

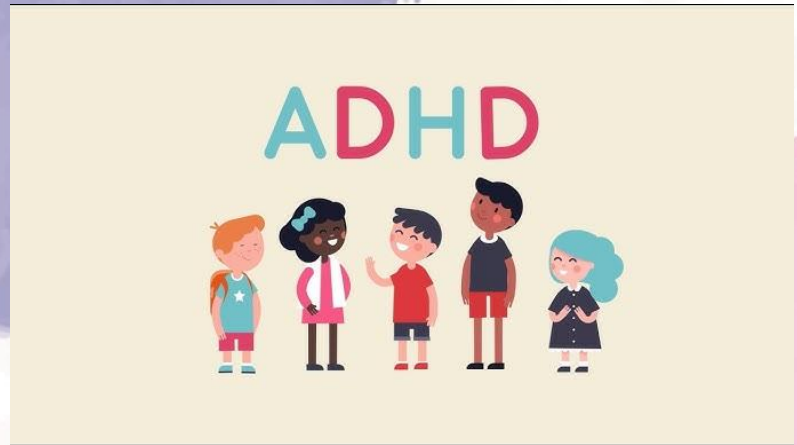
Inclusive Practice

Many children in education are exposed to prejudice and exclusion (Benner, *et al.*, 2015). Inclusive practice is the action of removing potential barriers to learning, encouraging the participation and acceptance of vulnerable children (Devarakonda, 2013). Ensuring that appropriate, tailored support is provided to best fit each child's specific needs is fundamental to inclusive practice (Moore, *et al.*, 2017); This is especially important for children with ADHD (NHS, 2021). Need-specific practice may be implemented through adapted teaching strategies, additional, supplementary resources, or environmental alterations (Mould, 2021). Creating a safe, emotionally informed, and inclusive environment for all children to socialise and thrive in, teaches them to celebrate and embrace their individuality and unique characteristics (Gilmore and Howard, 2016).

ADHD Definition

Attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder, otherwise known as ADHD, is often described as one of the most common neurodivergent conditions impacting children worldwide, which can often have lasting effects from childhood into adulthood (Coghill, *et al.*, 2021 and Mahone and Denckla, 2017).

Although there is reoccurring evidence that suggests genetics, neurological, and environmental factors play a role in the development of ADHD, literature shows that defining ADHD can be difficult and controversial due to the lack of definitive causation (Sroubek, *et al.*, 2013). Many reported cases show that children who are diagnosed with ADHD often have relatives who are either diagnosed or demonstrate similar ADHD tendencies (Grimm, *et al.*, 2020).



NCMH (2020) ADHD Illustration

Signs and Symptoms of ADHD in children

To preface, it is important to understand that although many children with ADHD display these symptoms, it is not uncommon to see children struggle with these factors at some point throughout their childhood (Child Mind Institute, no date). Meaning not all children who show these signs and symptoms have ADHD.

The symptoms of ADHD can be grouped into three classifications, inattentiveness, hyperactivity-impulsiveness, and a combination of both (NHS, 2021).

Signs that a child may have trouble with their attention span may include difficulty focusing and completing tasks, following instructions, and being forgetful. It is also common for children with ADHD to be easily distracted and may avoid sitting or participating in tasks for long periods of time (GOSHC, 2016).

The first core symptom of ADHD is inattentiveness. Inattentiveness can be defined as the action of being unable to pay attention or being easily distracted (National Institute of Mental Health, 2024). Children with ADHD often, but not always, demonstrate difficulty in concentrating on one or more tasks. The second core symptom of ADHD is Hyperactivity-impulsiveness. Hyperactivity-impulsiveness can be described as a pattern of behaviours which involve excessive movement and the inability to control your impulses (HealthyChildren.Org, 2019).

Diagnosing ADHD in Children

Many additional learning needs such as autism, share a plethora of similar symptoms with ADHD, therefore, diagnosing children with ADHD can be difficult, emphasising the potential risk of misdiagnosis (Craig, *et al.*, 2015).

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder can be identified in a multitude of ways (Wolraich, *et al.*, 2019). According to Craig, *et al.* (2015) diagnosing children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder can be a difficult process due to the overlapping of symptoms between ADHD and other additional learning needs such as autism, Asperger's syndrome, and reactive attachment disorder. Additionally, it is not unusual for ADHD to co-exist with additional conditions such as speech and language delays, autism, and anxiety, further emphasising the importance of advocating for an accurate and detailed diagnosis (CHADD, 2007). As discussed by Iznardo (2020) observation plays a key role when seeking an accurate diagnosis for ADHD in children.

Barriers and Impacts on Children and Families

Low funding in Wales is thought to have a substantial impact on children with ADHD as it can hinder access to effective resources and specialised support services (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2022). Due to poor financial allocation, educational and childcare settings often find providing specific needs-targeted interventions, such as one-to-one support, therapy-based activities, and modified classroom routines to be particularly difficult (Perera, 2019). Additionally, a shortage of resources in these environments can lead to children feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, and insecure, further impacting their ability to participate in social and academic activities (Thomas, 2020).

Due to classrooms in Wales having low teacher-to-pupil ratios, children with additional learning needs such as ADHD often go unnoticed, leading to potential outbursts or changes in behaviour (Welsh Government, 2023).

Furthermore, inadequate funding can also have an impact on families, as assessment and support service waiting lists are lengthening, preventing early interventions (Senedd Research, 2024). Leaving symptoms untreated can cause significant harm to children's well-being and future health. Whilst the consistent management of behaviour and pressure of the family dynamic, many families may experience tension within the home environment, leading to stress and anxiety for both the parents and the child (Kids Health, 2022). This pressure can put a lot on pressure on children, worsening their symptoms, there is also potential that this stress can lead to violence in the home environment.

The Importance of Routine (Strategy)

Those with ADHD, specifically children, can regularly struggle with attention, impulse control, and organisation, which can often make tackling spontaneous or unstructured scenarios exceptionally difficult (Betker, 2017). Further discussed by Betker (2017) a recommended strategy for supporting children with ADHD is the implementation of a structured and consistent routine. Practicing a consistent routine can prepare children with ADHD on what to expect, decreasing the sense of anxiety and facilitating confidence and security (Doesn't Fit All, 2024). This strategy may include the introduction of visual aids such as picture schedules, timers, and transitional cues (Young and Smith, 2017). These can also encourage critical thinking skills as well as improve memory retention (Garcia-Retamero, *et al.*, 2017). Additionally setting small, manageable, and clear goals can keep children engaged in tasks whilst also preventing them from feeling overwhelmed (Barkley, 2020).

For younger children who may not yet understand visual aids, maintaining a consistent day and nighttime routine can prepare them for what to expect. It is further explained that the implementation of an effective routine can encourage self-regulation, making transitional experiences easier for toddlers and babies (Taylor, 2022). The key to an effective routine is to make them fun and engaging, this can be done by creating traditions around these routines such as reading a story at bedtime.