

Best Approaches for Supporting Most Able Pupils with ADHD

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ChYMe

Children & Young People's
Mental Health Research Collaboration



What is ADHD?

- Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder
- Overlapping personality traits
- Unlucky combo- impairing without the right support
- Everyone has a bit of each, when is it ADHD?



Development and early testing of a school-based toolkit for children with traits of ADHD

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Phase 1 (2020-2022)

- Gather together the existing evidence for strategies that might improve the toolkit targets
- Develop a prototype toolkit using a structured framework called Intervention Mapping

Phase 2 (2022-2025)

- Test out the toolkit in 8 Primary schools, including staff, parents and 16-32 children with impairing traits of ADHD
- Make changes to the toolkit based on the feedback from each family and school

Toolkit targets

ADHD symptoms (inattention, hyperactivity, impulsivity)
classroom functioning
conflict with teachers and peers
executive functioning
global functioning/quality of life
organisation skills
self-esteem

The toolkit will be co-created with:

Parents



People with ADHD

School staff

Psychologists

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Everyone with ADHD is different

As we know, everyone has different strengths- some people are creative, others very logical for example

Your strengths can mean that some areas are not as impairing for you, or that you can overcome impairment using them

But some people's strengths might be unrelated to the severity of their ADHD, or impact on different domains- someone might be an excellent athlete but struggle with academic work, or an excellent creative writer but struggle with numerical skills

Individual interests are also key in ADHD- areas that are engaging and interesting can lead to *hyperfocus* and the ability to really hone in on something

Understanding strengths is key

Please read the instructions and complete the form below

Instructions

Question 1: What does Draco like to do, what are their hobbies, interests and things they find rewarding and engaging?

Question 2: What keeps Draco's attention?

Question 3: What does Draco do well in school? (topics and tasks or activities)?

Question 4: What tasks or activities does Draco struggle with or find difficult at school?

Question 5: What are the best ways to communicate with Draco in a way they understand?

Question 6: What pictures, signals or prompts are useful for Draco?

Question 7: What sensory challenges or difficulties does Draco have?

Question 8: What signals or behaviours does Draco do when they are getting upset or agitated?

Question 9: What signals or behaviours does Draco do when they are happy or excited?

Question 10: What does Draco do in their free time at school?

Save my progress - Click here!

Know Me prompts for school staff



Use these ideas and questions to fill in the know me form on the toolkit website– from your point of view (home will be able to see what you put in the form)

What does my student spend their time doing at school if they get to choose?

What do other staff need to know if they were to teach my student?

How can I tell if my student is happy or

How can I tell if my student is frustrated, angry or sad? What do they say or do?

What interests or hobbies does my student have that really catch their attention?

What can my student spend the most time doing in one stretch of time ?

Know Me prompts for students



Put a big cross or tick through the bubble when you've answered it!

What do I like to do?

What do I do or say when I'm happy?

What things are fun for me?

What things do I spend ages doing?

What else is special about me?

What lessons do I like doing at school?

What do I like doing in free time at school?

What other things do I like doing at school?

What do I do when I'm sad or angry?

What do I not like doing at school?

What should people know to understand me?

Everyone with ADHD is different

- Unfortunately, strengths do not always overcome the challenges specific to ADHD, which is why many people seek an explanation in the form of a clinical diagnosis
- ADHD is a very broad condition with many potential indicators - not everyone with ADHD has the same challenges- in diagnostic language-
- 6 or more symptoms required, out of a possible
- 9 inattention symptoms
- 9 hyperactivity/impulsivity symptoms
- =18,564 possible combinations of symptoms!

How do real people describe what their ADHD is to them?

- Can only focus if interested
- Not very good at routines, although try hard
- No time awareness
- Not able to verbalise feelings and thoughts
- Lacking common sense
- Discrepancy between processing speed and intelligence
- Emotionally intelligent
- Profound and articulate
- Logical
- Practical
- Bright
- Quirky
- Talking in school
- Fixed way of thinking
- Struggle with productivity
- Talking back to teachers
- Others lead them into trouble
- Quiet, unnoticed
- In the wrong place a lot of the time
- Defiant or argumentative
- Not knowing the moral rules (stealing things)
- Problems with buttons and zips and fine motor skills
- Skipping school
- Running away
- Climbing high things

From patient and public involvement informing research

We often remember and internalise the negatives...



Even when a student (or anyone!) excels at many things, it is the things they struggle with that can have the biggest lasting impact



With ADHD, those struggles are often multiple and happen often, meaning they are hard to avoid



Over time, this impacts on how a student feels about themselves and their self-esteem



Teenagers with ADHD are at a high risk of depression and anxiety- low mood and a poor sense of self-worth



This could be worse when ADHD hasn't been identified as there is no explanation as to *why* they find everyday tasks more challenging than their peers

Ideas to pick up on the positives

- Research shows that *specific labelled praise* is really important for reinforcing what is going well, and what is good about what a student is doing
- Positive feedback is critically important (here's a 4 min video about it [youtube.com/watch?v=CNEt3BuN_1Q&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNEt3BuN_1Q&feature=youtu.be))
- You can introduce a game to the class such as “catch them out being good” to find all those small moments where praise and positivity are possible



What you might think at first

They only did one maths problem,
everyone else did two pages

They just don't listen to anything I say!
They only listened one time today

They keep being silly when I'm trying to
get stuff done and don't do their
creative writing

They only wrote half a page, everyone
else did loads more!

