

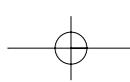


ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)

YOUR CHILD WITH ADHD: A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

ADHD Working Group





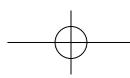
Foreword

This booklet has been prepared by a Working Group of Educational Psychologists from the five Northern Ireland Education Boards, with representation also from the National Educational Psychology Service in the Republic of Ireland. It has been prepared at the request of the Northern Ireland Regional Strategy Group on Special Educational Needs and has been funded by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland.

This is one of a set of two booklets and is primarily aimed at parents or carers of a child who has been diagnosed with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) or who might be presenting with some of its behavioural characteristics. It may also be useful for individuals who are interested in finding out more about the disorder. There is another booklet specifically aimed at schools. These booklets are available to all schools.

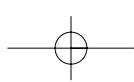
The booklet aims to define ADHD and describe its core features. It provides very useful management tips for both preschool and school age children with ADHD and gives encouragement and practical suggestions to help you to get the best from your child. It attempts to answer the most frequently asked questions about the disorder and gives advice and guidance on issues such as sleeping problems, organisational difficulties, low self-esteem and caring for yourself.

March 2004



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Section 1 - INTRODUCTION AN OVERVIEW OF ADHD

At one time or another, most children show weak concentration, become overactive, or act without thinking. There are some children, however, who show particular and exceptional difficulties with inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity, which have an effect on their learning and behaviour and which they themselves seem unable to control. These difficulties do not appear to be explained by usual influences such as computer games, too much TV, poor management, diet and so on.

Such children are currently referred to as having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD - sometimes referred to as ADD).

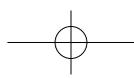
What is ADHD?

Children with ADHD show particular difficulties in some or all of the following:

1. Inattention (e.g. “can’t focus; doesn’t seem to be listening; seems to be daydreaming; very easily distracted; can’t concentrate”.)
2. Hyperactivity (e.g. “always on the go; can’t sit still.”)
3. Impulsiveness (e.g. “acts before he thinks; can’t stop himself shouting out or hitting out”.)

Many, or indeed most, children will of course show difficulties in these areas at some time in their lives. The difference for those with ADHD is that these behaviours must:

- a. be present for more than six months;
- b. be severe enough to interfere with the normal progress for children of the same age;
- c. not be explained by developmental level or other difficulty / condition; and
- d. not be explained by other factors such as “laziness”; lack of sleep; too much TV; videos; food additives.



Types of ADHD

Children with ADHD are all individuals and no two are the same. However, they may be divided into two broad groups according to their presentation:

1. Mainly Inattentive
2. Mainly Hyperactive-Impulsive

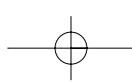
(Some children may show a combined form).

Some of the behaviours that a child in these groups may show are:

Inattention:

- A. Often fails to give close attention to details or make careless mistakes in schoolwork, or other activities.
- B. Often has difficulty keeping concentration in tasks or play activities.
- C. Often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly.
- D. Often does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork (not due to misbehaviour or failure to understand instructions).
- E. Often has difficulty organising tasks and activities.
- F. Often avoids, dislikes, or is reluctant to engage in tasks that require a sustained mental effort (such as school work or homework).
- G. Often "loses" things necessary for tasks and activities e.g. toys; school books; pencils.
- H. Often easily distracted by things going on around them.
- I. Often forgetful in daily activities.

For a child to have a diagnosis of ADHD, **six or more** of the above must apply to a significant and inappropriate degree.



Hyperactivity/Impulsiveness:

- A. Often fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in seat.
- B. Often leaves seat in classroom.
- C. Often runs about or climbs excessively in situations in which it is inappropriate (in adolescence this may be restricted to feelings of restlessness).
- D. Often has difficulty in playing or engaging in leisure activities quietly.
- E. Often “on the go” or often acts as if “driven by a motor”.
- F. Often talks excessively.
- G. Often blurts out answers before questions have been completed.
- H. Often has difficulty waiting their turn.
- I. Often interrupts or intrudes on others (e.g. butts into conversations or games).

For a child to have a diagnosis of ADHD, **six or more** of the above must apply to a significant and inappropriate degree.

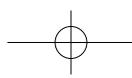
Causes of ADHD

For children with ADHD, their difficulties are thought to stem from differences in the ways their brains work.

Their behaviours are therefore **not** deliberate, in the sense that they are not on purpose being lazy, uncooperative, defiant or disobedient.

Their difficulties are not caused by poor parenting, family indiscipline, bad company, too much TV, computer games etc.

They (and their parents) may be themselves confused and distressed about the cause and control of their own behaviours.



How common is ADHD?

ADHD is thought to occur in 1-3% of the population. More boys than girls are affected. Others may have similar problems that are less severe.

Other Difficulties in ADHD

As well as the behaviours listed above, the child with ADHD may have the following difficulties:

Emotional:

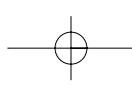
- may feel socially isolated, “left out”, unpopular with other children;
- may feel different or misunderstood;
- may be affected by constant telling off;
- may be labelled lazy, disobedient, naughty etc;
- may lose self- confidence.

