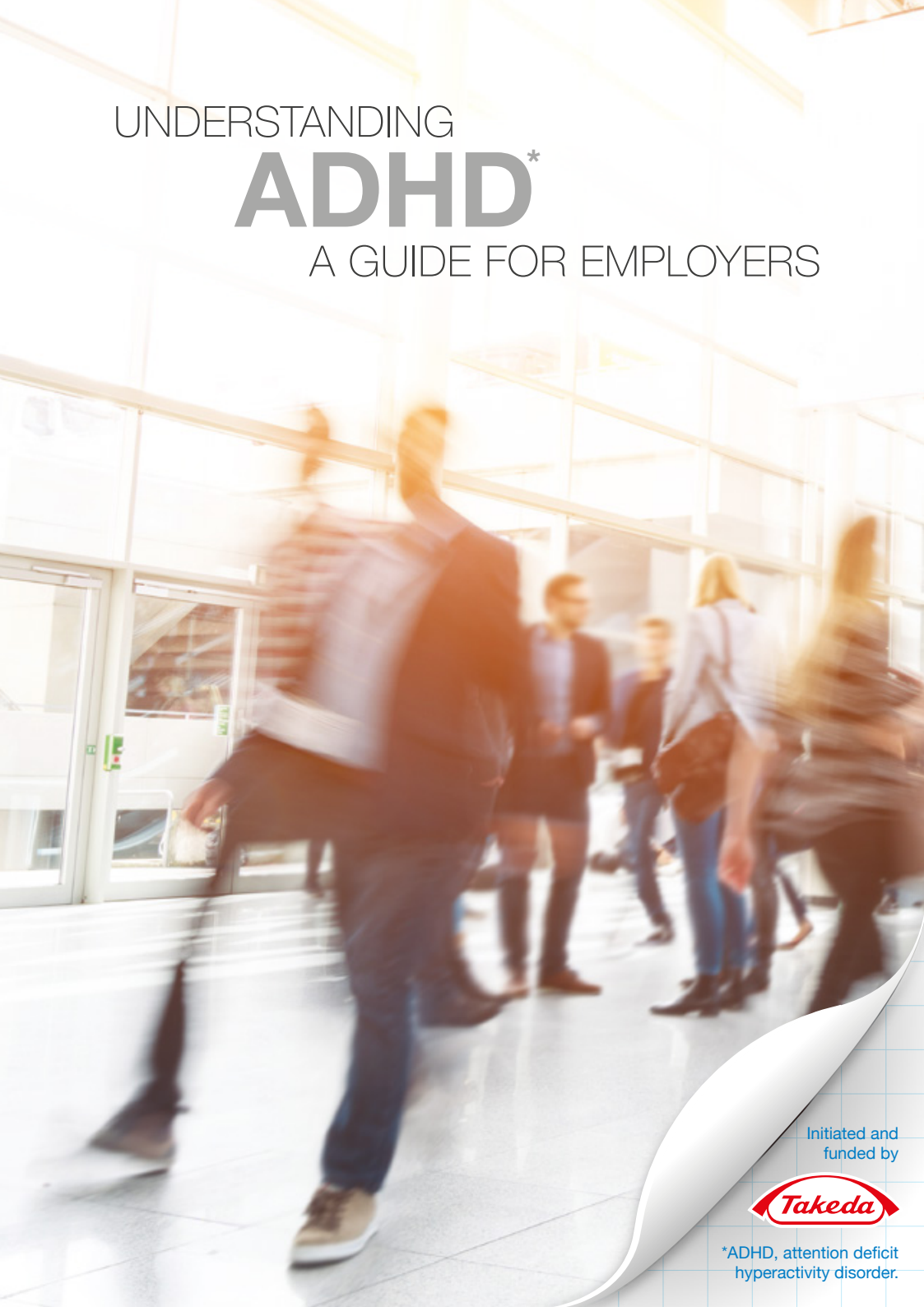
UNDERSTANDING ADHD*

A GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS



Initiated and funded by

Takeda

*ADHD, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

How this booklet can help



An introduction from Prof Harj Kaul

This booklet is useful if one or more of your employees has been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

It may be that they have known about their diagnosis through the educational system and are very open to discuss basic, simple adjustments that allow them to maximise their performance in their job role. On the other hand, they may be newly-diagnosed and may require some initial and empathetic support and collaborative working to find out what best works for both of you to improve their performance, capability and sustained attendance in their working environment.

If your training, experience or knowledge of this specific neurodiversity diagnosis is limited, it's possible that you may have picked up some misconceptions about ADHD.

The aim of this booklet is to help all line managers and employers to support employees with ADHD in a positive and proactive way.

Every employer seeks to recruit and retain the best talent for each role in their organisation. As an advocate of **neurodiversity as a competitive advantage** I hope this booklet, with its clear insight into current thinking and best practice around ADHD, will help you achieve this aim for your organisation's effectiveness and work colleagues wellbeing.

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This booklet was edited, in collaboration with Takeda, by Prof Harj Kaul.



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About ADHD

What is ADHD?

