

# Meeting the Needs of Children and Young People with Attention Difficulties

## Information for Schools

Children & Young People's Services



# Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

## Assessment process

### There is no 'test' for ADHD

- Parents & school staff notice difficulties.
- Child referred into Single Point of Access (SPA) by parent, GP, school or service. (Schools are best placed to make referrals as they have access to a wide range of information of the child's difficulties and needs).
- Initial appointment with a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) clinician – potential referral onto ADHD pathway.
- Potential signposting to other services/pathways if required.
- Collecting information:
  - I. parents/carers, school staff, other professionals
  - II. observation of child within school context
  - III. standardised rating scales
  - IV. developmental history.
- Multi-disciplinary formulation meeting.
- Information considered against diagnostic criteria.
- Decision about diagnosis.
- Possible post formulation feedback meeting in school led by an advisory teacher.
- Six week review "check in" with school via telephone following formulation meeting in school.



# Potential co-existing conditions with ADHD

Children with a diagnosis of ADHD most often have additional difficulties, some of which may result in further diagnoses being made.

This is the 'norm' rather than the exception.

These may include:

- Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD)
- Sleep difficulties
- Mood disorders – anxiety, depression
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)
- Conduct Disorder
- Tics or Tourette's
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Specific Learning difficulties e.g. Dyslexia.



# Meeting the needs of the child/young person through a strength-based approach

*Creating a personalised individual approach to learning in addition to reasonable adjustments*

## Strengths, difficulties and potential impact

### Children with ADHD often:

- Have high energy
- Are curious and keen to find out more
- Are keen to help others
- Are 'outside the box' thinkers
- Are willing to take risks and try new things
- Have the ability to hyper-focus on a specific task
- Are enthusiastic once engaged
- Are often imaginative and creative
- Draw upon their own resources to solve a problem
- Are often articulate speakers
- Excel at maths and/or reading
- Are deep thinkers and thrive on applying their knowledge in new and creative ways.

Although we need to look at a child or young person's difficulties to enable us to meet their needs, we also need to focus upon their strengths, as this:

- Helps promote a sense of belonging
- Increases self-esteem
- Supports them to access their learning through differing modes
- Opens up opportunities to develop social relationships

A communication passport can be a great method of recognising strengths of a child or young person with ADHD, and give an overall understanding of the child/young person as a whole.

# Difficulties with Attention

## Quality First Teaching Strategies

### Core Difficulties

- Inattention
- Organisational Skills
- Impulsivity
- Hyperactivity.

### Quality First Teaching

#### Inattention

- Seating position – ideally near teacher, facing board, limited distractions, peer role model.
- Vary pace of lesson, variety of activity, visual aids.
- Attention grabbing phrases to refocus child.
- Reminder to pay attention (encourage eye contact) when sharing important information - then check.
- Support to settle following transitions.
- Work broken down into achievable chunks (use of timer) and task completion promptly recognised.
- Uncluttered worksheets, simple format, allow annotation.
- Positive redirection back to task – physical proximity, non-verbal signal, visual cue/reminder, verbal prompt.
- Specific praise for good concentration, focus, quality/quantity of work achieved.

#### Organisation

- Regular, consistent routines.
- Predictability – visual timetables (day), sequenced list of tasks/activities (lesson).
- Recap/remind previous lesson content.
- Clear, concise instructions – visual cues, allow time to process information.



- Tasks broken down into manageable steps/stages.
- Support at start of task.
- Repeat instructions, clarify tasks, reassure.
- Time management – timed tasks, advance warnings of task/lesson end.
- Assist self-organisation – desk-top layout, colour coding, regular sort out of tray/school bag/ planner.

### Impulsivity

- Encourage use of quiet hand, 'speaking object' - praise when child remembers (judicious ignoring).
- Show the answer e.g. number fan, individual whiteboards.
- Support postponement – planned return to them, (use of post-its for older children), help if they have forgotten their answer.
- Group work –need scaffolding re membership of group (pairs), sharing, taking turns, planned roles.
- Clear, simple classroom rules, consequences, rewards.
- Encourage stop, wait and count to ten or stop/listen, look/think, answer/do.
- Reminders and encouragement to take time over written work.
- 'Catch and compliment' specific desired behaviours.