Learning:

- may make slow progress in school because of inability to concentrate, listen, stay with set tasks;
- may not remember, because they can't organise what has been learned;
- may have particular difficulties in school, for example with reading, spelling or maths.

Behaviour:

- may become disruptive , defiant or aggressive;
- may try to win friends by behaving badly (e.g. “the class clown”);
- may use bad behaviour to “cover up” problems with concentration or schoolwork.



The Long Term Picture

- While children's concentration and behaviour usually improve with age and maturity, the problems of those with ADHD may continue in the longer term.
- It is **not** therefore safe to wait for them to "grow out of it".
- Proper help and care are needed to lessen the effects of ADHD on learning, behaviour and emotional development.

Supporting the child with ADHD

A number of people are usually involved in identifying and helping children with ADHD, e.g. a teacher; a doctor; a psychologist. It is best that these people work together with each other and with the child and the family.

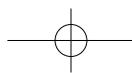
Support may take the form of:

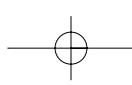
- suggesting ways to help the child at home;
- suggesting ways to help the child in school;
- teaching the child ways to help himself;
- recommending medication that can help the child settle and concentrate.

Characteristics of the Child with ADHD

While children with ADHD have some difficulties, they also have many strengths. ADHD does present serious challenges but the typical features of ADHD are not all disabling as can be seen in the table below:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Good at expressing themselves Quick application of skills Ability to see the big picture Good long-term memory Intense emotions Enthusiastic, curious Active	Poor at listening Poor organisation Miss out on visual details Poor short-term memory Impulsive Become bored easily Impatient





Section 2 - ADHD - THE CORE FEATURES DESCRIBED

Difficulties with paying attention

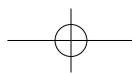
Children with ADHD have poorly developed listening skills and have difficulties with remembering instructions and information. They tend to be very easily distracted and have problems ignoring irrelevant information such as what others are doing/saying, sights and sounds. They find it difficult to concentrate and tend to give up easily when faced with tasks that are challenging. They flit from one activity to another and present as if they get little satisfaction from what they are doing - activities and games have a short life span. Some children with ADHD are described by their parents and teachers as dreamy and in a world of their own.

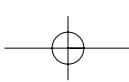
Difficulties with controlling their impulses

Children with ADHD can have great difficulty thinking about consequences before they act. They appear to speak and act without thought and seem to have problems stopping themselves from responding straightaway. They can have problems with turn taking, sharing and waiting.

Difficulties staying still

Some children with ADHD have problems sitting still and seem to need to fidget and fiddle with things. They are always on the go and have problems settling down in situations which require them to be quiet and calm. They tend to be poorly organised, be unaware of mess and some have co-ordination difficulties.





Coexisting difficulties

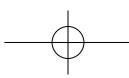
The above behaviours may exist alongside or lead to other problems such as emotional, academic and behavioural problems:

They may act in immature ways and appear to be seeking attention. They may have difficulty making friends and may unintentionally interfere with other children's activities. They may earn a reputation for being troublesome and get the blame when it's not their fault.

Constantly telling the child off may damage their self-image and confidence. They may become defiant, disruptive or aggressive and use these misbehaviours to mask their disappointment in their lack of achievement both academically and socially.

Children with ADHD may have specific problems with language, literacy, numeracy, writing or other academic tasks. Their inattention, disorganisation and poorly developed memory may make it difficult for them to learn.

Children with ADHD do not set out to behave badly but have great difficulty being aware of what they are doing and changing their behaviour for the better. This lack of control over their actions can leave them feeling distressed, frustrated, isolated and different to their peers.



Section 3 - IMPACT ON THE FAMILY

Caring for a child with ADHD isn't easy! Children with the condition demand more supervision, more support, a greater level of tolerance and more of your time than do most children.

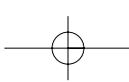
Living with a child with ADHD is stressful and sometimes we can forget that it can have a big impact on the family as a whole.

As a parent or carer you may:

- experience high levels of stress and anxiety in your life;
- react negatively to your child(ren);
- behave inappropriately towards your child who is acting in the only way they know how;
- compare yourself unfavourably to other families who are not experiencing similar difficulties - creating self-doubt and the belief that you are a 'bad parent';
- experience conflict with your partner and place strain on your relationship with other family members, particularly with the child with ADHD.

As a brother or sister you may:

- react badly to the behaviour of your brother/sister with ADHD;
- feel resentment at the attention and time they get from your parents;
- experience embarrassment because of the reactions of other people;
- feel 'less loved' and treated unequally.



ADHD is a family issue. It is therefore important to educate the entire family including the child with ADHD about the condition.

**It's important to explain ADHD to your child.
Here are a few suggestions.**

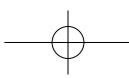
- Plan time to be alone with your child, free from distractions. Explain the condition clearly and calmly using words they will understand. Be prepared to answer any questions your child may have.

