Neurodivergent Adults Toolkit

For autistic adults, adults with ADHD and other neurodivergent adults, and the people who support them

Diagnosis, work, money, health, rights and local support in Barking & Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge

Barking & Dagenham | Havering | Redbridge

Welcome

Information and support for neurodivergent adults

This toolkit is for **adults** who are autistic, have ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, Tourette's, a learning disability or another neurodivergent difference — whether you have known for years, have just been diagnosed, or are wondering whether you might be neurodivergent. It is also for **family members, partners and carers**.

It covers getting an assessment, work, money, health, living well, your rights, and where to find help locally in **Barking & Dagenham**, **Havering** and **Redbridge**. Every link can be clicked.

> **You do not need a diagnosis to get support**
>
> Many services, and many reasonable adjustments at work and in health care, are based on your needs, not on a diagnosis. If something is hard for you, it is always worth asking for help.

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1 Neurodivergence in adulthood

Understanding yourself

Many adults, especially women, people from minority ethnic communities and older adults, are only recognised as neurodivergent later in life. A diagnosis or self-understanding in adulthood can bring relief, new questions and sometimes grief for past struggles. All of these feelings are normal.

Masking

Hiding or copying behaviour to fit in. It can help in the short term, but masking all day is exhausting and can affect mental health.

Burnout

Long-term exhaustion, loss of skills and increased sensitivity, often after long periods of masking, change or stress. Rest and reduced demands help recovery.

Sensory needs

Noise, light, smells, textures and crowds can be overwhelming. Knowing your sensory needs helps you plan your day and ask for adjustments.

Executive function

Planning, starting tasks, time management and organisation can be harder. Tools like reminders, lists and body-doubling can help.

Strengths

Many neurodivergent adults have strengths such as deep focus, creativity, honesty, pattern-spotting, problem-solving and strong values.

Co-occurring conditions

Autism, ADHD, dyslexia and dyspraxia often occur together. Anxiety, depression and sleep problems are also common and can be treated.

2 Getting an assessment

Autism and ADHD assessments for adults

NHS • 18+

NELFT Adult Autism Service

The NHS adult autism service for adults aged 18+ in **Barking & Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge** (and Waltham Forest). It offers diagnostic assessment, support while you wait, and support after diagnosis, including help with education, employment and benefits.

How to get referred:

- Ask your GP to refer you
- If you already use NELFT mental health services, your clinician can refer you
- Assessments may be spread over more than one appointment
- Online appointments may be available

Visit website ›

nelft.nhs.uk/adult-autism-service
0300 555 1200 ext. 67960 | ASDAssessmentService@nelft.nhs.uk

ADHD assessment

Ask your GP to refer you to the local NHS adult ADHD service. Waiting times can be long, so ask what support is available while you wait.

Right to Choose

In England, if your GP agrees you need an autism or ADHD assessment, you may be able to choose another NHS-approved provider, which can sometimes be quicker. Ask your GP Your choices in the NHS - NHS

Preparing for your assessment

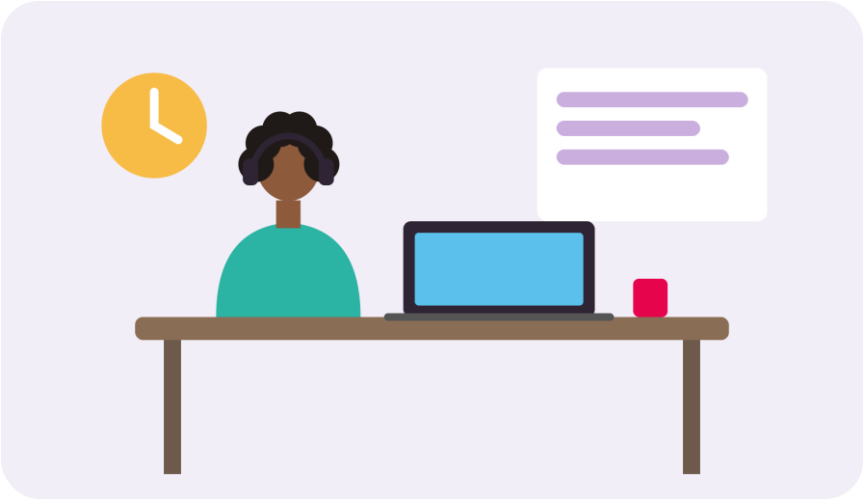
- Write down examples from childhood and now
- Ask someone who knew you as a child to share what they remember
- Take school reports if you have them

