



Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder



Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, abbreviated to become ADHD is a condition that consists of multiple different symptoms. It often affects the behaviour of individuals, causing restlessness, concentration troubles and impulsive choices (NHS, 2021). Wearmouth (2017) views ADHD as ‘one kind of antisocial behaviour’ which implies that ADHD is a choice that people make or an unfortunate circumstance, which can result in negative attitudes towards the condition. Definitions like this can also result in discrimination and will negatively boost the stigma surrounding the condition (Mental Health Foundation, 2021).

In the first instance it is common that ADHD is queried by practitioners. Curran (2020) suggests that this is due to the training, knowledge and experiences that they develop through their role, however, they cannot formally diagnose the condition. Smeets and Roeleveld (2016) imply that it is because practitioners are able to compare children in their care with peers of the same age or stage. Both studies provide a need for parent involvement, which is contradicted by Turner (2017) who suggests that if parents push for a diagnosis, it may result in misdiagnosis which can prevent practitioners supporting children that need assistance. The only way an official ADHD diagnosis can be obtained is through specialist assessment as a result of a GP referral (NHS, 2021). Young Minds (2022) identifies the diagnosis of ADHD in early years children as ‘no single test’ but a professional observation of a child in at least 2 different settings, such as school and home. Additionally, they will carry out questionnaires with the adults involved and discussions with the child where appropriate. However NICE (2018) guidelines suggest that diagnosis before the age of 7 is rare, especially if the child has no other underlying ALN

As a result of having ADHD, individuals may face many barriers in going about their day-to-day life, especially in relation to concentration and impulsivity (Mind.org, 2023). Children with ADHD may suffer barriers such as poor executive functioning, also known as executive dysfunction (Martel and Nikolas, 2007 and Cleveland Clinic, 2023). Thorell & Wåhlstedt, (2006) found that the relation between ADHD and poor executive function was clear in both boys and girls, which would suggest that it is a common barrier that most individuals with ADHD face. Whereas according to Jacobsen (No Date) impulsivity is a more common ADHD symptom in boys rather than girls, which could suggest this barrier is less common. Executive functioning is the brains self-management system, it relates to many brain functions, but specifically the development of time management and organisational skills, alongside concentration and the ability to self-regulate feelings and emotions (The ADHD Centre, 2022). This would impact an early years child in recognising and being able to control their emotions in comparison to their peers. They might need extra support and coping strategies to be able to develop self-awareness or techniques to cope with their feelings, more so than a child without ADHD. A child struggling with emotional regulation difficulties may be seen to overreact, or negatively respond to situations that are out of their control (The ADHD Centre, 2022). Jacobsen (No Date) explains that within the early years emotional dysregulation because of ADHD could be portrayed by a child getting overly upset or angry over something like failing to catch a ball or splashing themselves with water by mistake. Executive functioning can also relate to a child’s ability to focus upon their tasks within a setting, this may impact their academic attainment. Despite a child’s academic potential, if they are unable to access the tasks and activities within their setting because of their inability to focus and concentrate, they may not benefit as much as possible (VeryWellMind, 2022).

There are many different strategies that can be used to support children with ADHD in a variety of situations For example, a strategy used to support pupils with ADHD within an early years classroom setting could be movement songs or sensory circuits to increase physical stimulation (Hoza, Betsy *et al*, 2016). Another could be visual timetables, now and next boards or short and sharp activities (O'Regan, 2014). Having a consistent whole staff approach is a supportive strategy. For example, being cautious of punishing a child who displays forgetfulness or clumsiness. This could be because they may be struggling with the condition. Furthermore, being cautious about removing playtime as a punishment as this might escalate a child’s meltdown as they may need the outdoors to run off energy and regulate themselves (Chadd.org, 2017). Finally focussing activities around the child’s interests to increase their ability to focus and enforce the unique child (Birth to 5 matters, No Date). Sensory circuits are a strategy used to support children displaying ADHD symptoms. A sensory circuit is a sensory integration intervention, that consists of a sequence of physical activities that are designed to alert, organise and calm a child with sensory processing difficulties (Childrens Choice Therapy Services, 2023). The aim of a sensory circuit is to be completed at the start of the day to help focus and engage the brain throughout the morning. According to NHS Cambridgeshire (2018) and NHS Berkshire (2021) Sensory circuits should be fun and engaging to be most successful, and can be done with and without equipment. They also both agree that in order for a sensory circuit to be entirely successful they must be complete in the right sequence, alerting, organising and calming. (Griffin, 2021). However, as with most strategies there are complications, for example, in line with Griffin (2022) sensory circuits are individual, therefore if you there are 10 children in a setting needing a circuit, there may need to be 10 separate circuits, in order to set these up and carry them all out, it will take time.

