

Information for patients: ADHD – referrals, treatment and support

What Is ADHD?

ADHD is defined as a condition where someone exhibits several traits due to either inattention (difficulty with focus and concentration), hyperactive or impulsive behaviour or a combination of both. These traits must have been present for at least 6 months, must affect a person in multiple areas of their life and should have been apparent from childhood (before the ages of 7-12). They should also cause difficulties for that person emotionally, or in their day to day functioning.

The criteria for diagnosing ADHD is set out in both the DSM-5 (US standard classification of mental health disorders) and ICD-11 (International classification of diseases).

How is it diagnosed?

A diagnosis of ADHD can only be made by a specially trained psychiatrist or paediatrician, or another healthcare professional who has undergone specialist training in diagnosing ADHD.

In order to diagnose ADHD these professionals will need to complete a lengthy and thorough assessment of a person's symptoms and psychological health. This will usually involve tools such as questionnaires that can be completed by the person, their family or school but should also include a thorough clinical assessment.

How is ADHD treated?

Not everyone who is diagnosed with ADHD goes on to receive specific treatment. For some individuals receiving a diagnosis allows them to understand certain behaviours and personality traits, making it easier to develop coping strategies.

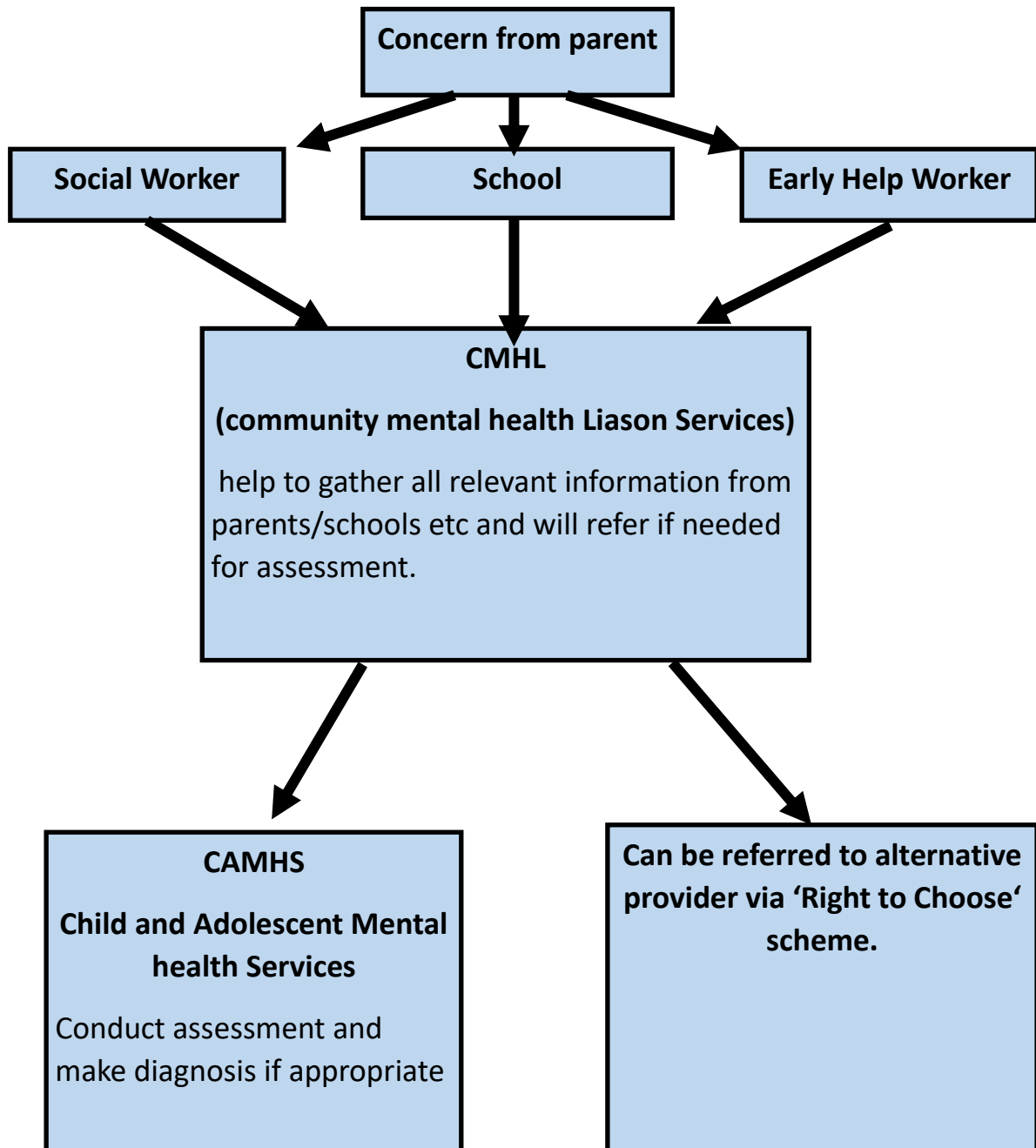
NICE recommends that parents of children diagnosed with ADHD are offered parenting support sessions, in order to help the whole family to develop strategies to support a child with ADHD.