After a diagnosis

- Take your time to process it
- Connect with other neurodivergent adults
- Decide who you want to tell, and when
- Use it to ask for adjustments that help you

3 Work and employment

Your rights and support at work



Under the **Equality Act 2010**, employers must make **reasonable adjustments** for disabled workers and job applicants. Many neurodivergent people meet the Act's definition of disability, whether or not they have a diagnosis.

Adjustments that often help

- Written instructions and clear priorities
- A quiet workspace, noise-cancelling headphones or home working
- Flexible hours or regular breaks
- Interview questions in advance, or a practical task instead of an interview
- Regular check-ins with a manager

Telling your employer

You do not have to tell an employer that you are neurodivergent. Telling them can make it easier to get adjustments. You can choose what to share and who with.

You can ask for adjustments at interview stage too.

Access to Work

A government grant for practical support at work, such as a job coach, specialist equipment, travel or mental health support.

GOV.UK – Access to Work

Connect to Work

A free supported employment programme for disabled adults in Barking & Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge who want to find or keep a job.

Local London – Connect to Work

Local job support

Each council has an employment service that can help with CVs, applications and training. See Section 10.

4 Money and benefits

Financial help you may be entitled to

Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

For extra costs if a long-term condition affects daily living or getting around. It is not based on income or work, and you can claim it if you are working.

GOV.UK – PIP

Universal Credit

If you are on a low income or out of work. You may get extra money if your condition limits your ability to work.

GOV.UK – Universal Credit

Disabled Person's Freedom Pass

Free travel on London transport for eligible disabled residents, including people with a learning disability. Apply through your council.

Freedom Pass – how to apply

Disabled Persons Railcard

A third off most rail fares for you and a companion, if you are eligible.

disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk

Blue Badge

People with non-visible disabilities who find journeys very difficult may be eligible.

GOV.UK – Blue Badge

Get advice

Benefit forms can be difficult. Citizens Advice, local disability organisations and Sycamore Trust can help you apply and gather evidence.

citizensadvice.org.uk

Tips for benefit forms

- Describe your worst days, not just your best, and what happens if you do not get support.
- Explain the help or prompting you need, even if you do manage a task in the end.
- Send evidence from people who know you, such as your GP, support worker or family.

5 Health and mental health

Looking after your body and mind

At your GP

- Ask for **reasonable adjustments**, such as the first appointment of the day, a quiet place to wait, or appointments by email or text.
- Ask for your needs to be recorded on your health record.
- If you have a learning disability, ask to join the learning disability register for a free **annual health check**.

Talking Therapies (NHS)

Free, confidential NHS therapy for anxiety, depression, stress and other common problems. You can **refer yourself** online or by phone.

0300 300 1554 (option 3 B&D, option 2 Havering, option 1 Redbridge)

NELFT Talking Therapies – how to refer

Tell the service you are neurodivergent so they can adapt therapy for you.

If you need urgent mental health help

Call **NHS 111 and choose option 2** to speak to a mental health professional, 24 hours a day. You can also call **Samaritans** free on **116 123**, or text **SHOUT** to **85258**. If your life is in danger, call **999**.

More local crisis options (NELFT): nelft.nhs.uk/i-need-help

Recovering from burnout

- Reduce demands where you can
- Plan rest and recovery time
- Spend time on special interests
- Unmask with people you trust

Everyday wellbeing

- Keep regular sleep and meal routines
- Move your body in ways you enjoy
- Use sensory tools like headphones or sunglasses
- Plan quiet time after busy days

6 Living well and independence

Support at home and in daily life

Care and support assessment

If you need help with daily living, such as looking after yourself, your home, money or going out, you can ask your council's adult social care team for a free **needs assessment** under the Care Act 2014. Contacts are in Section 10.