- Emphasise to your child that they are not bold or stupid.

- Caution your child not to use ADHD as an excuse. It is an explanation, not an excuse for inappropriate behaviour. Emphasise that they remain responsible and accountable for their own behaviour.

- If possible, try to let others know that your child has ADHD. This will also help your child understand that ADHD is nothing to be ashamed of.

- Help your child to develop ways of telling others about their condition.



How do you manage ADHD within the family?

Here are a few suggestions recommended by parents which you might find useful -

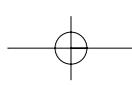
- **Educate the entire family about ADHD**
Consideration should be given to joining a support group as a means of gaining information and support. See Appendix 1: Useful Contacts.

- **Work on trying to alter the 'reputation' of your child with ADHD**
Having a reputation often makes it difficult for a child to change. Try to focus on your child's positive strengths and attributes. Remember - your child is a unique individual with an array of special gifts and talents.

- **Adopt a supportive approach**
The family needs to accept that the child's behaviour is not deliberate. The child may just need some extra support to enable them to follow the rules (such as regular breaks during homework, ignoring of particular behaviour).

- **Remember to make time for other family members**
Often the child with ADHD needs a large amount of your time and attention. Try to redress the imbalance by allowing the other children to express their worries and concerns. Although your time is precious, try to set aside some special time with your other children and let them know that they are important and special too.

- **Put on a united front**
It is important to have a consistent approach to the child. All carers should agree on how to respond to the child's behaviour.



Section 4 - HOW CAN YOU HELP YOUR CHILD

Being a parent is an important and exhausting job. Managing behaviour can be very stressful for parents, especially if the child has ADHD. Difficult behaviour can influence the behaviour of parents who may become less consistent. This can make matters worse.

It may sound simple but the best way to manage your child's behaviour is to encourage the behaviour you want. Children tend to repeat the behaviours that are rewarded. Parental attention is a powerful reward for most children.

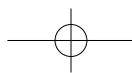
THE YOUNG CHILD

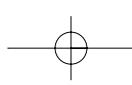
If help and support is offered when children are young, it may be possible to prevent or at least reduce problems later on in life.

There are specific ways of interacting, playing and working with your young child which have been found to help improve their behaviour:

Gain your child's attention

- When giving instructions make sure you have your child's full attention. Use his or her name. Make eye contact with your child before you try talking to them. Turn off the TV or other sources of distraction. Kneel down in front of your child, gently hold their hands, and turn their face towards you whilst you look into their eyes.





Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

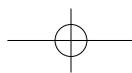
A Practical Guide for Parents and Carers

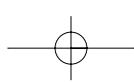
- Apply the **KISS** Principle – **K**ep **I**nstructions **S**hort and **S**imple – Children with the condition have problems with short-term memory, therefore anything longer than one sentence is likely to be forgotten. Also try to speak clearly and *without* shouting.
- Be positive and direct e.g. ‘James, please tidy-up your toys now’.
- Speak warmly, use positive labels. Remember criticism does not just make a child feel bad momentarily; it shapes a child’s self-image and personality. A child who is frequently told that he is ‘hyperactive’ may see himself as someone who cannot really be expected to sit still and listen.
- Limit the available choices, reducing the child’s option of saying ‘No’ e.g. *Would you like to wear your red or blue coat?*

Be consistent/set limits

- Provide and practise clear routines. Children with ADHD need predictability. Ensure you tell them what is going to happen each day. Have well planned routines for morning, mealtimes, bedtime, shopping etc.
You can use lists/charts as reminders of the day’s events.
(See Appendix 2: Routines)

Take care when changing from one activity to another. Provide advance warnings such as when something is about to change or finish. Kitchen timers or buzzers are useful to show your child that something different is going to occur. This technique may also increase periods of concentration by making the child aware that time is passing.





Remember the importance of praise

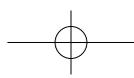
We all like to be praised and acknowledged for our efforts. What we sometimes forget is that praise is a powerful tool if used correctly.

- Try and catch your child being good. When they behave appropriately, make sure your praise is very specific for example 'That's great. I love the way you coloured that picture so carefully'. Also try and give praise when your child is within earshot e.g. 'Jack has been so helpful today' - this will also serve to raise his profile with others.
- Have a reward system in place e.g. star chart, counters in a jar. Obviously this needs to be very specific to your child and age appropriate. Rewards can be actual things, or/and activities and should always include praise.

Children with ADHD benefit from using a reward system which has two special features:

- **Rewards are given very close to the behaviours you want to happen.**

It is not a good idea to simply say on Wednesday 'You did your homework well today you can have a video on Friday'. The child with ADHD needs early feedback. So instead arrange for him to have the reward immediately!