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects behaviour. In the brain of a person with ADHD, levels of certain chemicals called neurotransmitters are altered.[1] This disrupts the connections within the brain, particularly in two areas that are important for planning tasks and controlling impulses.



Symptoms of ADHD vary by individual, but tend to involve inattention, hyperactivity or impulsivity. These symptoms can make social, academic or working life difficult for a person with ADHD. Research into ADHD has been ongoing since 'hyperkinetic disorder' was first recognised as a clinical diagnosis in the 1930s.[2]





What causes ADHD?[2]

ADHD is a complex condition with multiple causes. Genetic and environmental factors are thought to play a part, but our understanding remains incomplete. Research suggests that ADHD tends to run in families. Environmental factors that may play a part include pregnancy and early childhood risks (e.g., premature birth, low birth weight or prenatal tobacco exposure), social or economic risks (e.g., single-parent households, paternal history of antisocial behaviour, maternal depression, poverty) or exposure to harmful substances (e.g., lead or certain pesticides).



How does ADHD affect people?

Presentations of ADHD

There are three different presentations of ADHD[1]

Mostly inattentive type – individuals mainly have symptoms of inattention

Mostly hyperactive/ impulsive type – individuals mainly have symptoms of hyperactivity and impulsivity

Combined type – individuals have symptoms of inattention and hyperactivity/ impulsivity in more-or-less equal amounts



Symptoms of ADHD

It's likely that all of us experience the challenges listed below, at some time in our lives. The difference for people with ADHD is that they are not able to control these tendencies, because they are symptoms of a neurological disorder rather than behavioural choices. Some people with ADHD show all these symptoms while others show only some.[1] ADHD symptoms may change as people get older.

Symptoms of inattention[1]

- Difficulty staying focused – e.g., when filling in a form
- Difficulty keeping to deadlines
- Forgetfulness – e.g., paying bills, returning phone calls or going to appointments
- Losing things regularly, such as keys or wallet
- Getting easily distracted
- Making frequent mistakes at work or during other activities
- Difficulty keeping things organised and tidy

Symptoms of hyperactivity and impulsivity[1]

- Difficulty sitting still
- Feeling restless or impatient
- Being talkative or often interrupting conversations
- Intruding into, or taking over, what others are doing
- Acting quickly without thinking, e.g., darting into the street without looking

Strengths and talents of individuals with ADHD

Like all of us, people with ADHD are individuals with their own strengths and weaknesses. However, people with ADHD may have a tendency towards certain characteristics and capabilities that bring significant benefits to organisations. This is reflected in the many successful businesses that have been founded by people with ADHD.[3,4]

Creative

- Diffuse attention allows for rapid switching between aspects of a task or project
- Flexible associative memory allows for distantly-related ideas to be remembered and linked
- Impulsivity allows for ideas to be readily shared
- Energy helps to keep a team motivated

Link ideas
Share thoughts
Energy
Motivation

Focus
Dedication
Concentration

Hyper-focused

- Able to focus on one topic or task to the exclusion of all else

Not afraid
Quick-thinking
Unfazed

Useful in a crisis

- Not intimidated by volatile, uncertain or chaotic situations
- Able to quickly absorb large amounts of information from diverse sources
- Can evaluate multiple creative options at high speed



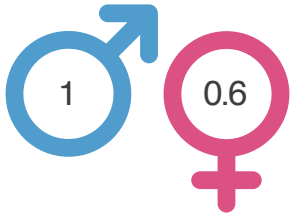
These ‘special skills’ may be capitalised on by employers while letting employees with ADHD gain satisfaction from their work. However, employees with ADHD may not be able to bring their skills to bear without the support and understanding of their colleagues and employer. A lack of support is often the reason why people with ADHD leave their jobs.

How many of us have ADHD?

It is estimated that around **1 in 30** adults has ADHD[5]



ADHD is more common in males than females, by a ratio of 1 to 0.6[6]



ADHD affects people of all ages. 50–65% of children with ADHD experience its effects into adulthood[7]





Common myths about ADHD

People with ADHD are slow learners ✗

ADHD is not a learning disorder. ADHD affects people in a similar way, whether they have high, medium or low IQ scores.[8] ✓

ADHD isn't a real disorder. The diagnosis is made up by badly-behaved people ✗

Only a specialist physician can make a diagnosis of ADHD.[1,9] Multiple 'diagnostic criteria' must be met. Besides a clinical interview, an individual's medical, psychiatric, educational and employment histories will be evaluated. People with ADHD sometimes have a long wait for assessment, and the process can be complicated by psychiatric conditions that may occur alongside ADHD such as depression or anxiety.[10] ✓

Employees with ADHD will hinder my business ✗

Certain characteristics associated with ADHD (e.g., rapid switching between aspects of a task to find solutions where others may not, the ability to 'hyperfocus' on one topic to the exclusion of all else, or being able to quickly absorb a large amount of information) can give a positive boost to the capabilities of a team. Successful business leaders with ADHD include chef Heston Blumenthal[3] and the founder of Virgin Group, Richard Branson.[4] ✓

What can happen when ADHD is not diagnosed?

