



# ADHD Information Booklet

## What is it and how to cope?

An information booklet for parents/carers on ADHD - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and ADD - Attention Deficit Disorder

### What is ADHD/ADD?

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a well-defined and widely accepted medical condition. It is not a fancy label for naughty children or bad parents. All children misbehave sometimes and no parent is perfect.

The cause of ADHD is unknown but it tends to run in families. The brains of people with ADHD are different from those of other people. Specific areas of the brain show differences in structure, metabolism and chemistry.

ADD is characterised primarily by inattention, being easily distracted, disorganisation, procrastination and forgetfulness. It is often overlooked and not diagnosed until children are in their teens and struggling at school.

Children with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) are not overly active and they do not disrupt the class or other activities. However, strategies used for children with ADHD are often effective for children with ADD.

### ADHD is common

As many as 1 in 20 children may have ADHD. Many of these have not seen a doctor and have therefore not been diagnosed. It is four times more common in boys than girls.

### Symptoms

- Inattention – the child can't concentrate, skips from task to task, forgets instructions and is disorganised
- Hyperactivity – the child is restless, fidgety, always fiddling and touching things
- Impulsive behaviour – the child speaks and acts without thinking, and can't wait their turn. There may be outbursts of temper



Of course all children are sometimes inattentive, restless and impulsive. The point about ADHD is that these kinds of behaviour are extreme. They cause significant problems at home and at school, and have been obvious from a young age. Each individual experiences these symptoms in a different way. With some people, inattention is the biggest problem; with others it is hyperactivity and impulsiveness; others show all three.

Many children with ADHD have other issues and difficulties too:

- Specific learning difficulties, for example problems with maths, reading or spelling
- Anxiety and depression
- Clumsiness and lack of co-ordination
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder, where the child deliberately defies parents and teachers
- Conduct Disorder – the child lies, steals and damages property

You may come to dread certain times – picking up from school, going to the supermarket, going to see relatives. Sometimes other parents don't understand and think that you're a bad parent.

Sometimes you feel they may be right. However, it is vital to realise that ADHD is not your fault, and not your child's fault.

### Useful Websites

**ADDISS** - They provide information, training and support for parents, professionals and people with ADHD in the fields of ADHD and related learning and behavioural difficulties.

Phone: 0208 952 2800

e-mail: [info@addiss.co.uk](mailto:info@addiss.co.uk)

Website: [www.addiss.co.uk](http://www.addiss.co.uk)



**Adders** - They provide information and free practical help to people with ADHD, both adults and children, and their families.

Website: [www.adders.org](http://www.adders.org)



## Caring for a child with ADHD

1) **Find out** as much as you can about ADHD. Medication may be prescribed following an assessment from Children & Young Peoples Service (CYPS) which may help your child focus and be less impulsive. Advice about medication is available from an ADHD specialist.



2) **Set up routine** - Children with ADHD tend to respond better to routines, because they have a better idea of what they are supposed to do. Changes to routine create distraction and uncertainty. So getting ready for school in the morning, or getting ready for bed at night, should proceed according to a fixed routine.



3) **Get attention** - When giving instructions, make sure that you have the child's full attention.

- Turn off the TV/radio/music
- Use the child's name
- With young children, gently hold their hands in front and point their face towards yours
- Approach older children from the front
- Look them in the eye
- Speak clearly, without shouting



4) **Be positive** - Tell them what to do, rather than what not to do. 'Darren, please eat your chips' is better than 'Stop playing with your chips'.

5) **Focus on strengths** - Boost your child's confidence by praising them and encouraging them in the things that they are good at.



6) **Praise** - Try to 'catch your child being good'. When they have completed a task or behaved well, say how pleased you are, and what exactly you're pleased about. For example: 'Thank you for getting out of the car sensibly and going straight into the house without me having to remind you'. The praise should be immediate, not hours or days later.



It's easy for children with ADHD to get into a vicious circle of criticism, which makes them feel bad about themselves, which makes them behave badly. The aim is to set up a virtuous circle of praise, which makes them feel good about themselves, which helps them to behave better.

7) **Make clear rules** and write them down, so that there is no argument about what the rules are. Focus on areas of behaviour that are really important to you and others in the family, and don't waste effort on less important ones.



8) **Plan for peace** - Organise things at home to cut out stress and confrontation. For example, if doing a big shop with your child is a nightmare, try to find another time to go shopping on your own in peace. If you're dreading a long car journey, think about breaking it up into two or three shorter journeys with stops in between to do something else.

9) **Reward** - Set up a reward scheme. Your child earns points for good behaviour, and a certain number of points mean they get something they want, that has been agreed in advance. You can use anything you like to keep track of the points – gold stars stuck on a card, plastic tokens put in a jar etc.

A reward scheme can work over the short term, e.g. 1 point for each 10 minutes good behaviour on a long car journey, and over the long term, e.g. 10 points for a week at school with all homework completed on time.

For example:

The child does something that you want, such as:

- Keep their room tidy for a week
- Get dressed in 10 minutes for 5 days in a row
- Not interrupting mum when she's on the phone for a week
- Keep goals realistic and in achievable steps.