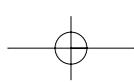
- **There should be a built in cost if undesirable behaviours occur.**

This means that when your child is not behaving as you would wish, for example by leaving their chair when they are supposed to remain seated at the dinner table, they lose part of the reward they have built up. A practical way of doing this is to use a jar and counters. The counters are exchanged for rewards. When he has remained seated for 10 minutes a counter is placed in the jar. If however he leaves the table before this time one counter is removed from the jar. Don't forget that rewards can be actual things or activities as well as just praise. To work well they must be something the child really wants. It is a good idea to discuss this with him. It will be useful to keep a special box of treats, which are only used as rewards and are not something he might get normally.

- The Cube Box Challenge is another good example of a reward system. This is how it works:

1. Pick one behaviour (e.g. 'I will not interrupt my mum when she's talking on the phone, I will wait to speak to her) and agree a set date on which you will work on this.
2. Label 2 boxes -one for you and one for your child.
3. Start the day with your box containing about 10 cubes or counters. Give your child's box the same number of cubes.
4. Every time your child behaves appropriately and waits, reward them with a cube from your box. Every time your child interrupts, a cube should be moved from their box into yours.

At the end of the day count up all the cubes and the person with the most cubes is the 'winner'.



Play with your child

- All children respond well to play. Find time to play with your child, even if it is only for short periods. Set aside some time (e.g. 5-10 minutes at a time) to share a pleasant activity.

But what do you do when things go wrong?

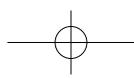
Despite your best efforts sometimes things just don't work. Having a plan for such times is very important in helping your child learn to manage their behaviour. Here are some ideas. They will also be useful for lots of children, not only those with ADHD.

“Shopping can be a nightmare! - what can I do?”

Large shops are like an adventure playground for children with ADHD so if it is necessary that you take your child shopping, be prepared.

Make out a list of exactly what you need before you go so that you don't use up unnecessary time browsing.

- Let them know the kind of behaviour you expect prior to entering the shop. You can say things like 'You'll stay beside me/You'll help mummy collect all the things we need'.
- In the shop have something novel to amuse your child such as their own shopping basket or a toy calculator and get your shopping finished as soon as possible!
- Involve them in the shopping task by asking questions, getting them to look out for their favourite cereal and handing you items from the shelves.
- Stay calm and focused on the shopping task so that they feel involved and distracted from any potential flare-ups.



“What do I do if my child has a tantrum?”

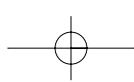
Tantrums are scary for adults as well as children so it's important that you stay in control and remain calm and above all positive. Don't let it become a power struggle by shouting each other down as this can make the tantrum worse. Watch out for the tell-tale signs that a tantrum is about to happen and try to avoid the flare-up by distracting or diverting them, 'Do you need a drink?', 'Help me find'. However, if your child does have a full-blown tantrum in the shopping aisle, don't try to reason with them, as they will probably be so distressed that your words of wisdom will not be heard above their screams.

It's OK to ask for help at this stage. A member of staff may be happy to look after your trolley for you or bring your groceries to the car. Remove your child from the situation calmly and positively. Use a soothing voice to comfort and to encourage them to tell you what's the matter.

State your expectations simply and repeatedly, to reassure the child that you are in charge.

“What can I do to prepare my child for outings?”**Making promises**

Even pre-school children are familiar with the concept of promises and what it means to make a promise to someone. This concept can be made more meaningful by encouraging your child to think and talk about how to behave before you go somewhere. By asking your child to 'Give me your promise' your child will know what is expected of them before you go in. Make sure that the promise is realistic and that your child isn't attempting the impossible! Use this technique just before you enter the place.



How to do it:

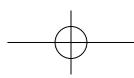
1. When you arrive ask your child to think of a good behaviour that they could make a promise to show whilst in Granny's/church/shop.
2. Get them to 'place' the promise in your hand and, whilst you hold their hand in yours, get them to tell you what the promise is.
3. You then look in your hand and pretend to open the 'promise' which your child has placed there and you read out what it 'says'. Things like 'It says "I'm going to hold your hand/stay beside you/ do what I'm told"' can significantly improve their focus and give them a sense of commitment to showing that behaviour.
4. You then pretend to put the imaginary promise in your pocket/bag and, during the trip, if they are not keeping to what they agreed, remind them by tapping your pocket/bag that you still have their promise and ask them to tell you again what their promise said.
5. Use this technique frequently and your child will soon remind you that promises need to be made before you go in anywhere!

Counting Down

Settling games such as counting your child's activity levels down from 10 to 1 can be a useful quick fix when you are in public with your child. Practise this technique well at home so that your child knows what is expected by the time you get to 1 (i.e. calm behaviour).

The Quiet Hat

Another useful activity is to get your child to place an imaginary magical hat on their head that makes them quiet and still. 'Putting the hat on' before you go into a place where quiet behaviour is expected can be useful.

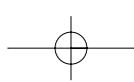


THE CHILD AT NURSERY OR SCHOOL

When your child starts nursery or school his behaviour may become more obvious because of the demands of school to remain seated, focus attention and stifle impulses for long periods of the day. It is important to contact your child's school to pass on any information which might be helpful.

All schools have a responsibility to identify pupils who experience difficulties in learning and behaviour. The Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs [SEN] provides a structure for schools to address children's particular difficulties.