Without diagnosis, the symptoms of ADHD can be misinterpreted as signs of poor behaviour. This may lead to people with undiagnosed ADHD becoming marginalised in workplace or social settings.

Problems associated with ADHD in adulthood include substance misuse,[11] injuries and accidents,[12] financial difficulties[13] and problems with personal and workplace relationships.[13]



Diagnosis, treatment and environmental changes are all aimed at reducing the likelihood of these harmful outcomes. For employers, this means creating an inclusive environment so that all employees can perform to their full potential.



How is ADHD treated?[9]

There's no 'cure' for ADHD, but once diagnosed it can be treated and managed according to the type and severity of ADHD, and the circumstances of the person with ADHD.

Structured discussion

This takes place between a person with newly-diagnosed ADHD and their specialist physician. The discussion begins by talking through the benefits of diagnosis, such as having a better understanding of symptoms, getting access to support services and a chance to build on personal strengths. It also covers the possible stigma and 'labelling' that can follow a diagnosis, as well as the risks associated with self-medication or substance abuse.

The conversation covers social, relationship and employment considerations and any co-existing neurodevelopmental or psychiatric issues. The question of environmental modifications to reduce ADHD symptoms is an important topic for discussion as it touches on workplace considerations.



Treatment options

If ADHD symptoms are still causing problems after environmental modifications have been made, a person with ADHD, together with their physician, may decide to begin treatment. This could involve one of several prescription medicines.

Alternatively, a 'non-pharmacological' approach might be selected. This might be preferred by those who have difficulty taking medicine, have tried medicines and found them ineffective, or have made an informed choice not to take medication.

This approach would involve a structured course of cognitive behavioural therapy (or 'talking therapy'). Whichever treatment pathway is chosen, regular monitoring of symptoms should be maintained.



Baseline assessment

Before starting any medication, people with ADHD should have a full 'baseline assessment' covering mental health, social, personal and employment circumstances, as well as physical health to include any current medications, height and weight, pulse, blood pressure and cardiovascular health.



Employing and managing people with ADHD

What type of work may suit a person with ADHD?

Like everyone else, people with ADHD have a broad range of interests, skills, likes and dislikes. This variety of thinking is part of what makes us human – and a good reason to make workplace teams as diverse as possible. However, there are requirements associated with certain roles that could make them better suited for people with ADHD.

It's likely that an individual with ADHD may respond well to a structured working day, the opportunity for physical movement, regular stimulation, regular feedback and a good fit between their work and their interests. All these things tend to help people with ADHD stay focused.





Work that is characterised by long periods in isolation, monotonous or repetitive tasks or the need for sustained periods of attention in a safety-critical environment may be particularly challenging for people with ADHD.

How should people with ADHD be supported in the workplace?

Learning about ADHD

The most important thing that an employer can do to support their employees with ADHD is to get educated. Find out about the condition, show understanding and a reasonable degree of flexibility – and ensure that the employee's colleagues are doing the same.



Support during diagnosis

A specialist healthcare professional may want to examine an individual's employment record as part of the process of diagnosis. If an employee undergoing clinical examination requests these, an employer can play their part by providing them.

Or the employer can provide a factual report of their observations in the working environment as part of the total diagnostic assessment process.

The process of evaluation – as well as the diagnosis itself – can be a major life event for an adult whose ADHD symptoms have never been understood by colleagues, friends and family, or even their classmates and teachers back in childhood.

For an employer who has been made aware that an individual is being evaluated for ADHD, this is an opportunity to show understanding and support, as we would for any employee receiving a significant medical diagnosis.

How should people with ADHD be supported in the workplace?

Environmental modifications

Our logical aim as employers is to build diverse, productive, well-motivated teams. This should mean that people with ADHD are treated with understanding and flexibility as a matter of course.

Current UK clinical guidelines for ADHD diagnosis and management highlight the importance of environmental modifications to reduce the impact of symptoms on individuals with ADHD. Environmental modifications are changes that are made to the physical environment in order to minimise the impact of a person's ADHD on their day-to-day life. Appropriate environmental modifications will be specific to the circumstances of each person with ADHD and should be determined from an assessment of their needs.[9]

Examples may include:[9]

- Changes to seating arrangements
- Changes to lighting and noise
- Reducing distractions
- Optimising education or work to have shorter periods of focus with movement breaks
- Reinforcing verbal requests with written instructions



Misunderstanding the symptoms of ADHD

The traits of individuals with ADHD can be misinterpreted. When these are viewed as evidence of poor behaviour rather than symptoms of a condition, people with ADHD can be made to feel misunderstood, marginalised and frustrated. A better understanding of the condition among colleagues can lead to a huge improvement in the wellbeing and work performance of a person with ADHD.



ADHD and recruitment



Job advertisements

Organisations looking to build diverse teams try to achieve this by drawing new talent from the widest possible pool. Effective job advertisements are written with this in mind. These examples of good practice may help you reach further for your new hires.

