

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

Introduction

Scaccio (2016) and NHS Foundation Trust (2021) state that ADHD is not a form of anti-social behaviour as occasionally suggested, but if left unsupported children with ADHD carry a higher risk of developing behaviours that are seen as anti-social. People with ADHD tend to be restless, have a limited or no attention span, an increased level of impulsivity and an inability to concentrate on certain activities (Barkley 2015; NHS, 2018). Approximately between 3 and 6% of children in the United Kingdom have been diagnosed with ADHD (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2021).

Identification and Diagnosis

Smith *et al.* (2014) highlights how important early intervention is in the support and treatment of ADHD. St. Louis Children's Hospital (2016) and Smeets and Roelevelt (2016) explain that ADHD is often identified earlier and more often in boys than girls. Boys are more likely to present symptoms which are more visible and disruptive which makes identification clearer, whereas girls tend to present less noticeable symptoms such as inattentiveness which results in struggling to learn new information, thus causing barriers to diagnosis and early intervention.

However, practitioners are typically one of the first people to identify when a child may have ADHD as the symptoms tend to affect different aspects of the child's schooling (Bhandari, 2021). Riley Children's Health (2017) state that despite this, practitioners are unable to diagnose a child with ADHD.

There are strict criteria to follow to getting a diagnosis which takes time (NHS, 2018). However during this time period parents may be offered ADHD training and information courses as additional support.

Dey, Rao and Shah (2012) state that ADHD is identified through behavioural symptoms. Similarly, Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (2021) state that the diagnosis for ADHD includes several multidimensional steps.

- These include:
- Gathering in depth knowledge of the child from teachers, other professionals and parents as well as the child when appropriate.
 - Comprehensive check list type assessments, intelligence and achievement testing and general paediatric assessments should be carried out to rule out any other ALN or medical condition.
 - Information on parents and siblings should be gathered to build a wider understanding of the child's family background (CHADD, 2021).

NHS inform (2022) state that once a diagnosis is made, ADHD can be managed through the use of appropriate support within education, support and advice for parents and medication if needed.

Barriers

Medication can be effective in reducing symptoms of ADHD and increasing abilities to function socially and academically (Charach and Fernandez, 2013; NHS, 2018a) . However, 62% of children who were previously prescribed ADHD medication discontinued it due to the side effects it caused (Toomey *et al.* 2012).

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| Side effects consisted of: | • Headaches |
| • Stomach aches | • Insomnia |
| • Decreased appetite | • Irritability |
| • Tics | • Personality changes and depression |

These symptoms can negatively impact a child's health and wellbeing and in turn their school performance with little evidence that medication improves school performance (Public Health England, 2014; Currie, Stabile and Jones, 2014).

The rise of children showing symptoms of ADHD may be due to the increase of distractions and demands for attention from different methods of technology (RSA, 2010; Rowan, 2017).

Creating and maintaining peer relationships can be difficult for children with ADHD due to challenges with social skills (Low, 2020) . Impulsivity, inattentiveness and hyperactivity can all effect a child with ADHD's lack of ability to respond to social cues and manage difficult emotions (McQuade and Hoza, 2015; Low, 2020). Negative social interactions can cause behavioural issues to worsen long-term (Mikami and Normand, 2015).

Austin (2022) explains that difficult peer relationships have an impact on children's happiness, wellbeing and self-esteem therefore are likely to have a negative affect on their learning experiences.

However, research suggests that although children with ADHD are reported to have shorter friendships, they still generally fall within the average bracket of the amount of friends they have (Marton *et al.* 2012).

Strategies

Lego therapy interventions can be used for children who need guidance on social interactions and communication making it a positive strategy for children with ADHD (Green, 2019; Challenging Behaviour Support, 2022). Lego therapy has the potential to develop children's communication experiences and methods, therefore supporting the importance of practitioners assisting children with an ALN to find their individual ways of communicating effectively (Brodie and Mather, 2017; Welsh Government, 2021).

Williams (2022) explains that lego therapy should be led by a trained practitioner with a small group of children in a calm environment. The aim is for each child to be allocated a different role, there should be an engineer, supplier and builder each with a set of responsibilities and they will work together to create the end goal (Williams, 2022). Lego therapy builds on a child's abilities to-

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| • Control their emotions | • Problem solve |
| • Communicate effectively | • Share ideas |
- However, children with ADHD tend to have difficulties managing strong emotions therefore have been reported to become frustrated with some of the rules of the session (Cheng, 2016; Joy, 2020).

Conclusion

ADHD is an additional learning need often identified through the symptoms of inattentiveness, impulsivity and hyperactivity. There is a lengthy process of getting a diagnosis. However, once a diagnosis is given there are different forms of therapy available as well as medication. Medication can be a barrier to learning experiences for children due to the side effects in can cause. Creating and maintaining peer relationships can also be a struggle due to the social skills that are required. Lego therapy has been identified as a useful strategy to support children with ADHD as it builds on communication skills and working as a team, however it can be too emotionally overwhelming for some children.

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