



ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

ADHD

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental difference in how the brain regulates attention, impulses and activity levels, often alongside differences in executive function. It appears in inattentive, hyperactive-impulsive and combined presentations.

i Attention isn't 'missing' – it is regulated differently. Focus can swing from hard-to-sustain to intense 'hyperfocus' depending on interest, context and the day.

i How it can present

- Attention that varies – easily distracted, yet able to hyperfocus on interests
- Difficulty starting, organising or finishing multi-step tasks
- Impulsivity – acting or speaking before thinking; finding waiting hard
- Restlessness or fidgeting, or an inner sense of being 'on the go'
- Executive-function differences – planning, working memory, 'time-blindness'
- Strong emotions and sensitivity to perceived criticism or rejection

✓ What helps – supportive approaches

- ✓ Structure, predictable routines and clear, one-step-at-a-time instructions
- ✓ Short bursts of work with movement and breaks between
- ✓ Externalising memory – lists, reminders, checklists and alarms
- ✓ Specific, genuine praise and strengths-based coaching
- ✓ Reasonable adjustments – extra time, a quiet space, SENCo support
- ✓ NICE-endorsed support can include behavioural approaches, therapy and, where appropriate, specialist-led medication

📍 UK CONTEXT

~5%

ADHD affects roughly 5% of children and 3–4% of adults in the UK – an estimated 2.6 million people in total.

ADHD UK / NICE NG87

★ Strengths often seen

- ★ Creativity and original, divergent thinking
- ★ Hyperfocus and drive in areas of genuine interest
- ★ High energy, enthusiasm and spontaneity
- ★ Quick thinking and problem-solving under pressure
- ★ Resilience built from navigating daily challenges

🔍 Finding assessment & support in the UK

- 1 School first: ask the SENCo about SEN Support – no diagnosis is needed to start help
- 2 A GP can refer for assessment (children: NHS paediatrics/CAMHS; adults: NHS adult ADHD services)
- 3 Request an EHC needs assessment / EHCP where needs are significant
- 4 Your local SENDIASS offers free, impartial advice on SEN support
- 5 ADHD UK and the ADHD Foundation provide information and support

Please note – this sheet provides general information only. It is not a diagnostic tool and is not a substitute for individual assessment or professional advice. Every person is unique; if you have concerns about yourself or a child, please speak with a suitably qualified professional.

Sources & further information: NHS · NICE (NG87) · ADHD Foundation · ADHD UK