

## **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)**

ADHD is a developmental behavioural disorder that leads to inappropriate inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity. The levels of these behaviours are not appropriate for the young person's level of development and it must interfere with their functioning in at least two settings eg home and school. At least some of the symptoms must have been present before the age of 7.

If you suspect a child has ADHD ask teachers that know that child well to complete the Vanderbilt questionnaires and ask parents to complete them too. This is useful information if the child visits their GP for a referral to be assessed by a psychiatrist.

### **Symptoms to look for are:**

- Easily distracted.
- Miss details and make careless mistakes.
- Forget things.
- Lose things
- Struggle to focus on one thing/follow instruction especially if more than one instruction.
- Trouble completing homework assignments
- Daydream in lesson
- Squirming in seat/fidgeting
- Talking when should not or blurting out answers
- Constantly in motion
- Playing with things they should not
- Impatient
- Inappropriate comments blurted out
- Difficulty waiting for things or taking turns
- Interrupts conversations
- Engages in risk behaviours

Medication is not the only support on offer for ADHD. Improving sleep and diet can be beneficial. Trying strategies in the classroom and home can help. Behavioural therapy may lead to improvement and medication will help approximately 70% who are diagnosed with ADHD.

### **Try the following strategies in school:**

- I would advise teachers to keep in contact with the young person's parents to share problems and to utilise the same approach at home and school.
- I would advise sitting the young person close to you, ideally between two calm well-behaved children, away from doors, windows and possible distractions. Allow adequate space at the group desk between the young person and his peers as the young person may wriggle, fidget and find it hard to sit still.

- Discuss with the young person if his chair is comfortable/soft enough, consider allowing the young person a cushion on his chair.
- Provide legitimate opportunities for physical activity. For example, let the young person go and fetch something you need or wipe the board.
- Try to find a way to let the young person fidget without interfering with peers, e.g. tangles, stress balls, chew necklaces.
- The young person may struggle to plan his activity or do it in the right order. Break his tasks into small steps and give a written checklist, including what the young person should do when he has finished the task to occupy himself appropriately. Ensure there is structure for the young person if he finishes a task before his peers.

Where possible ensure you write down the homework for the young person or e-mail it to their parent

- Beware of changes to the young person's routine or activity. This can be upsetting to the young person and he needs to know in advance and have it repeated.
- Work on the young person's self esteem. Praise the young person in public for good behaviour and reprimand quietly away from peers.
- Give the young person an older "Buddy" who they may take advice from, copy their behaviour and talk to if being teased/bullied