

NHS Right to Choose: for autism and ADHD

Referrals for Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) assessments in Sussex have risen significantly over recent years. This has led to waiting times that are much longer than anyone would want.

We know that it is not always clear where to go to ask for support when you, or your family needs it, or what support is available and for whom.

We understand how difficult it is for people and their families/carers to wait for services when there is a need for support.

We are doing everything we can to respond to this urgent need. Health and care organisations in Sussex have taken both immediate and longer-term actions.

For now, local providers have increased the number of people they can see by changing the way some services are run; got help from other organisations to complete assessments; and prioritised waiting lists to provide early help to patients with the most complex needs.

Planning for the longer-term, we know we need more substantial changes that will bring about the biggest improvements for local people. A system-wide [Sussex All Age Neurodevelopmental Pathway Programme](#) has been set up to achieve this.

NHS Right to Choose

Services for people seeking assessment (and related care) for ASC and ADHD in Sussex are provided by four local NHS providers and a range of independent sector providers with NHS contracts under the [national NHS Right to Choose \(RTC\) Framework](#).

The significant increase in need has meant that many more people are opting to be referred to independent providers, contracted by the NHS under Right to Choose (RTC).

This allows you the ability to select a healthcare provider when receiving a referral from a GP or another designated professional for your initial or first appointment.

This right applies provided the referral is:

- For a clinically appropriate physical or mental health service (this means a provider that holds a qualifying NHS contract and provides a service clinically relevant and suitable to the needs of the patient, as identified by the GP in their consultation/referral).
- To providers who are commissioned by the NHS in England.

This helps us to make sure the highest standards of care are consistently maintained.

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

What is Right to Choose?

The national NHS Right to Choose (RTC) Framework allows you the ability to select your NHS-funded healthcare

provider when receiving a referral from a GP or another designated professional for your initial or first appointment.

This right applies provided the referral is for a clinically appropriate physical or mental health service.

When does the right to choose apply?

You can exercise your right to choose when:

- You receive an NHS referral for your initial or first appointment.
- A GP has made the referral (for other services a dentist or optometrist can also refer under RTC).
- The service is led by a consultant (for both physical and mental health) or by a mental health professional (for mental health services only).
- The provider is commissioned by the NHS in England to provide the service needed.

Which providers can you choose from?

You are free to select any appropriate qualified provider across England if the provider is commissioned by the NHS in England to provide the service needed.

This includes NHS organisations as well as private and independent providers.

When does the right to choose not apply?

Exceptions to the right to choose include situations where:

- The patient has self-referred.
- The patient needs urgent or emergency treatment.

- The patient is already receiving care and treatment for the condition.
- The organisation or clinical team they have chosen does not provide the right care for their condition.
- The patient is a prisoner or on temporary release from prison.
- The patient is detained in prescribed accommodation, such as a court, secure children's home, secure training centre, immigration removal centre or young offender institution.
- The patient is detained in a secure hospital setting.
- The patient is a serving member of the armed forces.
- The patient is detained under the mental health act 1983
- The service is commissioned by a local authority outside of a joint commissioning agreement or is delivered through primary care.

Will RTC cover the cost of medication?

Yes, initially. At the end of the titration period (process to establish effective dosage for an individual), a [Shared Care Protocol \(SCP\)](#) is sent from the provider to the GP, to consider taking over the regular prescribing.

For ADHD medicines, for the prescribing to be undertaken by your GP, the RTC provider will need to be able to continue to provide on-going annual (or more frequently if clinically required for an individual) reviews and monitoring as detailed in the relevant SCP.

Not all RTC providers are able to initiate drug therapy/prescribing. Some can only provide a limited service under Right to Choose, giving an assessment/diagnosis only.

This should be considered when you are considering your choice of provider - please refer to the list of providers below for details on which are able to initiate drug therapy/prescribing, and which provide assessment/diagnosis only.

If you had an assessment previously and were not diagnosed, but want a second opinion, can you use RTC?

Regardless of the reason for the referral, it is the referrer (GP) who determines if the referral is clinically appropriate.

Second referrals after a previous NHS-referred diagnosis, would need to be prompted by additional evidence or symptoms that were not previously considered.

Please see the referrers section of the [NHS Patient Choice guidance](#) for more information.

Further questions

If you have any further questions which are not answered here, please [contact us](#).

Pre-approved provider lists

This link will take you to pre-approved provider lists for ADHD and ASC assessment and prescribing/post diagnosis support for children.

<https://www.sussex.ics.nhs.uk/our-work/cyp/special-educational-needs-and-disability-send/support-and-information-while-you-are-waiting-for-neurodevelopmental-services-in-sussex/nhs-rtc-framework-for-autism-and-adhd-referrals/>

* These providers have advised they can only provide a limited service under the NHS Right to Choose framework, whereby it provides assessment/diagnosis only. They are unable to initiate any drug therapy/prescribing. This should be considered when you are considering your choice of provider.

** These providers can provide the full pathway **except** for physical diagnostics and will request GP colleagues carry these out.