Autism Spectrum Disorder:
Top Tips for supporting patients, families and carers whilst waiting for a diagnostic assessment

Accessibility

- Be accessible and maintain continuity with your patients and their families. Reassurance is likely to be necessary along the way as you may be the only point of contact for both the person suspected of having autism and their families during a potentially stressful time.

Referral pathway

- Be aware of the current local referral pathways to avoid delays caused by sending referrals to the wrong providers. For example, find out if child referrals are sent to the community paediatricians or the CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health) service in your area. Your local commissioners should have the details available.
- If you are able to, find out about local waiting times so you can be realistic with your family member/patients about how long it may take to be assessed. This may help with managing expectations.
- Consider using the read code/snomed code ‘Suspected Autism’ in your patient’s notes, and flagging this up with any referral to other health services.

Reasonable adjustments

- Be prepared to suggest/make reasonable adjustments in your general practice if your patient is known to have anxiety and/or sensory sensitivities, for example a quiet space to wait before appointments, longer appointment slots, etc.
- Consult the RCGP toolkit for more advice on reasonable adjustments.

Signposting

Signpost patients and their carers to useful free online resources e.g.