In return, the child gets something that they want, such as:

- 15 minutes extra on a computer game / Xbox
- Downloading a film or music
- 30 minutes extra playing outside

10) **Can't and Won't** - The tricky thing about dealing with children with ADHD is knowing the difference between "can't" and "won't". Talking out of turn, forgetting instructions, being disorganised, being easily distracted – these are part of ADHD. They can be worked on and improved, but they can't be helped, and are not wilful naughtiness.

But any child, including those with ADHD, can also sometimes deliberately misbehave. As a parent, you are the person best placed to become the expert on telling the difference between "Can't" and "Won't".

## Managing Challenging Behaviour

1) **Say how you feel** - Rather than criticising the child directly e.g. "You're behaving badly", talk about the way their behaviour affects you, e.g. "It really upsets me when you...."

2) **Avoid arguments** - There are clear rules. You know them, the child knows them. End of story.

3) **Count to three** - For example if the child has taken someone else's toy, say "Darren, please give the dinosaur back to James. I'm going to count to three. One...(wait 5 seconds)...two (more forcefully)...three."

4) **Time out** - You can establish a special place – a chair, a step, a corner – where the child goes to cool off (and let you cool off) for a fixed period (e.g. 5 or 10 minutes). You can use a kitchen timer. During the time out, don't talk to the child and don't answer them. When the time is up, don't talk about the problem. If the child refuses to take time out, then threaten to withdraw a privilege, such as playing on the computer or going out to play football. If necessary carry out the threat. Make a "Do not Disturb" sign, encourage your child to colour it in and decorate it, they can then use this sign whenever they need some time alone.



## Looking after Yourself

- Being the parent of a child with ADHD is exhausting and can be depressing. Try to organise an occasional break for a few hours or even a few days
- Treat yourself to a meal out with a friend, or a long soak in a bubble bath



If you feel that things are getting on top of you, (e.g. you can't sleep, or you're crying for no reason) seek help from your GP.

## Disability Living Allowance (DLA) / Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

If you have a young person who has ADD/ADHD they may qualify for DLA or PIP. This is dependant on how much extra care the child needs compared to others of the same age, this includes supervision/safety issues as well as personal care. Contact us at Skills for People and we can refer you onto a specialist advice service.

## Education

Coping with school - many children with ADHD require extra support in school. Make sure your child's school are aware of their ADHD diagnosis and discuss what extra help your child might require. Our Family Advice Workers can come to meetings in school to provide support if needed.

## Useful Contacts

### Children and Young People's Service (CYPS)

This team is based at Benton House and offer a specialised service for young people up to the age of 18 on emotional and behavioural problems. Your child will need to be referred to this service by a health professional, Social Care or your child's school.

### Newcastle Carers

Provides support for carers of someone who lives in Newcastle. Offers free and confidential information and advice.

Tel: 0191 275 5060

Email: [info@newcastlecarers.org.uk](mailto:info@newcastlecarers.org.uk)

Web: [www.newcastlecarers.org.uk](http://www.newcastlecarers.org.uk)



### Parent Carer Participation & Families United

Families United is a support network for parents, carers and families of children with disabilities in Newcastle.

Web: [www.newcastlefamiliesunited.com](http://www.newcastlefamiliesunited.com)

Tel: 0191 277 4700

Email: [Sharon.Hand@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:Sharon.Hand@newcastle.gov.uk)



### Newcastle Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service

This service provides information specialising in education matters and includes information and signposting on social care and health issues.



Contact: Judith Lane

Tel: 0191 284 0480

### Local Offer

The Local Offer describes the services available for children/young people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) aged 0 - 25 and their families.

Email: [localoffer@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:localoffer@newcastle.gov.uk)

Web: [www.newcastlesupportdirectory.org.uk](http://www.newcastlesupportdirectory.org.uk)

Select SEND Local Offer



### Contact

(New name for Contact a Family)

Helping families in the North East who care for disabled children.

Tel: 0191 213 6300

Email: [northeast.office@contact.org.uk](mailto:northeast.office@contact.org.uk)

Web: [www.contact.org.uk](http://www.contact.org.uk)

Look for advice in your area - select North East



## Skills for People

This booklet is produced by the Skills for People, a charity run by disabled people. We are based in Newcastle upon Tyne and for over 25 years we have been helping disabled people to speak up for themselves and make their own choices about their lives. Our work is led by disabled people and their experiences are at the heart of all we do.

Our Family Advice Workers support families with disabled children/young people up to the age of 25. They help families by giving practical advice, appropriate to their needs and working across all agencies such as education, social care, health, benefits, leisure and voluntary services. Their services are free to parents/carers.

We produce a range of information booklets, factsheets and "How To" guides. Visit our website to see the full range: [www.nsn.org.uk/resources](http://www.nsn.org.uk/resources)

## How to get in touch

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Facebook: [facebook.com/skillsforpeople](https://www.facebook.com/skillsforpeople)

Twitter: [@skillsforpeople](https://twitter.com/skillsforpeople)



Facebook: [on.fb.me/1istYKg](https://www.facebook.com/on.fb.me/1istYKg)



Newcastle parents of children with disabilities  
and special needs working together

Facebook: [Pass it on Parents Newcastle](https://www.facebook.com/PassitOnParentsNewcastle)

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