

## **An employer's guide to ADHD in the workplace**

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a lifespan neurodevelopmental disorder that affects the way people behave. People with ADHD are often restless, finding concentration difficult and may act impulsively.

This document has been put together for anyone employing, or considering employing, someone who has told you that they may have ADHD. People with ADHD may struggle to get adequate support from their employer and many end up leaving their job. However, with support, understanding and small changes to help support their behaviour traits, they are likely to be as great an asset to your organisation as any employee.

### ADHD and workplace protection

Under the Equality Act 2010, an employee with ADHD may be considered to have a disability if the condition has a 'substantial' and 'long term' negative effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This means that employees have a right to 'reasonable adjustments' to make their working environment safe and productive. These should be things that don't pose any undue hardship to you, the employer. These will include providing support that isn't outrageously expensive or burdensome to the business. It is often helpful to have an occupational health assessment at the start of this process to work with your employee to identify the support they need.

### Confidentiality

Many people with ADHD choose not to tell their employer about it, so disclosing this information may have been a big decision. There is real stigma in society in general around ADHD, so many people are afraid they will be seen as less capable or as troublesome. They may additionally fear that their ADHD might affect career progression or job security.

You should ensure that any information your employee shares with you about their ADHD remains confidential. This means not discussing their ADHD with other team members, without consent, not discussing their ADHD with them in an open forum, clarifying with them exactly who can see any occupational

health assessment report and keeping secure any documents which discuss your employee's ADHD.

### Reasonable adjustments

So, what might reasonable adjustments in the workplace look like? ADHD is often associated with an inability to focus (or to choose what to focus on) and/or hyperactivity and impulsive behaviour and therefore adjustments taking these behaviours into account may be helpful.

#### A. Focus/attention-based adjustments

1. Allow staff to take short breaks throughout the day. The frequency should be agreed with the employee.
2. Provide bullet pointed key points or actions from meetings. Some people with ADHD have issues with working memory and focus and meetings can be challenging.
3. Try to facilitate your staff member focusing on one job at a time rather than requiring multi-tasking
4. Use assistive technology where appropriate - software like [Asana](#) and Trello can help organise tasks, apps like [Todoist](#) or [Microsoft To Do](#) can help with priority setting
5. Allow the use of a "do not disturb" door sign, and any equivalent function on telephone and email, especially when your staff member has a specific task that requires intense concentration.
6. A quiet space - this might be a sole occupancy office, or the use of noise cancelling headphones.
7. Optimise the sensory environment. Many adults with ADHD also have photophobia so allow them to adapt their work environment to limit sensory stimulation.
8. Allow working from home where possible, especially if they have anxiety issues
9. The use of a quiet room for stressful times can be helpful, especially if anxiety or other associated issues arise whilst at work.

#### B. Hyperactivity-based adjustments

1. Allow a member of staff with ADHD room to move if they need to do so. If they need to move a lot, perhaps provide a chair with a wide range of movement or a rising desk allowing them to stand.
2. A stress ball or other fidget toy may satisfy the need to move.

### C. Organisation (some are already covered above)

1. Provide a workspace that is quiet and as free from distractions as practical.
2. Support working from home occasionally, where appropriate.
3. Provide physical organisational supports, such as a whiteboard or a wall planner that can visually highlight tasks.
4. Provide clear, short reminders of important tasks and deadlines and regular reviews of priorities and projects.
5. Use Microsoft Outlook calendar invites to help reinforce deadlines.
6. Provide access to organisational software such as Asana or Trello.
7. Support them to create a daily/weekly "To Do" list and support the use of apps such as Todoist or Microsoft To Do to manage this (paper lists can also work).
8. Support breaking work up into manageable chunks where appropriate.
9. Provide templates for detailed work, such as structured reports.

### D. Other factors

ADHD in adults is associated with several co-existing conditions which can impair the ability to work effectively. These include anxiety, mood disorders, sensitivity to rejection, migraine, and others.

Some adjustments for this might include:

1. Identify a staff mentor – maybe their line manager, or an 'ADHD buddy' arrangement. They can help defuse difficult emotional situations before they become significant.
2. Support time taken off should a crisis arise. Disability leave is a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010. It is paid leave from work for disabled employees who need treatment, rehabilitation or assessment

related to their disability. It can usually be planned and is for a fixed period of time.