

Table 1

Overview of identified studies, methodological quality scores and key study characteristics

Study ID	Authors	Year	Quality score (MMAT)	Location	Main focus	Method	Participant group(s)	Participants ethnicity	Autism diagnoses; Age at diagnosis (yrs)	Co-occurring ID	Age of autistic adults (yrs)	Gender of autistic adults	Co-occurring mental health difficulties
1	Adamson, Kinnaird, Glennon, Oakley & Tchanturia	2020	5/5; 100%	UK (n=9), USA participants (n=1)	Carers perspectives on their autistic daughters' experience of AN, including treatments	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis	Parents/carers of autistic adult daughters with AN (n=10)	Not specified	Autism diagnoses not specified; Mean, range = 15, 9-23	Not specified	Range = 16-25	All female (n=10)	AN and at least one co-occurring diagnosis, most commonly OCD and GAD
2	Ainsworth, Robertson, Welsh, Day, Watt, Barry, Stanfield & Melville	2020	5/5; 100%	UK, Scotland	Practitioners perspectives on presentation and treatment of anxiety in autistic adults	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis	Practitioners current/past experience working with autistic individuals with anxiety (n=8)	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Adults, not further specified	Not specified	Anxiety
3	Anderson & Butt	2018	5/5; 100%	US	Parents' perspective on general service provision & transitions for young autistic adults, some mention of access to mental health services	Qualitative: Unstructured interviews. Analysis used constant comparative method	Parents of autistic young adults (n=35)	83% White (n=30), 11% Black/African American (n=4), 6% Other (n=2)	31% Autism (n=11), 36% Asperger's syndrome (n=13), 33% PDD-NOS/other ASD (n=12); 36% aged 0-3 (n=13), 17% aged 4-7 (n=6), 47% aged 8 or above (n=17)	39% ID, details on severity level/support required provided	Mean, range = 23.2, 19-31	19% female (n=7), 81% male (n=29)	67% Anxiety disorder (n=24), 47% Mood disorder (n=17), 28% OCD (n=10), 8% Psychosis (n=3), 19% Seizures (n=7)
4	Anderson, Lupfer & Shattuck	2018	5/5; 100%	US, Maryland and the District of Columbia	Parents perspective on transition experiences of young autistic adults, some mention of support for co-occurring mental health difficulties	Qualitative: Unstructured interviews. Analysis used constant comparative method (grounded theory)	Parents of offspring diagnosed with ASD (n=20)	90% White (n=18), 100% non-Hispanic (n=20)	35% Autism (n=7), 30% Asperger's syndrome (n=6), 15% PDD-NOS (n=3), 20% Other ASD (n=4); 50% aged 0-3 (n=10), 15% aged 4-7 (n=3), 40% aged 8 or above (n=8)	40% ID (n=8)	Mean = 24.0	25% female (n=5), 75% male (n=15)	Not specified
5	Au-Yeung, Bradley, Robertson, Shaw,	2019	14/15; 93%	UK	Autistic adults experience of mental health diagnoses and	Mixed: Online survey including open-ended questions. Thematic analysis.	Autistic (n=208), possibly autistic (n=71),	Not specified	Autism diagnoses not specified; Mean (SD), range = 34.5 (12.2), 4-59	Not specified	Mean (SD), range = 38.6	Autistic participants: 34.6% males (n=72)	88% reported co-occurring mental health difficulties. % for individual conditions provided (depression, anxiety,