They keep drawing when I'm asking
them to write



Well done in class today



Well done in _____, you were
engaged with the work without
getting distracted. This meant you
got all the work done.



Thank you for helping me



Thank you for being helpful and
asking _____, that was very polite
and thoughtful, it also helped me
a lot.

You did good with your
partner today



Well done working with _____,
you had great partner skills and
I noticed you listening while
_____ was talking and waiting
for your turn to talk



You followed my instruc-
tion well today.



Well done following my instruc-
tions today, when I asked _____
you did it straight away. I could
tell you were actively listening
and paid attention to me

Safe environments

People with ADHD may have other sensory differences- over (hyper) or under (hypo) active senses

Overwhelming physical environments can cause extreme anxiety and distress, leading to avoidance or refusal

We also need to think about the people in the environment and how safe they are- adults and peers

And when a calm environment has been disrupted, how to work best with the student and others to restore equilibrium

It is important to recognise that you might not appreciate the scale of a problem for a student- something that seems minor to you may be momentous to them. Validate their experience

flex When things go wrong– Flowchart



flex When Things Go Wrong– Supplementary Information (3)



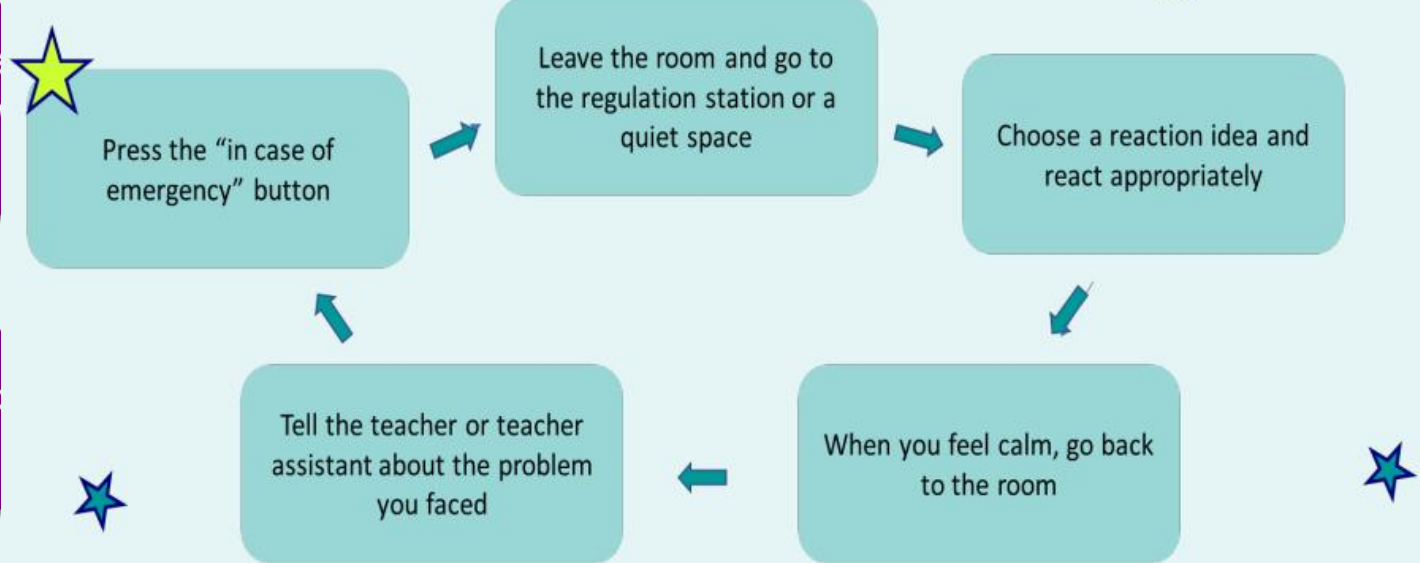
Problem?

What to do when you face a huge problem during class and would like to have a huge reaction appropriately?

After having that reaction, do you feel calm and ready to move on?

yes

Reflect about avoiding the problem



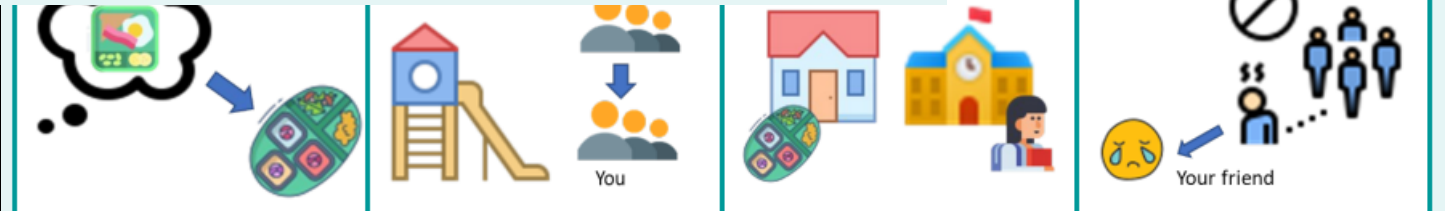
Problem Example



Small problem	Scenarios of a big problem
First aid kit, which is used in PE class	You injured yourself seriously after falling over
Home	Your friend told you that they have been bullied.
School	