Be clear that applications are being sought from all candidates with the right experience and qualifications

Make it known that the organisation takes a positive, proactive attitude towards equality and diversity, continually working towards a more supportive and inclusive environment

Avoid excessive jargon or mention of skills and experience that aren't needed for the role

Explain that inclusive working extends to the recruitment process, which is flexible and allows for individual needs

Interviews, work trials and skills testing

Considering the needs of candidates with ADHD might lead to a re-think of your whole assessment process. Is a long interview, held to a standard format, really the most efficient way to size up a candidate? How many potentially brilliant new hires will self-exclude from a process they find opaque and intimidating? It may be that an informal chat followed by a test of essential skills is a more accurate way of making an assessment. Here are some top tips for re-imagining the interview process with neurodiversity in mind.



Planning the interview

If the recruitment process requires forms to be completed, consider offering support

Ensure the assessment process is clearly outlined, and include written confirmation of appointment times

Consider allowing a trusted person to accompany the candidate to the interview as a supporter

Try to minimise distractions around the interview environment, e.g., phones ringing, interruptions, views of busy offices

Consider providing core interview questions in advance, and allowing candidates to bring notes with them

Managing the interview

Be specific. It's better to ask: "What was your role in the project?" than to ask a candidate to "expand on that"

If a candidate appears to be struggling to collect or articulate their thoughts, encourage them to take time before answering

Be prepared to repeat questions, where necessary

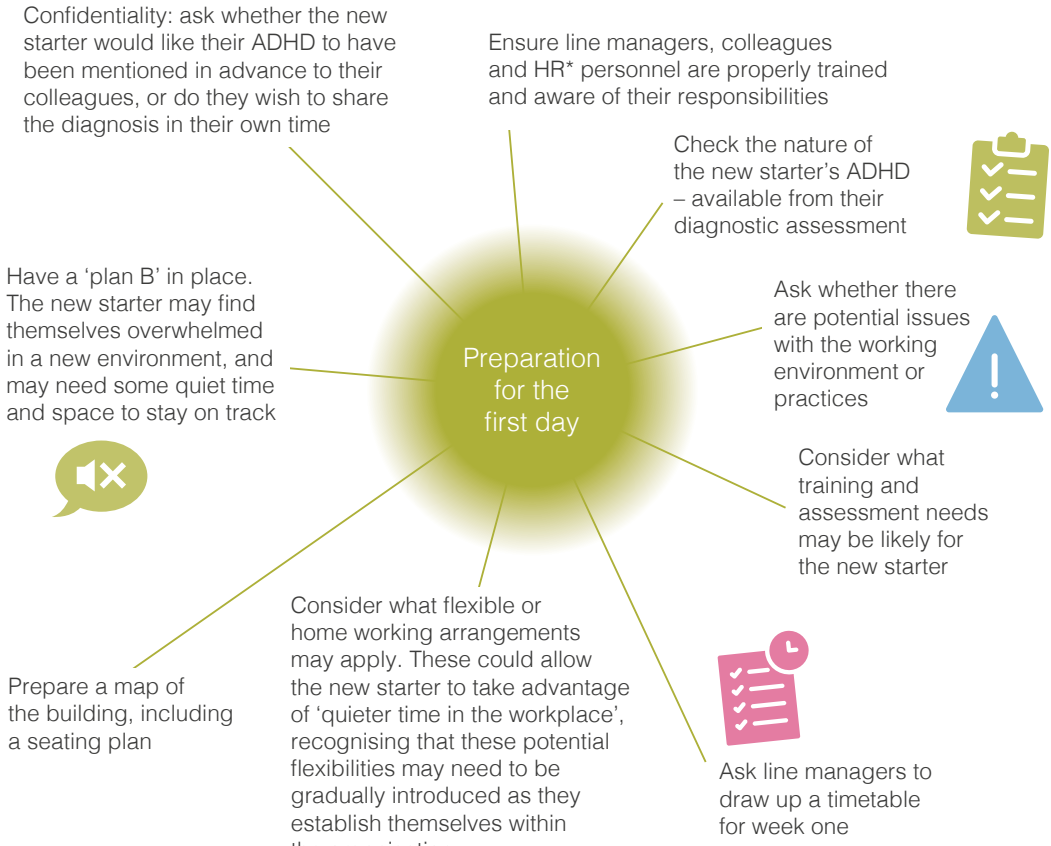
Keep it straightforward: candidates with ADHD find it difficult to wait for the end of long questions containing multiple clauses

Make allowances for candidates whose ADHD might cause them to interrupt, speak too much or appear distracted or disinterested. Their fidgeting or aversion to eye contact may be their way of maintaining their concentration and managing their natural anxiety

Helping your people with ADHD to perform at their best

New starters

A structured induction plan is good to have in place for anyone new to your organisation, and it's particularly important for people with ADHD. Simple steps taken by employers can make a huge difference for a person with ADHD in a new environment. Besides being quick to implement, these steps will help the new starter to become settled and productive, and encourage others around the organisation to take time to consider the individual needs of their new colleague.