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	Baron-Cohen & Cassidy				perceived misdiagnosis	Participatory approach: Study developed in partnership with a steering group	non-autistic (n=141) adults				(11.4), 18-67		OCD, personality disorder, feeding or eating disorders, bipolar, psychotic disorders, trauma, gender dysphoria, dissociative disorders, substance abuse)
6	Babb, Brede, Jones, Elliott, Zanker, Tchanturia, Serpell, Mandy & Fox	2021	5/5; 100%	UK	Autistic women's experience of eating disorder services	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis Participatory approach: Collaboration with two autistic advisors with lived experience of AN	Autistic women (n=15), parents (n=13), healthcare professionals (n=11)	Not specified	Autism spectrum disorder; Mean (SD), range = 29.40 (11.34), 10-34	No	Mean (SD), range = 32.60, (10.32), 23-58	100% female	Past or current Anorexia Nervosa, range of other current mental health difficulties described
7	Camm-Crosbie, Bradley, Shaw, Baron-Cohen & Cassidy	2019	5/5; 100%	UK	Autistic adults experience of treatment and support for mental health problems, self-injury and suicidality	Mixed: Online survey including open-ended questions. Thematic analysis. Participatory approach: Study developed in partnership with a steering group	Autistic adults (n=200)	Not specified	% of diagnoses reported by gender (Asperger's syndrome/high functioning autism, autism, PDD, other); Mean, range = 34.1, 2-59, some participants diagnosed in childhood.	None	Mean, range = 38.9, 18-67	61% female (n=122), 38.5% male (n=77), 0.5% unreported (n=1)	90.4% reported a mental health diagnosis, most commonly depression and anxiety. % for individual conditions provided.
8	Cheak-Zamora & Teti	2015	5/5; 100%	US	Young autistic adults and their caregivers experience of health care transition, some mention of mental health services	Qualitative: Semi-structured focus groups. Thematic analysis	Autistic youth (n=13), caregivers (n=19)	Not specified	Autism diagnoses and age not specified	Yes, details on ability level provided	Range = 15-22	25% female (n=2), 85% male (n=11)	Not specified
9	Coleman-Fountain, Buckley & Beresford	2020	5/5; 100%	UK	Young autistic adults experience of managing mental health problems through primary care	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis. Participatory approach: Two supporting advisory panels	Autistic young adults (n=19)	All but one white British'	Autism diagnoses not specified; 'Most received diagnosis before 8 years'	None	Range = 23-24	11% female (n=2), 89% male (n=17)	All had experience of mental health problems. Screening for anxiety depression and OCD reported, but not formal diagnoses

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10	Cooper, Loades & Russell	2018	12/15; 80%	UK	Practitioners (therapists) experience of working psychologically with autistic adults	Mixed: Survey including open-ended questions. Content analysis	Psychological therapists (n=54) attending workshop on CBT for autistic clients	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified
11	Coxon	2016	5/5; 100% (both studies)	UK	Autistic adults and practitioners experience of psychological therapies (two separate chapters)	Qualitative: Practitioners: Interviews. Interpretative phenomenological analysis Autistic adults: Semi-structured interviews. Grounded theory approach	Practitioners (n=6), autistic adults (n=7)	Practitioners: All white British. Autistic adults: 6/7 Caucasian British, one Caucasian/Asian	'High-functioning autism disorder'; mean, range = 7.7, 2-33; individual ages provided	None	Range = 21-38	43% female (n=3), 57% males (n=4)	Not specified
12	Crane, Adams, Harper, Welch & Pellicano	2019	13/15; 87%	UK; % from different regions provided	Young autistic adults mental health experience, including support needs and experience of service provision	Mixed: Online survey and semi-structured interviews with separate participant group (only interview data included in meta-analysis). Thematic analysis. Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach	Young autistic adults: (n=21)	95.2% White (n=20), 4.8% Mixed (n=1)	28.6% Asperger's syndrome (n=6), 9.5% Autism (n=2), 42.9% ASD/C (n=9), 9.5% Pervasive developmental disorder (n=2); Mean, range=14.68, 4-22	None	Mean, range = 20.90, 16-25	47.6% female (including transgender female) (n=10), 42.9% male (including transgender male) (n=9), 9.5% Non-Binary (n=2)	% with co-occurring conditions provided (anxiety, ADHD, bipolar disorder, depression, developmental coordination disorder, dyslexia, epilepsy, fragile X, OCD, PTSD, schizophrenia, Tourette's)
13	Crane, Davidson, Prosser & Pellicano	2019	12/15; 80%	UK; % of psychiatrists practicing in different regions provided	Psychiatrists autism knowledge, attitudes and experiences of working with autistic individuals, some mention of mental health support for autistic adults	Mixed: Online survey including open-ended questions. Thematic analysis	Psychiatrists (n=172)	69.8% White (n=120), 2.3% Black (n=4), 19.2% Asian (n=33), 3.5% Mixed (n=6), 1.2% Other (n=2), 4.1% Prefer not to say (n=7)	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified

