

Leeds PCF have regular meetings with health services, including the NHS Leeds Integrated Care Board and wider partners, to share the lived experiences of families. Parents and carers consistently highlighted that there is not a clear or easily navigable pathway for accessing neurodevelopmental assessments, particularly for autism and ADHD. Concerns were also raised about long waiting times, limited communication, and a lack of clarity about what support was available while waiting.

Health and care partners across Leeds and West Yorkshire have worked together to review and redesign elements of the system. The developments set out in this document aim to provide a more transparent, consistent, and needs-led approach that hopefully families will find useful. This document is also available on the Leeds Local Offer.

[Information and Resources across Leeds and West Yorkshire](#)

[The MindMate Neurodiversity Information Hub](#)

The ND Hub is a one-stop information resource to support all neurodivergent ND) children, young people and families in Leeds **with** or **without** formal diagnosis. The ND Hub advocates for a Needs-Led approach; information and recommendations are based on the area of strength and needs, rather than formal diagnosis.

The ND hub can be accessed here - [Neurodiversity information hub - MindMate](#)

[Right to Choose and the West Yorkshire Assessment and Medication Provider Framework](#)

In West Yorkshire, we have committed to deliver a more consistent approach for our population when it comes to their Right to Choose and Patient Choice for Autism/ADHD assessment and diagnosis.

There is a wealth of information and resources about Right to Choose available on the West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership website here - [Patient Choice \(Right to Choose\) :: West Yorkshire Health & Care Partnership](#)

The resource includes information on a range of topics including how to access RTC, who the WY accredited providers are, medication and shared care and the latest information on Activity Plans.

Initiatives and Developments in Leeds

Improving Access to Mental Health and Neurodevelopmental support in Leeds

Many children and young people in Leeds are waiting too long to get the mental health support they need. The Integrated Care Board (ICB) in Leeds is working with local partners to make it easier for families to get help and reduce waiting times.

Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust (LCH) and Northpoint are working together to improve the MindMate Single Point of Access (SPA). A key priority is reducing the backlog of children waiting for neurodevelopmental (ND) assessment suitability screening. This screening helps identify whether a child may need a full neurodevelopmental assessment.

Contacting families on the waiting list

Families on the waiting list have already been contacted. We asked them to confirm:

- if their child still needs Neurodevelopment suitability screening, and/or
- if their child still needs support.

We also asked for consent to transfer their referral to Northpoint so they can manage the referral.

What happens next

Families who agree to transfer their referral:

- Northpoint will send a Neurodevelopmental Assessment Questionnaire.
- Specialist clinicians will review the answers.
- They will decide whether:
 - a neurodevelopmental assessment is needed now, or
 - another type of support would be more helpful at this stage.

If an assessment is needed, we will:

- make sure there is a smooth handover to the most suitable provider

- share information about services, resources and support that may help them and their child

Families whose child doesn't meet the clinical suitability for a ND assessment will be contacted and have the opportunity to talk through what service and support they may find beneficial to address their child's needs.

Supporting families through the process

The Leeds ICB, LCH, Northpoint and other partners are working together to:

- understand any barriers families may face
- reduce those barriers
- make sure families can fully take part in the process
- ensure families get the support they need

In the short term, this work may increase the number of children and young people using support and assessment services.

We are working with universal, targeted and specialist services to help manage this demand.

Our aim is to clear at least half of the MindMate SPA waiting list backlog by March 2026.

ND School-age Needs Led Support Pilot

The NHS Leeds Integrated Care Board has secured some additional funding to pilot a new initiative where young people and families will be offered a needs-led assessment and therapeutic brief intervention to help understand, support needs, and provide guidance and signposting.

We are writing to all families whose child attend a school that is partaking in the pilot, have been on the MindMate SPA waiting list for ND triage for assessment suitability and have been identified by their school Cluster as meeting the criteria for this support. Eligible children (joint with a parent / carer if beneficial) are being offered up to 4 therapeutic face to face sessions by a trained practitioner / therapist through the school Cluster.

These sessions will provide an opportunity to:

- Receive a therapeutic conversation to help understand needs and a source of needs management,

- To ask questions about needs and neurodivergent characteristics.
- To receive advice and signposting to support services and relevant resources.
- Where appropriate, to have conversations to explore what the benefits may be to proceed with clinical diagnostic assessment
- Provide or explore strategies for responding to identified needs

The pilot will run between February and July 2026 and following this WY Integrated Care Board along with the clusters will be evaluating the impact of this additional support.

ADHD Medication Pathway

Short-term additional investment has been made to support ADHD medication prescribing within Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust. This has resulted in measurable real time improvement in waiting times, and it is anticipated that the waiting list will reduce to under 18 weeks by mid 2026.

Preschool autism needs led support pathway

Many children across the country wait a long time for an autism assessment. To help families get support sooner, we are changing how we work. We spoke to parents and carers to find out what matters most to them.

In Leeds, we are starting a new way of helping children and families. It is called the Needs-Led Support Pathway. This means we look at what your child needs help with right now, instead of waiting for an autism assessment.

This new pathway gives support based on what each child needs. It can help with things like:

- Communicating and understanding others
- Sleeping
- Eating
- How your child reacts to changes in environment, sounds, lights, or touch

Parents and carers can now access:

- Online videos
- Workshops for parents and carers
- Groups that help with early communication

These are run by our specialist health visitors and speech and language therapists.

If your child needs more help, we can also offer one-to-one support from our team. This might include psychologists, advanced practitioners, or occupational therapists who help with everyday skills.

Preschool autism assessment pathway

As with the school aged pathway, a key priority is reducing the backlog of preschool aged children waiting for autism assessments.

Contacting families on the waiting list

Families on the waiting list have already been contacted. We asked them to confirm:

- If their child still needs an autism assessment, and/or
- If their child still needs support

What happens next

Families who still want an autism assessment for their child:

- Specialist clinicians will contact the parent/carer to get more information and review the answers
- They will decide whether:
 - A neurodevelopmental assessment is needed now or
 - Another type of support would be more helpful at this stage.

If an assessment is needed, we will:

- Aim to complete the assessment in a single appointment with a paediatrician or arrange an enhanced multi-disciplinary assessment
- Share information about services, resources and support that may help them and their child

Families whose child doesn't meet the clinical suitability for an autism assessment will be provided with the needs led support offer.