*Human Resources



Avoid overwhelming the new starter by limiting introductions on day 1 to close colleagues

Try to make the orientation 'tour' around the environment as clear and structured as possible, accepting that the 'onboarding' may be best delivered over a few weeks rather than a few days



The first day at work



Be proactive in discussing sensory differences (e.g., to noise or lights) and be ready to work together on optimising the new starter's workspace

Providing a suitable experienced empathetic buddy or peer supporter in their direct working environment for the first few months may be helpful



Highlight areas that are for social interactions, project discussions, production or practical work

Conducting a workplace needs assessment – if required

The aim of a workplace needs assessment is to consider the employee's role, work environment and responsibilities, and to explore the changes to working environment (i.e., environmental modifications) and practices that will help the employee perform to their full potential. The assessment should be carried out by a specialist with experience in the workplace needs of neurodiverse people, and should suggest answers to the challenges faced by the employee as a result of his or her ADHD.

It's best for this assessment to happen shortly after a new employee with ADHD has started in their role. A support worker or 'trusted friend' may also join if desired.



A report is then produced, containing recommendations for environmental modifications or other potentially helpful adjustments. These might include the use of assistive technology, changes to working practices, access to a quiet place or other changes to support wellbeing and performance at work.



Environmental modifications and other potentially helpful adjustments

Besides offices, people with ADHD work in foundries and dairy farms, shops, boardrooms, building sites, churches, dockyards and hospitals – sometimes travelling between multiple sites or settings that are not under the control of their employer. Many more will work from home. Here are some top tips for environmental modifications and other potentially helpful adjustments that allow for this diversity of employment settings, keeping the scope for adjustments fairly wide and taking account of the needs of the employers who will plan, implement and fund them.



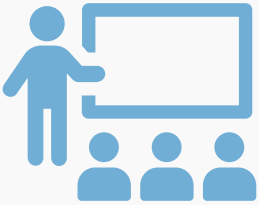
These adjustments don't have to be complex or costly.
They fall into four categories:



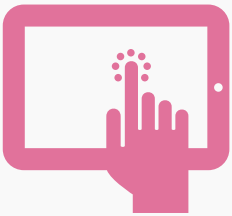
Physical changes to the work environment



Changes to working practices



Training and coaching



Assistive technology

The mix of proportionate and balanced adjustments you settle on will depend on the role and workplace setting, the type of organisation and the individual needs of the employee with ADHD. Discussions about what modifications or adjustments to make should follow a workplace needs assessment.

Physical changes to the work environment

The aim of environmental modifications for people with ADHD is to avoid sensory overload. As with all adjustments, these will depend on the type of working environment and the needs of the employee. Common areas for change include:

- Desk partitions
- Low or adjustable lights
- A quieter working area
- Access to printed as well as on-screen materials
- A wall planner to visually highlight appointments
- Control over the working area: hot-desking can lead to anxiety for people with ADHD

Home working

Many organisations have extended support to home-workers over recent years, encouraging them to consider the efficiency and safety of their working environment at home. In the same way, adjusting and optimising the home-working environment with ADHD in mind should form part of the workplace needs assessment for employees with ADHD.



Changes to working practices

Small changes to working practices can go a long way in supporting employees with ADHD. At the heart of these adjustments will be awareness and understanding of ADHD on the part of managers and colleagues. The following options might be discussed and explored with an individual with ADHD.

- A structured working day could be provided, where possible
- ADHD should be considered when tasks are allocated, with the aim of playing to the strengths of an employee with ADHD
- Verbal instructions may be backed by notes or diagrams, where possible
- Flexible hours and home working allow employees to take advantage of 'quiet time' for their work
- Certain tasks should be demonstrated and supervised (be particularly cautious where safety-critical work is concerned)
- On longer-term projects, employees with ADHD may benefit from more frequent project reviews and feedback, focusing on positive progress to date and what further actions are required before the next review



Training and coaching

For the employee with ADHD

Support the person with ADHD as they develop their own strategies to manage their work more efficiently. Consider specialist ADHD coaching and keep in mind a government grant may be available to fund this, e.g., Access to Work.

For colleagues and managers

Training in ADHD awareness will provide context for adjustments. It will explain why an inclusive workplace culture requires the support of the whole organisation, as well as emphasising that the organisation is neurodiverse positive. It's also a chance to explain why adjustments need to be respected within the organisation's equality, diversity and inclusivity policies.





Assistive technology

It may be that an employee with ADHD is already making use of software apps to help them with the activities of daily life, as well as their work. The following technology may be helpful:

- Voice recognition software
- Spell-checking and proofreading apps
- Apps that organise and prioritise ideas or activities
- Project management apps
- Timers, for employees who are easily distracted and may lose track of time
- Noise-cancelling headphones
- Changes to monitor settings
- Reading pens

Technology isn't a panacea but a number of tools are already freely available through accessibility functions within common browsers and global software. Employees who use technology to help manage their ADHD should consider the need for balance and self-monitoring, in the form of 'tech-free' time and spaces.