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14	Ee, Mei Lim, Stenfert Kroese & Rose	2021	5/5; 100%	Singapore, with some of the research team being based in the UK	Mental health service experience of adults with neurodevelopmental condition in Singapore	Qualitative: one-to-one semi-structured interviews, focus group. Interpretative phenomenological analysis	Adults with a neurodevelopmental condition (autistic; n=4/5)	Chinese (n=3), Malay (n=1), Indian (n=1)	Autism (n=4/5), age not specified	ID (n=4/5)	Median (SD)=25 (3.53)	40% female (n=2), 60% male (n=3)	Depression (n=1), psychosis (n=2), social anxiety (n=1), OCD (n=2), aggressive behaviours (n=1), schizophrenia (n=1)
15	Elichaoff	2015	5/5, 100%	UK	Autistic adults experience of growing older, experience with mental health professionals as a subtheme	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis	Autistic adults (n=4)	All White British (n=4)	Asperger's syndrome/ASD; Age not specified	None	Range= 58-63	50% female (n=2), 50% male (n=2)	Depression
16	Griffith, Totsika, Nash & Hastings	2012	5/5; 100%	UK, Wales	Autistic adults general support experience and needs, some mention of mental health service experience	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews. Interpretative phenomenological analysis	Autistic adults (n=11)	Not specified	Asperger's syndrome; Mean, range = 37.89, 19-50; Two participants were seeking diagnostic assessment at time of study	None	Mean, range = 46.36, 37-57	36% female (n=4), 64% male (n=7)	'Many participants suffer from anxiety and/or depression'
17	Henry	2014	5/5; 100%	US	Autistic adults and family members' perceptions of barriers to support services in employment and health care, some mention of mental health	Qualitative: Phenomenological approach to interviews. Narrative analysis	Autistic adults (n=5), relatives (n=3)	Caucasian (n=4), Asian (n=2), Latino (n=2)	Autism, Asperger's syndrome; One person was diagnosed in adulthood, no further details provided	1/5 had ID	23,27,24, 23,55	20% female (n=1), 80% male (n=4)	3/5 experienced co-occurring mental health difficulties, including social anxiety, depression, oppositional defiance disorder
18	Jordan, Marczak & Knibbs,	2020	5/5; 100%	UK	Autistic adults experiences of low mood and depression, some mention of experience interacting with services	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews, supported by a mood diary and feeling wheel visual aid. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. Participatory approach: Autistic adults commented on study design	Autistic adults (n=8)	Not specified	Asperger's syndrome (N=8); Childhood (N=2), adulthood (N=6); Age not further specified	None	Mean (SD), range = 31.75 (12.7), 19-51	12.5% female (N=1), 87.5% male (N=7)	Depression (n=6), the two remaining participants experienced low mood

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19	Joseph-Kent	2018	4/5; 80%	US	Autistic adults with ID and their family members experience of barriers to access and helpfulness of different health care services, including mental health services	Qualitative: Explorative interviews. No details on analytic approach provided and co-developed themes in analysis	Family members (n=12), autistic adults (n=4)	White (all participants)	ASD/ID; Range=1-42; Two individuals were diagnosed in adulthood, all others before the age of 10 years	mid-moderate ID (n=5), severe ID (n=5)	Mean = 41.5	17% female (n=2), 83% male (n=10)	7/12 experienced co-occurring mental health difficulties
20	Kinnaird, Norton, Stewart & Tchanturia	2019	5/5; 100%	UK; Participants had received treatment in various locations across the UK, the US, and Western European countries	Autistic women's experience of eating disorder treatment	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis	Women with formal autism diagnosis (n=9), or high levels of autistic traits (n=4)	Not specified	'Formal diagnosis of autism' (n=9), 'high levels of autistic traits' (n=4); Age not specified	Not specified	All participants: Mean = 28.46; Participants with formal autism diagnosis: Mean = 23.56	84% female (n=11), 16% Non-binary (n=2)	AN and 92% (n=12) had additional co-occurring diagnoses, including depression (n=8), anxiety (n=8), OCD (n=6), bipolar disorder (n=2), PTSD (n=2), Tourette's (n=1). Two were diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, but disputed the diagnosis
21	Kinnaird, Norton & Tchanturia	2017	5/5; 100%	UK, London	Clinicians perspective on working with AN and autism comorbidity	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis	Mental health clinicians/therapists (n=9)	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	AN and at least one additional co-occurring diagnosis, most commonly OCD and GAD
22	Kinnaird, Oakley, Lawrence, Shergill & Tchanturia	2021	5/5; 100%	UK	Support needs of carers for people with comorbid autism and eating disorders	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis Participatory approach: Research team included a carer for an autistic young person	Parents (n=11)	Not specified	Autism Spectrum Condition, Mean=16.63	Not specified	Mean, range=23, 12-36	73% female (n=8), 27% male (n=3)	Restrictive AN (n=9), binge-purge AN (n=1), binge eating disorder (n=1); other: anxiety (n=11), OCD (n=7), borderline personality disorder (n=4), body dysmorphic disorder (n=2)
23	Lake, Milovanov,	2015	5/5; 100%	Canada, Toronto	Parents views on autistic children and young adults' use of	Qualitative: Focus group, 'thematic approach'	Mothers of autistic youth (n=7)	Caucasian (n=6), South Asian (n=1).	Asperger's syndrome (n=3),	Normal intelligence (n=2), Mild ID	24, 21, 12, 21,	43% female (n=3),	Anxiety (n=3), OCD (n=3), ADHD (n=3), borderline personality

