DIVERSE MINDS CIC

LEARNING & LEISURE

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A helpful resource for **understanding ADHD** in children & young people.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 What is ADHD?

2 ADHD in girls

3 Signs in girls

4 Signs of inattention

5 Signs of Hyperactivity

6 Signs of Impulsivity

7 Impacts of Masking

8 Strengths

9 Ways to support

10 Points of contact

WHAT IS ADHD?

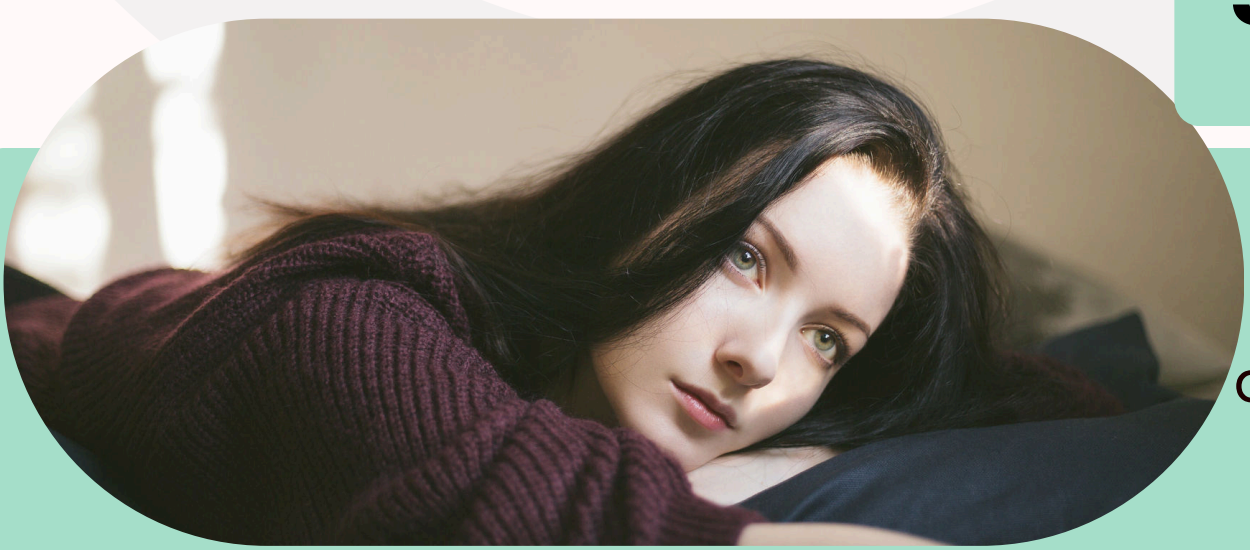
ADHD stands for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. It is a neurodevelopmental condition, which means it relates to how the brain develops and works. It affects how children and young people manage their attention, activity levels and impulses.

Every child with ADHD is different. Some may find it difficult to sit still, wait their turn or focus, even when they really want to. They may also be imaginative, curious and full of ideas.
ADHD is not caused by poor parenting. Difficulties with attention or impulses are not a sign that a child is lazy or deliberately being difficult.

Understanding your child means noticing their strengths and taking their difficulties seriously. They deserve patience, kindness and support that meets their individual needs. As a parent or carer, you deserve understanding and support too.

This guide will help you understand ADHD, recognise how it may affect your child and explore practical ways to support them at home, in education and as they grow.

ADHD IN GIRLS



5x Less

likely to receive a diagnosis before the age of 12 than boys.

38%

Of girls also had anxiety : Compared with 14% of girls without ADHD.

4x

More likely to develop depression than girls without ADHD.

ADHD may look different in girls and can be harder to spot, particularly when their difficulties are **less visible.**

Historically, ADHD research focused heavily on boys.
This influenced the diagnostic criteria still used today, including those in the DSM-5, a manual used to help diagnose ADHD.

Some symptom descriptions may better reflect how ADHD commonly appears in boys, making it easier to overlook girls who present differently.

Understanding of ADHD in girls and women continues to develop as research becomes more inclusive.