Government funding for individual workplace needs

A Government scheme called Access to Work provides funding for practical support to accommodate individual workplace needs in England, Scotland and Wales. Grants depend on individual circumstances and may cover adaptations to equipment or specialist support from a neurodiversity support worker or ADHD job coach. Grants may also cover disability awareness training for colleagues.

Access to Work
Making work possible

With regard to IT equipment, the definition of 'workplace' can include an employee's home if they use it for work.

For the purpose of this scheme, it does not matter how much an employee earns. An Access to Work grant will not affect any other employee benefits and they will not have to pay it back. An employer may need to pay some costs up front and claim them back later from the Department of Work and Pensions, which administers the scheme.



Career development for people with ADHD

An inclusive approach to career development

Organisations generally allow the strengths and weaknesses of individuals to become 'balanced out' within teams. This may be of particular help where employees with ADHD are concerned. Responsibilities should be assigned according to the strengths of individuals, allowing people with ADHD the opportunity to capitalise on their strengths and play their part in the strong performance of their team and wider organisation.

Dealing with concerns around ADHD and career planning

Employees with ADHD may be concerned that their diagnosis could hold them back from taking on additional responsibilities or being promoted. It's important for your organisation to show that career progression and development opportunities exist for all staff, equally. It may help an individual with ADHD to have a career plan that emphasises their strengths, leading to a focus on what is possible.



Training and development

Alongside organisation-wide or role-specific training courses, employees with ADHD may be especially interested to train in:

- Time-management, to help them prioritise and stay on track
- Public speaking – especially useful for those who might speak quickly or have difficulty putting their thoughts into words
- Active listening, with visual prompts to aid turn-taking in conversations and group discussions

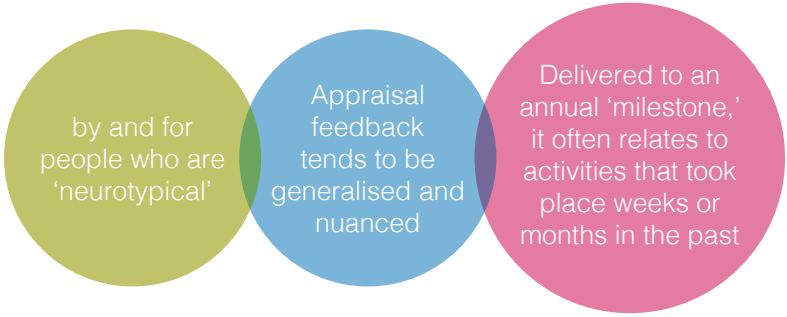
Employees with ADHD might be reluctant to take part in training because of fears around stigma and the exposure of their perceived weaknesses in public. It may help to take these steps towards more inclusive training activities:

- Provide a clear outline of relevant course material
- Give visual aids to assist learning
- Encourage engagement and participation through learning activities
- Repeat key points throughout the session or summarise towards the end
- Leave a few minutes at the end of a session for questions and to check that people have understood the main points
- Send contact details for post-learning opportunities to training providers



Appraisals and feedback

Systems of workplace appraisals tend to be designed as we'd expect:



These norms aren't well suited to the needs of people with ADHD. Instead, try to give direct and documented feedback, with ongoing and regular HR support. People with ADHD are likely to focus on the negatives within feedback, especially if they've had difficult workplace experiences in the past.



Try to make feedback constructive and where issues are raised, discuss possible solutions starting with the positives and then the developmental opportunities of improvement, suggesting possible solutions. Ideally, jointly agreed.



Confidentiality and ADHD

Top tips for managing communications around ADHD

- When discussing the issue of confidentiality with an employee who has ADHD, be clear that the default position of the organisation is to keep medical information confidential unless the employee wishes it to be shared
- Acknowledge the courage required of a person with ADHD to even discuss the matter because of the confusion, stigma and general lack of understanding that continues to surround neurodevelopmental disorders



- Be open when discussing the pros and cons of whether, how and when to discuss ADHD in general – or the employee's diagnosis – with colleagues. Take into account the type and size of the team and organisation, working relationships and the positive impact that good communications might have on the effectiveness of your planned workplace adjustments



- Ensure that reasons for communications or training on ADHD are made clear to colleagues. Information about ADHD or a specific diagnosis isn't being shared as a gesture of sympathy to an individual or to try and manage a conflict. The organisation is proactively sharing information to move towards its stated aims on equality, diversity and inclusion. These are designed to attract and retain skilled people from a variety of backgrounds, improving the performance of the organisation

ADHD support networks in the workplace

Formal support for employees

Making connections

Taking time to get to know one another, to discuss roles, to share hobbies and interests, is a natural process for employees who spend their working time together. For employers, this is a good route to building inclusive and loyal teams, and a chance for managers to identify and discuss challenges in the lives of their employees that might affect wellbeing.

Staying in touch

A shift towards remote or hybrid working means that, for many organisations, regular contact time between managers and employees is now timetabled. This is an important route for managers to know their people, to stay abreast of major changes in their lives and to respond to any risks around health and welfare.

