

Understanding NICE guidance

Information for people who use NHS services

Antisocial personality disorder

NICE 'clinical guidelines' advise the NHS on caring for people with specific conditions or diseases and the treatments they should receive.

This booklet is about the care and treatment of people with antisocial personality disorder in the NHS in England and Wales. It explains guidance (advice) from NICE (the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence). It is written for people with antisocial personality disorder but it may also be useful for their families or carers or for anyone with an interest in the condition.

The booklet aims to help you understand the care and treatment options that should be available in the NHS. It does not describe antisocial personality disorder or the tests or treatments for it in detail. A member of your healthcare team should discuss these with you. There are examples of questions you could ask throughout this booklet to help you with this. You can get more information from the organisation listed on page 12. Medical terms printed in **bold** type are explained on page 11.

Contents

Your care	3
Antisocial personality disorder	4
What happens when I first see a healthcare professional about my symptoms?	5
Who will provide my treatment?	6
Will my family or carers be involved in my treatment and care?	7
What treatment should I be offered for antisocial personality disorder?	7
Can I receive treatments for other conditions?	8
Information for families or carers of people with antisocial personality disorder	9
Information for families or carers of children with conduct problems	10
Glossary	11
More information	12
About NICE	12

The advice in the NICE guideline covers:

- The care, treatment and support that people with antisocial personality disorder and their families or carers should be offered.
- The care and treatment that children with conduct problems and their families or carers should be offered.

It does not specifically look at:

- Treatments not normally available in the NHS or prison health services.

Your care

Your treatment and care should take into account your personal needs and preferences, and you have the right to be fully informed and to make decisions in partnership with your healthcare team. To help with this, your healthcare team should give you information you can understand and that is relevant to your circumstances. All healthcare professionals should treat you with respect, sensitivity and understanding and explain antisocial personality disorder and the treatments for it simply and clearly.

The information you get from your healthcare team should include details of the possible benefits and risks of particular treatments. You can ask any questions you want to and can always change your mind as your treatment progresses or your condition or circumstances change. Your own preference for a particular treatment is important and your healthcare team should support your choice of treatment wherever possible, but this does depend on your age. If you are over 16, or under 16 and fully understand the treatment, you may be able to give your own agreement. If you are too young, your parents or **carers** may need to agree to your treatment.

Your treatment and care, and the information you are given about it, should take account of any religious, ethnic or cultural needs you may have. It should also take into account any additional factors, such as physical or learning disabilities, sight or hearing problems, or difficulties with reading or speaking English. Your healthcare team should be able to arrange an interpreter or an advocate (someone who supports you in putting across your views) if needed.

If you agree, your family or carers should have the chance to be involved in decisions about your care. Family members and carers also have the right to the information and support they need in their roles as carers.

If people are unable to understand a particular issue or are not able to make decisions for themselves, healthcare professionals should follow the advice that the Department of Health has produced about this. You can find this by going to the Department of Health website (www.dh.gov.uk/consent). Your healthcare professional should also follow the code of practice for the Mental Health Capacity Act. For more information about this visit www.publicguardian.gov.uk

Some treatments may not be suitable for you, depending on your exact circumstances. If you have questions about specific treatments and options covered in this booklet, please talk to a member of your healthcare team.

Antisocial personality disorder

Antisocial personality disorder is the name given to a condition that affects a person's thoughts, emotions and behaviour. Antisocial means behaving in a way that is disruptive to, and may be harmful to, other people.

Antisocial personality disorder is not usually diagnosed before the age of 18 but characteristics of the disorder can be recognised in younger people as **conduct problems**. Early treatment of children (aged 5–11 years) and young people (aged 12–17 years) with conduct problems may help to prevent antisocial personality disorder from developing later (see page 10).

The symptoms of antisocial personality disorder may include:

- behaving unlawfully, leading to repeatedly being arrested and convicted (this is sometimes called **offending behaviour**)
- deceiving people
- behaving angrily and aggressively
- feeling agitated or depressed a lot of the time, and easily bored
- being impulsive (doing something without thinking of the consequences)
- behaving irresponsibly and exploiting or manipulating other people
- not caring about the safety and feelings of other people
- not feeling remorse when causing harm to others.

