

Review and fund improved diagnosis and treatment of ADHD

The average wait time to get a diagnosis for ADHD in England is 104 weeks in some areas.

Government should rethink and fund more services to spot ADHD sooner, bring diagnosis times down, help people with ADHD get back on track quickly and prevent strains on mental health and benefit systems.

Government responded

This response was given on 4 December 2020

“We are promoting best practice examples to encourage professionals to make a diagnosis of ADHD as soon as possible and in line with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines”.

Read the response in full:

Thank you for your petition calling for the government to review and fund improved diagnosis and treatment services for people with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Thank you for sharing details of your situation. We absolutely agree it is important to receive a timely diagnosis. We want to make this possible for more people with ADHD to share similar success at work by improving diagnostic processes.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) are the organisation that provides the guidelines for diagnosing ADHD. A diagnosis of ADHD should be made as soon as possible and in line with NICE's clinical guideline (NG876) 'Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: diagnosis and management'. This updated guideline, published in September 2019, aims to improve the diagnosis of ADHD and the quality of care and support that people receive.

Diagnosis of ADHD can be challenging because there is no physical test for ADHD (such as a blood test). Additionally, people often have ADHD alongside other conditions. Symptoms of different conditions can overlap and hide the symptoms of ADHD e.g. autism, language disorder, dyspraxia and obsessive-compulsive disorder. The NICE guideline does not recommend a maximum waiting time standard from referral for an assessment of ADHD to the point of diagnosis.

The clinical guidelines on ADHD published by NICE should be taken into account by Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) when commissioning services for their local populations. Whilst clinical guidelines are not mandatory, following them will help improve the quality of care and services. Decisions on ADHD services and treatment are made locally by CCGs.

During 2019 the Department of Health and Social Care worked with NICE and their ADHD Implementation Working Group to look at how the current NICE guidance and quality standard on ADHD were being implemented and to identify and share examples of best practice when caring and supporting people with ADHD. We are considering the working group's findings with NICE and other key partners including NHS England and Improvement (NHSE/I) and the Department for Education (DfE).

To support earlier identification of ADHD, the NHS Long Term Plan (LTP) commits to working with local authority children's social care and education services as well as expert charities. The aim is to develop packages to support children with neurodevelopmental conditions, including ADHD, and their families, throughout the diagnostic process. NHS England and Improvement (NHSE/I) are also working closely with the DfE to improve services and diagnostic support for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).

You may be interested to know that the DfE is taking forward a cross-government review into the SEND system, announced in September 2019. The review is considering measures to make sure the SEND system is consistent, high quality, and joined up across education, health and care. Improving early identification of needs is a key focus for the review. DfE will publish the SEND review in early spring next year, working with children, young people, their families and experts across education, health and care to deliver an improved SEND system.

I hope this reply is helpful and is able to provide some reassurance that we are aware of the difficulties people with ADHD are facing and are working with our partner organisations and across government to make improvements to the system.

Department of Health and Social Care

**Petition
response**