Making the most of a remote consultation with a healthcare professional: a guide for those on the autistic spectrum

Remote consultations are those carried out via the telephone, video calls or electronically using email or chat services. It is becoming increasingly common and even more so with the COVID19 pandemic. Whilst this may suit some autistic people, it can present additional challenges and is a change from usual routine. We know that many autistic people, their parents and carers report difficulties accessing healthcare services and this guide provides some simple steps to make remote consultations more effective.

- If you want all healthcare professional to know you are autistic ensure the diagnosis of autism is recorded as a **significant active problem** on the computer records – which is just the terminology used to make it visible to everyone on opening the records.
- Reasonable adjustments to allow equitable access to health services should be clearly recorded and on the summary care record (NHS spine)
- Personal preferences about remote consultations should also be clearly marked on the records. For example, if telephone consultations are ineffective for you make sure this is clearly stated. If you find a video call easier – say so.
- A reasonable adjustment may include the fact that a remote consultation cannot be used effectively
- The GP surgery can send a special note – called “**share my care**” to NHS 111 detailing any reasonable adjustments which will then be visible to the clinician before contacting you. NHS 111 and your GP do not have the same computer system so any important information needs to be shared between them.
- If using the NHS 111 service be aware that the computer system allows for additional notes about reasonable adjustments to be added at the time of the consultation. Giving permission for NHS 111 to access the summary care record ensures that specific information kept on your GP’s records is available.

- If appropriate write down your concerns before starting the consultation, this helps if the situation becomes overwhelming. It may help to draw a timeline of when they started or got worse
- If you do not know who you are talking to – ask
- If you do not understand something or need more time to respond – say so
- If you know that you have sensory processing difficulties that will affect the consultation make these known at the beginning. For example, if background noise such as papers rustling or a keyboard tapping make it hard to concentrate explain this.
- Ensure you have a clear idea of what happens next at the end of the consultation, write it down if that is helpful
- If the consultation becomes overwhelming ask for a call back after an appropriate interval. Unless it is a life-threatening condition you do not have to complete everything in one call. A life-threatening condition will be recognised quickly by the clinician and acted on immediately.