Offering help

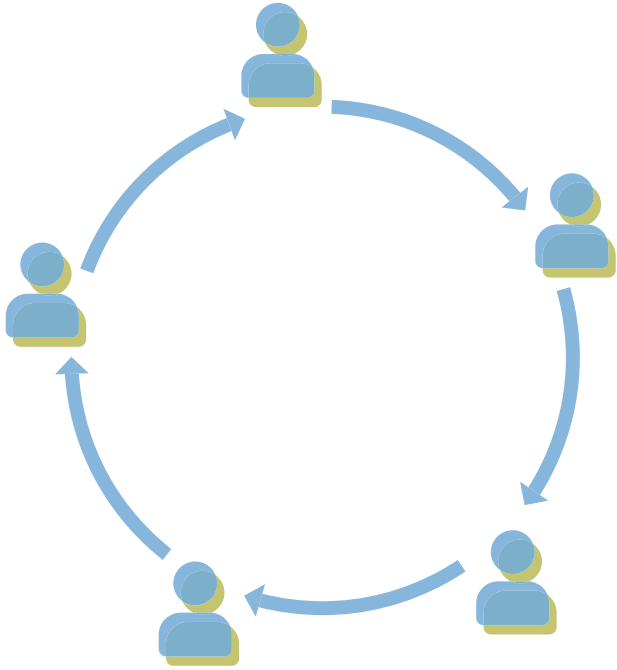
Like all other employees, those with ADHD who show signs of mental health challenges should be supported and given advice on where to turn for professional help. Whether discussing these issues remotely or in-person, employers should know how to spot the signs of a person who is struggling, and be ready to direct affected employees to the right professional services.

Support between peers

Many employees with ADHD find it beneficial to talk to their neurodivergent peers. This can provide an informal but powerful support mechanism. However supportive an HR professional or line manager is, they're unable to experience the world in the same way as a coworker with ADHD, making colleagues a particularly valuable source of advice.

As employers, we may be able to support these valuable networks. We could offer space for informal meetings or networking events, an intranet page for information and resources on ADHD, or sponsorship for employees who wish to attend external events or conferences on neurodiversity.

An employee-led network can be helpful in recruitment, as it shows the organisation is moving towards its stated aims on diversity and inclusion. People involved in the network may be willing to provide direct support to candidates with ADHD who are going through the recruitment process, or to their newly-hired colleagues.



Top tips to help your people with ADHD succeed at work

How can I play my part?

As an employer, your aim should be to remove as many barriers as possible, to allow your employees with ADHD to perform to their full potential.

Practical tips

- Build trust and listen to your employees with ADHD. You won't be able to remove workplace barriers until you're made aware of them
- Engage with other colleagues on ADHD. A supportive and inclusive working culture is a necessary first step to recruiting and retaining people with ADHD
- Try to be proactive: workplace issues related to ADHD can be worked through if they're discussed early, before problems arise



- A mentor or specialist coach can be a huge help to an employee with ADHD during induction or first-time adult diagnosis and may be funded by a UK Government grant

- Disability training for colleagues can transform the working environment for a person with ADHD. For example, colleagues who understand that being interrupted is a consequence of ADHD rather than rudeness are more likely to be supportive towards employees with ADHD



- Offer regular meetings and constructive verbal and written feedback to your employee with ADHD

- Divide larger projects into segments, each with a timeframe and ongoing regular constructive feedback

- Try to structure all tasks

- Be flexible with work times and allow for short, regular breaks to increase focus and concentration

Helping employees with ADHD to help themselves

If you're an employee with ADHD, here are some top tips that may help reduce the impact of ADHD at work. These assume that you're working in a supportive organisation that is already following good practice in diversity and inclusion, as described in this book. This checklist may be freely copied.



Set yourself a daily routine, with timings



Break down large tasks into small chunks



Store your important stationery items or tools in the same place each day



Use technology to help reduce distraction and stay focused



Use timer alerts to help stay on track



Keep your calendar and to-do list updated, so your appointments and deadlines are together



Prioritise and mark your tasks: 'for today,' 'for this week' or 'done'



Make sure that 'workplace adjustments' are in place and discussed regularly



Don't be afraid to speak to your line manager or HR department if your ADHD is causing you to struggle



Stop work immediately if your ADHD may be causing a risk to safety



Task planner

This template may be useful to employees with ADHD as they plan certain tasks. It may be freely copied.

1 **WHAT I NEED TO COMPLETE THE TASK**

1) 4)

2) 5)

3) 6)

2 **WHAT I NEED TO DO**

1) ☐

2) ☐

3) ☐

4) ☐

3 **NOTES:**

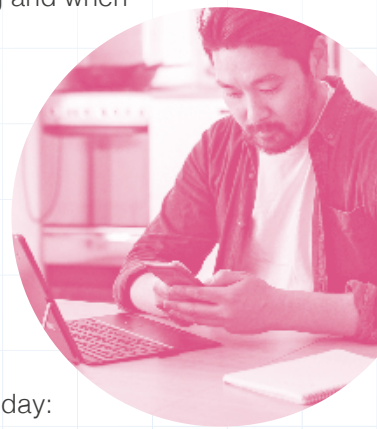
4 **HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE ME?**