Some patients with ADHD will find psychological therapies, such as CBT to be beneficial. This can be accessed without a specific diagnosis.

Those with severe symptoms may find a benefit from medications such as Methylphenidate and lisdexamfetamine. These can only be started by specially trained health professionals such as psychiatrists or paediatricians with an interest in ADHD. In order for your GP to continue prescriptions, there needs to be a 'shared care agreement' which involves ongoing monitoring by these professionals as these medications can have significant side effects. They may not be suitable for everyone, due to other health conditions and before and during taking them patients will need monitoring of their weight, heart and blood pressure.

How can I be referred for assessment?

Children Under 18



Please note that we recommend accessing referrals via the CMHL as they are able to gather and present all of the relevant information needed. A direct referral to CAMHS from a GP for ADHD assessment in this area is likely to be rejected as the process has not gone via the CMHL.

Your child may not be recommended for referral straight away as the current UK guidance from NICE recommends that in children and young people where ADHD with mild-moderate impact is

suspected a period of at least 10 weeks 'watchful waiting' to observe changes in behaviour versus a sustained pattern of behaviour should be performed before referral is considered. They also recommend in that time that families are given information about local ADHD focused support groups. (Your child does not need a diagnosis of ADHD to access these groups).

What can I do while waiting for assessment for my child?

Unfortunately both the local CAMHS service and other 'NHS Right to Choose' providers are experiencing long wait times for ADHD assessment at present. In the meantime here are some links to help provide advice and support for you and your child.

West Sussex CAMHS Single Point of Access

<https://www.sussexcamhs.nhs.uk/our-services/service-finder/west-sussex-single-point-advice-spoa>

Can be used by anyone (including parents/schools/young people) to access help and support for a child or young person with concerns about their emotional wellbeing or mental health. Not a referral for ADHD diagnosis but can lead to help and support for other concerns about your child's mental health and wellbeing.

Local support groups:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/CrawleyADHD/>

