

Changes in How Children and Young People are Reviewed and Assessed for Autism and ADHD in Greater Manchester

February 2026

NHS Greater Manchester (GM) is making changes to the way children and young people aged 0 to 18 are reviewed and assessed for suspected autism and ADHD. This is to make sure support is offered earlier based on a child or young person's individual need, and that those with highest need can be seen sooner. These changes are an important step to help manage unsustainable demand in GM for autism and ADHD assessments due to limited availability of financial resource and clinical workforce, which means families are currently waiting too long to be seen without access to support.

Who has been involved in developing the new process for reviewing requests for assessment?

NHS GM designed the new process through a series of in-person and on-line workshops, meetings, and surveys. These involved clinicians, service providers, commissioners, parents, carers, people with lived experience and young people.

What are the benefits of this new process?

The new process makes sure requests for assessments are reviewed in the same way across GM and will benefit children and young people and their families, by prioritising those with the highest levels of need for earlier assessment. It will also mean all children and young people with autism and ADHD related symptoms can access the support they need when they need it, with or without a diagnosis.

When is the new process being implemented?

Plans for introducing the new process for reviewing requests for assessment are being put in place from January 2026. They will be introduced step by step across services that support children and young people with autism and ADHD related needs. Introducing changes gradually is important to make sure children and young people are supported safely during the transition.

How will the process work?

The new process will bring together experienced professionals from different services. First this will include Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and paediatric clinicians. The longer-term plan is for social care and education to be included, so that care is more joined up for families. They will work together to decide the right type and level of support for each child or young person based on their needs. Their decisions will be guided by newly developed clinically agreed criteria, so that decisions are fair and equal across GM.



Will all children and young people get an assessment?

Not every child or young person will meet the clinical criteria for an assessment after the initial review. Not every child or young person will have the level of need or complexity for an NHS funded assessment. However, every child and family will still receive a personalised offer of support through the new needs-led services. Needs-led means that support is based on what a child or young person needs, rather than whether they have a diagnosis. Children and young people with the highest needs will be prioritised for earlier assessment. Children and young people who are eligible for an NHS assessment based on the new criteria but have less urgent needs than others will wait longer for an assessment.

Will everyone get an offer of support?

All children and young people will receive an offer of support from within their own borough where they live. This support will be based on an individual's need with or without a diagnosis

What is the new early support offer and when will it be available?

The new early support offer will be available in phases from January 2026. It is designed to help children with autism and ADHD related needs and their families, by providing them with access to specialists and proven, research-based support.

- Neurodevelopmental roles –
Professionals trained in how autism and ADHD affect thinking, attention, behaviour, and social skills. They assess your child's strengths and challenges and give advice tailored to your child or young person's needs.
- Professionals trained to deliver evidence-based interventions, which means the methods and strategies they use are proven by research to help children and young people.
- Neuro-profiling tool –
Helps identify a child or young person's learning style, strengths, and needs, and provides strategies which support them at home and school.
- Workshops –
Parent workshops on topics such as behaviour, communication, and coping strategies available on-line and in-person.
- A new website
A new GM neurodevelopmental website is launching soon, which will include, easy to read information and dedicated sections for parents and carers, young people and professionals, self-help resources and toolkits, recorded webinars on important topics, online mental health support, and a new chat messaging service.

Who will do the assessment and what will it involve?

Senior CAMHS and paediatric clinicians will look at information from parents, schools, and other professionals to decide what support is needed and how quickly. They will use clinically agreed

criteria to guide their decisions. This means children and young people are directed to the right service at the right time based on their levels of need.

Assessments will continue to take place locally in either CAMHS or community paediatric services, depending on the borough. CAMHS will focus on assessments for children and young people who have moderate to severe mental health needs or those with moderate to severe functional impairment due to distress.

My child has been on a waiting list for a long time, what will happen now?

We know many families have been waiting a long time for assessment and support. Experienced CAMHS and paediatric clinicians will review all children and young people currently waiting for an assessment using the new process and criteria. Where children and young people have been waiting a long-time, services will contact the family to ensure they are reviewing the most up to date information.

Not every child or young person on the waiting list will meet the clinical criteria for an assessment. Not every child or young person will have the level of need or complexity for an NHS funded assessment. This will mean that some children and young people will not remain on the neurodevelopmental waiting list, but all children and young people will receive a needs-led offer of support. This will mean children and young people receive the right level of support to meet their individual needs.

What happens if my child's needs change?

If your child or young person's needs change over time, they can be re-referred to local services either by their GP, school or other professional, dependant on the borough, to request an assessment.

