

Advice for supporting children with ADHD in the Early Years

Staff working with a young child exhibiting signs of ADHD need to be calm, positive and consistent in their approach. The child may often feel, or be, out of control, so it's important that you are not. Try to avoid confrontation as this will only escalate behaviour.

The following strategies are suggestions for inclusive teaching. This list should not be considered exhaustive and it is important to remember that all children are individuals and what is considered to be good practice for one child may not necessarily be good practice for another.

Suggested strategies & techniques;

In the Early Years setting, group situations can be stressful as the child struggles with acquiring the skills necessary for success in social situations. These will include turn-taking, cooperation, listening and sharing, as well as learning to recognise the feelings of others.

Books, puppets and social stories can be effective tools in supporting the development of such skills. When attempting to gain the child's attention, speak to them directly, using their name to ensure they understand you are including them. Sometimes it may be necessary to employ attention-grabbing techniques, such as putting on a silly hat or blowing bubbles, to draw their attention to you.

Providing more than one of a popular resource may also support the child in gradually developing skills in sharing and turn taking.

It is important that all children are aware of the rules and expectations of the early years setting, but aim to avoid any that are not necessary, ignore minor behaviours and build expectations gradually

Aim to be one step ahead and recognise signs of the child becoming overstimulated. Regular movement will help, but young children with ADHD can become fatigued quickly and when coupled with overexcitement, self-control breaks down and overactivity increases.

Routine, consistency and predictability can all support young children in remaining calm and in control. Pictorial timetables can be useful, and always aim to keep waiting times to a minimum.

Young children with ADHD can be encouraged to focus effectively when care, time and attention from a trusted adult is provided regularly. Staff should speak clearly, in short sentences, and wherever possible base conversations on the child's interests and fascinations. Showing that you are interested in them is a great motivator, and ensuring other children see that you like the child and enjoy spending time with them may help too.

As with all children in your care, it is important to build a trusting and positive relationship with each child's family. Whilst it is important to share relevant information on the child's day, avoid passing on information on all minor incidents and discourage parents from punishing or questioning their child about incidents that have been dealt with throughout the day – always ensure you emphasise the positives.

Joanna Burden – SEND Supported

Recommended reading for parents and professionals; ADHD Living without Brakes. Martin L. Kutscher (Oct 2009)