

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)



Introduction

In the UK, **1 child in every 20 children has attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)** (Grover, 2025). ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder that causes delays in areas of the brain responsible for regulatory behaviours (Greenway and Edwards Rees, 2020). It is a condition that often becomes evident in a **child's early childhood**, before the age of 12 years of age (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2025). However, many people experience difficulties within adolescence and adulthood. There are three recognized presentations of ADHD- inattentive, hyperactive-impulsive and a combined presentation (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2025) (Singh *et al.*, 2015). ADHD can present in a pattern of behaviours that can impact on individuals in most situations and can significantly impact on **learning, behaviours, social interactions and emotional well-being** (Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children, 2017). In 2024, a recent meta-analysis collected data from 18 studies across 10 countries evidently concluded that there was a significant increase in ADHD symptoms within children during the covid-19 pandemic (Matheiken *et al.*, 2024). Statistics from ADHD UK, 2025 has shown that there are **3 million people in the UK have ADHD**. From research conducted within November of 2025, 881,922 out of the three million people with ADHD are children and 40,444 out of the 881, 922 are children from Wales (ADHD UK, 2025). Research has evidently shown that many children within Wales and the United Kingdom have ADHD, although evidence had not shown which of the three recognised presentations of ADHD these children may have. ADHD can affect individuals differently, resulting in the profound importance of personalised support strategies and systems.

ADHD



(Complex children's health, 2025)

Barriers

Children with ADHD may face **stigma and misunderstanding** towards their ADHD diagnosis. In an article written by Maeda *et al* (2026), research into stigmas towards children with ADHD was undertaken. There are multiple types of stigmas that is directed towards children with ADHD, such as **public stigma, prejudice, discriminatory and structural stigma**. all these types of stigmas directed towards children with ADHD can have a profound negative impact on self-esteem and restricted social participation (Maeda *et al*, 2026). Evidence conducted from Metzger and Hamilton (2021) showed that children labelled with ADHD within classrooms are often rated by their teachers as academically low achieving, this suggests that teachers may display biased perceptions towards children with ADHD possibly caused by stereotypes which will result in children with ADHD receiving unfair treatment within classrooms beyond their academic potential. Stigma towards children with ADHD can have a **negative impact on their self-esteem and emotional wellbeing** causing self-stigma. Self-stigma arises when individuals are exposed to public stigmas. In accordance with Jelinkova *et al* (2024), self-stigma leads to reduced self-esteem, psychological distress and a negative impact on motivation to pursue goals and ambitions.

Identification and Diagnosis

The most common features of ADHD which may be displayed through children include the inability to pay attention and often showing hyperactive behaviours. ADHD is categorised into three presentations- **predominantly inattentive, predominantly hyperactive impulsive and combined** (a combination of inattentive and hyper impulsive symptoms (U.S. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024). Dr Adam Zamora, PsyD, a clinical expert explained that inattentive ADHD is caused by deficits in the executive functioning and cognitive process within a child's brain found in the hippocampus – the structure of the brain which is involved with learning and memory. Predominantly inattentive ADHD is presented through an individual finding difficulty in finishing a task without being distracted, the inability and struggle to pay attention to details, following instructions or fully engaging with in conversations. Individuals who have predominantly inattentive ADHD have difficulty staying focused and are easily distracted as well as have difficulties in remembering key details of a daily routine (U.S. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024). In comparison to predominately inattentive ADHD, there is predominately hyperactive impulsive. The hyperactivity pattern can be seen through a high amount of energy, the inability and struggle to sit still in environments when it is expected and often talking too much. In addition to the hyperactivity pattern there is the impulsivity pattern which is seen through a child acting without thinking of consequences or risk attached to the action and the difficulty with self-control (National Institute of Mental Health, 2024). Children who present with hyperactive impulsive ADHD have difficulty within educational settings and has been associated with higher levels of school exclusion, drop-outs and fewer years of attending an educational setting (Colomer *et al.*, 2017). During childhood, ADHD is diagnosed more often in boys than girls. This is due to boys are more likely to exhibit hyperactive impulse behaviours whereas girls often show more inattentive symptoms which inevitably leads to underdiagnosis (Salari *et al.*, 2023). An ADHD diagnosis is important for children to receive as it supports children to reach their full potential by access to specialised educational and behavioural support (Berkeley Psychiatrists, 2024). A diagnosis of ADHD for a child allows the child to thrive at home and within educational settings through families and schools implementing effective and personalised strategies and recourses to promote the child's development and providing overall positive experiences at home and within school (ADHD UK, no date). Within Wales and the United Kingdom, an ADHD diagnosis involves a multi-disciplinary assessment by multi agency working (Hywel Dda University Health Board, no date). An initial assessment and assessment tools will be used by a specialist paediatrician or child psychiatrist to assess the child's ADHD symptoms, once these have been conducted a multi-disciplinary team will gather – this will include the school ALNCO, family and professionals to discuss results and retrieve more information and evidence and then a diagnosis is finalised by either a paediatrician or child psychiatrist (Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board, no date). Families who a supporting their child through an ADHD assessment have the option of a diagnosis on with the NHS or the option of a private diagnosis. Through research both options have been scrutinised.



(iStockphoto, 2025)

Strategies

Support strategies for children with ADHD must focus on a **child's individualised needs**, promoting inclusion and emotional well-being. One effective support strategy recommended by the Welsh Government 2025, is **Consequence Based Approaches**. Consequence based approach involves encouraging positive behaviours from the child and consistently rewarding the positive behaviours and on the other hand using negative consequences (removal of specific privileges) to discourage negative behaviours (Welsh Government, 2025). This approach is individual to each child, behavioural goals are clearly set out with the learner's needs at heart, appropriate rewards and consequences are decided depending on the child's individual needs and progress towards goals (Education Wales, 2019). Successful strategies used within this approach have been daily report cards to document the child's behaviours each day within educational settings and at home. This can allow the child to feel **empowered and proud** by having positive feedback that can be shared at home with parents and within school with teachers (Welsh Government, 2025). Research studies have suggested that educational professionals believed that daily reports cards are a positive and successful strategy when supporting children with ADHD (Education Wales, 2019).



(Drops, 2021)

Conclusion

To conclude, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder ADHD is a complex neurodevelopmental condition which impacts every individual differently.. Overall, supporting children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder through positive diagnosis experiences, individualised support strategies and challenging barriers that may negatively impact on children play a vital role in proving the best support for children.

