



Health services across Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG) have recently announced that they are implementing changes that narrow the referral criteria for children and young people to obtain an Autism diagnosis.

Bristol, North Somerset and South Glos Parent Carer Forums collectively urge the services to reconsider this decision. We believe that a diagnosis is important for so many families and can be especially important for a child or young person's identity and understanding of their neurodiversity. It is therefore imperative that support and diagnosis happen in tandem.

Parent Carer Forums act as a conduit for amplifying the lived experience of children and young people with Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities. Our [Needs Led Survey Outcomes](#) reported that many families place significant value on a diagnosis. This is in part due to the challenges that parent carers often face in accessing appropriate support for their family. In many cases, a formal diagnosis can accelerate access to the support and services that families require.

Whilst we recognise that changes to the autism pathway are needed and the significant pressure the health service is under from staff recruitment, retention and increases in demand; we firmly believe that needs-led support should not come at the expense of a formal diagnosis for those who seek it.

We collectively urge health services to consider the feedback from our survey and ensure that their policies and practices reflect the needs and preferences of families. By working together in this way, we can ensure that all autistic children and young people and their families, receive the best possible support and care.

We have created a short survey for you to share your valuable views on the changes to the autism pathway [here](#).