

Detail	Information
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IMPROVING HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE ACCESS FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM



1. THE PROBLEM

1.1 AUTISM IN THE UK

1 IN 100 WORLDWIDE
ARE AFFECTED BY AUTISM
(WHO, 2025)



PREVALENCE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Higher estimates in urban and deprived areas



- Highest (>1.5%)
- High (1.2% - 1.5%)
- Moderate (0.9% - 1.2%)
- Lower (<0.9%)

Prevalence varies by region due to demographics, awareness and access to services (National Autistic Society, 2025)

1.2 WHY DOES THIS MATTER?(RATIONALE)

- ⚠️ Family notices concern
 - Early signs are often overlooked or misunderstood.
- ⚠️ Referral delay
 - Long waiting times delay GP or specialist referrals.
- ⚠️ Diagnostic waiting list
 - Many children wait months or years for a formal autism diagnosis.
- ⚠️ Support inaccessible
 - Limited access to early intervention and specialist support services.
- ⚠️ Development opportunities lost
 - Delayed support can negatively affect communication, learning, social skills, and long-term wellbeing.

⚠️ Delays today can lead to lifelong impact

1. DIAGNOSIS RATES INCREASING
Improved awareness and broader criteria contribute to rising identification



2. UK PREVALENCE RISING
Estimated prevalence >1% of the population (National Autistic Society, 2025)



3. LONG WAITING TIMES
Many Families wait months or years for assessment and diagnosis



4. FAMILY BURDEN
Delays increase stress, anxiety and financial pressures on families

2. THE RESEARCH

2.1 RESEARCH QUESTION

What barriers affect early diagnosis and access to support services for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in the United Kingdom?

2.2 RESEARCH AIM

To explore barriers influencing early diagnosis and access to support services for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in the UK.

2.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- 01** Identify factors contributing to delayed Autism Spectrum Disorder diagnosis.
- 02** Examine challenges families face when accessing health, educational and social support services.
- 03** Evaluate the impact of delayed diagnosis on children and families.
- 04** Recommend strategies to improve service accessibility and early intervention pathways.

2.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



3. EXPECTED RESEARCH IMPACT



FOR CHILDREN

- Earlier intervention and timely support.
- Improved cognitive and social development.
- Better educational outcomes and participation.
- Enhanced quality of life and independence.



FOR FAMILIES

- Reduced stress and emotional burden.
- Improved access to information and support services.
- Increased confidence in managing daily challenges.
- Stronger family wellbeing and resilience.



FOR HEALTHCARE SERVICES

- More efficient referral pathways.
- Reduced waiting times for autism assessment.
- Improved multidisciplinary collaboration.
- Better use of healthcare resources and capacity.



FOR POLICY MAKERS

- Evidence-based recommendations for policy development.
- Reduced health inequalities across communities.
- Improved planning, funding, and service provision.
- Better long-term outcomes at the population level.

3.1 VISUAL IMPACT SUMMARY



4. CONCLUSION – EARLY DIAGNOSIS CHANGES LIVES

Early diagnosis and timely access to health and social care services are essential for improving outcomes for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Identifying barriers to diagnosis and support can inform evidence-based improvements in healthcare practice, strengthen family support, and promote equitable, accessible, and high-quality autism services across the United Kingdom.



5. REFERENCES (HARVARD STYLE)

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