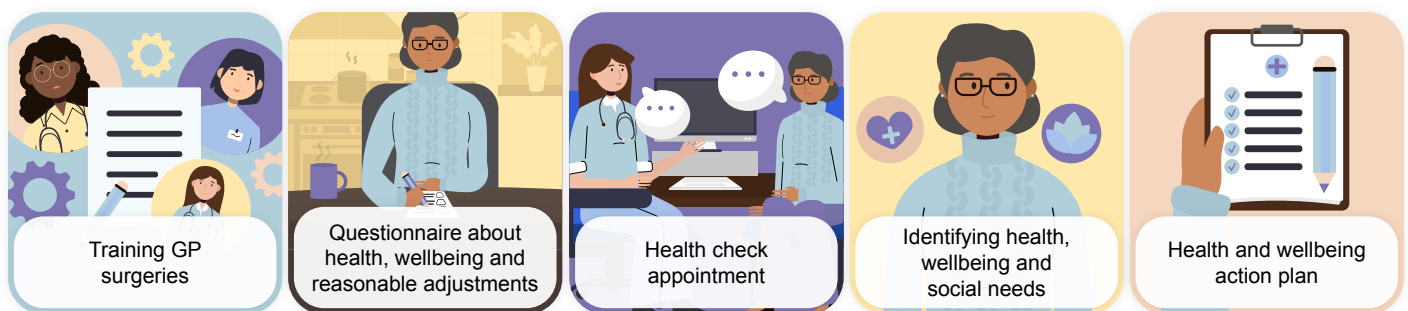


How a **primary care health check** for autistic adults can improve health and wellbeing

Autistic people often experience barriers to accessing healthcare due to sensory and communication differences and limited understanding of their needs. These barriers lead to poor health outcomes and health inequalities.

In partnership with **autistic people, carers and supporters, and clinicians**, we co-designed a health check for autistic adults.

The health check process



We tested the health check in NHS Primary Care in a Randomised Controlled Trial

GPs, nurses and other health professionals delivered the health checks

52

NHS GP surgeries in England tested the health check

226

autistic adults took part:
• half received a health check
• half received usual care

Autistic adults, carers and supporters, and clinicians reported positive experiences of the health check.



It's been really helpful. There are some issues I've been having my entire life that are being looked into after the health check."

"It was reassuring that everything's in order, my health's fine."

"Just being able to ask and talk about things without feeling judged was really good."

– autistic people



The health check gave the opportunity to unpick some issues that may have not been addressed otherwise. We covered some health issues that might not have been picked up on."

"I think it's been really valuable in highlighting to the practice how simple adjustments can make appointments better for patients."

"I definitely think it's of value and has allowed us to build those relationships that often get lost when things are busy."

– clinicians

Clinical effectiveness – We compared autistic people's health and social outcomes nine months after the health check. Compared to usual care, the health check identified and addressed:

two thirds (69%) more new health needs

such as mental health conditions and musculoskeletal disorders

twice as many (108%) more health promotion needs

such as immunisations and weight management

twice as many (118%) more social needs

such as signposting to employment support or housing advice

Our study identified several important points for future health check use:

Clear communication about the purpose and scope of health checks

improves engagement and manages patient expectations



Providing reasonable adjustments

supports autistic people to access and engage with the health check



Adapting the way services schedule and deliver appointments

promotes engagement and can ensure sufficient time to deliver the health check

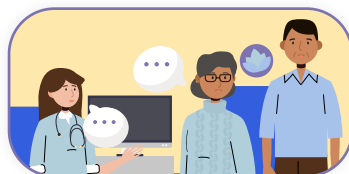


A patient-centred, flexible approach to health check delivery

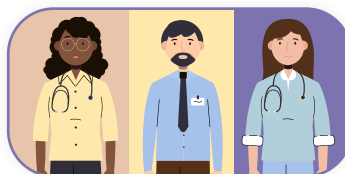
leads to a focus on individual needs and concerns



We found:



Carers and supporters can play a vital role in engagement and reduce anxiety



The health check provides training and an opportunity to increase knowledge about autism for primary care staff

The health check for autistic adults



Was effective at addressing the health and social needs of autistic people

Addresses key elements within the NHS 10-year plan

- Tackling health inequalities through preventative healthcare
- Delivery of services in the local community
- Utilising digital technology



Could be rolled out with NHS support, such as funding and ensuring services have adequate resources to deliver it

For more information, visit research.ncl.ac.uk/autismhealthchecks or email healthchecks@newcastle.ac.uk