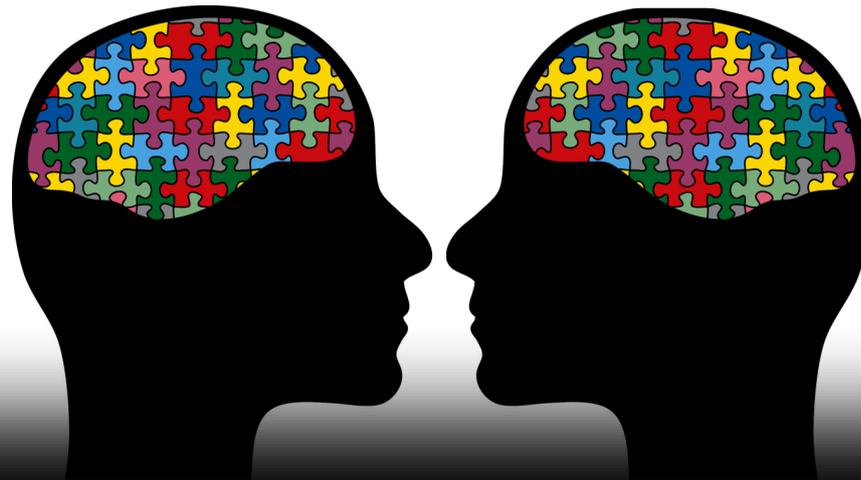


# CLAHRC BITE

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A bite-sized summary of CLAHRC research: Red Flags Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASCs)



*“The Red Flags tools could help frontline professionals decide whether to refer a person for specialist assessment”*



## What?

This study developed four short and reliable tools to identify people at risk for autism. There is one checklist for each of the four age groups: toddlers (Quantitative Checklist for Autism in Toddlers; Q-CHAT), children, adolescents, and adults (Autism Spectrum Quotient; AQ-10, different versions)<sup>1</sup>.

## Who?

Each checklist provides a quick and accurate tool for GPs to determine if a patient presenting with concerns or symptoms of autism needs referral to a specialist service for a full diagnostic assessment.

## Why?

Diagnosis can be a lengthy process. Speeding up the time it normally takes to access diagnostic assessment benefits patients by reducing anxiety and uncertainty.

Diagnosis of autism is often delayed because the symptoms can be difficult to detect in very young children. Later in life, autism can be masked by other behaviours or symptoms. Expertise in recognising autism in primary care is inconsistent, therefore many individuals go undetected. Without a diagnosis, however, the needs of people with autism cannot be met.

This study produced referral guides that primary care clinicians can use to aid their decision making process about whether to make a referral.

### Examples of using Red Flags

NICE guidelines for autism in Adults<sup>2</sup> recommend using the AQ-10 Adult. There is also evidence that the Red Flags tools are being used in services for children and young people. For example, the Q-CHAT and AQ-10 are a part of the referral pathway to autism services in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in Surrey<sup>3</sup>, Dudley<sup>4</sup>, and Berkshire<sup>5</sup>. The use of the Red Flags may be wider than in the three mentioned areas: in Scotland, NHS Education for Scotland lists the Q-CHAT as a “screening and diagnostic method”<sup>6</sup> and The National Autistic Society states that GP’s may use the Q-CHAT in deciding whether to make a referral to a specialist service<sup>7</sup>.

### References

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### What is NIHR CLAHRC East of England?

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLAHRC) East of England is a five year programme of applied health and social care research which focuses on the needs of people with complex problems, often vulnerable, when multiple agencies are involved in their care: young people, frail older people, those with dementia, learning disabilities, acquired brain injuries or mental ill health.

The CLAHRC East of England collaboration encompasses some thirty-six organisations, with research hubs in the Universities of Cambridge, Hertfordshire and East Anglia working closely with individuals and organisations involved in the whole care pathway.

Service users and carers are at the heart of what we do, in parallel with an ambitious public health research programme.

Co-production and collaboration at all stages of the research process are fundamental to making a positive impact through applied health research.

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E-mail: [CLAHRCoffice@cpft.nhs.uk](mailto:CLAHRCoffice@cpft.nhs.uk)

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