Not everyone with antisocial personality disorder will have all these symptoms.

People with antisocial personality disorder come from different backgrounds, but many have been brought up in a home where there was domestic abuse and violence, and other serious difficulties.

Some people with antisocial personality disorder may also have other conditions such as **depression, anxiety**, and problems with drugs and alcohol (see page 8).

The terms **psychopathy** and **severe personality disorder** are sometimes used to describe people with severe or extreme symptoms who pose a serious risk to other people.

What happens when I first see a healthcare professional about my symptoms?

If it is thought that you may have antisocial personality disorder, you should be offered an **assessment** with a specialist mental health professional.

During the assessment you should be asked questions about your thoughts, feelings and behaviour, and how you cope with any problems. You should also be asked about different areas of your life such as your relationships, life at home and at work or college, and any other problems such as depression and anxiety, and problems with drugs and alcohol. You may be asked to fill in a questionnaire. The person assessing you will also discuss with you whether you need **psychological treatment** (see page 7), social care and support or help in finding a job or getting back to work. They should develop a plan of your treatment and care.

As part of the assessment, your healthcare professional may discuss with you any behaviour that may be harmful to yourself or others. You may be referred to a specialist who will ask you about any violent behaviour, any previous convictions or time spent in prison. They may also ask about any other conditions you may have and events in your life that make you feel stressed.

If you are diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder, healthcare professionals should discuss with you, and your family or carer if appropriate, what this means and how it might affect your life. They should explain that you should still receive treatment for any other mental health problems. You should be encouraged to attend and fully take part in treatment for antisocial personality disorder and any other conditions.

If you have a learning or physical disability, and a healthcare professional thinks that you may have antisocial personality disorder, you may be offered an appointment with an expert in your disability. You should be offered the same services as other people with antisocial personality disorder, with adjustments made to the treatment where necessary.

If you think that your care does not match what is described in this booklet, please talk to a member of your healthcare team in the first instance.

Questions you might like to ask your healthcare team

- Why have I been given this diagnosis?
- Can I expect an improvement following treatment?
- Who can I contact in a crisis?
- Are there any specialist personality disorder services in my area?
- Are there any support organisations in my local area?
- Where can I access confidential advice and support if there is a problem with my healthcare?
- Can you provide any information for my family or carers?

If you have talked to your healthcare team, and you think that a treatment is suitable for you but it is not available, you can contact your local patient advice and liaison service ('PALS').

Who will provide my treatment?

You may initially receive treatment from **mental health services** and other community services. If you are in prison or another institution you can receive treatment there. Your treatment and care may involve many different services so it should be coordinated properly by the people caring for you. You should be told about the different services involved and given information about them.

When you are receiving treatment for antisocial personality disorder you should not usually be transferred to another service or institution during treatment. If you are receiving treatment in prison or another institution, your treatment should continue once you leave the institution.

You should not usually have to stay in hospital for treatment for antisocial personality disorder, unless you experience a crisis, or if you have another condition as well as antisocial personality disorder. If you do need to stay in hospital, this should usually be for a short period only.

Your rights and your relationship with your healthcare team

You should not be excluded from any services because of a diagnosis of antisocial personality disorder or if you have a history of antisocial or offending behaviour.

Any information about antisocial personality disorder should be provided in your preferred language, as should psychological therapy and other treatments. Interpreters should be arranged if needed.

Your healthcare team should work with you to help you to make your own decisions about your treatment options and goals. You should be encouraged and supported to find solutions to your problems, even during a crisis.

Your healthcare team should build a relationship with you based on hope, optimism and trust, and explain that recovery is possible. Healthcare professionals should be non-judgemental, consistent and reliable.

Will my family or carers be involved in my treatment and care?

Healthcare professionals should ask you whether you wish your family or carers to be involved in your treatment and care. If you agree, your healthcare team should encourage them to be involved.

There is information for families and carers on page 9.

What treatment should I be offered for antisocial personality disorder?

You may be offered psychological treatment in order to help you with problems such as impulsive and antisocial behaviour, and if you have problems relating to other people. Psychological treatment can help you to make positive changes to your thought processes and your behaviour.

