

Untangle the ADHD Assessment Process in England

An easy guide and micro steps checklist for adults

Introduction

Rebecca Loan is a psychotherapist specialising in supporting adults with ADHD and the people around them, and is the founder of Untangle ADHD.

Through her work with clients and ADHD communities, she has seen how confusing and overwhelming the assessment process can feel. This guide was created to break the process into smaller steps and make it clearer where to begin.

How does an ADHD assessment work in England?

Your GP is usually the first step. They can talk to you about the difficulties you are experiencing and, if an ADHD assessment is appropriate, refer you to a specialist service.

In England, you may also be able to use Right to Choose, which means you can ask to be referred to an eligible NHS-funded provider rather than your local ADHD service. You don't need to understand the whole system before getting started.

What do I need to do?

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Book a GP appointment | 7. Check the provider has received it |
| 2. Make a few notes before you go | 8. Check the provider has accepted it |
| 3. Look at your assessment options | 9. Complete any questionnaires |
| 4. Decide whether to ask about Right to Choose | 10. Attend your ADHD assessment |
| 5. Talk to your GP | 11. Receive the outcome/report |
| 6. GP sends the referral | 12. Discuss support and treatment options |

Not sure how to do these steps?

Don't worry. The **Micro Steps** section on the next page breaks down exactly what to do, including how to contact your GP and what to say.

How long will this all take?

Waiting times vary considerably between services and providers.

Your local NHS ADHD service and Right to Choose providers may have very different waiting times. There can also be a separate wait for medication titration after assessment.

Before choosing a provider, check their current waiting times for both assessment and medication, if medication is something you may want to explore.

Getting started - with Micro steps

Many adults with ADHD find processes like this overwhelming.

Making appointments, researching providers and keeping track of forms all require executive functioning skills that ADHD can make more difficult.

Try approaching this guide *one small step* at a time. You don't need to complete everything in one day.

Focus on a single tick box, take a break, and come back to the next step when you're ready.

If it feels difficult to get started, you might find it helpful to ask a friend, partner or family member to sit with you while you work through the steps together.

Step 1 – Book a GP appointment

- ☐ Find your GP surgery phone number or download your GP App
- ☐ Call the surgery or Register on your GP App
- ☐ Ask for an appointment to discuss ADHD symptoms or book via the App

On the phone:

"I'd like to book an appointment with a GP to talk about some difficulties I've been having and whether I could be referred for an ADHD assessment."

On an online form:

"I would like to discuss possible ADHD symptoms and whether a referral for an adult ADHD assessment would be appropriate."

#Tip - You don't need to explain everything to the receptionist or on the form.

Step 2 – While waiting for your appointment

Task A- Make a few notes about why you're asking about ADHD

- ☐ Write down a few difficulties you've noticed
- ☐ Think of some real-life examples
- ☐ Think about how they affect different areas of your life
- ☐ And if similar difficulties were there when you were younger
- ☐ Keep your notes on your phone or take them with you

Some things you might think about and where they impact your life most - work, home, everyday responsibilities, health, relationships ?

- Focus or concentration
- Organisation and time management
- Forgetfulness
- Starting or finishing tasks
- Restlessness or racing thoughts
- Impulsivity

Consider

How long these patterns have been present?

Who might remember what you were like as a child?

Task B - Look at your assessment options

In England, you may be able to choose between your local NHS ADHD service and an eligible Right to Choose provider.

#Tip - It can be helpful to look at these options before your GP appointment, but you don't need to make a decision yet.

On the next page, I'll talk you through the options, what you might want to consider, and how to start making that decision.

WHAT IS RIGHT TO CHOOSE?

In England, if your GP agrees that an ADHD assessment is appropriate, you may have the Right to Choose which eligible provider you are referred to.

This means you don't necessarily have to use the ADHD service in your local area. You may be able to choose another provider that offers ADHD assessments funded by the NHS.

Right to Choose is NHS-funded. It is not the same as paying for a private ADHD assessment.

Which route do I choose?

Your local NHS service

Your GP refers you into the ADHD assessment service for your local area. You don't need to find or choose the provider yourself.

Right to Choose

You choose an eligible provider that offers NHS-funded ADHD assessments through Right to Choose, and ask your GP to refer you to that provider.

#Tip Neither option is automatically the right one. The next step is just to find out a little more about each and decide what matters to you.

What do I need to find out?

To help you decide between your local NHS service and Right to Choose, start with:

How long is the wait?

Waiting times vary between local NHS services and Right to Choose providers.

Would my assessment be online or in person?

Check this if you have a preference.

What happens if I want medication afterwards?

Some services have a separate waiting list for medication after assessment.

Where do I find this out?

For your local NHS service:

Ask your GP at your appointment, or search online for “Adult ADHD service + your area.”

For Right to Choose:

Look at the provider's website. Their Right to Choose page will usually explain their current waiting time, how assessments take place and what happens after diagnosis.

Looking at Right to Choose providers

There are lots of providers, so you don't need to start by searching for them individually.

 **Use this useful shortcut:** ADHD UK keeps a list of Right to Choose providers and their current estimated waiting times [here](#).