Personal budgets and direct payments

If you are eligible, you may get a personal budget. You can take it as a **direct payment** to choose and arrange your own support Personal budgets and direct payments - Social care and support guide - NHS

Advocacy

If you find it hard to take part in assessments or decisions about your care and have no one suitable to help, the council must arrange an **independent advocate** for you.

Learning disability support

Adults with a learning disability can get specialist health and social care from their local **Community Learning Disability Team** (CLDT). See Section 10.

Everyday strategies

- Phone reminders, visual timetables and checklists for routines
- Batch cooking, meal kits and online shopping to reduce decision fatigue
- Direct debits and budgeting apps to keep on top of bills
- Body-doubling: doing tasks alongside someone else, in person or online

7 Community and relationships

Connection on your own terms

Finding your people

- Neurodivergent peer groups and social groups
- Clubs based on your interests
- Online communities, with care
- Volunteering

Relationships

- Everyone communicates differently.
- Healthy relationships respect your and their boundaries.
- Support is available if you feel unsafe.

Staying safe

- Be wary of messages asking for money or personal details
- Watch out for 'friends' who take advantage (mate crime)
- Report scams to Action Fraud

8 Your rights

The law is on your side

Equality Act 2010

Protects disabled people from discrimination at work, in education and when using services. Shops, health services, councils and transport providers must make **reasonable adjustments**.

GOV.UK – Rights of disabled people

Mental Capacity Act 2005

You have the right to make your own decisions, including ones others disagree with, and to be given support to make them. You can choose someone to make decisions for you in future through a **Lasting Power of Attorney**.

GOV.UK – Lasting power of attorney

Autism Act 2009

Requires the government to have a national strategy for autistic adults, and councils and the NHS to follow statutory guidance on services for autistic people.

Making a complaint

If a service does not meet your needs, you can complain. Start with the organisation's complaints process. Advocacy services and Citizens Advice can help.

Carry information about your needs

Some adults carry an alert card or use the **Hidden Disabilities Sunflower** lanyard HDS - Global so that staff, police or health workers understand they may need more time or support. Ask Sycamore Trust about our autism alert card.

9 Family, partners and carers

Supporting someone, and looking after yourself

Carer's assessment

Anyone who provides unpaid care can ask their council for a free **carer's assessment** to look at their own needs and wellbeing Carer's assessment | Carers UK

Carer's Allowance

You may be able to get Carer's Allowance if you care for someone for 35 hours or more a week and they get certain disability benefits.

GOV.UK – Carer's Allowance

Supporting an adult family member

Adults have the right to make their own decisions. Ask how they want to be supported and respect their choices. Only a Lasting Power of Attorney or the Court of Protection gives legal authority to make decisions for another adult.

Looking after you

Connect with other carers, take breaks, and look after your own health. Local carers' centres are listed in Section 10.

10 Local support

In all three boroughs: NELFT Adult Autism Service (0300 555 1200 ext. 67960), NHS Talking Therapies (0300 300 1554), NHS 111 option 2 for urgent mental health help, and Connect to Work for supported employment [Connect to Work - GOV.UK]

Organisation	How they can help	Website and contact
Adult social care (Adult Intake Team)	Care and support assessments for adults, including carers' assessments.	lbbd.gov.uk – Adult social care 020 8227 2915 | IntakeTeam@lbbd.gov.uk
Supported Employment Programme	Job coaching and in-work support for adults with a learning disability or autism who want to work.	lbbd.gov.uk – Supported employment
B&D Works	The council's free job support service.	lbbd.gov.uk – B&D Works
Community Learning Disability Team (NELFT)	Specialist health and social care for adults with a learning disability.	NELFT – CLDT Barking & Dagenham
Talking Therapies B&D	Self-refer for free NHS therapy.	NELFT Talking Therapies – B&D 0300 300 1554 (option 3)
DABD	Disability advice, including benefits, employment and transport support.	dabd.org.uk
Carers of Barking and Dagenham	Advice and support for unpaid carers.	carerscentre.org.uk

