THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Supporting staff with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

What is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder?

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a developmental condition that affects attention, impulsivity, and activity levels. There are three types of ADHD:

- Predominantly hyperactive,
- Predominantly inattentive, sometimes called Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)
- Combined, with both hyperactive and inattentive features

Strengths associated with ADHD

- Creativity, originality and inventiveness
- Energy and drive
- An ability to 'hyper-focus' when interested, stimulated or rewarded
- Rapid understanding of complex issues, bursts of inspiration and insight into a subject

Common challenges associated with ADHD

No two people with ADHD have the same experience or have the same strengths and challenges. The most common core features of ADHD include:

- Speaking/acting before thinking, interrupting others
- Jumping to a new topic of conversation without finishing the current one
- Being restless and fidgety, difficulty sitting still
- Poor sustained concentration on tasks, easily distracted
- Poor organisational skills e.g. prioritising tasks, meeting deadlines

How can staff get assessed?

Formal diagnostic assessments are carried out by specialist psychiatrists and a GP referral is required for this.

Reasonable adjustments at work

Effective adjustments will be specific to individuals. Ask the person what they find harder to do and what has helped previously. Adjustments to be considered include:

- Adapting working hours e.g. flexi-time or longer hours with more breaks within the day
- Locating the individual's desk in an area away from the main flow of 'traffic' in the office
- Using dividers between desks or providing noise-cancelling headphones to cut out sounds
- Supporting individuals to organise their desk
- Arranging brief, regular meetings to check progress on tasks
- Setting up a diary system, task lists and reminders/alarms
- Setting up a system to organise paperwork e.g. using colour-coding
- Breaking tasks into parts and being clear about the priority of tasks given
- Providing time to practice tasks, and automating processes where possible

A more extensive list of reasonable adjustments can be found at:
https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/adjustments_and_management_strategies_to_support_neurodiverse_staff.pdf

External support:

Scottish ADHD Coalition - https://www.scottishadhdcoalition.org/