

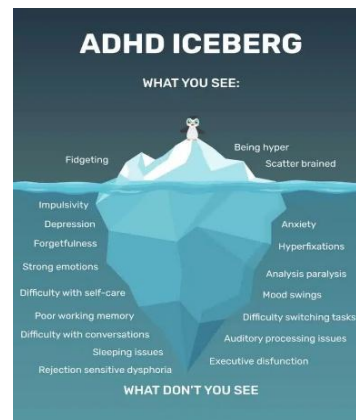
Introduction I am an advocate for children with ADHD. My passion for this area came when my son was little. Unfortunately, at that time there was limited support and knowledge around ADHD and he was tarnished as the 'naughty child' in his primary years. This led me to be a driving force for children and families who need support in getting a diagnosis for ADHD and then support and understanding onwards. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a Neurodevelopmental disorder which significantly impacts a person's life. Dr Ulrich Müller-Sedgwick BBC News, (2024) believes that the rise in ADHD cases comes from more knowledge of the disorder which allows consultants to be able to diagnose more efficiently, rather than an increase in people actually having the disorder. This is backed up by Professor Emily Smininoff BBC News (2024) who says that the amount of people who have ADHD is consistent with previous numbers and that there is no incline in cases overall.

How is ADHD identified? According to NHS Wales, (2023) there are 2 categories of behaviours that ADHD fall within, inattentiveness and hyperactivity and impulsiveness. Commonly, children with ADHD are usually impulsive and do not think before they react. They fidget a lot and are unable to keep still for a period of time. Another trait of ADHD is being easily distracted and unable to maintain focus. Premature birth is a risk factor as well as ADHD being genetic Action Medical Research for Children ((2018).

How is ADHD Diagnosed?

ADHD is identified by collating information following a referral from GP to a specialist for assessment. The assessments are based on the knowledge given from parents, child themselves and also a school setting that the child attends. Many children are 7 and over at the time of diagnosis on average according to National Institute of Mental Health (n.d.). According to NHS Wales, (2023) there is a strict criteria to diagnose ADHD. A scoring system is used as follows, 6 or more symptoms of inattentiveness and the same with hyperactivity and impulsiveness. Children also need to have had these behaviours and traits for a period of time and show that it affects their everyday life. ADHD UK, (nd) concurs this and gives a clear step by step guide of what to expect when children are starting the process of diagnosis. Overall, the process of diagnosis is standard and although there are no hard tests to make a definitive diagnosis, it is very clear of what the criteria is and how it needs to be met to allow a good, clear diagnostic criteria to support those who need it the most. It is officially recognised under the DSM-5 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition; ADHD: attention deficit hyperactivity disorder American Psychiatric Association (2022).

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)



Barriers and impacts on children and families

Unfortunately, the lack of funds in Wales is having a negative impact on children having an early diagnosis as confirmed by the Senedd Research Cymru, (2024). Children who have ADHD are creative and thrive on being able to work in a practical manner rather than working in an academic way within an educational setting. A person with ADHD uses a different method of learning and understanding compared to those without a neurodiverse condition. This can be seen as a strength rather than a barrier according to the ADHD Foundation UK (n.d.). Children with ADHD struggle to focus on a specific task. However, they are able to multi task really well compared to their peers. Barkley (2015) believes this is usually driven by a child's brain craving stimulation and by physically doing a number of tasks at once feeding this craving. Children who have ADHD are risk adverse and are extremely spontaneous with little fear. Another area children struggle with according to ADHD UK (n.d.) is relationships with their peers. Struggling to communicate and remain focused on a task or simple conversation can cause frustration for other children, thus leading to friendship breakdowns. According to Kara, et.al, (2025) lack of understanding, knowledge and support from professionals, adults and other children can negatively impact a child who has a neurodiverse condition as they can become withdrawn and not learn the skills they require to be able to socialize with their peers effectively.

Routines for children with ADHD(Strategy)

According to CHADD (n.d.) the best strategy to help support children with ADHD is to have strong routines and consistency. Allowing a child to know what is coming next on a regular basis takes away the anxiety and worry of 'what if's'. This is Important as a child with ADHD can overthink so allowing them time to process what is happening will allow for better outcomes overall for everyone involved. Along with routines children also need to have regular breaks within their school day to allow them to refocus when needed. Giving their brain a break and allowing them to have a positive coping mechanism to release endorphins that create better focus. Children who have an additional need must have and IDP as part of a legal requirement Additional Learning needs Code for Wales (2021).

Conclusion

To conclude, there are still children who are going undiagnosed for lengthy period which has been ongoing for many years according Professor Emily Smininoff (2024). Child and Adult Mental Health Services (CAHMS) states that the waiting list is over a year long and some families reach crisis point before their children get to be seen, diagnosed and above all supported MIND (2022). Despite there being a considerable amount of awareness around ADHD there is still so much more that needs to be discovered. Practitioners need to have suitable training that should be rolled out as mandatory to help support children who are affected by this condition as well as being able to support the families. This will prevent children being overlooked from early on and allow intervention to happen, supporting children's developments.

The colour orange is used to represent the energy, warmth, and creativity that are associated with individuals with ADHD.