Taking everything into account, ADHD is often identified by practitioners within settings, through a child showing symptoms like hyperactivity, impulsivity and poor executive functioning. It is then diagnosed by specialists through observation and discussion, and not often before a child is 7. With the correct supporting strategy, children within the early years, whether they it be visual timetables, sensory circuits, or a combination, they will be able to overcome the barriers caused by the condition.

Reference List

- ADHD foundation (2018) *ADHD Foundation: Epic Book of Strategies*. ADHD Foundation. Available at: <https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/EPIC-Strategy-Booklet-a-guide-for-teachers.pdf> (Accessed: 14 May 2023).
- ADHD Foundation (2019). *About Us*. ADHD Foundation. Adhdfoundation.org.uk. Available at: <https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/> (Accessed on 11th May 2023)
- BBC Bitesize (2023) *What is ADHD?* BBC Bitesize. Accessed at: [What is ADHD - About ADHD \(adhduk.co.uk\)](https://www.bbc.com/health/mentalhealth/what-is-adhd) (Accessed on 16th May 2023)
- Berkshire NHS (2021) *Sensory Circuits*. NHS Berkshire. Accessed at <https://cypf.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/health-and-development/sensory-processing/sensory-circuits/> (Accessed on: 17th May 2023)
- Birth to 5 Matters (No Date) *Principles of the EYFS*. Birth to 5 Matters. Accessed at: <https://birthto5matters.org.uk/principles-of-the-eyfs/> (Accessed on: May 17th 2023).
- Cambridgeshire NHS (2017) *Sensory Circuits – Info for Teachers*. NHS Cambridgeshire. Accessed at: <https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/docs/default-source/leaflets---sensory-strategy-leaflets---april-2015/0218---sensory-circuits---info-for-teachers---april-2018.pdf?sfvrsn=8> (Accessed on: 17th May 2023)
- Chadd.Org (2017) *Spend Time Outside to Improve ADHD symptoms*. Chadd.org. Accessed at: <https://chadd.org/adhd-weekly/spend-time-outside-to-improve-adhd-symptoms/> (Accessed on: May 12th 2023)
- Childrens Choice Therapy Services (2023) *Sensory Circuits*. Childrens Choice Therapy. Accessed at: [Sensory Circuits - Childrens Choice Therapy](https://www.childrenschoice.org.uk/sensory-circuits) (Accessed on: May 10th 2023)
- Christiansen, *et al* (2019). "Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and emotion regulation over the life span." *Current psychiatry reports* 21, 1-11.
- Cleveland Clinic (2023) *Executive Dysfunction*. ClevelandClinic.org. Accessed at: <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/symptoms/23224-executive-dysfunction> (Accessed on: May 17th 2023)
- Concept Training (2023) *Sensory Circuit*. Concept Training Courses. Accessed at: <https://www.concept-training.co.uk/courses/sensory-circuits/> (Accessed on: May 17th 2023)
- Curran, H. (2020) *Identifying special educational needs in the early years*. NASEN. Available at: <https://nasen-prod-asset.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Identifying-special-educational-needs-in-the-early-years.pdf> (Accessed: 12 May 2023).
- Ed Smeets & Jaap Roeleveld (2016) The identification by teachers of special educational needs in primary school pupils and factors associated with referral to special education, *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 31:4, 423-439, DOI:10.1080/08856257.2016.1187879

