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NHS
Nottingham and Nottinghamshire
Integrated Care Board

Right to Choose Guidance For Families Seeking An Assessment for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and/or Autism

December 2024

1. **What is "Right to Choose" (RTC)?**

   The "Right to Choose" allows families to pick a healthcare provider for their child's ADHD or Autism assessment. If a GP refers a child, the family can choose which hospital or service to use, including private providers that work with the NHS. The GP will discuss available options to help the family make an informed decision.

   Further information regarding your legal right to choose is available here Patient Choice - NHS

2. **Recognising the need for support**

   Information about autism and ADHD can be found in the links below. Learning more about autism and ADHD may help you recognise whether your child is showing signs of these conditions.

   - ADHD Information: ADHD Info NHS
   - Autism Information: Autism Info NHS

   Talk to your child's teacher, school Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO), or health visitor first. They will support you by following a "Graduated Response" process before deciding if further assessment is necessary.

   More information on the graduated response and local SEND support guidance can be found in the links below:

   Graduated Response

   Nottshelpyourself | SEND Local Offer

   www.asklion.co.uk

3. **Using your right to choose**

   If further assessment need for autism and/or ADHD is identified, schedule an appointment with your GP. The GP will assess whether a referral for the assessment is needed or not based on your child's health and relevant policies. If your GP suspects autism and/or ADHD, they may decide to make a referral.

   The GP will explain the different service options available based on the regularly updated list of approved Right to Choose providers they have, helping you to make an informed choice. You should consider factors like the quality of service, location,

and whether it follows guidelines set by NICE for ADHD and Autism assessments (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) NICE Guidelines ADHD Assessment and NICE Guidelines Autism Assessment .

You might need to fill out a form from the Right to Choose provider you select for your child. This form should be given to your GP so they can include it as part of the referral they submit.

However, please note that neither your GP nor the Integrated Care Board (ICB) can recommend any specific provider.

4. **Legal right to choose**

Based on NHS England guidance, you have the legal right to choose a provider if:

- The GP refers your child for a first outpatient appointment.
- The referral is appropriate for your child's needs i.e. child is showing significant signs of autism and/or ADHD.
- The service is led by a consultant or mental health professional.
- The provider works with the NHS.

5. **When do the rights to choice not apply?**

Based on NHS England guidance, you do not have the legal right to choose a provider if:

- You have self-referred.
- You are already receiving care for the same condition.
- The service is funded by a local authority or primary care.
- The care is urgent or an emergency.
- You or your child is in the armed forces or in a secure hospital under the Mental Health Act.

More information regarding your legal right to choose can be found here the-nhs-choice-framework-what-choices-are-available-to-me-in-the-nhs

6. **The Assessment Process**

The assessment should involve discussions with parents, teachers, and your child, along with observations and standard tests. Before the assessment, gather information about your child's development, behaviour, and any previous evaluations. The assessment should include a physical examination, as well as a review of medical history, especially if ADHD medication is considered.

It is important to note that if the Right to Choose provider doesn't follow the correct steps thoroughly, like doing a physical examination, checking medical history etc, the GP might refuse shared cared of medication. Also, the Community Paediatrician or adolescent Psychiatrist could reject the assessment report, as explained in point 7 below.

ADHD medication should be considered only after exploring other types of support, such as ensuring teachers use ADHD-friendly strategies in the classroom. Medication is recommended only for children aged 6 and older and is therefore not recommended for children under the age of 6.

7. **Cost of assessment and treatment**

The assessment and treatment through the NHS, after a GP referral, are free through Right to Choose. If the provider offers ongoing treatment, your child's GP may take over medication once the child is stable. This is called a "Shared Care Protocol," where the GP and the specialist share responsibility for ongoing care. However, there are instances when GPs may not agree to shared care, i.e. if the GP is not satisfied with the quality of the Right to Choose assessment, so in those cases, the original provider may continue to prescribe medication.

If the provider only offers assessments, your child might need to be referred to another NHS service for treatment, such as a Community Paediatrician or a child and adolescent Psychiatrist to consider medication, which could lead to longer waiting times.

Your GP will need to make this referral. They should include the full assessment report from the Right to Choose provider so the Community Paediatrician or child and adolescent Psychiatrist has enough information to support your child's treatment needs.

However, your Paediatrician/Child Psychiatrist will have responsibility to be satisfied with the quality of the assessment to accept the responsibility for starting or continuing any medications. If they are not, they may decline to take this responsibility. In this situation, there may be a need for a re-assessment by another provider, preferably a locally commissioned NHS service.

It should also be noted that another referral may be required to a local NHS funded service if the support/treatment required isn't provided by the "Right to Choose" provider.

8. **Post-assessment discussion**

After the assessment, you should receive a report with the findings and recommendations. You can ask questions and clarify anything in the report. The provider should work with you to create a plan to manage your child's ADHD or Autism symptoms, which could include therapy, medication, or behaviour management support.

Note: Your child does not need a formal diagnosis to get support and reasonable adjustments at school. However, in cases of suspected ADHD, they do need a confirmed diagnosis to start any specific ADHD medication.

9. **NHS locally funded assessment service pathways**

Whilst the option of a "Right to Choose" assessment might seem appealing over that of choosing an NHS locally funded pathway, there are a few reasons a family might choose not to use a "Right to Choose" provider.

Using the NHS locally funded pathway service often means smoother coordination of care, follow-up, and better use of community resources.

- **Local follow-up care -** If a family uses the local service, they're more likely to have consistent follow-up care and ongoing support from the same team. Using the "Right to Choose" for a private provider might mean they'll have to transfer back to local services later, which could disrupt the flow of support and add to wait times.

- **Cost of extra services -** The local service often has more resources for additional holistic support (like speech therapy or occupational therapy), which may not be available with an external provider chosen through "Right to Choose". Families may end up having to pay for these services separately if they're not covered by the private provider.

- **Waiting times can still apply** - While "Right to Choose" might sometimes reduce wait times, it's not always a guaranteed shortcut. Private clinics might also have long waiting lists due to increased demand, so families could still face delays.

- **Less local knowledge -** Local services are familiar with the community's support systems, schools, and resources, which helps them make referrals and recommendations that suit the family's specific area. An external "Right to Choose" provider may not have this local insight.

- **Potential gaps in communication -** If a family uses a different provider, there can sometimes be a lack of communication between the external "Right to Choose" assessment provider and local health or educational services. This can lead to challenges in coordinating care or ensuring all parts of the system are on the same page about the child's needs.

More information about the NHS locally funded service pathways can be found here:

Nottinghamshire County:

Neurodevelopmental Support Team (NST)

Bassetlaw GDA Pathway

Nottingham City:

Behavioural & Emotional Health Team