

Amaze & Reaching Families FACT SHEET Updated Sept 2019

ADHD

This fact sheet has been written by parent carers for parent carers



What is ADHD?

'Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder' (ADHD) refers to a neurological condition with behavioural symptoms that include poor concentration, restlessness and fidgeting, impulsiveness and being easily distracted. ADHD is the most common neurological condition in the UK. It affects around 2 to 5 per cent of school-age children and is more common in boys than girls. For most people ADHD is a life-long condition, although the symptoms usually improve with age. However, some people may continue to experience difficulties into adulthood.

Characteristics of ADHD

There are two types of behavioural symptoms that characterise ADHD:

- **Inattentiveness** – signs include: having a short attention span and being easily distracted; appearing forgetful or losing things; finding it difficult to listen or follow instructions; constantly changing activity.
- **Hyperactivity and impulsiveness** – signs include: being unable to sit still or to concentrate on tasks; excessive movement or talking; interrupting; acting without thinking; having little or no sense of danger.

The behavioural symptoms that lead to a diagnosis of ADHD are usually noticeable in children before the age of six and will be seen in more than one setting (such as home and school). Some people with ADHD also have learning difficulties and problems with sleep. ADHD is also common amongst people who have autism.

Children who only have difficulties with inattention tend to be diagnosed with 'attention deficit disorder' (ADD), which can go unnoticed because the symptoms may be less obvious.

Causes of ADHD

The exact causes of ADHD are not known. It tends to run in families and research suggests that parents and siblings of a child with ADHD are four to five times more likely to have the condition themselves. Various other risk factors are thought to play a part in ADHD but firm links have not been made, so more research is needed.

Types of therapy

There is no known 'cure' for ADHD but there are a number of therapies and interventions that can help to manage it, including:

- **Behaviour therapy** – uses a system of positive reinforcement to help parents, families and sometimes teachers to encourage improved behaviour in children with ADHD.
- **Diet and exercise** – the NHS recommends regular exercise and a balanced diet for children with ADHD. Cutting down on certain foods such as sugar can help with symptoms – speak to your GP or a dietician for advice on changes to diet.
- **Medication** – a number of drugs are available to provide short-term treatment for ADHD and to help people to feel calmer and to concentrate. Four drugs are licensed in the UK – methylphenidate, dexamfetamine, lisdexamfetamine and atomoxetine.
- **Social skills training** – using role play and drama to help children learn how they should behave in specific social situations.
- **Talking therapies** – regular contact with a counsellor, psychologist or psychotherapist is known to help children better understand and manage their condition.



ADHD



Ask about

- **ADHD Aware** runs a peer support group for adults with ADHD that meets monthly in Brighton. Visit: <https://adhdaware.org.uk>
- **Amaze – the Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)** offers impartial, confidential advice on anything to do with special educational needs and disabilities for 0 to 25 year olds. Parents, carers, children and young people under 25 with SEND living in Brighton & Hove or East Sussex can use the service. Email sendiass@amazesussex.org.uk, call **01273 772289** or visit our website at <https://amazesussex.org.uk>
- **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)** – has a specialist team that diagnoses, assesses and supports children and young people with ADHD. Referrals to CAMHS should be made by a professional such as your GP or child's school or you can contact the Brighton & Hove Wellbeing Service. Although the Wellbeing service cannot diagnose they can refer you on to the specialist CAMHS team if appropriate. Call the Wellbeing service on **0300 002 0060** or visit www.brightonandhovewellbeing.org. Alternatively, if your child is young, it may be beneficial to contact the **Seaside View Child Development Service** at Seaside View, as the team takes can take a broader look at your child's developmental needs. Call Seaside View direct on: **01273 265780**.
- **Compass Card** – a free leisure discount card administered by Amaze for 0 to 25 year olds with SEND who are registered on the compass. Go to: www.compasscard.org.uk, email Amaze at: compass@amazesussex.co.uk or call: **01273 772289** (Brighton & Hove) or **0300 123 9186** (West Sussex).
- **Disability Living Allowance (DLA)** – if your child's care or mobility needs are significantly greater than the needs of their peers you may be able to claim DLA for them. Visit www.gov.uk and search for DLA. Amaze can also give you advice and support with making a claim. Call our helpline: 01273 772289 or visit our website: amazesussex.org.uk
- **Parenting Kids With Dyslexia / Dyspraxia / SPD / ADHD Sussex** hosts monthly social meetups for parents of children with similar challenges. Find out more at www.facebook.com/onewarriormum.
- **Parent support groups** – there are many parent led groups for children with disabilities in Brighton & Hove. Some are for all children with SEND and some for children with specific disabilities. You can find a list of local groups in Brighton & Hove at: amazesussex.org.uk/parent-carers/info-advice-parent-carers/survival-strategies/parent-support-groups

Further reading and useful links

- **ADHD Information Services (ADDISS)** – information and resources on ADHD. Visit: www.addiss.co.uk.
- **Local Offer** – the local authority's online listing of all the services and support that are available to families with children with SEND in the area. Visit new.brighton-hove.gov.uk/special-educational-needs-and-disabilities
- **Young Minds** – the mental health charity for young people has a section of their website devoted to ADHD with fact sheets and advice. Visit: www.youngminds.org.uk.

