

Help in a crisis

- [Leeds Crisis Card](#) - lists services you can call, email or visit in person in Leeds if you are experiencing a mental health crisis
- If you need to talk to someone anonymously:
 - [Samaritans](#) - call their number for free on 116 123
 - [Battle Scars](#) - a local service supporting people who are experiencing self-harm
 - [Connect Helpline](#) - open to people in Leeds experiencing mental distress; call 0808 800 1212 from 6pm-2am
 - [Leeds Survivor-Led Crisis Service](#) - they run places you can refer to if in mental health crisis, including Dial House in Halton
 - **West Yorkshire 24-hour mental health helpline** - 0800 183 0558 (Freephone), open 24 hours for anyone aged 18 and over who needs to talk and be listened to

What's available in Leeds?

- [Leeds Mental Wellbeing Service](#) - they provide support and therapies in groups, one-to-one, classes, online support sessions and evidence-based psychological interventions. They are part of Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust
- [Mentally Healthy Leeds](#) - a preventative mental health service that works with people at risk of experiencing poor mental health, led by Touchstone
- [Leeds Mind](#) - they offer a range of different mental health services and support, online and offline
- [The Advonet Group: Independent Mental Health Advocacy \(IMHA\)](#) - free, independent advocacy for anyone who has been sectioned under the Mental Health Act
- [Inkwell Arts](#) - an art and mental health service led by Leeds Mind
- [Live Well Leeds](#) - a community-based support service for people with mild to moderate support needs to manage and/or recover from mental health difficulties*
- [The Market Place](#) - mental health support including groups/one-to-ones for 11-25 year olds in Leeds

**Please note that Leeds Autism AIM is partly funded to deliver autism awareness training for Live Well Leeds' staff team.*

Online and text-based support

- [MindWell](#) - a website with resources and links to mental health support
- [SHOUT](#) - a free text-based mental health helpline - text 85258 to get support
- [Live Well Leeds](#) - they run online groups on a regular basis, often via Zoom
- **Mentally Healthy Leeds** - they run online groups at the time of writing (March 2021)

Applying for NHS funding for specialist therapy

Many people will have mental health difficulties at some point in their life. Often, autistic people may find generic talking therapist services hard to use. They may benefit from accessing autism-specific counselling instead.

Getting funding for specialist counselling

Funding for autism-specific counselling is available through the CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group). They oversee NHS-run GP surgeries in your area. To do this, take the following steps:

- Make an appointment with your GP. Let them know you want to apply for funding.
- Your GP will then apply for funding on your behalf.
- Before that, they will need to say why you need 'specialist autism' counselling.
- The GP will do this by writing a letter to the CCG. It will say why they think you need this support.

The letter then goes to the CCG's 'exceptions panel'. They are the people who decide if you are eligible for funding or not. They meet every few weeks to do this. If your application for funding is successful:

Your GP is given an authorisation code to refer you to a service of your choice. It is done by their 'choose and book' scheme.

The scheme allows you to pick the counselling service you want. However, at the time of writing, long waiting lists and high demand mean some counsellors are not taking new patients.

What to do before your GP appointment

Be prepared before your appointment about trying to access counselling services. Try to think about answers to these questions to give yourself the best chance of getting funding:

- When and where were you diagnosed? What is your diagnosis?
- Do you have examples of when you have struggled to engage with a non-autistic professional? Examples could include counselling/therapies you have used before and why they were not helpful.
- What difficulties are you experiencing now?
- Do you struggle to form relationships? If so, you should be funded for 10 sessions instead of the standard six usually prescribed. Let your GP know if this is the case.

Summary

Prepare what you want to say to your GP before your appointment. This will help them know why you need the funding for counselling.

If successful, be prepared to be on a waiting list. To know how long it will be, ask about waiting times so you know when you will have your first session.

Private autism counselling services

You can access private counselling services without having to go through the NHS. When contacting them, you should be able to ask for their credentials. Things to consider when looking for a private therapist/counsellor:

- There are a few places to search. Using keyword 'autism'; Counselling Directory - <https://www.counselling-directory.org.uk/> and BACP - <https://www.bacp.co.uk/search/Therapists>, or, searching 'counsellors' in the National Autistic Society directory - <https://www.autism.org.uk/directory>
- Questions to ask; How many autistic clients have you worked with? How did you adapt your approach to suit those clients? What experience of autism do you have?
- Finding the right counselling 'fit' is important, so do not be afraid to ask questions or to ask to meet/speak to the therapist before committing to any paid sessions.
- Remember that although you may feel vulnerable and in need of help, it is still a service that you are paying for, so it needs to work for you!
- AIM cannot recommend any specific autism counsellors and have not verified any qualifications or otherwise that may or may not be advertised by individual therapists. The above is for guidance and information only.

Here is a selection of autism-specific counselling services that are available in Leeds:

- [Specialist Autism Services](#) - their autism-specific counselling is normally delivered at their bases in Bradford and Leeds
- [The Horsforth Centre](#) - they have an autism-specific counsellor, but aren't taking referrals at the moment (October 2021)
- [Nick Hoare](#) - they are based in south Leeds. The waiting list for appointments with Nick is about two months, but you can often get an initial appointment set up sooner (October 2021)
- [Trudi Longbottom](#) - Trudi is an autistic counsellor who works with autistic adults. She is AIM's Peer Support Worker, but works as a counsellor independently of AIM. Please note that Trudi's counselling cannot be funded by NHS/CCG funding requests
- **Steph Callaghan at [Atypical Counselling](#)** - a Leeds-based service that works with autistic adults, as well as people with ADHD. They work with adults, children and families. They can usually get people in within a month, but is dependent on what time they can come (October 2021)
- [Angie Fell](#) is a counsellor based in North East Leeds with an interest and experience in supporting the mental health of autistic adults and adults with ADHD. Angie currently has availability for new clients for online/telephone appointments only. Their best days for appointments are Wednesday and Thursday between 9:00am and 6:00pm

Other counselling services can be found by going on the directories linked to further up this page.

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- Registered Charity No. 1126132
- Website: leedsautismaim.org.uk | Email: leedsautismaim@advonet.org.uk

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