

# ***Oxfordshire protocol for the identification and assessment of pupils with Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)***

## **Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)**

### **Advice for Carers from the Social and Health Care Directorate**

When caring for a child who either has a diagnosis of ADHD or is under investigation for ADHD, managing their behaviour can be extremely tiring and requires great personal resources. Children who are placed in care have additional difficulties and their behaviours, although similar may not relate to ADHD, but to their previously difficult lives. The following suggestions are key points taken from the advice for parents written by the Oxfordshire Educational Psychology Service.

#### **Structure**

Children with ADHD have had feelings of being out of control and seeing those around them fail to manage. Clear consistent structures will help them get in touch with what is being expected of them and will be a basis on which they can develop self-control. You may be able to restructure some parts of the day to support your efforts to manage your child. For example, having a bedtime routine, which has short achievable steps which can be consistently followed by everyone who has to manage the child, is likely to lead to more successes.

#### **Routine**

Children with ADHD need routines more than most. Children with ADHD have difficulties with personal organisation and particularly with adapting to changes. What routine does is bring stability and predictability into their lives, thereby reducing the extent to which they are faced with complex demands. It is helpful to plan routines with some thoughts about encouraging the kind of behaviours that you want. Children with ADHD need routines with clear instructions and adults with time to ensure that these are followed up.

#### **Being Calm**

The more you can use structure and routine to organise the expectations of your child, the more likely you are to be successful. However, there will be times when your child is particularly difficult. At these times, it's important to remember that success in managing your child is something that will come gradually. There will be days or times when you feel that things are worse than ever. If your child is behaving in a way which is particularly difficult, it's important that you don't overreact. Children with ADHD can be very loud, vigorous, and unpredictable. If we mirror this then we make the situation worse.

#### **Avoid confrontation**

There will be times when your child's difficult and impulsive behaviour challenges you and catapults you both into a situation that has the features of a confrontation.

If you recognise patterns in the situations where there are confrontations between you and your child, you can plan beforehand how to manage them. For example if it's at the end of a playtime when the expectation is that the child clears up, you could talk to your child before the toys come out saying "It's difficult to end playing with toys. I'm going to give you a 5 minute warning when it's time to tidy up and I'll be there to help you do it". Then remembering to give the 5 minute warning and being ready with your undivided attention to help the child manage the transition time from playing to whatever is next.

#### **Clear positive communications**

Children with ADHD need clear achievable instructions and this means that we as adults and parents need to think about how we speak to them. If we are to help them manage their own

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behaviour, then we need to be clear what it is that we want them to do. We need to be in the habit of making it clear to them, particularly when they are very young. We also need to recognise that they may only be able to manage what we ask of them for a short period of time. We as adults must plan to have other activities rather than expecting too much of them.

### **Notice good behaviour**

Your child's difficult behaviour and the ways adults have dealt with this in the past will have undermined his or her self-esteem. Finding times in the day to recognise and praise the child with ADHD for appropriate behaviour is vital to encouraging more of that behaviour and building self esteem. Like any other child they need to feel good about themselves and they need to feel that they can do well. So however insignificant or brief is the behaviour, it needs to be noticed and the child needs to be praised. Most of the time, some clear acknowledgement of their achievement is all that is needed, for example "I really like the way you played with your brother".

### **When all else fails**

No strategies for managing children with ADHD work all the time and children with ADHD are difficult to manage. There will be times when you feel that all else has failed. Helpful strategies can include:

- It can be that you use "time out".
- If the outburst is extreme but the child is in no danger, it may well help if you can just take yourself out of the situation.
- Outbursts that happen outside the home need to be dealt with then and there. Threats of consequences later when the child is in a different situation are unlikely to be effective. You will have to use the experience to plan strategies for when it happens next time and/or to avoid the circumstances/situation that led to the outburst.

### **Seeking support**

Managing a child with ADHD or suspected ADHD can be very demanding and knowing where to go for help and support is very important. The following people should be able to help you in the management of your foster child:

Your family placement social worker

The child's social worker

Your health visitor

The child's school - they can let you know strategies they are using in school, which may be helpful at home.

The Attach Team