



Why did Ann feel she needed to pay for a private autism assessment instead of using the NHS?

Ann believed she might have autism because she had struggled with some aspects of life for a long time. She wanted to understand why that was and what she could do about it. As the process to get a diagnosis via the NHS as an adult in Calderdale is complex, with a long waiting list, she decided to get a private assessment. Even though it cost her £500, having a diagnosis has given her peace of mind, and now she feels like she really knows who she is...

We use people's stories to highlight problems, and encourage the NHS to change and improve its services.
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After Ann's son was diagnosed with autism she did an online Autism Spectrum Quotient test and was surprised by her high score. Ann did some more research and found out about the different ways to get a diagnosis, and the differing diagnosis rates depending on which area does the assessment. She also went to some of the autism peer support groups and talked to people about their experiences.

Ann's GP surgery had put everything down to anxiety, and as she had already been given a course of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) and counselling, with no mention of autism, she didn't feel she could ask for a referral, and it didn't help that she was always being seen by different doctors.

Ann also found the thought of going through the NHS assessment process in her area very daunting. She would have had to get special funding via her GP using the Individual Funding Request process, and then if she was successful she would still have been a long wait before an assessment, with only a small chance of a positive diagnosis.

Because of this Ann decided to pay to have a private assessment. She only had to wait one month for the assessment, which consisted of completing two questionnaires and a three-hour appointment. It was a good experience as they made accommodations for her needs, and were easy to talk to.

Ann said 'If I had known I had autism when I was younger it could have made a big difference to my life. I never knew who I was, but now it all makes sense.'

Ann now feels very positive about her future as the diagnosis has made her feel more confident in herself. 'Now I know why CBT didn't work but I can now look at other things that might work, and I have already found ways to help me manage how autism affects my life.'

It cost Ann £500 to get her private diagnosis when she could have used the NHS, but the NHS process for getting an assessment for autism in Calderdale is complex and time consuming. How many other people could have been put off seeking a diagnosis and just given up?



The Elsie Whiteley Innovation Centre
Hopwood lane
Halifax
HX1 5ER

Telephone: 01422 399433

www.healthwatchcalderdale.co.uk
info@healthwatchcalderdale.co.uk



Unit 11-12 Empire House
Wakefield Old Road
Dewsbury
WF12 8DJ

Telephone: 01924 450379

www.healthwatchkirklees.co.uk
info@healthwatchkirklees.co.uk