

ADHD diagnosis: long waits on the NHS need urgent attention

**In May 2025 it was** [**estimated**](https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mi-adhd/may-2025) **that 2,498,000 people in England have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), including those without a diagnosis. In March 2025, up to 549,000 people may have been waiting for an ADHD assessment.**

A New Healthwatch England poll of **2,579** adults in England highlights that ADHD diagnosis can change people’s lives. However, long waits for assessments put people with suspected ADHD off seeking professional care.

# The national survey: [key findings](https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/report/2025-05-28/how-improve-adhd-support-people#download)

* Of the 363 respondents who had already been diagnosed, most agreed their **diagnosis improved many aspects of their lives**:
	+ The vast majority of respondents (**84%**) said that a diagnosis helped them **understand their behaviour** and how their brain works
	+ Over half (**54%**) agreed that being diagnosed for ADHD improved their **self-esteem**, and 47% agreed it helped them **concentrate** at work or while studying
	+ For over half (**58%**) it helped them find **new strategies** to manage traits, while the same number agreed it helped them look after their **mental health and wellbeing.**
* **70%**, of those who have been diagnosed said that they found the length of the process between referral and diagnosis difficult
* Almost a quarter (**21%**) said they had a negative experience of the process from referral to diagnosis
* Of all 963 respondents **41%** said they didn’t seek a formal ADHD diagnosis, with **20%** of this group citing long waits as a reason.

Healthwatch England have set out four priorities for the Department for Health and Social Care, NHS England and other stakeholders. Find out more in their [How to improve ADHD support for people report.](https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/sites/healthwatch.co.uk/files/20250523%20ADHD%20report.pdf)

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental condition characterised by difficulties with concentration, energy levels, impulsiveness or a person’s ability to manage their time. People reporting experience of ADHD traits note significant impacts on their mental health, studies, work and relationships.

**Here in Surrey?**

A number of Surrey residents responded to the national poll and ADHD – particularly issues around diagnosis – is something people talk to us about regularly.

We have been told how ADHD affects people’s lives, the impact of being on a waiting list and the lack of support available.



“Having such a late diagnosis made childhood very difficult and the lack of ability to get support or a diagnosis compounds the whole situation. It was only the ability to get a private diagnosis that helped but was far too late to reduce the anxiety and depression that then took years to stabilise from.” **Surrey resident**

“I am just struggling along with everything as I have been waiting for just over a year. I received an acknowledgement of receipt of my referral [but] nothing else. I also have an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) referral in and haven't even had an acknowledgement it was received.” **Surrey resident**

“I feel like the diagnosis has helped me understand myself, my difficulties and my strengths. Over the years I have acquired many labels such as stupid, useless, lazy, annoying, etc. ADHD is the most validating label and is helping me undo years of thinking negatively about myself.” **Surrey resident**



**The importance of diagnosis: the bigger picture**

In 2023, in the light of long waits for diagnosis and increased needs based support for children and young people, we set out to explore what families perceive to be the benefits of a formal neurodiversity diagnosis. Our findings and recommendations can be found in our [Neurodiversity – the hidden value of diagnosis report](https://www.healthwatchsurrey.co.uk/report/neurodiversity-the-hidden-value-of-diagnosis/).