5 **HOW WILL I REWARD MYSELF?**

Practical tips for people with ADHD working from home

If you are not used to working from home, it can take some getting used to and may take a little time to find out what works best for you. Here are a few tips that may help you adjust to your home-working environment:

- Have a **daily routine** so you know what needs doing and when
- **Breakdown tasks** into more manageable chunks
- Get **regular exercise** and have a **healthy diet**
- **Switch off electronic devices** when you're trying to focus on a task and around one hour before bedtime to help you relax
- Get a good night's **sleep** zzZ



Here are a few tips that may help you to organise your day:

- **Use checklists** to keep track of what needs to be done – use separate checklists for work and household tasks
- **Keep an up-to-date calendar** on a phone or tablet – note down all work deadlines, teleconferences and/or appointments, and things that need to be done by a certain date
- **Tick off tasks** as they are completed on a phone, tablet, Post-it® note, etc.



- **Structure the working day** – use daily time sheets and computer/phone alerts to help keep track of tasks
- **Use 'In' and 'Out' trays** to sort jobs, for example, 'Important for today, Complete this week, Pending or Done/waiting for response'
- **Break up bigger tasks** into smaller, manageable chunks and combine them with other activities to keep focused
- Schedule **regular breaks** into your day



Here are a few pointers on how to improve the quality of sleep:

Keep a routine – try to wake up and go to bed at approximately the same time every day

Avoid watching TV, playing computer games, using social media, eating or doing work while in bed – these activities provide passive mental stimulation and will only add to any sleep problems

Avoid doing any exercise within two hours of bedtime

Avoid drinks containing caffeine (e.g., coke, coffee or tea) or chocolate at least six hours before bedtime

What's coming?

Employment and neurodiversity: shifts in culture and practice

As employers, the way we recruit and relate to our people has progressed significantly over recent years. Changing societal and workplace norms have brought new practices and language around diversity, inclusion and employee wellbeing that would have been hard to recognise just a decade or two ago. In particular, the positive cultural shift around neurodiversity looks set to continue.

Wellness Action Plan

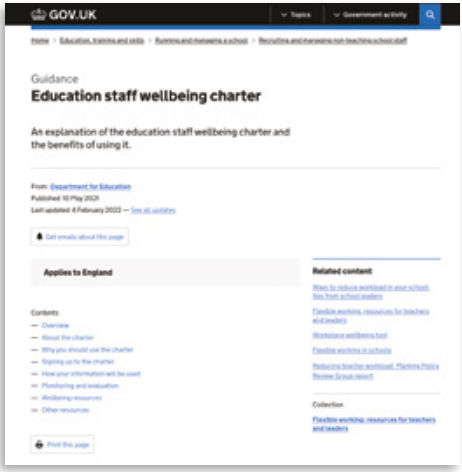
The mental health charity MIND recently launched a tool for employers called the Wellness Action Plan, noting that 'the focus is shifting from reactive management of sickness absence to a more proactive approach of prevention through promoting wellbeing and improving employee engagement.'

Wellbeing Charter

The Department for Education also promotes a more proactive approach to employee wellbeing, through the Education Staff Wellbeing Charter.

This encourages schools to anticipate and address questions around the health, disabilities and wellbeing of teachers, before problems develop.





Health passports

NHS Employers has developed ‘health passports’ for employees. These contain information on disabilities, long-term health conditions, mental health issues or learning difficulties, as well as the adjustments that make for more effective working. The passports aim to avoid the need for employees to continually re-brief new line managers on their individual needs, as they progress in their careers.



Future trends

As we ask what we can do to attract and retain the best neurodiverse employees in future, this trend towards a more proactive and positive approach from forward-thinking employers gives a good indication of the direction we should be heading in.

Resources

Further reading

- Your duties as an employer – The Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Advice on reasonable adjustments in the workplace – ACAS (The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service)
- ADHD Employer Guide published by the Data and Marketing Association
- NHS employee health passports published by NHS Employers
- Delivered from distraction: getting the most out of life with Attention Deficit Disorder by Dr Edward Hallowell and Dr John Ratey
- The disorder of geniuses by Michael Ansel – a film about ADHD and how it affects people
- Fast Minds: How to thrive if you have ADHD (or think you might) by Craig Surman and Tim Bilkey
- ADD-friendly ways to organize your life by Judith Kolberg and Kathleen Nadeau



Support organisations

- National Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Service (ADDISS)
- Access to Work – Government scheme providing funds for practical support to accommodate individual workplace needs
- UK ADHD
- ADHD Europe
- Scottish ADHD Coalition
- Northern Ireland ADHD

Professional organisations

- UK Adult ADHD Network
- National Health Service
- Royal College of Physicians
- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence



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This publication is intended to provide background information on ADHD as well as practical tips and suggestions for supporting individuals with ADHD in the workplace. This publication is provided for general guidance purposes only and should not be used as a substitute for seeking independent legal advice. For information on ADHD and employment law, please consult the Equality Act 2010 available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents

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