NHS
Greater Manchester

Changes to autism and ADHD assessment pathways: Information for parents and carers

What is changing?

From **1 October 2026**, NHS Greater Manchester will use a new approach to review referrals for children and young people who may need an autism or ADHD assessment.

As the first step, a group of experienced health professionals, known as a **multi-agency panel**, will review the information included with your child's referral. The panel will not diagnose your child. It will decide whether an autism or ADHD assessment, another service or other support is the most appropriate next step.

Initially, the panel will include professionals from:

- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, known as CAMHS
- children's community health services

The new approach aims to:

- help children get appropriate support as early as possible
- make decisions more consistently across Greater Manchester
- prioritise children with the highest level of need

How do I make a referral?

Speak to:

- your GP
- your child's school, college or nursery
- another professional who supports your child. Tell them about your concerns. These may relate to your child's:
    - development
    - communication
    - behaviour
    - attention or learning
    - mental health or wellbeing

They can explain the referral process, including what information is needed and how you can contribute information about your child.

What happens after a new referral?

The organisation that receives the referral will arrange for the multi-agency panel to

NHS Greater Manchester,
The Tootal Buildings, 56 Oxford Street, Manchester M1 6EU
www.gmintegratedcare.org.uk

review your child's needs and the information provided. The panel will decide the most suitable next step for your child.

The decision will be based on:

- your child's needs
- the information included with the referral
- the agreed Greater Manchester guidelines for reviewing referrals for assessment
- the experience and judgement of health professionals

What information will the panel consider?

The panel will look at the information provided about your child, including information you have been able to add as part of the referral, such as:

- communication and social needs
- behaviour
- education
- mental health
- safety and wellbeing

How does the panel decide who should have an autism or ADHD assessment?

The panel does not diagnose autism or ADHD. It reviews the referral against the agreed Greater Manchester guidelines and considers your child's needs, the information provided and the judgement of health professionals. It will then decide whether there is a clinical reason for an assessment or whether another type of support or care would better meet your child's needs.

Children and young people with the highest level of need will be prioritised for assessment and support.

Not every child or young person will have the level of need required for an NHS-funded assessment. If your child does not, they will be offered advice and support from local services based on their individual needs.

Who will carry out the assessment and what will it involve?

If your child is offered an assessment, it will usually take place locally through CAMHS or children's community health services, depending on where you live and your child's needs.

CAMHS: CAMHS will carry out assessments for children and young people with moderate to severe mental health needs. They will be placed on a local CAMHS

waiting list and seen according to their clinical need.

Children's community health services: Children's community health services will carry out assessments for children and young people who do not have moderate to severe mental health needs. They will be placed on a local children's community health waiting list and seen according to their clinical need.

Children's community health services are not yet fully available in every area. This means that another approved NHS-funded service may carry out the assessment. These temporary arrangements will help make sure children can continue to receive an assessment and support.

Can my child get support without a diagnosis?

Yes. Your child does not always need a formal diagnosis to get support. The support offered will depend on your child's needs and what is available locally. It may include:

- help at school, college or nursery
- health or social care support
- local services for children with different developmental needs
- community services
- advice for parents and carers
- mental health support

Support is based on your child's needs and is available whether or not they have a formal diagnosis.

What will happen if my child is already waiting for an assessment?

If your child joined a waiting list before **1 October 2026**, the organisation already supporting them will remain responsible for their care.

Services are reviewing their waiting lists to identify children and young people with the highest level of need, so they can be prioritised for assessment and receive the most appropriate support.

All children and young people and their families will continue to have access to local support based on their needs while they are waiting.

Where can I get more information?

Visit https://gmintegratedcare.org.uk/keep-well/greater-manchester-autism-adhd-assessment-changes-2026/.

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You can also:

- use the Greater Manchester autism and ADHD chat support service. It is currently available in Bury, Oldham, Rochdale and Tameside and is planned to be available across all 10 Greater Manchester areas by March 2027. Parents, carers and young people aged up to 18 in areas where the service is available can text the confidential service on **07507 329954** between 9am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday
- contact your local neurodevelopmental support service for advice and to find out what support is available. You do not have to be waiting for an assessment or need a diagnosis to access support.
- contact your local Parent Carer Forum to connect with other families and find information about local support
- find information about the support available in your local area at https://gmintegratedcare.org.uk/supporting-your-child-with-diagnosed-or-undiagnosed-autism-and-adhd/
- speak to your GP
- speak to your child's school, college or nursery
- speak to another professional who supports your child.

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