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flex No Thanks!- Map Activity Template



Area:
Reason:
Triggers:

Area:
Reason:
Trigger:

Include a clear boundary that shows the areas the

Area:

Area:
Reason:
Triggers:

Area:
Reason:
Triggers:

Area:
Reason:
Triggers:

Area:
Reason:
Trig:

flex No Thanks! - Flexing Around Triggers



Can you take a different route to avoid this place?

Is there a person you can talk to before or during an activity?

Can you have a 5 minute warning before you need to do something?

Which will you do?

Will adding more break/chunk an activity make it easier?

Can you go here with a trusted adult?

Can you be allowed to play in a different place?

Are there any objects that will make an activity or place nicer (ear defenders, fidget toys, comfort objects)?

Safe harbours- adults I trust flex

Activate Strategy for the Class

Safe harbours template- add your trusted adults



Key Points

This activity is for you and the student to identify which adults in the school they already trust and like. This is useful so that you can scaffold them to seek out one of their trusted adults if they run into difficulties when you are not physically present. It may also help you understand why the student might be reluctant to do some tasks or activities around the school

How is this tweaked

Adults cannot always contact
trust
add
to in
well
diver
regu

flex

Trusted adult cards

Fill in the spaces with the child's name and your name, and hand to trusted adults. You could add any other important info on the back of the card before you give it to the trusted adult



Congratulations!

You have been identified as a **trusted adult** for

This means that they may come to you if they need help with a social situation or other problem at school, such as

We might also ask you if it's ok for you to be a social contact for the student, so they can come and visit you for five minutes if they have done something well or need some space for a minute or two.

If you have any questions or worries, please ask

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flex Negative No-Nos - Ho

Current

flex

1)

Why do peo
about thing:

flex

Friendship across the ages– social network activity

Who do you like to spend time with at school? Map out your social connections here

flex

Friendship across the ages–

Children with traits of ADHD might make friends with children of different age are more or less mature than those of their classmates, so they might gravitat interests.

It might be that they have speech delays or other problems that mean they ca

It may be that they are not interested in playing in the same way as peers the students or adults.

It may also be that they struggle to make and maintain friendships with any o their time talking to adults, either to keep themselves away from students wh adults' conversation more interesting and meaningful than play with peers.

As long as the toolkit student is not upsetting others, we do not think it is a pr er we do understand that sometimes other adults may think this is inappropri

Using the social networks template and flowchart, we encourage you to think and if so reflect on what changes you might encourage.

Remember, it's important for everyone to feel that they have social connectio a lonely and difficult place to be, which can impact on attendance and behavio suring others that these are normal for students is important.

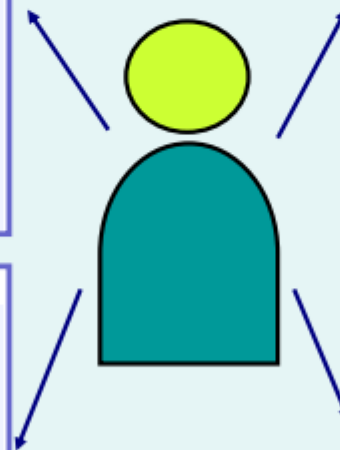
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Students in your class

Younger students

Older students

Adults at school



Reframing
“difficult
moments” as
communication
when pupils are
struggling or
underachieving
due to lack of
appropriate
challenge

- Due to the core symptoms of ADHD, engagement with work and willingness to attempt activities can vary
- Doing a strengths activity can also help you to understand the student’s communication (verbal and non-verbal) and be alert for signals
- Key to engage students using methods that suit them, and with appropriate adaptation as needed (e.g. format of work, weaving in areas of interest from understanding strengths)
- Challenge needs to be appropriate- work should be completable as otherwise may disengage
- Small chunks of more challenging work is better than one long challenging demand- promote engagement
- Consider the way the student learns best and structure work this way- try a few different approaches and reflect with the student on what suits them best

Stretching it out

Activate Strategy for

flex

Funky Chunking suggestion sheet



Key Points

This strategy is to support the child to extend their

flex Stretching It Out-

Current position:

Step 1

Step 2

Step 4

Put each of a series of questions on a separate page

Cover up the page using a blank piece of paper (or a piece of paper with a window cut into it), just reveal one question at a time

If you have 5 questions listed on the board, write down one question at a time on a piece of paper for your toolkit student for them to look at and hold

Cut up paper worksheets or activities into their chunks with scissors, have the student glue them back together when they've completed the chunks

If you are using slides or digital resources, zoom in to so just one chunk shows at a time

Adapt how you ask the toolkit student to answer a question so they can complete each chunk- can they circle an answer or tell you what it is so you can write it down

Ultimate Goal(s):



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Any questions?