### Hyperactivity

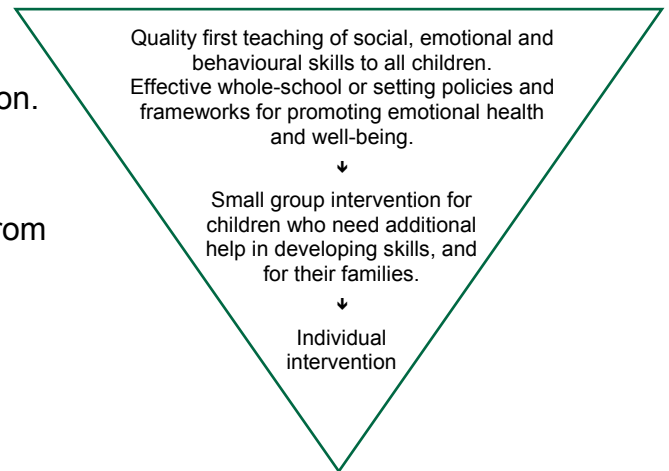
- Build into lesson opportunities for the child to move around the room to release physical energy – through class activities, errands.
- Position on the carpet close to teacher – ideally so fidgeting does not disturb others.
- Use of a 'fiddle toy' to aid concentration e.g. tangle, thinking putty or doodling on paper at desk.
- Ignore excessive physical movement at desk e.g. feet and legs if it is not disturbing/hurting the child or others.
- Keep in mind that the excessive motor activity is probably not within the child's control and may be uncomfortable for them.

# Working Memory Difficulties

## Quality First Teaching Strategies

### Core Difficulties

- Holding in mind and manipulating information.
- Retaining (holding on to) information.
- Retrieving (finding and using) information from Short-term memory.



### Quality First Teaching

#### Develop visualisation skills

- Encourage the child/young person to create a picture in their mind of what they have just read or heard.
- For example, if they've been asked to get equipment for a science experiment, ask them to come up with a mental picture of what the experiment should look like. Then have them draw that picture.
- As they get better at visualising, they can describe the image instead of needing to draw it.

#### Get the child/YP to teach others

- Being able to explain how to do something involves making sense of information and mentally filing it. If they are learning a skill, such as how to dribble a basketball, ask them to teach it to you and/or their peers.
- Pair students in class, enabling them to start working with the information right away rather than waiting to be asked.

#### Games using visual memory

- Play matching games and incorporate these as activities in class that can help your child. For example, word finding in a text, i.e. circle all instances of the word 'the' or the letter 'a' in one minute.
- At home, turn licence plates into a game. Take turns reading the letters and numbers on a licence plate and then saying them backwards, too.

### Play cards

- Simple card games like 'Go Fish', etc., can improve working memory in two ways. The child/young person has to keep the rules of the game in mind and remember what cards they have and which ones other people have played.

### Encourage active reading

- Jotting down notes and underlining or highlighting text keeps information in the mind long enough to answer questions about it.
- Talking out loud and asking questions about the reading material support memory.
- Use highlighters and post-it notes to further support.

### Chunk information into smaller pieces

- Break down multi-step directions into smaller, achievable 'chunks.' Write them down or give them one at a time (e.g. on post-it notes, cue cards, worksheets cut into strips, etc.).
- At a secondary level, planners/organisers and hours of the day/days of the week charts help break writing assignments/homework into smaller, manageable chunks.

### Make it multisensory

- Write tasks down so the child/young person can look at them.
- Say them out loud so they can hear them.
- Toss a ball back and forth (or use playdough, Blu-tack, pass a stress ball) while you discuss the tasks that need to be completed.
- Using multisensory strategies helps keep information in mind long enough to use it.

### Help make connections

- Use mnemonics to form associations, e.g. Roy G. Biv (colours of the rainbow), My Very Energetic Mum Just Served Us Noodles (Planets).

### Overall:

1. Visualise
2. Teach
3. Games
4. Cards
5. Active reading
6. Chunk
7. Multisensory
8. Connections.



# Notes

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