

How to Seek a Diagnosis in the UK: Step by Step

TL;DR · QUICK SUMMARY

- In the UK, a GP is usually the first point of contact for pursuing a formal ND diagnosis.
- From there, you can typically choose an NHS route, an NHS “Right to Choose” provider, or a private provider.
- Preparing examples of how traits affect your daily life in advance makes appointments more productive.
- Diagnosis isn't compulsory; you can pause or stop this process at any point.

A Note Before You Read On

This resource offers general guidance and reflects common experience, not professional, legal, medical or financial advice. It is not a substitute for employment law, HR policy, occupational health guidance, or individual professional assessment. Every person's experience of neurodivergence is different, so please adapt anything here to your own situation. The Uniquely Wired Network does not accept liability for decisions, actions or outcomes arising from the use of this material. If you need advice specific to your circumstances, please consult a qualified professional (e.g. HR, legal, medical, or financial advisor).

Why This Matters

The UK diagnosis system has several possible routes, and it isn't always clearly explained. Knowing the steps in advance can save time, stress and false starts.

What This Might Look Like

- Booking a GP appointment specifically to discuss possible autism or ADHD traits.
- Being offered a choice between local NHS services and a Right to Choose provider.
- Deciding to go private after finding NHS or Right to Choose waiting times too long for your circumstances.

The Typical Steps

1. Book a GP appointment.

- Ask specifically to discuss a possible autism or ADHD assessment. Be direct about why you're there.
- It can help to bring written notes, as appointments are often short (routinely around 10 minutes).

2. Prepare examples in advance.

- Note specific, real-life examples of how traits show up, at work, at home, or in relationships.
- Consider bringing results from validated self-report questionnaires (see our companion guide).

3. Discuss your route options with your GP.

- NHS route: referral to your local NHS neurodevelopmental / autism / ADHD service.
- NHS "Right to Choose" route: referral to an alternative NHS-funded provider, under Section 75 of the NHS Act 2006, often faster than local waiting lists, but availability varies by ICB (Integrated Care Board) and can change.
- Private route: self-funded assessment with a private clinic or consultant (see our companion guide on NHS vs private).

4. Get referred and wait for assessment.

- Ask for an approximate timeframe, and how you'll be updated.
- See our companion guide on costs and waiting times for realistic expectations.

5. Attend the assessment.

- This usually involves a structured interview, sometimes questionnaires, and sometimes input from someone who's known you a long time.
- You'll typically receive a written report afterward, whatever the outcome.

Helpful Phrases You Can Borrow

You don't have to use these exact words. Take what fits and leave the rest.

"I'd like to be referred for an autism and/or ADHD assessment. I've written down some examples of how this affects my day-to-day life."

“Could you tell me about my NHS Right to Choose options, as well as the standard local referral?”

Quick Tips

- You can ask your GP about Right to Choose; it isn't always offered proactively.
- Bring written notes; it's easy to forget things in a short appointment.
- Ask what happens while you wait, including any interim support available.
- A referral doesn't commit you to anything; you can change your mind at any stage.
- If your GP is unfamiliar with adult ND assessment, you can ask to see a different GP at the practice.
- Assessment outcomes can take time to process emotionally, whatever the result.

Want to Know More?

- See our companion guides: “NHS vs Private Diagnosis” and “Costs, Waiting Times & What to Expect.”
- Your local ICB (Integrated Care Board) website usually lists current Right to Choose providers for your area.
- Citizens Advice and NHS England's website both offer general guidance on patient rights around referrals.

Before You Go

Navigating this system can be frustrating, and that frustration is a reasonable response to a genuinely stretched system, not a reflection on you.

Whatever the outcome, seeking clarity about yourself is a worthwhile thing to do.