

Studies

[Disability digital divide: survey of accessibility of eHealth services as perceived by people with and without impairment](#)

Sustainable and effective eHealth requires accessibility for everyone. Little is known about how accessibility of eHealth is perceived among people with various impairments. The aim of this study was to compare use and perceived difficulty in the use of eHealth among people with and without impairment, and how different types of impairment were associated with perceived difficulty in the use of eHealth.

[What are the Challenges and Resilience Resources Identified by Informal Carers During the First UK COVID-19 Lockdown? A Longitudinal Qualitative Study Using Naturalistic Data](#)

COVID-19 has posed serious challenges for informal carers living in the UK. This article examines some of the specific challenges facing carers and the resources they used to manage them throughout the first UK lockdown. We used a framework approach to analyse naturalistic, longitudinal data from 30 carers taking part in 96 of Mobilise's daily Virtual Cuppas between March and July 2020.

[Sex differences in the course of autistic and co-occurring psychopathological symptoms in adolescents with and without autism spectrum disorder](#)

There is an ongoing debate as to whether autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is expressed differently in women than men. It is unclear whether differences found are specific to autism or merely reflecting normative development. In this study, we compared sex differences in developmental trajectories of autistic and co-occurring psychopathological symptoms in adolescents with milder forms of autism to those in a normative group matched for intelligence quotient (IQ) and socioeconomic status. Data of five assessment waves from ages 11 to 22 years were analyzed using linear mixed modeling.

[Autism spectrum disorder and personality disorders: How do clinicians carry out a differential diagnosis?](#)

Although it is recognised that autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and personality disorders (PDs) have a variety of factors in common, the exact nature of the relationship between ASD and the PDs remains unclear. The overlapping symptom profiles and complexities in developmental trajectories in ASD and PDs can lead to diagnostic uncertainty and to challenges in determining differential diagnoses. Features of ASD and PD can be misattributed and easily lead to misdiagnosis or missed diagnoses in patients who have a diagnosis of ASD, which may impact therapeutic pathways. Since differentiating between ASD and PD is such a complex task with implications for therapeutic approaches, it has been argued that there is a need for additional understanding and markers for facilitating diagnostic procedures. There is an urgent need to explore how clinicians make diagnostic decisions and the challenges they face in forming diagnostic conclusions. Where overlaps exist, it is important to consider how clinicians interpret and attribute certain characteristics within the context of ASD and/or PD diagnoses.

[Concordance of Diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder Made by Pediatricians vs a Multidisciplinary Specialist Team](#)

Wait times for autism spectrum disorder (ASD) diagnosis are lengthy because of inadequate supply of specialist teams. General pediatricians may be able to diagnose some cases of ASD, thereby reducing wait times.

[Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Geographic Access to Autism Resources Across the US](#)

Do autistic children belonging to minoritized racial and ethnic groups have access to fewer autism resources than White autistic children in the US and, if so, where are these disparities most significant?

Reports

[Joint Committee publishes report on the Draft Mental Health Bill](#)

The Joint Pre-Legislative Committee on the Draft Mental Health Bill has now released its report, which comments on proposals to change mental health laws in England and Wales.

[Disability organisations urge government to make "vital reforms" to Mental Health Bill](#)

Disability charities have welcomed the recommendations made by the Joint Committee on the Draft Mental Health Bill in a new report which scrutinises the Bill.

Statistics

[Number of autistic people in mental health hospitals: latest data](#)

The latest monthly Assuring Transformation NHS Digital data shows that in December 2022:

- In total 2030 autistic people and people with learning disabilities are in inpatient mental health hospitals in England
- 1,280 (63%) of these people are autistic
- 95% of under 18s in inpatient mental health hospitals in England are autistic (195)

[Unpaid carers spending longer periods of time caring for loved ones](#)

The latest data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows that while the number of unpaid carers is lower now compared to in 2011, these carers are typically spending significantly more hours a week caring for their loved ones.

