be shared with you in the session.
- For this appointment, please could you bring 5 small random household items. These should be, for example, a toy car or animal, a pen, a paper clip etc. The purpose of these will be explained to you in the session. If you are unsure, your clinician can support you to gather these during the session.

Once all your appointments are completed, the assessing team will meet to review all the information gathered during the assessment process and reach a diagnostic decision. This meeting will also explore if traits of another condition may be present or may better explain the experiences you have had. This information will be carefully explained to you.

Session 4: Feedback - 30 minutes

- In your feedback session the outcome will be shared with you.
- You will have an opportunity to ask questions and consider some supportive strategies you may require.

What to expect on the day of your assessment?

- At the beginning of each appointment the assessor will introduce themselves.
- Some sessions may be observed by another clinician. You will be introduced to both and the purpose of this in the session.
- The assessor will then complete a short identification check, requesting confirmation of your full name, date of birth and home post code.
- The assessor will explain the assessment process and structure to you, and you will have opportunity to ask questions.
- The assessor will confirm your consent to assess and explain how the report will be provided to you.
- The assessor will conduct the specific assessment as outlined above.
- You will have opportunity to take comfort breaks and ask questions should you need to.

What happens after my assessment?

- A full diagnostic report will be written by both the clinicians who assessed you. This will detail the information shared and observations made. It will also include a full diagnostic summary and some recommendations.
- You will usually receive the report within 10 working days.
- Once you have received the report, take some time to review this.
- A summary report will be generated and provided to your employer (with your consent), briefly outlining the diagnostic conclusion, key information and summary recommendations.

We recommend taking some time to discuss the outcome of the assessment with you line manager.



Potential next steps

This requires an additional charge which will be payable by you as the employee or at the discretion of your workplace.

Post Diagnostic Support

Our post-diagnostic support is up to three sessions with a neurodivergence-experienced clinician. This is an opportunity to talk through the assessment outcome in detail, reflect on the outcome and get a better understanding of the diagnosis. There is also the opportunity for you to consider next steps and we can signpost to additional sources of support.

Psychological support – Mental health

Our neurodivergence-informed psychological therapy is specifically tailored to your needs. We offer treatment for co-occurring mental health conditions, including anxiety, depression, and obsessive-compulsive disorder. We also offer support to help manage a variety of other issues commonly associated with the experience of autistic individuals, such as sleep disturbance, low self-esteem, and rejection sensitive dysphoria. This would consist of an initial assessment to establish your needs, usually over two appointments, followed by a recommendation for additional treatment sessions. Typically, this would be in the region of 6-14 sessions.

Workplace needs assessment

If we feel that there is an impact at work, then we will recommend having a workplace needs assessment (WPA). This is an objective, comprehensive assessment which looks holistically at your strengths and needs to identify adjustments that may be implemented in the workplace.

Coaching

Coaching sessions are usually delivered on a fortnightly basis for a set number of sessions. They consist of one-to-one sessions that focus on topics detailed within your workplace needs assessment. You will be taught skills that could be applied to your workplace and environment and aims to increase:

- productivity
- confidence at work
- retention



Frequently Asked Questions

What if I need to change my appointment?

If you need to cancel your appointment, please let us know at least 48 hours before your appointment to prevent cancellation fees. Cancellation fees will occur for any missed appointments (did not attend) or late cancellations. Please contact us at wpateam@healthpartners.uk.com.

What should I do if I require adjustments for my assessment?

Please contact us regarding adjustments at wpateam@healthpartners.uk.com or call on 01273 013771.

Does my employer have to know about my assessment?

Yes, your employer will have made the referral to us and will be aware of the date/time of your assessment taking place. Often the referrer may be someone in the HR department, so it will be at your discretion to inform your line manager.

Who should I contact regarding my appointment?

If you have any queries regarding your assessment, please contact wpateam@healthpartners.uk.com.

How will my assessment be conducted?

Your assessment will be virtual, using secure video conferencing via Whereby or Microsoft Teams. You will be sent a link to the assessment. Please follow this guide carefully as this is a requirement for the assessment.

I have feedback for my assessor – what can I do?

We want to ensure your experience with us is the best it can be, and as such we welcome feedback. You will be sent a questionnaire after you have received your report. This will allow you an opportunity to provide us with any feedback.

What if I have questions for my assessor after I receive my report?

If you have any queries regarding your assessment, please contact the wpateam@healthpartners.uk.com.



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