- Fischer, R. (2019) *The benefits of equine therapy*, Down Syndrome Association of Wisconsin. Available at: <https://www.dsaw.org/blog/equinetherapy> (Accessed: 14 May 2023).
- Fuligni, Howes, *et al* (2012). Activity settings and daily routines in preschool classrooms: Diverse experiences in early learning settings for low-income children. *Early childhood research quarterly*, 27(2), pp.198-209.
- Goddard, C., 2019. opportunity areas: East Cambridgeshire: Signed up. *Nursery World*, 2019(24), pp.30-31.
- Griffin (2021) What are sensory circuits and how can I use them? Griffin OT. Accessed at: [What are sensory circuits and how can I use them at school? - GriffinOT](#) (Accessed on: May 17th 2023)
- Hagstrøm, Julie, *et al* (2020). "Reappraisal is an effective emotion regulation strategy in children with Tourette syndrome and ADHD." *Journal of behavior therapy and experimental psychiatry* 68,101541.
- Hoza, Betsy, *et al.* (2016) "Using physical activity to manage ADHD symptoms: the state of the evidence." *Current psychiatry reports* 18: 1-7.
- Jacobsen (No Date) *ADHD In Boys*. Understood. Accessed at: <https://www.understood.org/en/articles/adhd-in-boys> (Accessed on: May 8th 2023).
- Koseva, N. (2022). *How Does ADHD Affect Executive Function?* The ADHD Centre. Available at: <https://www.adhdcentre.co.uk/how-does-adhd-affect-executive-function/>. (Accessed on May 10th 2023).
- Madsen, *et al.* (2018) Characteristics of undiagnosed children with parent-reported ADHD behaviour. *Europe Child Adolescent Psychiatry* 27, 149–158. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00787-017-1029-4>
- Martel, M. and Nikolas, M. (2007) Executive function in adolescents with ADHD. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 46(11), pp.1437-1444.
- Mental Health Foundation (2021) *Stigma and discrimination*. MentalHealth.org. Available at: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/a-z-topics/stigma-and-discrimination> (Accessed: 12 May 2023).
- Mind (2022). *ADHD and mental health*. mind.org.uk. Available at: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/adhd-and-mental-health/>. (Accessed on May 10th 2023).
- NASUWT (2023) Funding for Special and Additional Needs. NASUWT. Accessed at: <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/advice/in-the-classroom/special-educational-needs/issues-paper-on-funding-saaen.html> (Accessed on May 8th 2023)
- NHS (2021) *ADHD Definition and Symptoms*. NHS UK. Accessed at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd/> (Accessed on: 16th May 2023)
- NICE (No Date) *Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: diagnosis and management*. | NICE. Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng87/chapter/Recommendations#diagnosis> (Accessed on May 10th 2023).
- O'Regan, F. (2014) *Successfully managing ADHD: A handbook for SENCOs and teachers*. Routledge.

- SEN Help (No Date) *How to appeal costs*. SENHelp.org. Accessed at: <https://www.sen-help.org.uk/how-to-appeal/costs/> (Accessed on: 17th May 2023)
- Thorell & Wåhlstedt, (2006). Executive functioning deficits in relation to symptoms of ADHD and/or ODD in preschool children. *Infant and Child Development*, 15(5), 503-518.
- Turner (2017) *Parents to blame for misdiagnosis of special educational needs?* Boyes Turner. Available at: [Parents to blame for misdiagnosis of special educational needs? Special Educational Needs Solicitors, Boyes Turner \(senexpertsolicitors.co.uk\)](https://www.senexpertsolicitors.co.uk/parents-to-blame-for-misdiagnosis-of-special-educational-needs/) (Accessed on: May 13th, 2023)
- VeryWellMind (2022) *What is executive dysfunction?* Very Well Mind Accessed at: <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-executive-dysfunction-in-adhd-5213034#toc-the-impact-of-lacking-executive-functioning> (Accessed on 17th May 2023).
- Wearmouth, J. (2021). *Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in Schools*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Welsh Government (2021) *Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales*. Gov.Wales. Accessed at: <https://research.senedd.wales/research-articles220622-the-additional-learning-needs-code-for-wales-2021.pdf> (Accessed on: May 12th 2023)
- YoungMinds. (No Date). *Help Your Child With ADHD | Parents Guide to Support*. YoungMinds. Available at: <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/adhd/#ADHDdiagnosissupportandtreatment> (Accessed: May 13th, 2023)