GIRLS WITH ADHD MAY:

Daydream

Anxious

Quiet

Mask

GIRLS

- Seem **daydreamy**, distracted or forgetful, without obvious hyperactivity.
- Appear **quiet** in class while struggling to follow lessons or organise their work.
- **Hide** their difficulties by copying others or working extra hard to keep up.
- Feel **anxious** or **overwhelmed** by the effort of managing everyday demands.

ALWAYS CONSIDER

Girls can also be visibly hyperactive or impulsive.

Boys can also present more innatentive traits.

These patterns are not exclusive to girls, and every child needs to be understood individually. When difficulties are less noticeable or hidden, ADHD may go unrecognised, delaying diagnosis and support.

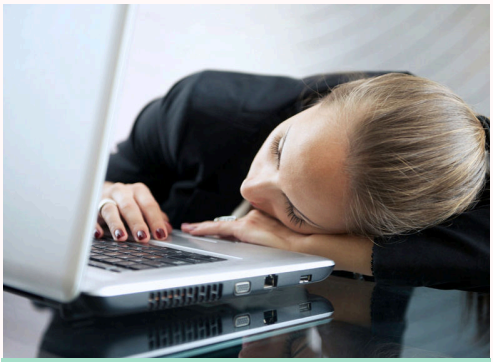


SIGNS OF INATTENTION









Avoiding sustained effort

Forgetful

Anxious

Easily distracted

Task completion difficulties

Difficulty Listening

Losing belongings

Overwhelmed

SIGNS OF HYPERACTIVITY









Frequent fidgeting

Tapping or wriggling

Difficulty staying seated

Running or climbing

Feeling restless

Difficulty playing quietly

Talking excessively

Struggling to await turn

SIGNS OF IMPULSIVITY









Interrupting conversations

Blurting out answers

Difficulty waiting

Making sudden decisions

Feeling restless internally

Erratic spending

Risky behaviours

Overlooking danger

POTENTIAL IMPACT OF MASKING

Masking is when a child or young person hides or holds back their ADHD traits to fit in or avoid criticism. They might copy others, stay quiet when they feel restless, or put enormous effort into appearing organised and attentive.

This can happen consciously or without them realising, making their difficulties harder to spot. A child may seem to cope well at school but come home exhausted, overwhelmed or needing to let their feelings out. Appearing to cope does not always mean they are coping comfortably or without support.

The impact of masking

The effort of hiding ADHD traits can leave a child or young person exhausted, anxious or overwhelmed. They may worry about getting things wrong or feel they cannot be themselves. Masking can also mean their support needs go unnoticed, even when they appear to be managing well.

Your child may appear calm at school, then become tearful or angry once they get home.

They may copy their friends to fit in, even when it means hiding their own interests or needs.

They may hold back their need to move in class, then come home exhausted and needing time alone.

ADHD COMMON STRENGTHS



- **Creative thinking**
- **Curiosity**
- **Imagination**
- **Spontaneity**
- **Problem-solving**
- **Highly adaptable to change**

SUPPORT YOU CAN GIVE

If you recognise your child in these pages, you may want to explore whether ADHD could help explain some of their experiences.

An assessment can offer clarity, but you can start making helpful changes now. Listening to your child and finding out what makes everyday life easier can help them feel understood while you work out the next steps together.

- Short movement breaks
- Give clear instructions
- Break tasks down
- Notice their effort.
- Respond calmly
- Allow movement



REACH OUT TO ORGANISATIONS

NHS: ADHD IN CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Information about signs, assessment and treatment.

nhs.uk/conditions/adhd-children-teenagers

ADHD FOUNDATION

Resources to help parents, carers and young people understand ADHD and find practical support.

adhdfoundation.org.uk/resources

YOUNGMINDS

Advice for parents on ADHD, emotional wellbeing and supporting your child at home and school.

youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/adhd

SCOTTISH ADHD COALITION

Information about ADHD in Scotland and a directory of local support groups.

scottishadhdcoalition.org

ENQUIRE

Advice about additional support for learning and your child's rights in Scottish schools.

enquire.org.uk

Where you can get further information and advice.