Government Statements

[Government Action on Major Conditions and Diseases - Statement made on 24 January 2023](#)

Statement made by Steve Barclay, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

Reviews

[Government announces rapid review into patient safety in mental health hospitals](#)

Maria Caulfield, Conservative MP for Lewes, has announced the commencement of a rapid review into patient safety in mental health inpatient settings in England. The review comes following a series of scandals in which inpatients in mental health, learning disability and autism settings were mistreated while under hospital care.

Webinars

[Webinar: Practicable steps for people with communication difficulties](#)

The third webinar in the new series took place on 19 January 2023. It focused on enacting the second principle of the Mental Capacity Act for people with communication difficulties. We explored who might need supported decision-making, what supported decision-making for people with communication difficulties might look like in practice, how Speech & Language Therapists can help, and what other professionals can do when a Speech & Language Therapist is not available to provide support. We included case studies to demonstrate best practice and provide information on useful tools and further learning opportunities.

News

[Government announces rapid review into patient safety in mental health hospitals](#)

Mental health hospitals should be there to keep patients safe and provide them with the appropriate help they need but there have been multiple reports in the last year alone, highlighting how often this isn't the case and that all too often people are kept in mental health hospitals for far too long. These reports have exposed the way that some patients, including autistic patients, are being mistreated, having their safety compromised and ultimately being failed by the mental health system.

[Shared visions for 'Human Flourishing, 'a gloriously ordinary life' and everyone living their 'Good Lives'](#)

"We have all the evidence and many of the steps we need – lets work together for all our 'Good Lives'.

We welcome the Reimagining Care Commission report and the principles of trust, empathy, inclusion and human flourishing. The inquiry report calls for a 'fundamental and comprehensive redesign of care and support' that includes those principles.

[Autistic psychiatrists are an asset to medicine — but we need to better support them](#)

Many of us likely have autistic colleagues. Research in this area is scarce, but the evidence so far suggests autism is at least as common in the medical profession as in the general population: 1 percent of general practitioners and roughly the same fraction of psychiatrists in the United Kingdom have reported being autistic, according to two surveys from the past five years. Indeed, medical training may even inadvertently select for certain autism traits that are prized in clinicians, such as attention to detail, precision, honesty and diligence.

[Decisional capacity and informed consent, explained](#)

Some autistic people with communication challenges need extra support before they can participate in research. To give informed consent, they need to have the risks and benefits of a study explained to them in ways they can understand.

[Racial, economic disparities skew New Jersey data on autism, intellectual disability](#)

Black children are significantly more likely than white children to be identified as having autism with intellectual disability, according to data from New Jersey published today in Pediatrics. Autism with intellectual disability is also more commonly identified among children from poorer areas of the state than among those from wealthier areas, the study shows.

[Children of parents with a learning disability 54 times more likely to be taken into care](#)

Parents with a learning or physical disability are significantly more likely to have their child taken into care, according to an investigation based on reports from more than 100 local authorities in England. The investigation by Channel 5 News reveals that of the 72,154 children who entered care between April 2020 and April 2022, 8.1% of children were removed from their family home after social workers identified their parent's learning disability as a factor of concern.

[Gendered expectations can impact on the psychological wellbeing of autistic women](#)

Cultural and gendered expectations can have adverse impacts on the psychological wellbeing of autistic women, according to a new review that says there needs to be increased knowledge and training for professionals.

The review, published in [Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders](#), said that there is also a need to promote better awareness of safe relationships to reduce risks of abuse and exploitation for autistic women. Adaptations to communication, cognitive and sensory challenges, and psychological therapy are also suggested.

['Alexithymia means I can't explain how I'm feeling'](#)

Saffron Anderton was at university when she was diagnosed as autistic. The 22-year-old, from Newmarket, Suffolk, also discovered she experiences alexithymia, meaning she cannot identify emotions. Saffron similarly struggles to create mental images in her mind, a condition called aphantasia.

[Children punched and hit over the head in care homes rated 'good'](#)

Children in care were punched, locked out naked and had vinegar poured on cuts, according to reports that were filed over three years before the homes were finally shut.

A BBC investigation has learned more than 100 concerns were logged at the Doncaster children's homes, which retained a "good" Ofsted rating.