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**Broaching the subject of being autistic**

Many health professionals have approached us for advice on having conversations with patients, they suspect may be autistic. If framed correctly, the conversation can be a positive experience, with minimal stress and anxiety to the individual.

Co-produced with autistic adults at Leeds Autism AIM, the following checklist covers what is **important to autistic people in broaching the subject of autism.** It is aimed at helping professionals prepare for and have a conversation, so that people **feel supported, listened to, and understood.**

Your feedback is important to us. If this document has been useful, or if we can make improvements, please let us know.

Contact us: [Leedsautismaim@advonet.org.uk](mailto:Leedsautismaim@advonet.org.uk) or 0113 244 0606

**Pre-Appointment Checklist**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **☐** | Book a double appointment. This will allow for additional processing time, clarifications, and questions. |
| **☐** | Check whether any reasonable adjustments are recorded and needed. |
| **☐** | Check whether a carer, support worker or interpreter is needed. |
| **Print:** | |
| **☐** | Information about autism <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/autism/what-is-autism/> |
| **☐** | Information about diagnostic process in Leeds – Leeds Autism Diagnostic Service (LADS) <https://www.leedsandyorkpft.nhs.uk/our-services/autism-diagnostic-service-lads/information-for-service-users/> |
| **☐** | Information about local support available through Leeds Autism AIM <https://leedsautismaim.org.uk/> |

**Appointment Checklist**

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| --- | --- |
| **Getting started** | |
| **☐** | Check sensory needs/environment (brightness/noise/seating position etc). |
| **☐** | Explain the structure of the appointment. |
| **☐** | Explain they can ask you to pause, stop or repeat anything. |
| **☐** | Explain they can make notes and or you will send a follow up letter or email of points discussed. |
| **About autism** | |
| **☐** | Have they heard of autism or being autistic? |
| **☐** | Would they like you to explain what autism is? |
| **About diagnosis** | |
| **☐** | Be clear that you are not diagnosing them. |
| **☐** | Explain the referral process for diagnosis. |
| **☐** | Explain the diagnostic process. The waiting times, where and how it takes place. |
| **☐** | Explain not everyone receives a diagnosis. |
| **Potential benefits** | |
| **☐** | * May explain some of their medical conditions, that often co-occur amongst autistic people. * May improve the management of certain conditions. Eg. Treatment of mental health conditions, experiences with pain. * May explain why they have felt different to others. |
| **Potential negative aspects** | |
| **☐** | * The process may take up to a year. * Current waiting times are long. * The process and outcome may be unsettling – refer to Leeds Autism AIM provides for post diagnostic support. |
| **Finishing up** | |
| **☐** | Explain that you have finished what you wanted to talk about. |
| **☐**  **☐** | Ask if they need anything explaining again  give them the printed information. |
| **☐** | Explain what will happen next and with any relevant timescales. |
| **☐** | Book in any follow-up appointments with you. |