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	Sawyer & Lunsky				psychotropic medication and healthcare services				PDD-NOS (n=4); Age not specified	(n=3), Moderate ID (n=1, N/A (n=1).	21, 28, 28	57% male (n=4).	disorder (n= 1), bipolar (n= 1)
24	Mack	2020	5/5; 100%	US	Counsellors' experience of providing counselling to autistic adults	Qualitative: Two rounds of semi-structured interviews. Transcendental phenomenology approach	Counsellors (n=11)	White (n=10), Black/African American (n=1)	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified
25	Maddox, Crabbe, Beidas, Brookman-Fraze, Cannuscio, Miller, Nicolaidis & Mandell	2019	5/5; 100%	US	Autistic adults, clinicians and agency leaders perspectives on improving mental health services for autistic adults	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews with autistic adults. Clinicians and agency leaders participated in either an individual interview or a focus group. Thematic analysis	Autistic adults (n=22), Community health clinicians (n=44), Mental health agency leaders (n=11)	Autistic Adults: 81.8% White, 9.1% Asian, 4.5% Black, 4.5% mixed, 4.5% Hispanic/Latino Clinicians: 79.5% White, 18.2% Black, Hispanic/Latino 18.2% Hispanic/Latino, 2.3% more than one race Agency leaders: 90.9% White, 9.1% Black	ASD; 59.1% had received their diagnosis in adulthood	Not specified	Mean = 34.4	22.7% female, 77.3% male	21/22 had accessed mental health services during adulthood. No further details provided
26	Maloret & Scott	2018	5/5; 100%	UK, East England	Autistic adults experience of acute inpatient psychiatric services	Qualitative: In-depth interviews. Interpretative phenomenological analysis. Participatory approach: Consultation of member of the local autism community. Coding framework	Autistic adults (n=20)	Not specified	ASC (including Asperger's syndrome or high functioning autism); At least one participant was diagnosed in late adulthood	None	Mean = 35.5	40% female (n=8), 60% male (n=12)	35% anxiety disorder, 27% psychotic disorder, 25% mood disorder, 10 depression, 5% eating disorder, 4.5% substance abuse

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27	McMorris, Baraskewich, Ames, Shaikh, Ncube & Bebko	2018	6/15; 40%	Canada	Young autistic adults (college students) experience of accessing services for mental health issues	confirmed with participants Qualitative: Interview. Analytic approach not specified. Participatory approach: Peer mentors conducted the interviews	Autistic adults (n=45)	73% European-Canadian (n=29)	Autism diagnoses and age not specified	22% ID (n=10)	Mean = 21.03	18% female (n=8), 82% male (n=37)	56% (n=25) had at least one mental health diagnosis, 29% (n=13) had at least two mental health diagnosis, % for individual disorders provided (anxiety, depression, learning disorder, ADHD, other)
28	Merrick, King, McConachie, Parr, Le Couteur & Transition Collaborative Group	2020	10/15, 66,6%	UK	Young autistic people's experience of transition from child to adult mental health services	Mixed: Qualitative notes from discussion with young person, guided by questionnaire responses, and from the clinical records. Framework analysis	Autistic young people (n=118), parents/carers (n=113)	'98.3% described themselves as White British'	ASD; Age not specified	None	Mean (SD), range = 19.1 (1.4), 16.1–21.9	31% female (n=36), 69% male (n=82)	ADHD/ADD (n=35), mood (n=27), anxiety (n=27), ODD/challenging behaviour (n=8), sleep disorders (n=17), other (n=8), self-harm (n=8)
29	Murphy & McMorrow	2015	10/15, 66,6%	UK	High secure psychiatric hospitals staff's views on autism	Mixed: Survey including open-ended question. Analytic approach not specified	Staff working in high-secure psychiatric care with patients with specific needs (n=206)	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified
30	Newlove-Delgado, Ford, Stein & Garside	2018	5/5; 100%	UK, Southwestern England	Young people's experiences of transition from child to adult care for ADHD, including subset of participants with co-occurring autism	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis	Young adults (n=7), three of whom were diagnosed with ASD	Not specified	ASD; Age not specified	None	Range= 17-18	Gender of autistic participants - 33% female (n=1), 67% male (n=2)	ADHD
31	Petty, Bergenheim, Mahoney & Chamberlain	2021	5/5; 100%	UK, North of England	Recommendations on adapting mental health services for autistic clients from a specialist multidisciplinary team	Qualitative: Freestyling interviews. Freelisting analysis to calculate frequency and salience of items,	Multidisciplinary staff members from a specialist autism service (n=15)	Not specified	Not specified	None	services for children, young people and adults	Not specified	Not specified