The Code of Practice outlines a model for SEN identification and assessment. It stresses the importance of early identification, assessment and provision. The Code recognises the importance of involving parents at all stages and encourages partnership between home and school. All schools have a teacher who has particular responsibility for making sure that children with special educational needs receive appropriate help. This person is referred to as the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO). Should you have any queries regarding the Code of Practice and your child you should contact the SENCO attached to your child's school. If your child's difficulties are persistent and severe they may be referred to an Educational Psychologist. The Educational Psychologist will assess the situation and, in collaboration with parents and school, will offer advice. Most children who have a diagnosis of ADHD can be well managed within the school and do not need additional resources. For the small number of children who do need additional support this would be sought by the school.



Tips on managing your school-age child

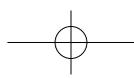
The following are some ideas which parents have found useful in managing the older child with ADHD:

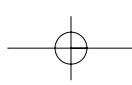
Establish routines

- Decide on routines and ensure that **all** adults in the home agree with them. Make sure to get the agreement of extended family members too.
- Try not to give too many commands and be polite when you are asking your child to do something. Give one instruction at a time - clearly and consistently. Try not to use 'STOP' instructions e.g. don't say 'STOP shouting' say 'Please speak more quietly'.
- Offer choices, so as to avoid the option of saying 'no'. For example "Would you like to do reading or spelling first?"

Try to remain in control

- Everyone should know what happens when children behave well and when they don't. There should be agreed consequences for both acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.
- Use **STOP, THINK, ACT** approach for problem solving when things have gone wrong. Using a calm, controlled voice explain to your child that the behaviour was unacceptable. Use clear, simple language to help the child to understand. A lengthy telling-off will prove unproductive and is more likely to wind both parties up, leading to anger and resentment. If you feel it appropriate, you may wish to remove a privilege. You need to specify for how long the privilege is to be removed, taking away TV time for 30mins, removing their mobile phone until dinnertime.





Ignore minor inappropriate behaviour

- Learn to ignore the minor, irritating behaviours e.g. fidgeting, rocking on a chair. Children with ADHD can have difficulty managing these behaviours so it may not be worth making an issue of them.

Plan ahead

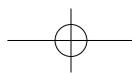
- Avoid placing your child in situations in which there is an increased risk that their problems may result in difficulty (e.g. arrange for them to be cared for while you are doing the big monthly shop).

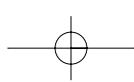
Build up your child's self-esteem

It is important to build up your child's self-esteem. They need to know that they are special and a valued part of the family and have a positive view of themselves.

Some ways you can help your child to achieve this:

- Telling your child that you love them even after a difficult day;
- Focusing on your child's talents and making a list of their qualities and good things they can do. Other family members should be encouraged to contribute;
- Praising them honestly;
- Complimenting your child "You suit that blue jumper" but don't mention the stain on their tie;
- Listening sympathetically e.g. "I can understand why you are upset..... I would feel that way too";
- Communicating your feelings clearly so that your child does not have to guess;



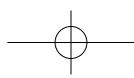


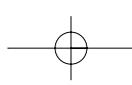
- Not being sarcastic or undermining them;
- Helping your child to express their emotions clearly when they feel distressed, angry or disappointed;
- Focussing on the positives. Playing down mistakes that your child makes and finding things that are nearly right;
- Sharing stories and anecdotes of your own experiences of growing up to show them that growing-up is eventful for everyone.

For the older child with ADHD, informing them of the nature of their condition can help them to understand themselves better. This information can remove the sense of self-blame they experience and allow them to accept the implications of having ADHD and to actively minimize the impact it can have on their future.

Practise forgiveness

- Take time at the end of the day to discuss with your child the good and bad moments that have occurred. Emphasise that tomorrow is a new day and a fresh start.
- Nobody is perfect so there's no point in blaming yourself. Try to forgive yourself for the mistakes you have made during the course of the day. The important thing is that you learn from your mistakes and adapt your practice accordingly.





Homework issues

Homework can be a stressful experience and is quite often more stressful for parents than it is for children. For the child with ADHD homework presents particular problems. The skills required to manage the homework task include:

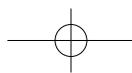
- The ability to concentrate on a task
- The ability to switch attention from one task to another (e.g. moving from spelling to maths)
- Efficient organization (e.g. having correct books and equipment at hand)
- Good memory

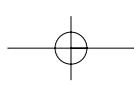
These are the areas in which children with ADHD are particularly vulnerable. A range of strategies can be employed to make the experience more effective and reduce stress and anxiety.

Work with your school

The key words are inform, agree and negotiate. It is a good idea to meet with your child's teacher at the beginning of each term to share information on issues such as diagnosis, medication, behavioural concerns and homework before problems emerge.

- Agree on a home/school book so you can see what homework has to be done. A homework partner can check this before home time so you know it is accurate. This saves a lot on telephone bills!
- Agree the amount of time to be spent on homework.
- Negotiate to present work in alternative ways, especially if time has run out. For example, a diagram rather than a page of writing or occasionally a story told on tape.





