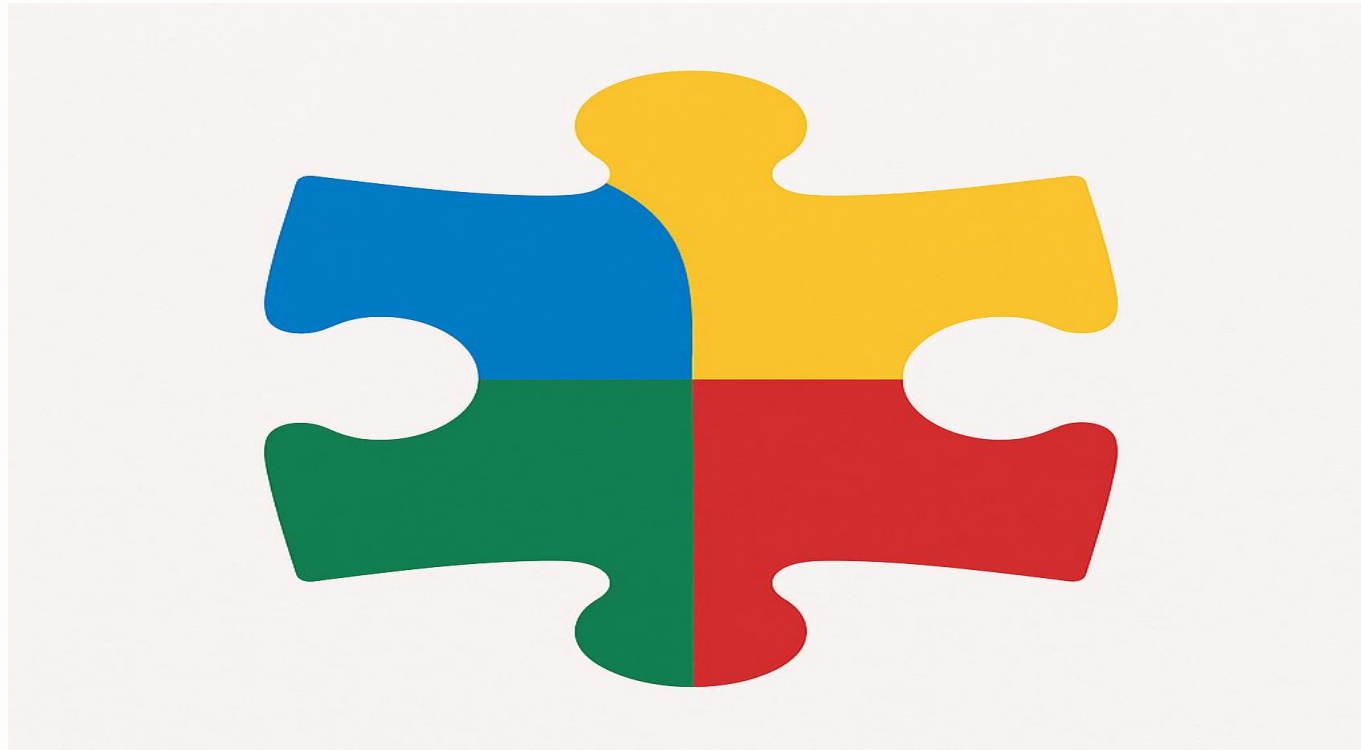


Introduction			Data Analysis	
Menstrual health difficulties, particularly dysmenorrhoea, are among the most common gynaecological problems affecting women of reproductive age. Global prevalence is estimated at 60–73%, with rates among university students reported as high as 95% (Armour et al., 2019; Belayneh et al., 2023). Menstrual pain and associated symptoms such as fatigue, mood changes, and headaches have been linked to absenteeism, reduced concentration, and poorer academic outcomes (Munro et al., 2021; Ortiz et al., 2022). Despite this burden, menstruation remains under-discussed in higher education, often compounded by stigma (Sima et al., 2022). There is a pressing need to understand the lived experiences of students in order to inform institutional policy and practice.			Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) Six-phase framework used: - Familiarisation - Coding - Generating themes - Reviewing themes - Defining and naming themes - Producing the analysis Themes identified: - Diagnostic delays & fragmented pathways - Regional inequalities (“postcode lottery”) - Socio-economic, cultural & communication barriers - Facilitators: peer support, advocacy, co-production	
Aim			Search Strategy	
To explore systemic, cultural and interpersonal barriers limiting parents’ access to autism-related support services in the UK, as well as personal and systems facilitators which assist families in negotiating health, education and social care systems.			Databases: CINAHL, PsycINFO, MEDLINE, Web of Science, Scopus, Google Scholar. Search Terms (Boolean operators): “autism” OR “autism spectrum disorder” OR “ASD” “parents” OR “carers” “access*” OR “barrier*” OR “facilitat*” “support services” OR “NHS services” OR “SEN support” “United Kingdom” OR “UK” Timeframe: 2013–2025 (post-DSM-5). Policy sources included: Department for Education, NHS England, House of Commons, National Autistic Society.	
Objective		Inclusion Criteria		
To investigate the extent of autism services used by carriers in the UK. To highlight the major obstacles such as delays, regional disparities, socio-economic issues and cultural matters. Investigate facilitators (such as peer support, advocacy, and co-production). To offer recommendations for enhancing access based on evidence.		Peer-reviewed studies (2013–2025). UK literature regarding parents or carers of children with autism. Studies on access to diagnosis, therapy, education or social care. Qualitative studies, systematic reviews and grey literature.		
Research Design		Exclusion Criteria		
Qualitative Secondary Research This study uses existing published literature, including peer-reviewed research, policy documents, and grey literature, to explore parental experiences. A secondary design was chosen because: It avoids placing additional burden on parents, a group already experiencing high emotional stress. It allows analysis of a broad range of UK-based evidence across health, education, and social care. It is appropriate for examining established issues and comparing findings across multiple contexts. (Johnston, 2017; Pope and Mays, 2020)		Studies on autistic adults only. Non-English papers. Biomedical or genetic autism research. Opinion pieces without empirical data.		
Philosophical Approach		Reference		
Interpretivism This approach focuses on understanding the lived experiences of parents and how meaning is constructed through interactions with services. It supports exploration of subjective experiences such as stress, exhaustion, and advocacy demands. (Bryman, 2016)		Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006) <i>Qualitative Research in Psychology</i> , 3(2), pp. 77–101. Bryman, A. (2016) <i>Social Research Methods</i> . Oxford University Press. Johnston, M. (2017) <i>Qual & Quant Methods in Libraries</i> , 3, pp. 619–626. Lim, N. et al. (2020) <i>Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders</i> , 50, pp. 1514–1529. Wallace-Watkin, C. et al. (2023) <i>Autism</i> , 27(4), pp. 812–824. National Autistic Society (2024) <i>Autism Services and Statistics</i> . DfE (2015; 2022) SEND policy documents.		