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32	Robertson Stanfield, Watt, Barry, Day, Cormack & Melville	2018	5/5; 100%	UK, Scotland	Autistic adults and family members experiences of anxiety, including barriers to support	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis	Autistic adults (n=10), supporters of autistic adults(n=7)	Not specified	Asperger's Syndrome (n=7), Autism (n=3); Age not specified	None	Mean, range= 40, 19 – 60	50% female (n=5), 50% male (n=5)	Anxiety
33	Rodgers, Herrema, Garland, Osborne, Cooper, Heslop & Freeston	2018	5/5; 100%	UK, England, Scotland	Autistic adults worries regarding their futures, some mention of mental health services	Qualitative: Focus groups. Thematic analysis	Autistic adults (n=23)	Not specified	Autism (n=2), Asperger's syndrome (n=16), ASD (n=6); Mean (SD), range = 16 (13), 2.5 - 62	Not specified	Mean, range = 36, 18 - 64.	48% female (n=11), 52% male (n=12)	Multiple participants reported experiencing depression and anxiety in findings. No further details provided
34	Russell, Gaunt, Cooper, Horwood, Barton, Ensum, Ingham, Parr, Metcalfe, Rai, Kessler & Wiles	2019	5/5; 100%	UK, Bristol, Newcastle	Autistic adults and therapists experiences of a trial of autism-specific guided self-help (GSH) for depression	Qualitative: In-depth interviews. Thematic analysis. Participatory approach	Autistic adults GSH arm (n=14), autistic adults treatment as usual arm (n=7), therapists (n=5)	Not specified	Autism diagnoses not specified; 'Eighteen participants had received an ASD diagnosis in the previous 6 years and nine had received it in the previous year'	Not specified	Range = 21-60	19% female (n=4), 81% male (n=17)	Depression
35	Spain, Rumball, O'Neill, Sin, Prunty & Happe	2017	5/5; 100%	UK, London	Multidisciplinary professionals views on working with autistic individuals with social anxiety	Qualitative: Focus groups. Thematic analysis	Professionals (n=22)	Not specified	Not specified	With and without ID	Not specified	Not specified	Social anxiety
36	Tint & Weiss	2018	5/5; 100%	Canada	Autistic women's experiences of service needs and barriers to care, some mention of mental health service experience	Qualitative: Focus groups. Inductive, semantic-level analysis conducted	Autistic women (n=20)	90% White	Autism diagnoses not specified; Mean, range = 26.25, 2-65	None	Mean, range = 35.45, 19 - 69	All female	Not specified
37	Unigwe, Buckley, Crane,	2017	13/15; 87%	UK; % from different	Family doctors experience of managing their	Mixed: Online survey including open-ended	Family doctors (n=304)	79.6% White (n=242), 3.0% Black	Autism; Age not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified

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	Kenny, Remington & Pellicano			regions provided	patients on the autism spectrum, some mention of co-occurring mental health difficulties	questions. Thematic analysis		(n=9), 11.2% Asian (n=34), 2.6% mixed (n=8), 1.6% other (n=5), 2.0% prefer not to say (n=6).					
38	Van Hees, Moyson & Roeyers	2015	5/5; 100%	Belgium, Flanders	Autistic students experience in higher education, some mention of managing mental health difficulties	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews. Grounded Theory analysis.	Autistic university/college students (n=23)	Not specified	ASD, Asperger's syndrome, PDD-NOS; Age not specified	None	Range = 18 - 25	26% female (n=6), 74% male (n=17)	Anxiety (n=22), stress (n=23), fatigue (n=21), feeling overwhelmed (n=21), loneliness (n=20), depression (n=16)

Note. Abbreviations: Anorexia Nervosa (AN), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorder/Condition (ASD/C), General Anxiety Disorder (GAD), Intellectual Disability (ID), Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT- Version 18; Hong et al., 2018), Obsessive–Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS)