

THE *Cooley* PRACTICE

A GUIDE TO  
ADULT AUTISM  
ASSESSMENTS



The Cooley Practice

T: 0116 403 0083

E: [contact@cooleypsychology.co.uk](mailto:contact@cooleypsychology.co.uk)

W: [cooleypsychology.co.uk](http://cooleypsychology.co.uk)

## Autism Assessments at The Cooley Practice

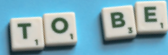
Thank you for choosing The Cooley Practice for your autism assessment.

You can be assured that your assessment will be offered by a multidisciplinary team (MDT) of professionals with expertise in autism and other neurodivergence. We will hold your needs at the centre of the process.

Informed by NICE guidelines, we use evidenced-based assessment tools that are considered 'gold standard' within the profession, offering a valid and reliable assessment to explore and understand your differences and difficulties.



IT'S O.K.



TO BE



DIFFERENT

### What is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?

Autism (also known as 'ASD') is characterised by differences with social communication and interaction, impacting a person's relationships. These social differences are combined with restricted and repetitive behaviours; this may include unusual or intense interests, sensory processing differences, a need for routine, or repetitive body movements known as complex mannerisms. These differences have a persistent and pervasive impact on the person's functioning.

### Who can have an assessment?

We are experienced in assessing children from 30-months up to older adults. The approaches we use to assess autism are different across the lifespan and we have a separate guide for our child assessments. We assess all types of presentation, including those who display 'masking behaviours' that can disguise features of autism. Our adult assessments can usually be completed remotely or in person.

This guide will take you through each step of the assessment process:

- Step 1 – Initial screening
- Step 2 – Information gathering
  - Information from someone close to you
  - Additional information from questionnaires
  - Meeting with you
- Step 3 – Team review
- Step 4 – Feedback and report



## Initial screening

The aim of the screening process is to help us better understand the reason for your referral and to determine whether a full diagnostic assessment of ASD is recommended.

You will be sent a short autism screening questionnaire to gather initial information regarding your previous and current experiences. If you have previously had input from other professionals that may be relevant to your assessment, we will invite you to share any associated letter and reports. This information will be reviewed by a clinical psychologist, who will advise on whether a full diagnostic assessment is recommended.

## Information from someone close to you

Should you proceed with a full assessment, we will gather a comprehensive overview of your strengths and differences from birth to present day. This information will be obtained during what we refer to as a 'developmental history appointment'. Preferably, this appointment should be completed by either a parent or carer, or another adult that has known you since an early age. If this is not possible, the developmental history appointment can be completed with you or a spouse. We will gather information about your family background, medical history, early communication and interaction, and any restricted or repetitive behaviours.



## What to expect from the developmental history appointment?

The developmental history appointment will usually comprise a telephone call lasting approximately 1-hour. Prior to this appointment, you or your nominated informant will be emailed a questionnaire comprising what will be asked during the phone call. It is helpful if you/your informant completes this questionnaire and returns it to us prior to the appointment, but this is not necessary for the appointment to go ahead.

We recognise that it can be difficult for individuals to remember early years information, and there is no need to worry if there are questions that you or the person completing the appointment is unable to recall. It may be worthwhile for the individual to look through your 'Little Red Book', or any previous medical reports and letters prior to the appointment to jog their memory.



## Additional information

Additional information will be gathered via questionnaires to ensure your own perspective is included within the assessment. In some cases, we may use questionnaires to measure co-existing conditions. Autism does not always occur in isolation, and traits and symptoms can often overlap or present similarly. Commonly used questionnaires will screen for:

- other forms of neurodivergence such as ADHD
- mental health such as anxiety and low mood
- specific areas of autism such as repetitive behaviours and interests
- masking behaviours that may be used to 'disguise' autistic traits from others

## Meeting with you

We will meet with you for an interactive assessment known as the 'ADOS' (Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). It aims to gather information about the way you interact, your thoughts on different topics, and your areas of strength and difference. This assessment is carried out by two ADOS-trained practitioners. One practitioner will guide you through the ADOS while the other takes notes.

The ADOS is standardised. This means that the outcome can be interpreted relative to others of the same age and language ability to inform the diagnostic process. The ADOS is widely used across the NHS and is considered a 'gold-standard' tool in assessing autism.

## What can I expect during an ADOS?

The ADOS typically takes around 45-60 minutes to complete, and this can be in person or via video call. You will be invited to engage with several different tasks and topics of conversation. The practitioner will ask you questions about your daily experiences and much of the assessment will feel similar to an informal conversation.

You are welcome to have someone accompany you to this appointment, but where possible, we would recommend they wait in another room. This is to give the practitioners the best opportunity to get to know you, observe how you interact, and hear about your experiences first-hand.

Although this is an assessment, it is important to note that there is no right or wrong way of completing the ADOS, and there are no 'correct' answers to any of the questions you are asked. **It is a priority for us to provide you with a comfortable and relaxed environment during the assessment.**



## Team review

This meeting will comprise clinicians from different backgrounds, such as a clinical psychologist, occupational therapist, and/or speech and language therapist. This is so that more than one area of expertise is involved in concluding your assessment.

It takes place soon after your ADOS appointment, where the professionals involved review the information gathered across the different contexts. Evidence is compared to the diagnostic criteria for Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Following this review meeting, the team may request further information from you or others to ensure the outcome is accurate and appropriately evidenced. You will be kept up to date if there is a need for further information, or if additional professionals are asked to join the review. Where autism is clearly evidenced, a formal diagnosis will be given. This diagnosis will be recognised by the NHS and other professional bodies.

## Feedback and Report

Once the team review has been completed, one of the practitioners involved in your assessment will be in touch to arrange a date and time for a telephone appointment to discuss the outcome. During this phone call you will be told whether or not you are receiving a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder, as well as any other recommendations the team has suggested, such as further assessments or specific interventions. This phone call will be scheduled for 30 minutes to allow you time to ask any questions you may have about the outcome.

Following this phone call, you will receive a comprehensive written report outlining your assessment, including all the information gathered at each stage, and an explanation of how the team came to their diagnostic decision. This report will also contain the specific recommendations that have been made, and direction to additional organisations and resources that you may find helpful.

**Contact the Cooley Practice to book your assessment**

**Call: 0116 403 0083 | Email: [contact@cooleypsychology.co.uk](mailto:contact@cooleypsychology.co.uk)**

**Full assessment fee: £2000**

This includes a £175 initial screening fee that is deducted should you proceed with a full assessment

