

ADHD Fact Sheet



Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental condition. Scientific studies have shown that people with ADHD have structural differences in some parts of the brain, including the pre-frontal cortex, which is the area believed to control 'executive function', i.e. the specific mental activities which allow self-control.

People who have ADHD may have difficulties in some or all of the following areas:

- **attention:** problems with concentration, short attention span, getting distracted, finding it hard to follow instructions, losing things or not being organised, fatigue
- **hyperactivity:** struggling to sit still, finding it hard to stay sitting down, fidgeting and moving a lot, talking or making noises, fiddling with things
- **impulsiveness:** interrupting other people, finding it hard to wait their turn, doing things or saying things without thinking through the consequences, having a reduced sense of danger, challenges around rejection/criticism

These are the most common areas that impact students but there may also be others including executive dysfunction (wanting to do something but feeling physically unable to do so), memory loss, and poor time management. Difficulties may also change over time, and be dependent on the activity being undertaken.

Some students with ADHD take medication to stimulate the part of the brain that regulates activity. This can calm their behaviour and help them think more clearly, but it can also have unwanted side effects which you should bear in mind.

Good practice when teaching or supporting students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder:

- Encourage the student to sit at the front of the class to minimise potential distractions between them, the teacher and the whiteboard/screen.
- Display clear and concise rules for behaviour and enforce them consistently.
- Be positive and calm – students may have low self-esteem due to being criticised and punished throughout their education.
- Create subtle signals – for example, to let the student know they are off task without drawing attention to them.
- Give positive reinforcement – reward positive behaviour as quickly as possible and do this more often than you criticise problem behaviour, make sure praise is age appropriate and not patronising.
- Use a variety of activities within each lesson – variety supports engagement and concentration.
- Break tasks into smaller chunks and provide checklists so that students can tick each one off as they complete it. Chunk learning into episodes of a maximum of 20 minutes.
- Allow short breaks – this will make it easier to maintain concentration in between breaks.
- Manage classroom activities to allow some movement – e.g. when getting into groups, collecting equipment, presenting at the whiteboard etc.
- Encourage all students to use 'thinking time' before answering questions in class to discourage impulsive calling out and encourage respectful listening.
- Manage group work and assign roles to ensure the student is actively engaged. Role allocation can support students with specific areas they may need to develop such as timekeeping, communication, team working etc.
- Give clear instructions and key information in writing so that the student can refer back to them later. Do not rely on verbal delivery alone.
- Share all materials from the lesson.
- Repeat information frequently and give constant reminders – and do it calmly and patiently to build self-esteem.