ADHD UK – Right to Choose providers and waiting times

Use the list to choose one or two providers you want to look at more closely. Then go to the provider's own website

Look for a page called:

Right to Choose/ NHS patients/ Adult ADHD or GP referrals

Check:

- ☐ Are they currently accepting adult ADHD Right to Choose referrals?
- ☐ What is their current assessment waiting time?
- ☐ If you might want medication, what is their titration waiting time?
- ☐ What do you need to complete?
- ☐ What does your GP need to complete or send?

Found a provider you're happy with?

Look for their Right to Choose referral information or GP referral form.

Save the page or download the forms so you have them ready for your GP appointment.

You don't need to memorise the process - take the information with you.

Step 3 - Going to your GP appointment

Take your notes/phone with you. If you've chosen a Right to Choose provider, also take or have access to their referral information.

You don't need to explain ADHD perfectly or know the right terminology.

What do I say?

You could start with:

"I think I may have ADHD and I'd like to talk about being referred for an assessment."

Your GP will probably ask you some questions about what you've been experiencing and how it affects your life.

Use the examples you prepared earlier. It's okay to look at your notes.

If you want to use Right to Choose

Tell your GP which provider you've chosen:

"I'd like to use Right to Choose and be referred to [provider]. I've brought their referral information with me."

Before you finish

- ☐ Check that the GP is going to make the referral
- ☐ Check they have the Right to Choose provider details
- ☐ Ask if they need anything else from you
- ☐ Ask how you'll know when the referral has been sent



Home and thought of more questions? - Write them here:

Your referral has been sent – what happens now?

Don't assume that sent means you are on the waiting list yet.

There are three useful things to check:

1. SENT

Has your GP actually sent the referral?

2. RECEIVED

Has the ADHD provider received it?

3. ACCEPTED

Has the provider accepted your referral and added you to their waiting list?

What do I need to do?

- ☐ Make a note of the date your GP says the referral was sent
- ☐ Look out for an email, text or letter from the provider
- ☐ Complete any forms they send you
- ☐ Check that your referral has been accepted

Haven't heard anything?

Contact the provider and say:

“My GP sent a Right to Choose referral to you on [date]. Could you check that you've received it and let me know if you need anything else?”

Keep a quick record here:

Referral sent: _____

Provider received it: _____

Referral accepted: _____

Added to waiting list: _____

If you get stuck

Sometimes a referral doesn't move forward as expected. Usually, the first step is simply to find out where it has got stuck.

Here are some of the most common issues people get stuck on.

“The provider can't find my referral.”

Ask your GP surgery:

“Could you check when my referral was sent, where it was sent and whether it can be resent if necessary?”

“The provider says something is missing.”

Ask your provider:

“Could you tell me exactly what is missing and whether I or my GP need to provide it?”

“I've been told I need a health check or test.”

Ask the person/organisation who told you the test was needed:

“What exactly do I need, why is it needed, and who should arrange it?”

If your GP and provider give you different information, ask the provider to put what they need in writing so you can send it to your GP.

“My GP says they can't refer me through Right to Choose.”

Ask your GP:

“Could you explain why Right to Choose doesn't apply in my case?”

Make a note of the reason. You can then check it against the provider's current Right to Choose information.

#Tip If you aren't sure what has happened you don't need to solve the whole problem. Just Start with one question: “Where is my referral right now, and what needs to happen next?”

Next up - Your Assessment explained.



Your ADHD assessment

Once you reach the top of the waiting list, the provider will contact you about your assessment.

Before the appointment, they may send you questionnaires or ask for information about your childhood.

What do I need to do?

- Read the appointment information when it arrives
- Complete any questionnaires they send you
- Check whether they need information from someone who knew you when you were younger
- Make a note of anything you particularly want to remember to mention
- Check the date, time and whether your appointment is online or in person

What happens in the assessment?

You'll be asked about the difficulties you experience now and what things were like for you growing up.

The clinician may ask about different areas of your life, such as work or education, relationships, organisation, attention and everyday tasks. You don't need to prepare the “right” answers.

The purpose of the assessment is to understand your experiences and whether ADHD could explain them.

What happens afterwards?



The provider should explain the outcome of your assessment and what happens next.

If you are diagnosed with ADHD, your next steps will depend partly on what you want to do.

After your assessment

The provider will explain the outcome of your assessment and what happens next. You may also receive a written report.

If you receive an ADHD diagnosis

You don't have to decide what you want to do straight away.

Your next steps might include:

- ☐ Learning more about ADHD and what it means for you
- ☐ Looking at practical support or adjustments
- ☐ Exploring psychological support
- ☐ Considering whether you would like to explore medication

If you want to explore medication

Tell your provider. Ask: "What happens next if I would like to try medication?"

They should explain whether they provide medication titration, how long you may need to wait and what you need to do next.

If you don't receive an ADHD diagnosis

Ask: "What happens next?" The clinician should explain their findings and whether there are other things they recommend you explore.

If you found this guide helpful, follow [Untangle ADHD](https://www.untangleadhd.com) for more practical ADHD information and resources.

If you have worries or questions arising before or after an ADHD assessment, you're also welcome to get in touch and talk them through with me.