

# Primary Care Health Link Worker

Our Health Link Worker supports autistic individuals in accessing a full range of physical and mental health services, helping to reduce the health inequalities they often face. This begins with building trust and developing a strong, supportive relationship.

A key focus is helping individuals understand their sensory sensitivities and how these impact their overall wellbeing. This includes raising awareness of interoception - the internal sense of the body - which affects how pain is experienced and communicated, influencing how individuals express their health needs.

Interoception also plays a significant role in health anxiety. The Health Link Worker supports individuals in understanding how heightened or reduced interoceptive sensitivity can contribute to anxiety and helps them develop strategies to manage these challenges effectively.



**The Health Link Worker can meet the needs of autistic people in a number of ways:**

## Autism Yearly Health Checks

- Autistic adults and young people aged 14 and over are eligible for a yearly NHS Health Check.
- Our health link worker can assist with accessing health checks.
- They can work with the person and GP practices to make health checks as accessible as possible for autistic individuals, ensuring that any necessary reasonable adjustments are put in place
- The health link worker can support patients to identify any health concerns or health anxieties and determine any necessary adjustments prior to the health check appointment, ensuring the health checks are accessible and meaningful.

## **Physical and Mental health Support**

- ▶ The health link worker can provide support around accessing physical and mental health services, promoting self-confidence, and helping to develop communication skills around health needs: reducing health inequalities by supporting timely access to services and appropriate reasonable adjustments.

## **Long-Term Health Conditions**

- ▶ Our Health Link Worker provides support to understand health needs, including any long-term conditions, and to make sure autistic adults get the right care and support. They can help you access health services. They'll also work closely with professionals to make sure everyone involved in your care understands what you need and how best to support you.

## **Health Passports**

- ▶ The Health Link Worker assists individuals in creating a health passport that can be used across all primary care settings. These passports are also valuable in emergency situations or during hospital stays, helping to ensure continuity of care.

## **Reasonable Adjustment Cards**

- ▶ Our reasonable adjustment cards are personalised to reflect the specific accommodations the person may require in a healthcare setting. The health link worker works with the person to produce a bespoke card that will best meet their needs.

## **Working with Primary Care Professionals**

- ▶ The health link worker will support Primary Care professionals in developing a deeper understanding of the unique healthcare needs of autistic individuals. They can provide guidance and scaffolding through an autism-informed perspective, helping professionals recognise how these needs can differ significantly from those of neurotypical individuals.

Referral can be made into the Health Link Worker in Sunderland through the **Autism in Mind Website**

Professionals who would like the support of the Health Link Worker can contact us via telephone **0191 5700047** or email **[contact@autisminmind.com](mailto:contact@autisminmind.com)**