<https://www.reachingfamilies.org.uk/>

<https://www.aspens.org.uk/>

Other information and support

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/adhd/>

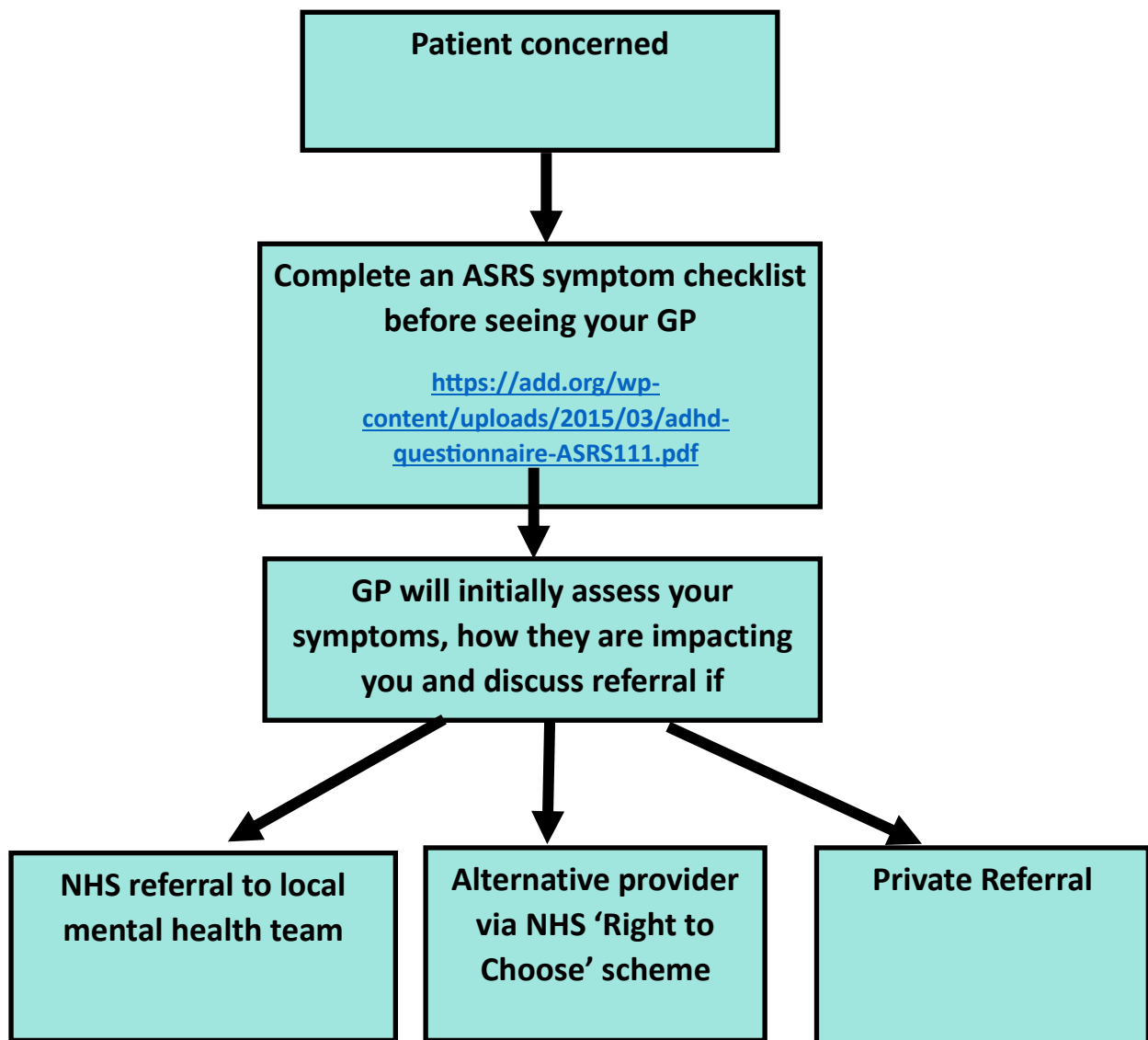
<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/adhd-and-mental-health/>

<https://www.ukadhd.com/>

<https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/>

*Please note ADHD foundation has lots of good information about how to support a child with ADHD however the private 'ADHD screening tests' they offer are **not** necessary for a diagnosis with the above pathway and would be unlikely to speed up the referral process via the NHS pathway.*

Adults over 18



Choosing the right service for you

NHS 'Right to choose'

All NHS patients have a right to choose the provider they are being referred to including private providers who are working with the NHS.

When going through the 'right to choose' pathway with a private provider, **only the initial assessment** would be NHS funded. Some services covered by 'Right to Choose' will **only** offer diagnosis and have no ongoing provision for medication or follow up. You may then have to pay for ongoing care or prescriptions with that provider, or may require referral back to the start of the NHS waiting list if you opt for ongoing NHS care. If referred back to the NHS services having been

diagnosed by a private provider, your diagnosis may be revised on assessment by the NHS practitioner.

Please note that it is important to consider your ongoing care when choosing an initial provider. The medications prescribed to some patients with ADHD can only be prescribed by ADHD trained professionals or by a GP when a 'shared care agreement' has been arranged between the provider and your GP where ongoing consultant input from the specialist is still required. For both of these instances, you would need to continue follow up under the provider in order to continue to receive medication. **This will require you having to pay for ongoing appointments, or for private prescriptions.**

What can I do while awaiting assessment?

The wait times for both the NHS service and most 'Right to choose' providers remain long currently. ADHD UK provide up to date details about the waiting times for each provider here:

<https://adhduk.co.uk/right-to-choose/>

While awaiting diagnosis you may benefit from self support information about coping with ADHD traits and behaviours in everyday life and may even benefit from some CBT or other psychological therapies to help with anxiety and thought patterns which are often associated with ADHD.

Time to Talk Is the local NHS provider for talking therapies and you can self-refer via their website:

<https://www.midsussexhealthcare.co.uk/time-to-talk---talking-therapies-service-in-west-sussex#:~:text=Time%20to%20Talk%20is%20an,therapies%20can%20really%20help%20you.>

Other useful resources:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/adhd-and-mental-health/>

<https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/>

*Please note ADHD foundation has lots of good information about coping with ADHD symptoms however the private 'ADHD screening tests' they offer are **not** necessary for a diagnosis with the above pathway and would be unlikely to speed up the referral process via the NHS pathway.*

References:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng87/chapter/Recommendations>

<https://icd.who.int/browse11/l-m/en#/http%3A%2F%2Fid.who.int%2Ficd%2Fentity%2F821852937>

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/diagnosis.html>