If you have a history of offending behaviour, you may be offered a psychological treatment (such as one called 'reasoning and rehabilitation') that can help you to reduce offending and other antisocial behaviour. People with very serious and extreme symptoms (such as psychopathy and severe personality disorder) may also be offered this treatment.

You should be given support and encouragement to attend your meetings for psychological treatment and to complete the course. The treatment should be offered in a group with other people with similar problems, but a healthcare professional should also see you regularly on your own so that you can discuss how your treatment is progressing.

Some treatments may not be suitable for you, depending on your exact circumstances. If you have questions about the specific treatments and options covered in this booklet, please talk to a member of your healthcare team.

Help for young offenders

The evidence shows that psychological treatments for adults with antisocial personality disorder can also help young offenders (aged 17 years and younger) who are in care to reduce offending behaviour. The treatments should take place in a group of young people with similar problems.

Young offenders should be offered an appointment with mental health services for adults when they reach an appropriate age to assess whether they need treatment.

Should I be offered medication?

You should not usually be offered medication just to treat antisocial personality disorder or for any related symptoms or behaviour, such as aggression, anger and impulsive behaviour. This is because there is no evidence that medication helps to relieve the symptoms of antisocial personality disorder and it may cause side effects.

However, you may be offered medication if you have other conditions, such as depression and anxiety (see section below).

Can I receive treatments for other conditions?

People with antisocial personality disorder often have other conditions, such as depression, anxiety, and drug and alcohol problems. If you have another condition or problem you should be offered treatment for it, such as psychological treatment and medication, whether or not you are receiving treatment for antisocial personality disorder or for psychopathy or severe personality disorder. Healthcare professionals should follow NICE's guidelines on treating these other conditions.

If you have a problem with drugs (such as cocaine, crack cocaine, amphetamines or heroin) you should be offered a psychological treatment, such as an **incentives programme**.

If you are in prison or another institution, and you have a problem with drugs or alcohol, you may be offered a place in a specialist treatment programme.

Questions about the treatment

- Why have you offered me this particular type of treatment?
- What are the pros and cons of having this treatment?
- What will the treatment involve?
- How will the treatment help me? What effect will it have on my symptoms and everyday life? What sort of improvements might I expect?
- How long will it take to have an effect?
- Are there any risks associated with this treatment?
- What are my options for taking treatments other than the recommended treatment?
- What will happen if I choose not to have the recommended treatment?
- Is there some written material (such as a leaflet) about the treatment that I can have?

Information for families or carers of people with antisocial personality disorder

Caring for a person with antisocial personality disorder can be difficult and challenging. Depending on the circumstances, families or carers can play an important part in supporting a person with antisocial personality disorder, but they may also need help and support themselves. Healthcare professionals should tell you about any local support groups for families or carers. They should address your needs, particularly the impact of antisocial behaviour and any drug or alcohol problems on you and the rest of the family. Healthcare professionals should also take account of the needs of any children in the family.

It is up to the person with antisocial personality disorder whether they would like families or carers involved in their treatment. They might ask for you to be involved or this might be encouraged by their healthcare professional. But if the person with antisocial personality disorder would prefer to cope on their own, you are still entitled to a **carer's assessment** and support.

Questions for families or carers

- Can you give me some information about antisocial personality disorder and its treatments?
- Am I entitled to be told about the treatment my family member or friend is having?
- What can I/we do to help and support the person with antisocial personality disorder?
- Can you give me any information about how to access help and support in a crisis?
- Is there any additional support that I/we as carer(s) might benefit from or are entitled to?

Information for families or carers of children with conduct problems

Many young people with conduct problems go on to have antisocial personality disorder as adults. But treating young people with conduct problems at an early age can help to prevent more serious problems from developing later on. There is a range of psychological treatments involving parents, the whole family, or the child or young person on their own, and for young people in foster care.

For very young children who are thought to be at risk of developing conduct problems, healthcare professionals may offer parents nursery care for children aged younger than 1 year. For parents with children aged 3 years and younger, help may be offered to enable them to make the most of their parenting skills.

For parents of children younger than 12 years, a course called a **parent-training programme** should be offered. The course helps parents make the most of their parenting skills so that they can help to improve their child's behaviour. It can help with communication skills, problem-solving techniques and encouraging positive behaviour. The training usually takes place in a group with other parents and is run by professionals such as psychologists or social workers.

