

Supporting Children with Additional Needs-ADHD

(Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder).

Introduction

This academic poster explores what ADHD is, how it is identified and diagnosed in children, and the importance of early identification. Moreover, it highlights the potential benefits of receiving a formal diagnosis and examines common barriers faced by children with ADHD. Furthermore, it outlines evidence-based strategies designed to improve outcomes both in educational settings and at home.

What is ADHD?

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a developmental condition that affects an individual's ability to regulate attention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity (NHS, 2025a and Steer, 2021). ADHD is classified as a neurodevelopmental disorder due to delayed development in areas of the brain such as the prefrontal cortex, which are responsible for concentration, emotional regulation, and decision-making (Rudge, 2022). According to the Attention Deficit Disorder Association (2025), ADHD can typically present in three ways : predominantly inattentive, predominantly hyperactive- impulsive and combined presentation.

How Is ADHD Identified?

ADHD is often identified when a child consistently displays behaviours that significantly impact their daily functioning (Liu *et al.*, 2024). However, many behaviours considered symptoms of ADHD—such as impulsiveness, inattention, or restlessness—can also be common in young children due to ongoing developmental changes. However, identification of ADHD symptoms can be more challenging in girls, as they often present with predominantly inattentive symptoms, which are less disruptive and therefore harder to detect (NHS, 2025). Furthermore, Bilbow (2021) suggests ADHD in girls is frequently under-recognised or misdiagnosed, as their behaviours may not align with stereotypical expectations of ADHD behaviours, such as hyperactivity.

How Is ADHD Diagnosed?

According to Hywel Dda University Health Board (no date), when a child is suspected of having ADHD, a referral can be made by their early years setting or GP to begin the diagnostic process.

Great Ormond Street Hospital (2016) highlights that there is no specific test for ADHD; instead, the diagnostic process involves a comprehensive assessment carried out by healthcare professionals with expertise in ADHD.

According to NHS 111 Wales (2025) for a diagnosis to be made, the child must:

- Show 6 or more symptoms of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity,
- Have displayed symptoms for at least 6 months,
- Have experienced symptoms before the age of 12,
- Show symptoms in two or more settings,
- Be significantly impacted in daily life and functioning.

What Are the Benefits of an ADHD Diagnosis?

An ADHD diagnosis can lead to early intervention, which supports improvements in a child's social development, education, and overall well-being (Bowling and Nettelton, 2020).

Furthermore, according to Welsh Government (2021), the Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales (2021) highlights the importance of early identification and support. A diagnosis enables effective strategies to be put in place, helping each child reach their full potential.

What Support Strategies Are Available for Children with ADHD?

According to Miller (2024), one effective support strategy for children with ADHD is behavioural treatment. In addition, Mind (no date) highlights that cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) support individuals to understand how their thoughts influence their emotions and behaviours. Moreover, cognitive. behavioural therapy also encourages children to develop problem-solving skills and express their feelings through structured conversations with a trained professional (NHS, 2025). Similarly, Ojinna *et al.* (2022) state that cognitive behavioural therapy supports children in developing self-reflection skills, recognising behavioural triggers, and restructuring negative thought patterns. However, this therapeutic approach aligns with the medical model of disability, which views the condition as a problem that requires intervention to manage or reduce symptoms (Disability Wales, 2023).

Barriers Faced by Children with ADHD

Children with ADHD often face significant barriers due to societal stigma and misconceptions, which can negatively impact their self-esteem, relationships, and access to support (Wright *et al.*, 2015). In early years settings, expectations to sit still, listen attentively, and remain quiet are particularly challenging for children with ADHD, often resulting in them being mislabelled as “naughty” rather than being recognised as needing support (Gwernan-Jones *et al.*, 2016 and Geigel, 2016).

According to, May *et al.* (2020) and the ADHD Foundation (no date) negative attitudes may foster negative feelings towards school, limiting a child's academic and social development. Moreover, Visser, Peters, and Luman (2020) further argue that these misconceptions can affect children's emotional well-being and long-term opportunities. Furthermore, these negative perceptions, held by early years practitioners, can stem from a lack of training and understanding of ADHD (Cueli *et al.*, 2022).

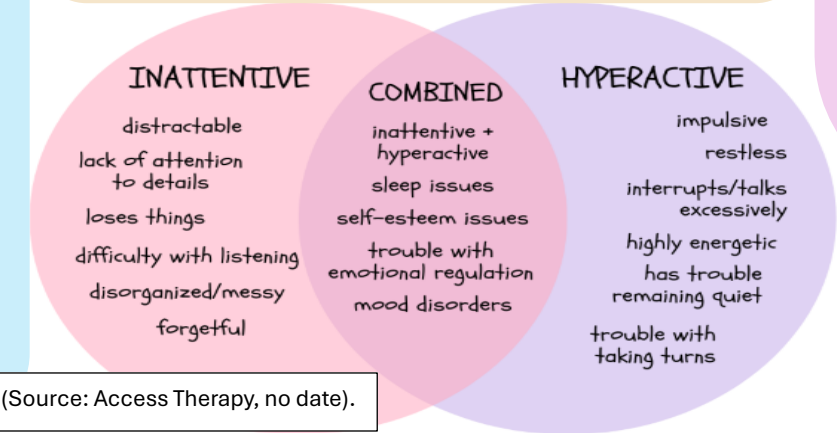
Another barrier lies in the reluctance of some parents and caregivers to seek diagnosis or support. This hesitation often arises from stigma, misinformation, or cultural misconceptions about neurodevelopmental conditions (Schoeman and Voges, 2022). Moreover, McKenna *et al.* (2023) suggest that families who hold negative views may reject professional recommendations, which can prevent children from accessing early interventions that are vital to their well-being and educational success.

These challenges align with the social model of disability, which suggests that it is not the diagnosis itself but societal structures and attitudes that create barriers (Disability Wales, 2023). Supporting this view, Devon County Council (no date) states that negative beliefs can reduce a child's quality of life by undermining their confidence and sense of self-worth.

Children with ADHD have the right to equal opportunities and freedom from discrimination, as outlined in Article 5 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, no date). Moreover, The Children's Commissioner for Wales (no date) states addressing these barriers requires better training for practitioners, public education, and a commitment to inclusive practices that empower rather than exclude.

Conclusion

To conclude, understanding ADHD is essential for early identification, accurate diagnosis and appropriate intervention and support. Moreover, a formal a formal diagnosis can provide children with access to effective support, which could potentially improve their long-term outcomes. However, children with ADHD often face stigma as a result of misinformation and lack of knowledge.



(Source: Access Therapy, no date).