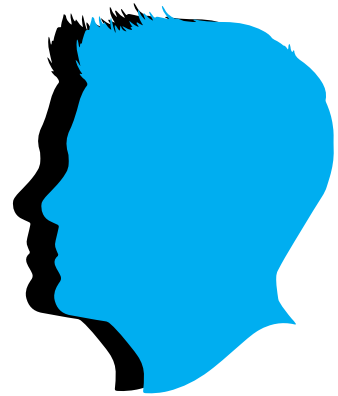


GETTING AN AUTISM DIAGNOSIS AS AN ADULT

WHY SEEK A DIAGNOSIS AS AN ADULT?



Many people live their lives without realising that they may be autistic, which can make them feel like they don't fit in. Although many people have found their own ways to handle things, this can be tough sometimes. Some people are happy without a diagnosis while others feel they need one. Ultimately, the decision to pursue an official diagnosis is entirely up to the individual.



Potential Advantages of Getting an Autism Diagnosis as an adult:

- An autism diagnosis can help individuals access the right support they need in education, work, and healthcare.
- An increased awareness and understanding of autism and its challenges among family, partners, friends, and others in the individual's circle.
- An official diagnosis can empower individuals to connect with and embrace their neurodiverse community, creating a sense of belonging and acceptance.
- Many adults feel a sense of relief when they receive a diagnosis of Autism later in life, as it validates and affirms their unique way of thinking, understanding and being.
- Autism assessments often provide detailed reports that highlight a person's strengths and areas where support may be beneficial. This allows individuals to focus on their strengths and work towards getting the support they need.
- An autism diagnosis can prompt a reevaluation of previous diagnoses, such as mental health disorders, or it can help to understand other co-existing conditions.

Common Traits of Autism in Adults

Some common traits of autism in adults are:

- Finding it challenging to express emotions.
- Difficulty understanding others' thoughts or feelings.
- Struggling to form friendships or preferring solitude.
- Feeling anxious in social situations.
- Appearing blunt, rude, or disinterested in others unintentionally.
- Taking things literally and having difficulty with sarcasm or idioms.
- Maintaining a rigid routine and experiencing significant anxiety or distress when it changes.
- Not grasping social norms or rules, such as not interrupting conversations.
- Avoiding eye contact.
- Getting too close to other people, or getting upset if someone gets too close.
- Noticing minute details, patterns, smells, or sounds others overlook.
- Having intense interests in specific subjects or activities.
- Preferring careful planning before engaging in tasks.

Steps to take to get an Adult Autism Assessment

If you suspect you are autistic and would like to pursue a formal diagnosis, you should note that:

- There are no public assessment teams specifically for diagnosing autistic adults in Ireland.
- Getting an autism assessment in the public system can take a long time.
- Most adults suspecting Autism seek private assessment.
- While most private professionals don't need GP referral, some may, so discussing options with GP is advisable.

It's important to make sure that your assessment is given by a psychiatrist or a clinical psychologist.

What the Adult Assessment Process Looks like

While not all assessments are the same, there are several standardised diagnostic tools available, recognised under DSM5, that will be used during assessments.

- An autism assessment usually involves interviews with a clinical psychologist or psychiatrist to discuss experiences.
- Meetings usually cover background, life, and reasons for suspecting Autism.
- The assessment should involve working together and showing respect, where you have the space to share about your past experiences and how you see the world.
- Some adults may not exhibit obvious Autistic traits due to learned masking, however a professional with a good understanding of Autism will recognise this .
- Some assessments may involve speaking with family members or partners.
- If you would prefer not to involve others you can seek professionals who will respect this decision.
- If you feel uncomfortable with a professional's approach, seeking another one is acceptable

If you would like help or support completing any application form or have any questions, about Autism please contact **Trish Flood**, Autism Support Louth & Meath's Parent Information Office on **0860787356** or trish@autismsupportlouth.com who will help you through this process.