Havering

Local support for families

Organisation	How they can help	Website and contact
Adult Social Care	Care and support assessments for adults, including carers' assessments.	havering.gov.uk – Contact us 01708 432000
Community Learning Disability Team	Assessment, care planning and specialist health support for adults with a learning disability.	NELFT – CLDT Havering 01708 433446 | CLDTReferrals@havering.gov.uk
Havering Works	Free employment and skills advice from the council.	havering.gov.uk – Havering Works 01708 432567
Talking Therapies Havering	Self-refer for free NHS therapy.	NELFT Talking Therapies – Havering 0300 300 1554 (option 2)
Sycamore Trust – Havering adult peer groups	Peer groups for autistic adults in Havering.	Havering Directory – Sycamore adult peer groups

Redbridge

Local support for families

Organisation	How they can help	Website and contact
Adult Social Care	Make an adult social care referral online, including for carers' assessments.	adultcare.redbridge.gov.uk/contact
Community Learning Disability Team (NELFT)	Support for adults with a learning disability. Self-referrals and family referrals accepted.	NELFT – CLDT Redbridge 020 8708 2318 | LDReferralRedbridge@nelft.nhs.uk
Work Redbridge	The council's free employment and skills service.	redbridge.gov.uk – Work Redbridge
Talking Therapies Redbridge	Self-refer for free NHS therapy.	NELFT Talking Therapies – Redbridge 0300 300 1554 (option 1)
Redbridge Carers Support Service	Advice and support for unpaid carers.	rcss.org.uk

Sycamore Trust UK

We support autistic adults and their families across Barking & Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge, including peer and social groups, advice, benefits support and signposting. Get in touch to find out what is available in your area.

020 8517 9317 | 27–29 Woodward Road, Dagenham RM9 4SJ | Home - Sycamore Trust

11 National links

Trusted information and support

Organisation	How they can help	Website and contact
National Autistic Society	Information and advice for autistic adults, including work, relationships and mental health.	autism.org.uk
Autistica	Autism research charity with guides on mental health and wellbeing.	autistica.org.uk
ADHD UK	Information and support for adults with ADHD, run by people with ADHD.	adhduk.co.uk
British Dyslexia Association	Information on dyslexia in adulthood and at work.	bdadyslexia.org.uk
Dyspraxia Foundation	Information for adults with dyspraxia (DCD).	Dyspraxia Foundation
Mencap	Advice for people with a learning disability and their families.	mencap.org.uk
Mind	Mental health information and support.	mind.org.uk
Citizens Advice	Free advice on benefits, work, housing and money.	citizensadvice.org.uk
Disability Rights UK	Information on benefits and disability rights.	disabilityrightsuk.org
Scope	Practical and emotional support for disabled people.	scope.org.uk
Carers UK	Advice and support for unpaid carers.	carersuk.org
Samaritans	Free, 24-hour emotional support.	samaritans.org 116 123

12 My profile and checklist

Share what helps you

Fill in this profile and share it with your GP, employer, college or support workers. You choose what to include.

About me and my strengths

How I communicate best

Sensory needs and what helps

Signs I am struggling, and what helps

Adjustments that work for me

Important contacts

My checklist

☐	Talked to my GP about an assessment, or about support I need
☐	Asked my GP to record my reasonable adjustments
☐	Checked which benefits I may be able to claim (PIP, Universal Credit, Freedom Pass)
☐	Asked my employer for reasonable adjustments, or looked into Access to Work
☐	Asked adult social care for a needs assessment (if I need help with daily living)
☐	Found a peer group or community where I feel comfortable
☐	Saved crisis numbers in my phone (NHS 111 option 2, Samaritans 116 123)

Thank you for reading

Sycamore Trust UK is a registered charity supporting autistic children, young people, adults and their families across Barking & Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge.

Call us	Visit us	Find us online
020 8517 9317	27–29 Woodward Road, Dagenham RM9 4SJ	Home - Sycamore Trust

Disclaimer

This toolkit gives **general information only**. It does not replace medical, legal, financial or employment advice from a qualified professional, and it should not be used to diagnose any condition.

Benefit rules, services, contact details and eligibility can change. Information was checked in **September 2026**, so please check the latest details with GOV.UK, the NHS, your local council and each service directly. **If you are in crisis or your life is in danger, call 999.**

Organisations and services are included to help people find support and do not mean that Sycamore Trust UK recommends any particular provider. Links to external websites are provided for information. Sycamore Trust UK is not responsible for their content or availability and cannot accept responsibility for any loss or harm arising from the use of this toolkit.