

ADHD – How do I identify employees within the workplace?

What is ADHD?



ADHD is described as a neuro developmental condition. It tends to run in families and has a strong genetic influence and affects 4% of adults in the community. This means that for every hundred employees, you are likely to have four who have symptoms of ADHD.

Identifying employees with ADHD is difficult for managers. I managers. It is very difficult for doctors and psychologists as there is little research on the subject in adults, the focus has been on children and therefore the professionals in this area find it difficult to define in adults.

What we do know is that you cannot have ADHD symptoms as an adult unless you have had symptoms as a child. Current research indicates that approximately 50% of children go on to experience some symptoms of ADHD as an adult.

Symptoms of ADHD



ADHD symptoms can be divided into two groups.

1. Inattentiveness - lack of concentration
2. Hyper activity and impulsiveness

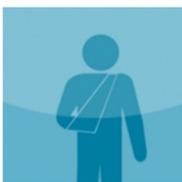
Symptoms of hyperactivity improve with age and are not seen commonly to any great extent in adults. Symptoms of inattentiveness and lack of concentration increase with age and are the primary symptoms in adults. These symptoms are exacerbated by further by perceived stress in the workplace and pressure at home and at work. ADHD is commonly associated with other significant psychological health issues and some physical health issues. These include diagnoses of depression, anxiety, bipolar disease, learning difficulties such as dyslexia, issues with drug and alcohol dependence and epilepsy.



How to identify employees with possible ADHD symptoms at work

In our experience, questionnaires completed by the employee are not particularly helpful. Questionnaires can be manipulated and we are all aware that individuals use health issues to achieve a variety of opportunities.

A more useful way for managers, we consider, is informal observation of employees raising concerns. You may wish to use the chart below to record your observations. An individual in which you highlight more than five of the issues detailed below should be considered for a formal assessment, which is normally undertaken by an occupational psychologist.



Treatment

Treatment is available to support adult sufferers of ADHD and is published in the Governments NICE guidelines. The NICE Committee recommends two types of treatment, medication which can be prescribed by the general practitioner followed up by psychological treatment; usually CBT.

With certain medications someone with ADHD can learn to concentrate better, be less impulsive feel calmer and get the most out of subsequent Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

ADHD Observational Chart

| Poor attention | YES | Hyperactivity | YES | Impulsive Behaviour | YES |
|--|-----|--|-----|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Carelessness and lack of attention to detail | | Restless and on edge | | Speaking out of turn | |
| Starting new tasks before finishing old ones | | Mood swings | | Interrupting others | |
| Unable to prioritise | | Quick temper | | Impatience | |
| Losing and misplacing things | | Unable to deal with stress | | Risk taking with no regard for safety | |
| Forgetfulness | | Unable to engage in leisure activities | | | |
| Does not seem to listen when spoken to | | | | | |

We recommend that you observe an individual with whom you have concerns over a few days or weeks.

The above personality traits should raise your concerns regarding the possibility of ADHD and further professional help should be considered.