

ADHD in the workplace

Everybody with ADHD is different with strengths and difficulties which need to be looked at on an individual basis. For many people with ADHD, minor adjustments in the workplace can make a significant difference and enable them to fulfil their potential.

Strategies for working with ADHD

Some key strengths of people with ADHD in the working environment

- Ability to “hyperfocus” on things they are interested in
- Motivated by short term deadlines – working in sprints rather than marathons
- Do well in fast paced environments as they get on well with high levels of stimulation
- Willingness to take risks
- Spontaneous and flexible
- Relentless energy
- Often optimistic
- Good in a crisis
- Creative ideas – thinking outside the box
- Enthusiastic and energetic



Self-compassion and understanding

Often the best thing you can do to help yourself is to find out more about how ADHD may cause at work. If you are comfortable disclosing your diagnosis to your employer, it is recommended that you discuss any concerns with them. You could arrange a quarterly meeting to talk about how your ADHD is affecting you and how any reasonable adjustments that have been agreed are working.

ADHD is included as a **disability** under the terms of the **2010 Equality Act**, meaning that employers have a responsibility to protect employees from discrimination and harassment, and to make reasonable adjustments to assist them to their jobs. The following strategies are examples of **reasonable adjustments**. Discuss with your manager if you think these may benefit you:

Flexibility

- If possible, agree a 15-minute start and finish time window, rather than a rigid fixed start time
- Flexible working hours - you may need to take medication in the morning and may not be effective until this starts working
- Flexibility with breaks - you may need regular short breaks, or to be able to get up and walk around
- Request short breaks during longer meetings
- Ask about opportunities to work flexibly, possibly from home on occasion. Some people work best in very structured environments e.g., an office, whilst others prefer their own space and work more productively at home

Modifications to working environment

- Visual prompts (e.g., wall charts for routines, timetables, checklists, post it notes)
- If you work in an office, use larger computer screens so everything is visible. Some people opt to use standing desks to allow for movement / fidgeting
- Make use of highly visible clocks, alarms and timers
- Reduce distractions by using headphones or ear plugs
- Place signs on the door of your workspace (e.g., 'do not disturb', 'please come back later')
- Request an independent workspace as opposed to shared space to limit distractions and interruptions

Modifications to communication and working practices

- **Set aside daily time for organisation.** Set aside 5 to 10 minutes a day to organise your day / week in advance. Break down tasks into bitesize chunks
- Allocate specific periods of time each day for responding to emails / phone calls so that they do not disrupt other responsibilities
- **Use colours and lists.** Color-coding can be very useful to people with attention difficulties. Manage forgetfulness by writing everything down and colour-coding tasks according to levels of priority. You can also do this electronically (e.g., on an Outlook calendar)
- **Prioritise.** More important tasks should be placed first on your to-do list, so you remember to do them before lower priority tasks. Set deadlines for everything, even if they are self-imposed. Seek support from your manager or a colleague to assist with prioritising you struggle with this or if you are feeling overwhelmed by your workload
- Ask your manager for clear information about expected outcomes and time frame by which to complete tasks. Set regular reminders about important deadlines
- Take notes during meetings and other tasks
- Check your understanding after you have been given new information

Feedback

- Ask your manager to give you regular and clear feedback on performance
- Request that your manager documents any performance reviews or 1-1 meetings so you can refer back to this to remind yourself of actions
- A workplace mentor can be ideal – one might be available from the government's Access to Work scheme

Useful technology

There are several apps that can be helpful, however the wrong app can also place extra burden. So discuss with your employer what may be helpful:

- To do lists / reminders
- Aids if reading / writing are challenging such as text to speech software and speech to text software
- Blockers to eliminate distraction from smart phones or computers during tasks
- White noise apps
- Note taking apps