In planning a homework routine it is essential to include the child in the process. Including the child in the planning will make a good outcome more likely. The following issues should be considered:

■ **Timing**

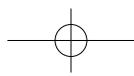
Agree a starting time with your child and stick to it consistently. Decide on a time when the child has had a short break and when they are not too tired and you are not too busy.

Decide on a time to finish as well as start. If possible agree with the school the amount of time to be spent rather than the quantity of work to be completed. A child with attention difficulties often spends long periods of time doing homework. Agree with the class teacher an acceptable time to spend on homework. If it is not completed in the agreed time try to arrange with the teacher that if necessary some work could be presented in a different way for example in a diagram, listing key words or as a list of headings.

■ **Place**

Choose a setting free from distractions i.e. away from the television, baby's high chair, radio and telephone. Remove unnecessary items from the table. Stick to the same place every night.

Consider allowing your child to construct a 'screen' or 'work station' for an activity that might need a high level of concentration.



■ Structure

Structure the homework task by making a list of the items/areas to be covered and allowing your child to stroke these off on completion. Alternate the tasks depending on the child's interests.

Allow breaks only after each task is completed and use these for exercise (a gallop round the garden!), a toilet break, a drink or a brief chat.

■ Legitimise movement

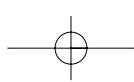
Allow your child a 'squidgy' ball to squeeze. If they find it useful, allow them to move, for example to pace up and down as they recite mathematical tables.

■ Provide feedback

When they are behaving as you would wish, let them know. This helps the child monitor their own behaviour and be aware of what is appropriate.

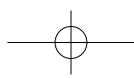
- a quick word 'you're working really hard'
- a gentle stroke on the head
- a more visible reward such as placing a button in a jam jar to be exchanged *immediately* after homework session for an agreed reward for example:

4 buttons = 15 minutes extra TV



How can you help your child to organise and plan?

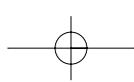
- Use a calendar to mark in when assignments and coursework are due. Indicate in a visual way by marking out or highlighting the number of days available “*Thursday is not that far away!*” It is useful to find out from the school the dates when coursework is due so you can help your child make a realistic plan.
- Children with ADHD have a poor concept of time. Raise their awareness of the passage of time by using a clear sign such as a kitchen timer or for older children a stopwatch.
- Colour-code books and the timetable - all maths books have yellow backs, English books have red backs and so on. This helps with packing the schoolbag and ensures that the required books are available. If misplacing or forgetting books is a problem then negotiate with the school to have a second set kept at home.



How can you help your child develop good study skills?

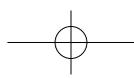
Encourage your child to develop and use efficient study and exam preparation skills using such strategies as:

- Draw up a weekly timetable (Appendix 3: Weekly Timetable). Fill in all the activities for the week, including after school activities such as job commitments and clubs and social activities. Don't forget to allow time to eat! Then draw a box around the empty spaces. This is the available time for study. For each day add the number of these hours and record them in the available time box. Keep a record for one week and then assess if there is enough time to study. If the answer is yes stick with this timetable. If not make the necessary adjustments.
- Develop reading comprehension strategies. Written passages consist of three parts, the topic, the main idea and the supporting details. If the child can identify these three parts within the passage reading comprehension will be improved. So first look at the title, this describes what the passage is about. Then examine the first sentence this will tell us the main idea then read the rest of the paragraph and this will contain the supporting details.
- You might find the following strategies will also help;
After they have read the story ask them to think of another name for the story.
Ask them to think of a title for each paragraph
Ask them to highlight the key words that for example 'tell you the boy is sad'
Ask them to make flow diagram using key words to show the sequence of events.



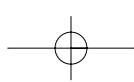
The child with ADHD will often have difficulties with remembering information in the short term. You can help overcome these difficulties by:

- Encouraging them to use a diary and write down things to remember
- Limiting the amount of information you give; for example, rather than say 'find your PE kit and put it in the washing machine and give the dog his dinner', give instructions one at a time or in more easily managed amounts.
- When they have lengthy passages to read encourage them to underline important words (in pencil!) as they go along then a quick look back will help them recall the details.
- Practise using good revision techniques using the pointers shown in (Appendix 4: Revision Techniques.)
- Become familiar with key words which typically appear in examinations. A glossary of terms is attached. (Appendix 5: Glossary of Exam Terms.)



TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

- Having a child who has impulsive behaviour can be very hard work. Parents and other carers can have a constant feeling of exhaustion. They can also feel inadequate especially when the child behaves unacceptably in public situations.
- Try to share the responsibility of caring for your child. Carers should agree to a consistent approach to particular routines such as bedtime, meals and homework.
- Many carers find good support from knowing others are facing the same issues. Making contact with a local support group can be very helpful. Remember many others are experiencing the same problems and support groups can also give you good ideas and lots of information.
- To help your child you need to keep well. Try to relax, keep healthy, maintain a sense of perspective and a sense of humour. With support and advice things should get easier as your child gets older.