Parents may also be offered a place on the course if the child is older (aged 12–17 years).

For children or young people who are aged 8 years and above, a psychological treatment may be offered to them on their own.

Psychological treatments that involve the whole family (if the young person is aged 12–17 years) may be offered if the parents are not able to attend parent-training programmes, or have chosen not to, or if the child or young person's conduct problems are very severe.

For young people aged 12–17 years who are in foster care, a treatment designed for them, their foster family and their birth parents may be offered. For those with severe conduct problems, who have a history of offending, and who are at risk of being taken into care, a treatment involving the young person, their family, their school and friends may be offered.

Young people with conduct problems may be offered an appointment with mental health services for adults before they turn 18 to assess whether they need treatment as an adult.

Glossary

Anxiety: feelings of worry or fear that can be difficult to control.

Assessment: a meeting with a healthcare professional, who will ask questions about a person's physical and mental health to establish what the illness is, how severe it is and what treatments would suit the person best. An assessment may involve a physical examination, tests or a questionnaire.

Carer: a person who has regular close contact with the person with antisocial personality disorder and is involved in their care. This could be a family member, guardian, partner or friend.

Carer's assessment: a meeting in which a carer can discuss with social services the help and support they need in their role as a carer. Carers have a legal right to have their needs assessed.

Conduct problems: behaving in an aggressive or defiant way, deceiving others, and taking part in unlawful behaviour such as destroying property and stealing. Conduct problems are more serious than teenage rebelliousness.

Depression: a type of mental health problem that causes a loss of pleasure in things that were once enjoyable, withdrawal from family and friends, negative and self-critical thoughts, and other symptoms, such as feeling tearful, irritable or tired, poor appetite, and sleep problems.

Incentives programme: a psychological treatment for people who have a problem with drugs. The person may be given a voucher (worth a few pounds to be exchanged for items that encourage a healthy, drug-free lifestyle) or a privilege (such as a take-home dose of methadone) if they have a negative test showing that they have not used illegal drugs. The person is tested regularly and continues to receive vouchers or privileges for every negative test until they have reached their goal.

Mental health services: a group of professionals or a healthcare service that includes nurses who may visit people in their own homes, psychiatrists, psychologists, occupational therapists and support workers.

Offending behaviour: behaviour that leads to breaking the law and often a criminal conviction.

Parent-training programme: aims to enable parents to improve their relationship with their child and to improve their child's behaviour.

Psychological treatment: a general term used to describe meeting with a healthcare professional to talk about feelings and moods.

Psychopathy: a serious form of personality disorder.

Severe personality disorder: a serious form of personality disorder, sometimes called 'dangerous and severe personality disorder'.

More information

The organisations below can provide more information and support for people with antisocial personality disorder. Please note that NICE is not responsible for the quality or accuracy of any information or advice provided by these organisations.

- Mind, 0845 766 0163, www.mind.org.uk
- Rethink, 0845 456 0455, www.rethink.org

NHS Choices (www.nhs.uk) may be a good place to find out more. Your local patient advice and liaison service (usually known as 'PALS') may be able to give you more information and support. You should also contact PALS if you are unhappy with the treatment you are offered, but you should talk about your care with a member of your healthcare team first. If your local PALS is not able to help you, they should refer you to your local independent complaints advocacy service.

About NICE

NICE produces guidance (advice) for the NHS about preventing, diagnosing and treating different medical conditions. The guidance is written by independent experts including healthcare professionals and people representing service users, families and carers. They consider the evidence on the condition and treatments, the views of service users and carers, and the experiences of doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals. Staff working in the NHS are expected to follow this guidance.

To find out more about NICE, its work and how it reaches decisions, see www.nice.org.uk/aboutguidance

This booklet and other versions of this guideline aimed at healthcare professionals are available at www.nice.org.uk/ICG77

You can order printed copies of this booklet from NICE publications (phone 0845 003 7783 or email publications@nice.org.uk and quote reference N1764).

We encourage NHS and voluntary organisations to use text from this booklet in their own information about antisocial personality disorder.

The NICE website also has information about the guidelines on anxiety, borderline personality disorder, depression and drug misuse.