Section 5 - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW CAN I KEEP MY CHILD SAFE?

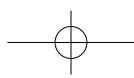
With careful planning your child should remain safe in the home and outside. You may need to plan for times when there is a greater risk to safety so as to minimise the danger.

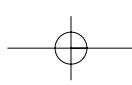
Going out shopping needs careful attention as you do not want your child to become distracted and wander off. Keep your child informed about your plans and how to act in risk situations. Plan for times when the child may become separated from you. A card or a badge with your name and mobile phone number would be useful. Your child will need close supervision when playing outside the home. Plan to make sure there is an opportunity to play safely and still be able to practise being independent.

WILL MY CHILD EVER GROW OUT OF IT?

Although ADHD cannot be cured, for some children the main symptoms, such as attention difficulties, tend to improve with age and maturity. For others however, behaviour problems continue into adulthood, if the child does not receive help.

It is important that children are identified early and effectively managed in order to ensure additional difficulties are minimized.





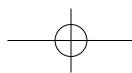
IS MEDICATION SAFE AND DOES DIET HAVE A PART TO PLAY?

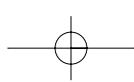
Research studies have demonstrated that stimulant medication can produce benefits for many children with a diagnosis of ADHD. The medication works by stimulating those parts of the brain which control behaviour and regulate activity. This medicine can only be prescribed by a medical doctor, under the supervision of a consultant. The doctor will make you aware of some of the side effects of stimulant treatment like decreased appetite, problems with growth, change in sleeping pattern or mood. Should these occur the medication can be stopped simply and safely and the side effects will have gone away within a very short period, usually less than six hours.

The use of medication will not 'cure' ADHD but rather creates a window of opportunity to allow you to help the child learn more effective behaviours.

A common intervention for children with ADHD is a combination of approaches sometimes using medication along with behavioural interventions.

Some parents feel that children become more active after taking fizzy drinks or sweets. The main culprits are drinks which contain caffeine, like colas or tea and coffee. Your doctor can advise you about this but you could avoid these foods if you feel this makes a difference.





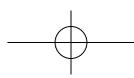
HOW CAN I IMPROVE MY CHILD'S SLEEP PATTERN?

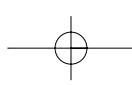
Many parents find that their child with ADHD experiences difficulties with sleep.

In the first instance seek your child's views and negotiate about the time for going to bed. This enables them to feel that they have some choice and will increase the chance of success.

- **Signal the approach of bedtime in advance**
This is particularly important for the younger child. Arrange for a 'wind down' time when boisterous play is replaced with a quiet activity such as listening to a story while having a warm drink.
- **Arrange the bedroom so that sleep is more likely**
CD player with taped stories or relaxing music can be helpful. A television in the bedroom can keep your child awake.
- **Getting to sleep**
Follow a routine such as get into your pyjamas, lie down on the bed, lower the lights, read your story or mum will read to you and try to sleep. This should be followed every night.
- **Be consistent**
If the child comes out of the bedroom insist on immediate return reminding them of the routine.

If your child is on medication and is experiencing persistent sleep difficulties you should bring this to the attention of your doctor.





HOW CAN I HELP IMPROVE MY CHILD'S SOCIAL SKILLS?

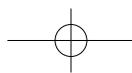
Children with ADHD often experience social problems. They tend to be especially poor at

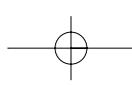
- interpreting social signs such as gestures and facial expressions;
- taking account of the feelings of others;
- resisting temptations;
- predicting the consequences of their behaviour.

While the child with ADHD wants and is eager to make and maintain friendships, they often have difficulty going about it - they are socially 'out of tune'.

- As a parent you should look out for and reward and praise good social behaviour
- Teach how to exchange greeting with others
- Teach and practise how to make eye contact
- Teach and practise how to listen and take turns in conversation
- Opportunities could be arranged which encourage co-operative play with others such as board games, card games and team games.
- Assigning the child a special responsibility may encourage other children to observe them in a more positive light.
- Encourage your child to use and display his/her strengths and talents e.g. looking after the family pet, answering the telephone well.

Remember that in addition to direct teaching you also teach by your own example.





So, in conclusion...

We hope this booklet has given you some insight into Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and how it can be managed within the home context. Understanding the world from the point of view of a child with ADHD allows us to empathise more fully and provide appropriate support.

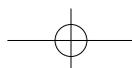
Remember...

ADHD is a genuine and complex disorder.

Life can be extremely tough for children and young people with ADHD.

The strategies used to help these children will benefit all children.

Adults are in a powerful position to make changes that will have a positive impact on the life of the child with ADHD.



Acknowledgements

We would like to express our thanks and appreciation to those who responded to consultations in the preparation of this booklet, including teachers, colleagues, classroom assistants, health professionals, NIADD (The Northern Ireland ADHD Family Support Group), parents and young people. Thanks are also due to the technical and administrative staffs in the Boards and in the Department of Education.

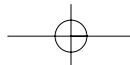
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Copies of this booklet may be obtained from your local Education and Library Board. Copies can also be downloaded from the ELB web sites (See Useful Contacts).



Appendix 1 - USEFUL CONTACTS

N.I. ADD Support Centre

71 Eglantine Avenue
BELFAST
BT9 6EW

Tel No. (028) **9020 0110**

Fax No. (028) **9020 0112**

Website www.ni-add.org.uk

e mail:

[sarahniaddfsyuk@netscape.net/](mailto:sarahniaddfsyuk@netscape.net)

niaddfsyuk@netscape.net

Educational Psychology Service South Eastern Education & Library Board

Grahamsbridge Road
Dundonald
BELFAST
BT16 2HS

Tel. No. (028) **9056 6924**

Fax No. (028) **9056 6916**

Website www.seelb.org.uk

Educational Psychology Service North Eastern Education & Library Board

County Hall
182 Galgorm Road
BALLYMENA
BT42 1HN

Tel. No. (028) **2566 2558**

Fax No. (028) **2566 2441**

Website www.neelb.org.uk

Educational Psychology Service Southern Education & Library Board

3 Charlemont Road
The Mall
ARMAGH
BT61 9AX

Tel. No. (028) **3751 2524**

Fax No. (028) **3751 2598**

Website www.selb.org.uk

Educational Psychology Service Belfast Education & Library Board

40 Academy Street
BELFAST
BT1 2NQ

Tel. No. (028) **9056 4033**

Fax No. (028) **9056 4386**

Website www.belb.org.uk

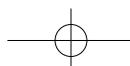
Educational Psychology Service Western Education & Library Board

Campsie House
1 Hospital Road
OMAGH
BT79 0AW

Tel. No. (028) **8241 1399**

Fax No. (028) **8241 1293**

Website www.welbni.org



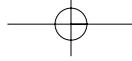
Appendix 2 - ROUTINES

Morning Routine

Wash
Brush Teeth
Breakfast
Get Dressed
Lunch Box
School Bag

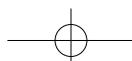
Bedtime Routine

10 mins to go
Supper
Bathroom
Pyjamas on
Story time
Stay in Bed



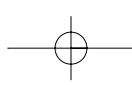
Homework Routine

Set time
Get books
Get equipment
Maths
Break
Reading
Break
Science
Finish
Play Computer



Appendix 2 - WEEKLY TIMETABLE

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
4.00 - 4.30							
4.30 - 5.00							
5.00 - 5.30							
5.30 - 6.00							
6.00 - 6.30							
6.30 - 7.00							
7.00 - 7.30							
7.30 - 8.00							
8.00 - 8.30							
8.30 - 9.00							
9.00 - 9.30							
9.30 - 10.00							
Available Time							
Time Used							



Appendix 4 - REVISION TECHNIQUES

Gather all your materials in the place where you will be working (preferably at your desk)

Ensure you know what sections of your work need to be studied

Re-read the relevant sections of your notes, underlying key ideas

Next, change the form of your notes. For example, you could draw a flow-chart or a mind map or present the information in a table or chart.

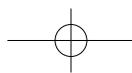
Next, check your answers to see what sections of the work you need to go over in more detail

After this, summarise the information, using the key words only

Then, use the key words to rewrite full sentences with detailed information about your topic

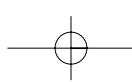
Have a short break and then later ask someone to test you orally, or test yourself

Finally, have a good night's sleep, so that you are fresh and able to give your best in your test the next day!

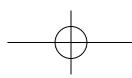


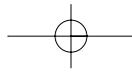
Appendix 5 - GLOSSARY OF EXAM TERMS

Account for	explain the causes of
Analyse	separate into basic parts, evaluate in detail
Assess	decide how important something is, and give your reasons
Classify	arrange into categories or groups
Comment on	explain why something is important
Compare	describe the similarities between two things
Concise	short, brief
Contrast	describe the differences between two things
Criteria	the rules or requirements that apply to something
Deduction	the conclusion or generalisation you came to after looking carefully at all the facts
Define	write the meaning of the word or subject given
Describe	give a detailed account with examples of the procedure, term, etc. specified in the question
Discuss	give both sides of an argument and then give your own Opinion
Evaluate	explain how important something is
Explain	give reasons for
Factors	the facts or circumstances that contribute to a result
Function	what something does: its purpose or role



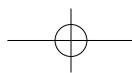
Identify	point out and describe important items or points
Illustrate	give examples (or diagrams) that prove your answer is correct
Implications	why something is significant or important; long-term effects or results
In relation to	refer to a specific aspect of something
Indicate	show, demonstrate
Justify	show your reason for
Outline	briefly give the essential points
Role	the function of something, what part something plays, how it works (especially in cooperation with others)
Scope	the extent or influence of something
Significance	the consequence and importance of something
State	give the relevant fact(s) briefly
Summarise	give the main points





Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

A Practical Guide for Parents and Carers



**YOUR CHILD WITH ADHD:
A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS**