

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in Adults

Psychological Counsellors in Higher Education in Ireland – 27th January 2023

Jessica Bramham

Professor of Clinical Neuropsychology



UCD School of Psychology

Scoil na Síceolaíochta UCD

Overview

1. Validity:

Does ADHD exist in adults?

2. Presentation:

What to look for?

What are the co-occurring difficulties?

3. Intervention:

What can be done to help?

4. Current services in Ireland:

What is available for adults with ADHD in 2023?



1. Validity of ADHD in adults



Does ADHD exist in adults?

Evidence from:

- Prospective studies
- Genetics
- Neuroimaging
- Neuropsychology
- Treatment response
- Clinical presentation



Prospective studies



- ADHD symptoms often persist into adolescence and adulthood. Overt hyperactive-impulsive symptoms decline or 'burn out' with increasing age (or may be internalised), but inattentive symptoms show less improvements. (e.g. Taylor et al, 1996, Faraone et al, 2000; Fischer et al, 2002, Wender et al, 2001)
- Proportion who continue to meet diagnostic criteria varies from 4-80% depending on methods – meta-analysis shows 40-50% (Sibley et al, 2016)
- Majority (72-90%) continue to show at least one "disabling symptom" and evidence of "clinically significant impairment" (Biederman et al, 2000)
- Predictors of persistence of ADHD into adulthood meta-analysis – severity of ADHD, childhood treatment for ADHD, comorbid conduct disorder, comorbid major depressive disorder (Caye et al, 2016)



Genetics

- Multi-gene interaction (dopamine, norepinephrine, epinephrine, serotonin, GABA) increases risk of ADHD
- Heritability of ADHD is 0.75 to 0.91
- Genetic risk of ADHD
- If you have a *parent* with ADHD - 57%
 - If your *child* has ADHD - 29%
 - If your *sibling* has ADHD - 41%
 - If your *identical twin* has ADHD - 80%



ADHD and the brain

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4r3XWj269_g



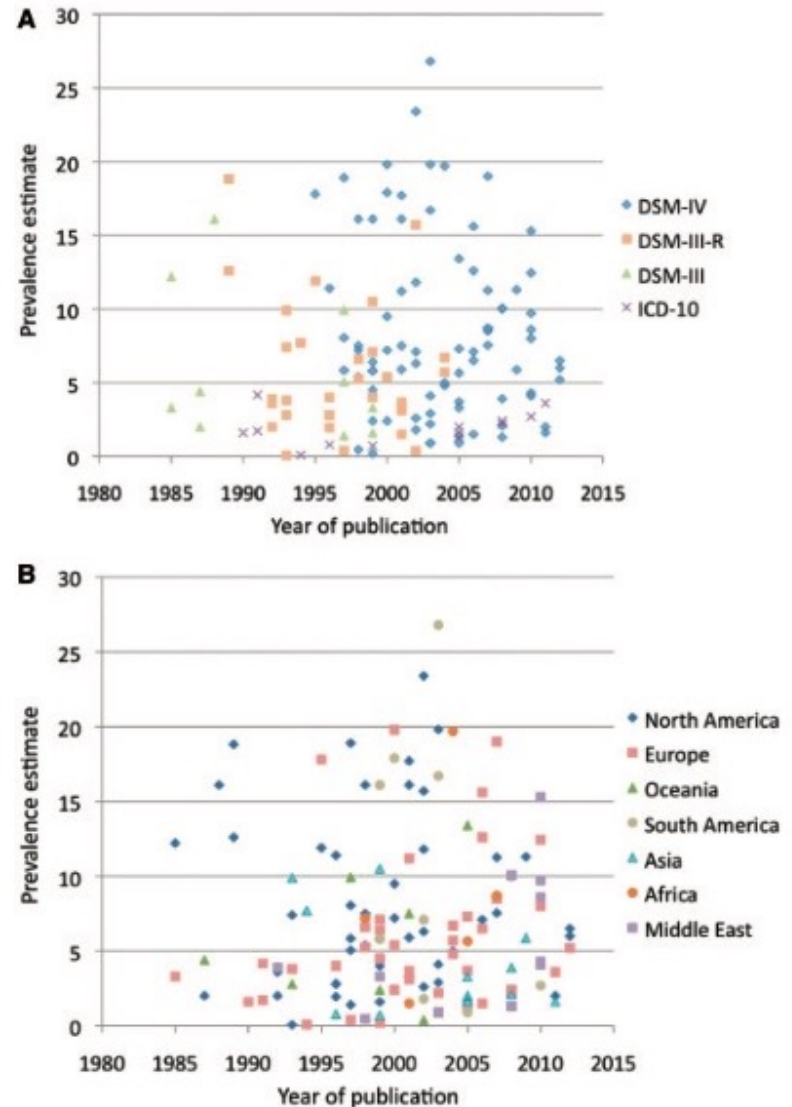
ADHD and the brain



Prevalence of ADHD



- Same range worldwide
 - 8-12% of children
 - 1-4% of adults
- Meta-analysis of prevalence (Polanczyk et al 2007, repeated 2014) showed it is not increasing but being diagnosed more often
- Meta-analysis of prevalence in adult outpatient mental health services is 26.7% (Adamis et al, 2022)
- High rates of undiagnosed ADHD in Irish adult mental health services (e.g. Dublin 23.9%, Syed et al, 2010; Sligo 20.7%, Adamis et al, 2018)



2. Clinical presentation

- Assessment of adult ADHD
- DSM-5 Symptoms in adults
- Co-occurring difficulties



Assessment of Adult ADHD

- Individual and informant interviews
e.g. Diagnostic Interview for ADHD in Adults (DIVA)
Conners Adult ADHD Diagnostic Interview for DSM-IV (CAADID)
- Childhood documentation
e.g. school reports, statement of special needs
- Adulthood documentation
e.g. employers references, occupational health, reports
- Psychometric assessment
i.e. rating scales



DSM-5 Symptoms of ADHD

Inattention

1. Fails to give close attention to detail
2. Difficulty sustaining attention
3. Does not listen when spoken to
4. Fails to follow through on instructions and complete task
5. Difficulty organising tasks or activities
6. Avoids or dislikes sustained mental effort
7. Loses things needed for tasks
8. Easily distracted by extraneous stimuli
9. Forgetful in daily activities

Hyperactivity

1. Fidgets with hands or feet
2. Leaves seat in situations where is inappropriate
3. Wanders or runs excessively /subjective feelings of restlessness
4. Difficulty engaging in leisure activities quietly
5. 'On the go' or acts as if driven by a motor
6. Talks excessively

Impulsivity

1. Blurts out answers before questions completed
2. Difficulty in waiting turn
3. Interrupting or intruding on others



DSM-5 Symptoms of ADHD

Inattention

1. Fails to give close attention to detail
2. Difficulty sustaining attention
3. Does not listen when spoken to
4. Fails to follow through on instructions and complete task
5. Difficulty organising tasks or activities
6. Avoids or dislikes sustained mental effort
7. Loses things needed for tasks
8. Easily distracted by extraneous stimuli
9. Forgetful in daily activities

Hyperactivity

1. Fidgets with hands or feet
2. Leaves seat in situations where is inappropriate
3. Wanders or runs excessively /subjective feelings of restlessness
4. Difficulty engaging in leisure activities quietly
5. 'On the go' or acts as if driven by a motor
6. Talks excessively

Impulsivity

1. Blurts out answers before questions completed
2. Difficulty in waiting turn
3. Interrupting or intruding on others



+ Emotional regulation difficulties

Diagnoses

- **Combined type:** 6+ inattentive and 6+ hyperactive/impulsive
- **Inattentive subtype:** 6+ inattentive symptoms; <6 hyperactive/impulsive (also known as ADD)
- **Hyperactive/impulsive subtype:** 6+ hyperactive/impulsive symptoms; <6 hyperactive/impulsive
- Has to be present from **before 12 years** and
- In adults can have only **>5** rather than 6 symptoms (change from DSM-IV)

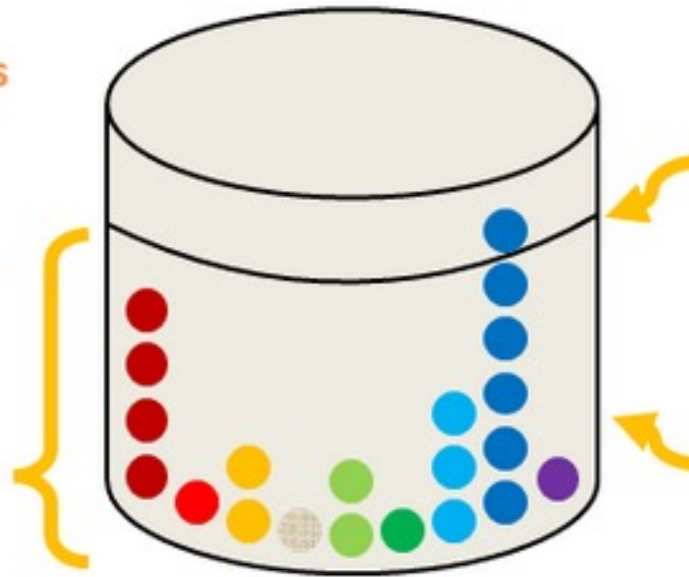


Functional impairment (daily responsibilities, education, work, leisure, social relationships, money, driving, offending)

Neurodiversity diagnosis – Amanda Kirby

You can picture someone's challenges as like different coloured and different sized balls in a bucket:

Number of balls indicates the severity of the challenge in that area. Some are easier to see!

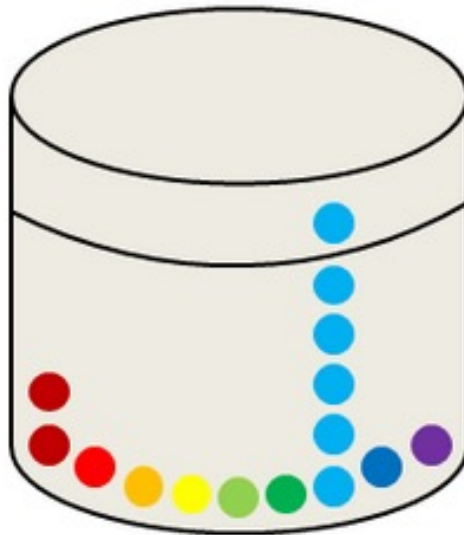


Have to meet a certain level to 'count' and get a diagnosis for challenges or meet the criteria for services

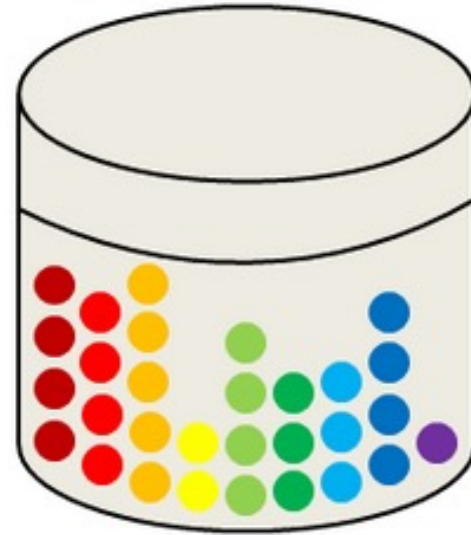
Different colours indicate different types of challenge, e.g. reading, attention, social, motor, home life, behaviours

Neurodiversity diagnosis – Amanda Kirby

This system works well for people with a single colour ball = one area of challenge



Fails people with multiple needs or less well identified needs who don't quite meet a criteria = greater support needs



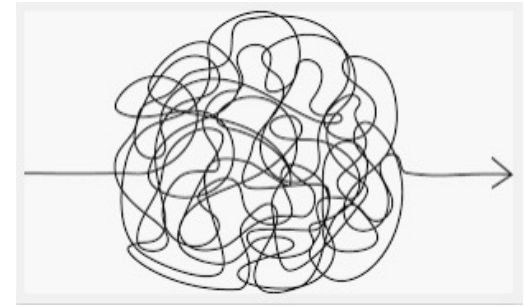
Co-occurring difficulties with ADHD

- Only 14% are 'simple ADHD'
- Anxiety – 25-50%
- Depression - 16-31%
- Dysthymia - 19-37%
- Bipolar disorder - 9-22%
- Substance misuse disorders - 25-50%
- Personality disorder - 18-25%
- Other specific learning difficulty - 40%

(Kessler et al, 2006)



Additional Adult ADHD Difficulties



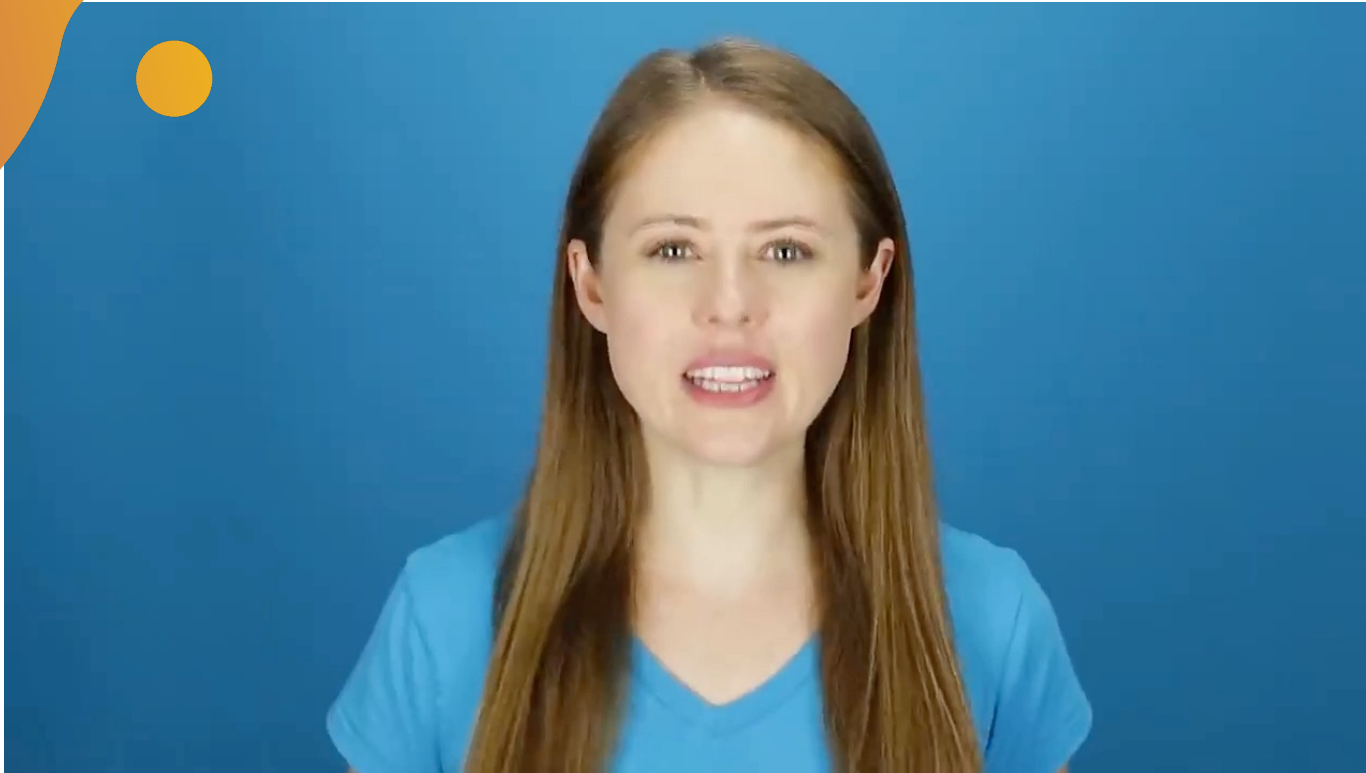
- Low self-esteem
- Motivation problems
- Procrastination
- Low mood
- Anxiety
- Emotion regulation problems
- Low tolerance of frustration
- Crowded thoughts or ceaseless mental activity
- Sleep problems
- Relationship problems
- Substance use problems



UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING
ADULT ADHD PROGRAMME



ADHD
SUPPORT • EDUCATION • AWARENESS
IRELAND



How to ADHD - How to (explain) ADHD

Anxiety in ADHD

- Fear of failure - anticipatory anxiety
- Marked self-consciousness or susceptibility to embarrassment or humiliation
- Concerns about competence and performance anxiety
- Exacerbates attentional difficulties
- 'Adaptive' OCD
- Over- focusing and perseverative behaviour



Social relationship difficulties

- Rejection sensitivity dysphoria
- Lack intimate confiding relationships
- Feeling 'different' from others
- Impulsivity and emotional dysregulation can lead to relationship breakdown
- Problems maintaining relationships due to executive functioning
- Low boredom threshold
- Others are intolerant of ADHD differences
- Dilemmas around disclosure of ADHD



Low mood and depression

- Criticism for being 'lazy' or 'stupid'
- Lack of supportive relationships
- Low self-esteem through not achieving potential
- Failure to finish tasks – lack of sense of achievement/mastery
- Mood regulation difficulties- emotional lability
- Low mood can present as irritability, being 'snappy'
- Low mood following diagnosis
- Increased risk of self-harm and suicide attempts



ADHD & Suicidal Behaviour/Self-Harm



Three possible reasons for this increased risk are:

(Furczyk and Thome, 2014)

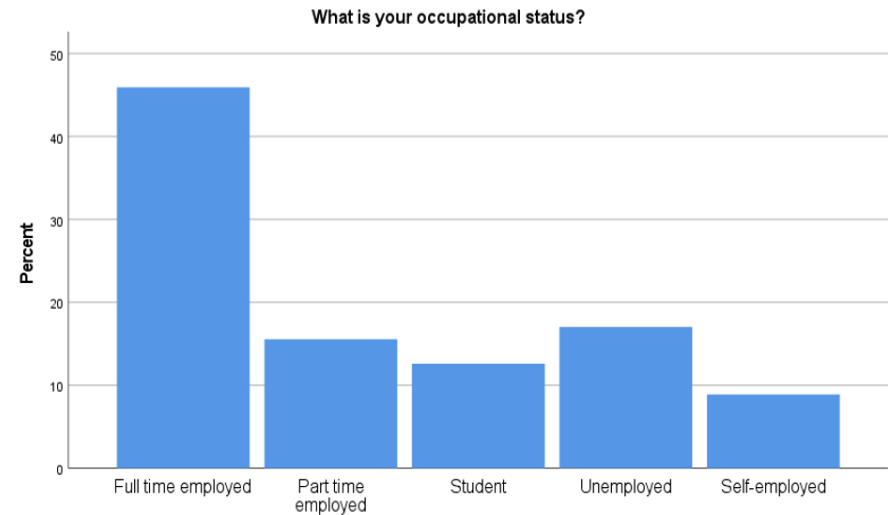
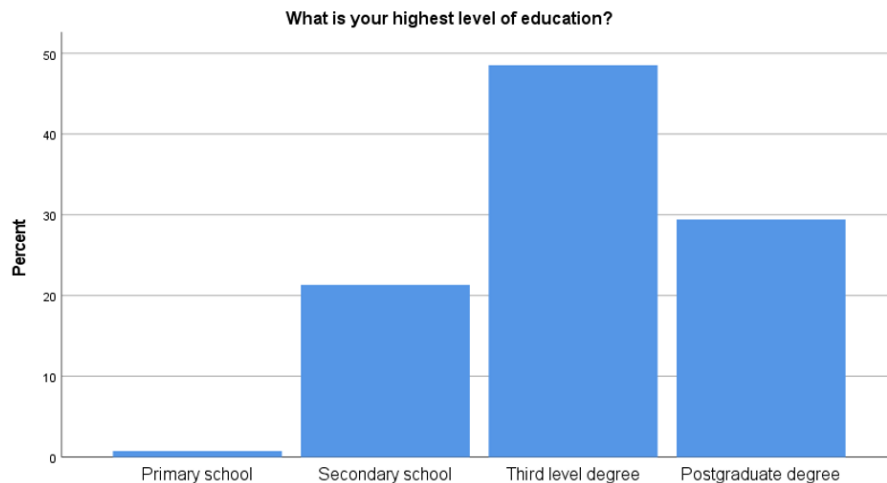
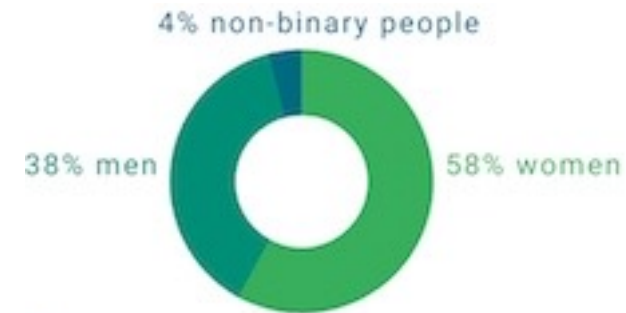
1. Symptoms of **ADHD** itself e.g. impulsivity
2. Elevated levels of co-occurring **mental health difficulties** e.g.
 - a) depression
 - b) anxiety
 - c) emotion regulation difficulties
3. Elevated levels of **alcohol/substance use**



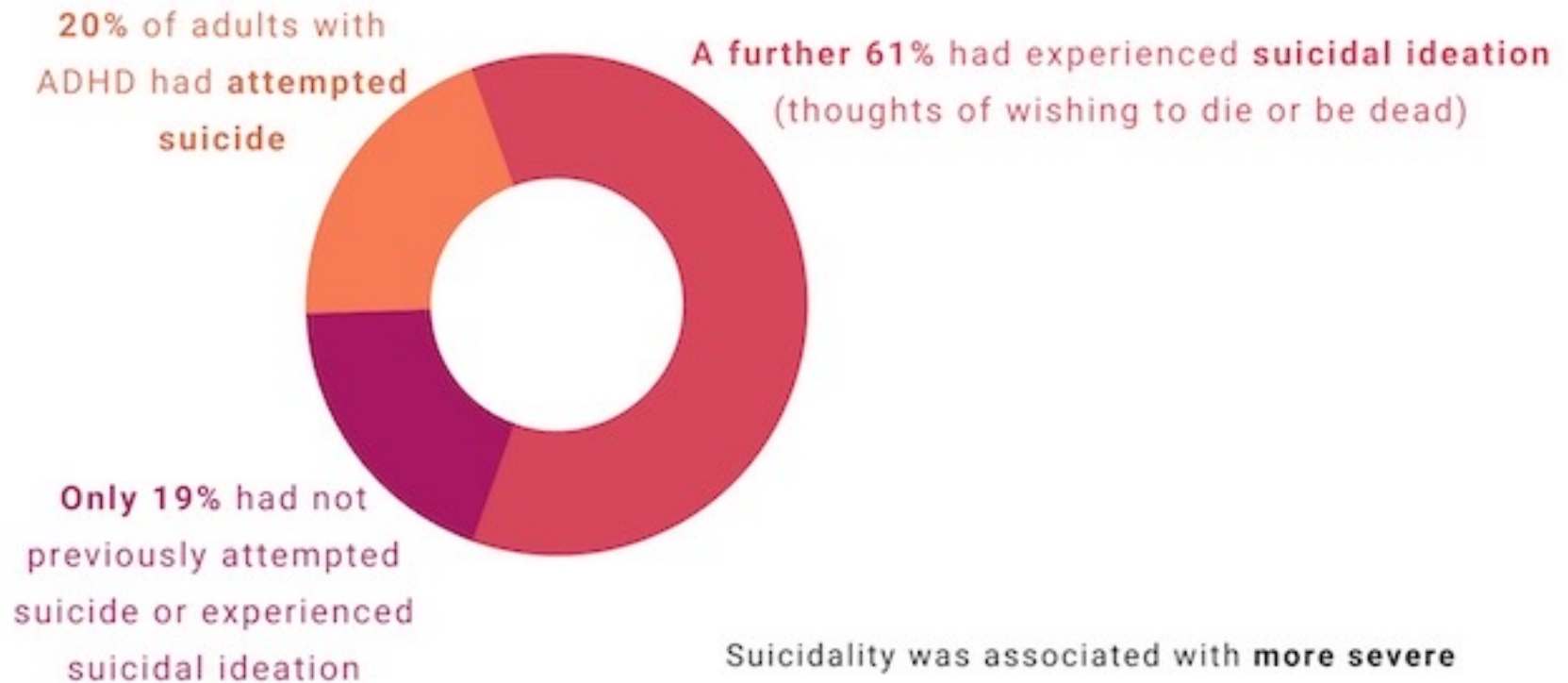
ADHD and suicide in Ireland study



- **N=136** participants with ADHD; 90% diagnosed in adulthood
- Mean age was **39 years** (range **18-71 years**)
- **78%** had third level education
- **70%** employed; **13%** students; **17%** unemployed



Findings: Suicidal Behaviour



Suicidality was associated with **more severe ADHD symptoms, anxiety and use of cocaine, amphetamines and sedatives**

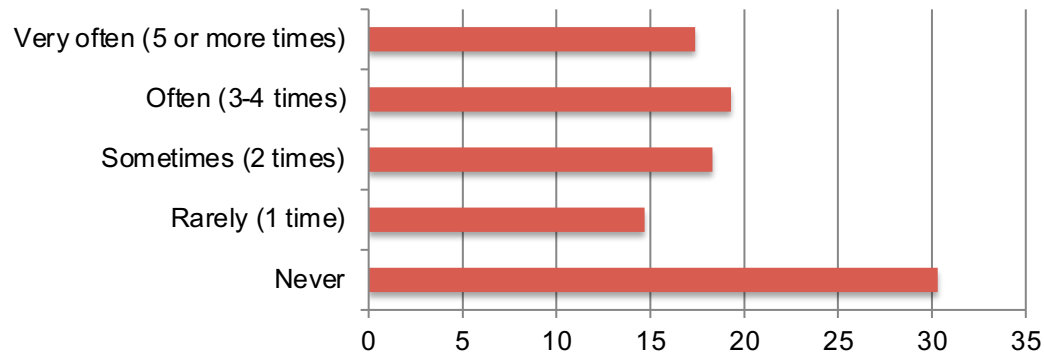
Suicidality was not associated with depression, alcohol or cannabis use



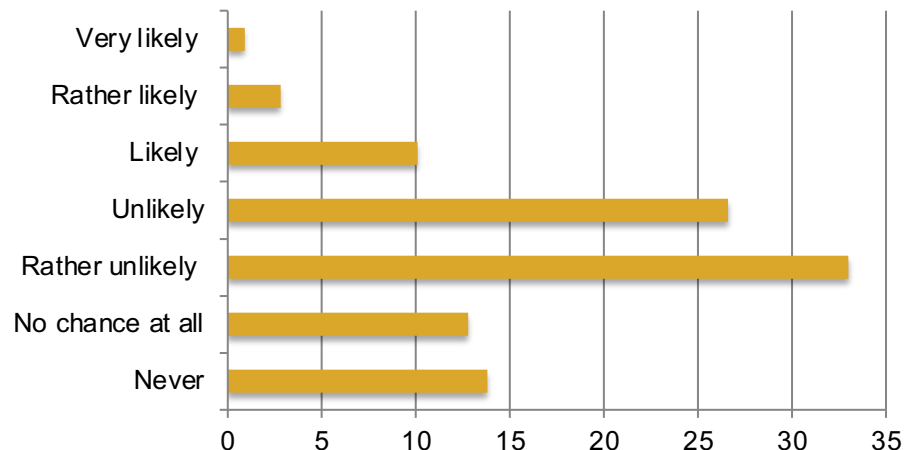
Findings: Suicidal Behaviour



How many times have you thought about killing yourself in the past year?



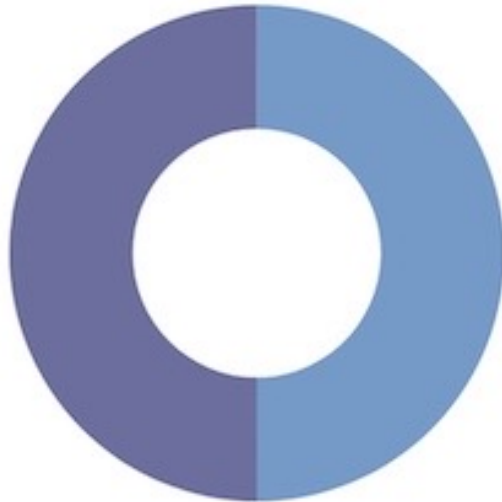
How likely is it that you will attempt suicide one day in the future?



Findings: Self-Harm



50% of adults with ADHD have self-harmed



Self-harm was associated with
more severe ADHD symptoms
emotional dysregulation
cannabis use

Mean age when first harmed self:
13 years (range 3-47 years)

Types of self-harm

Banging/hitting head	72%
Interfering with a wound	71%
Severe scratching	62%
Cutting	62%
Pinching	56%
Pulling hair	49%
Biting	49%
Burning	28%
Inhaling substances	27%
Rubbing skin	24%
Sticking needles	22%
Carving	21%



National Self-Harm Registry Ireland for self-harm in hospitals recorded rate 0.2% of general population
Up to 20 times higher rates in the community i.e. 4% of population (based on McMahon et al, 2020)

3. INTERVENTIONS FOR ADHD IN ADULTS



Improvements in adult ADHD difficulties



- **Biological change** affects the symptoms directly, e.g. pharmacological treatment, maturation of the brain.



- **Environmental change**, e.g. the ability to change the environment so that problems arising from the difficulties are reduced.



- **Psychological coping strategies**, e.g. by the individual recognising how difficulties affect them and the development of internal techniques to manage their challenges.



ADHD medication

Cerebral Stimulants

- Methylphenidate
 - Short acting forms (e.g. Ritalin, Equasym)
 - Sustained release (e.g. Concerta)
- Dexamphetamine (e.g. Dexadrine, Adderal)

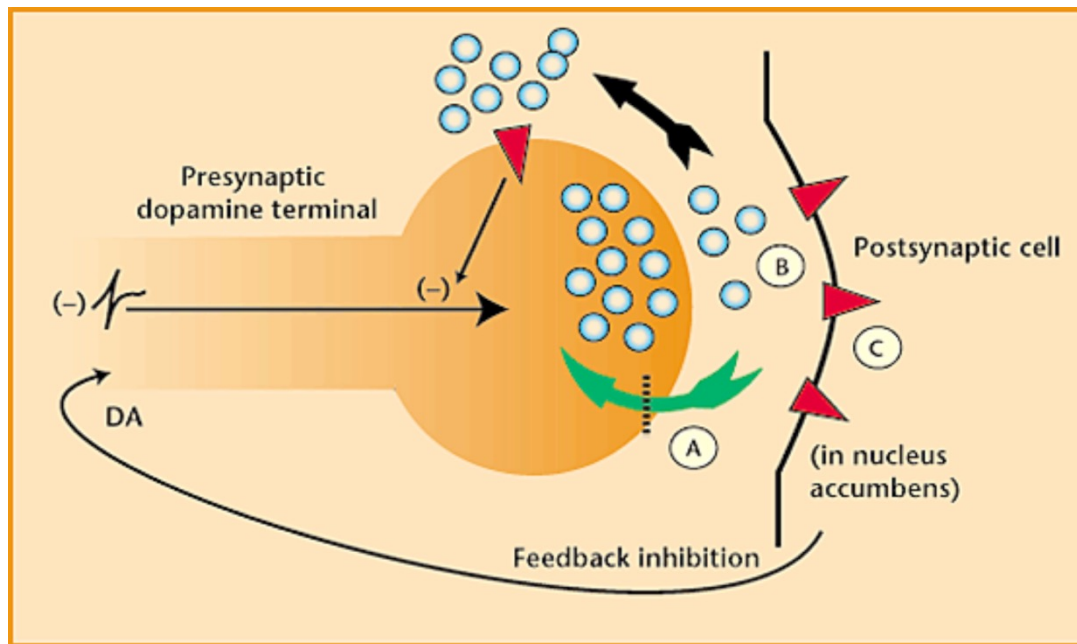
Non-stimulant drugs

- Atomoxetine (e.g. Strattera)
- Venlafaxine



Cerebral Stimulants

- Blocking of dopamine transporter
- Increase intrasynaptic dopamine and norepinephrine



Robbins (2002)

ADHD and the stigma of medication

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38qpm6VKBFc>



Evidence-based psychological interventions for adults with ADHD

- **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy**

- Scholz et al, (2020); Fullen et al (2020), Young et al (2016) Systematic reviews and meta-analyses
- Safren et al. (2005) - CBT for medication-treated ADHD with residual symptoms
- Rostain & Ramsay (2006) - Combined medication and CBT
- Bramham et al (2009) – Young-Bramham CBT workshops
- Included psychoeducation, coping strategy training, building on strengths

- **ADHD coaching**

- Tuttle et al (2016) Systematic review 22 studies
- Zwart & Kallemeyn (2001)– coaching for college students with ADHD & LD
- Swartz, Prevatt & Proctor (2005)– case study evidence
- Included time management, motivation, increasing self-efficacy, short-term and long-term objectives with rewards and consequences
- More action, less insight oriented



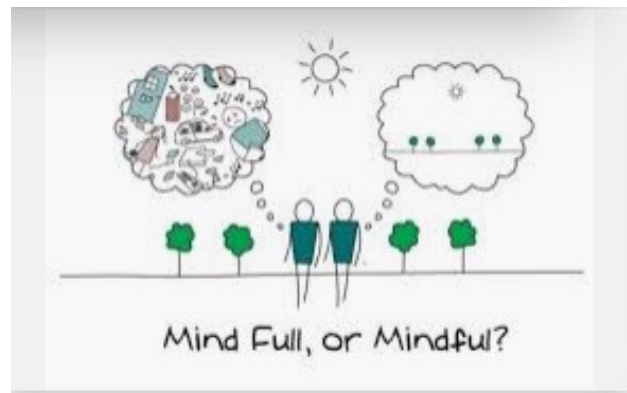
Evidence-based psychological interventions

- **Dialectical behavioural therapy**

- E.g. Philipsen et al (2007); Nasri et al (2020)
- Including psychoeducation, mindfulness, 'chaos and control' organisational strategies, emotion regulation, stress management, substance use, self respect

- **Mindfulness meditation**

- E.g. Zylowska et al (2008); Edel et al (2017)
- Focus on attentional control, distractibility awareness, and emotion regulation



'The Motivation Bridge'

Can apply to therapy too

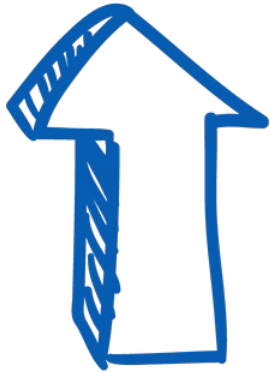
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OM0Xv0eVGtY>



4. ADHD IN ADULTS IN IRELAND



3rd Level for Students with ADHD



24% increase in the number of students registered with ADHD in disability services across third-level education in Ireland from 2020-2021 (AHEAD, 2022).

Press release

New National Access Plan to drive equality of access to higher education launched by Minister Harris

From [Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science](#)
Published on 31 August 2022



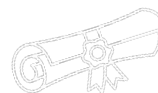
PHD - CHRISTINE BOYD



Disability Services

Student Health Services

Counselling Services



PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS



PRELIMINARY RESULTS



- One institution (UCC) provides ADHD assessments



27% of institutions have access to a psychologist for ADHD specific support

14% of institutions provide psychiatric support for ADHD



27% of institutions provide ADHD-specific OT services



RESULTS



Approximately
half of institutions
do not provide
ADHD-specific
training to
academic staff



All institutions offer
exam supports,
additional study skills
and assistive
technologies to
students with ADHD
with a diagnosis

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

ADHD/ wider neurodiversity services need to be developed tailored to support students with ADHD in an academic environment

Services should include multidisciplinary teams who are skilled in assessment and interventions.

The provision of training for academic staff is recommended to improve knowledge of the condition.

WHAT NEXT?



An Roinn Breisoideachais agus Ardoideachais,
Taighde, Nuálaíochta agus Eolaíochta
Department of Further and Higher Education,
Research, Innovation and Science

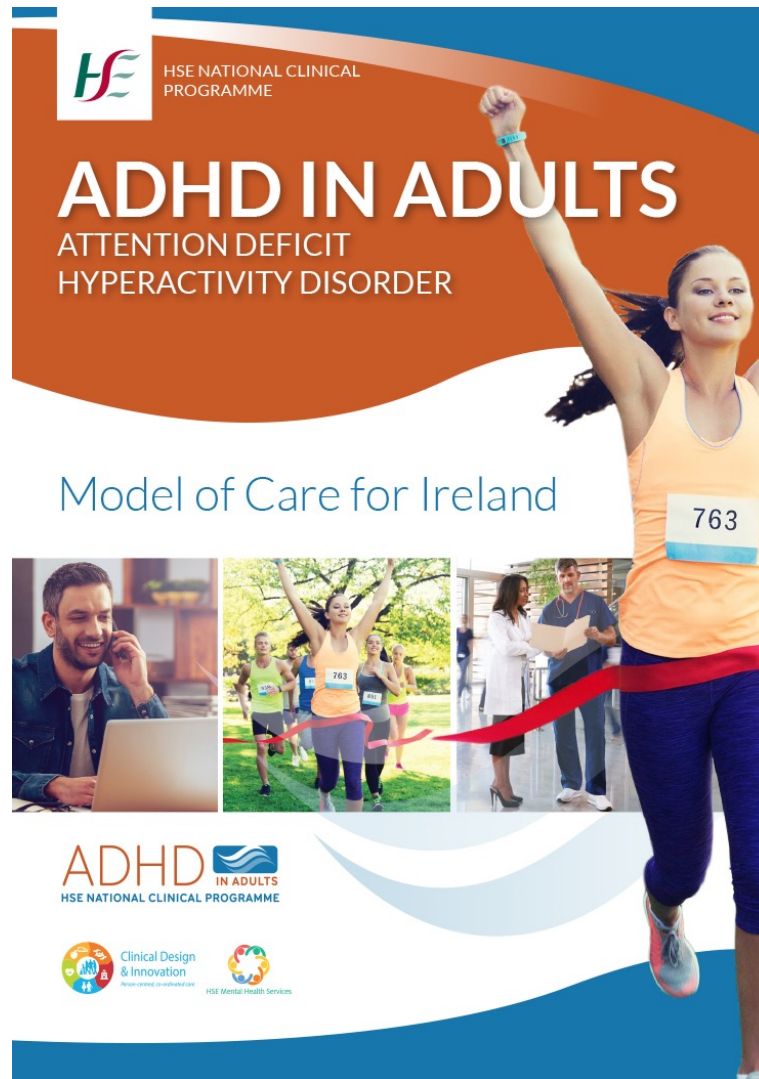


Report submitted to Minister
Simon Harris

Further research will
explore the current
assessment
pathways and needs
of students with
ADHD

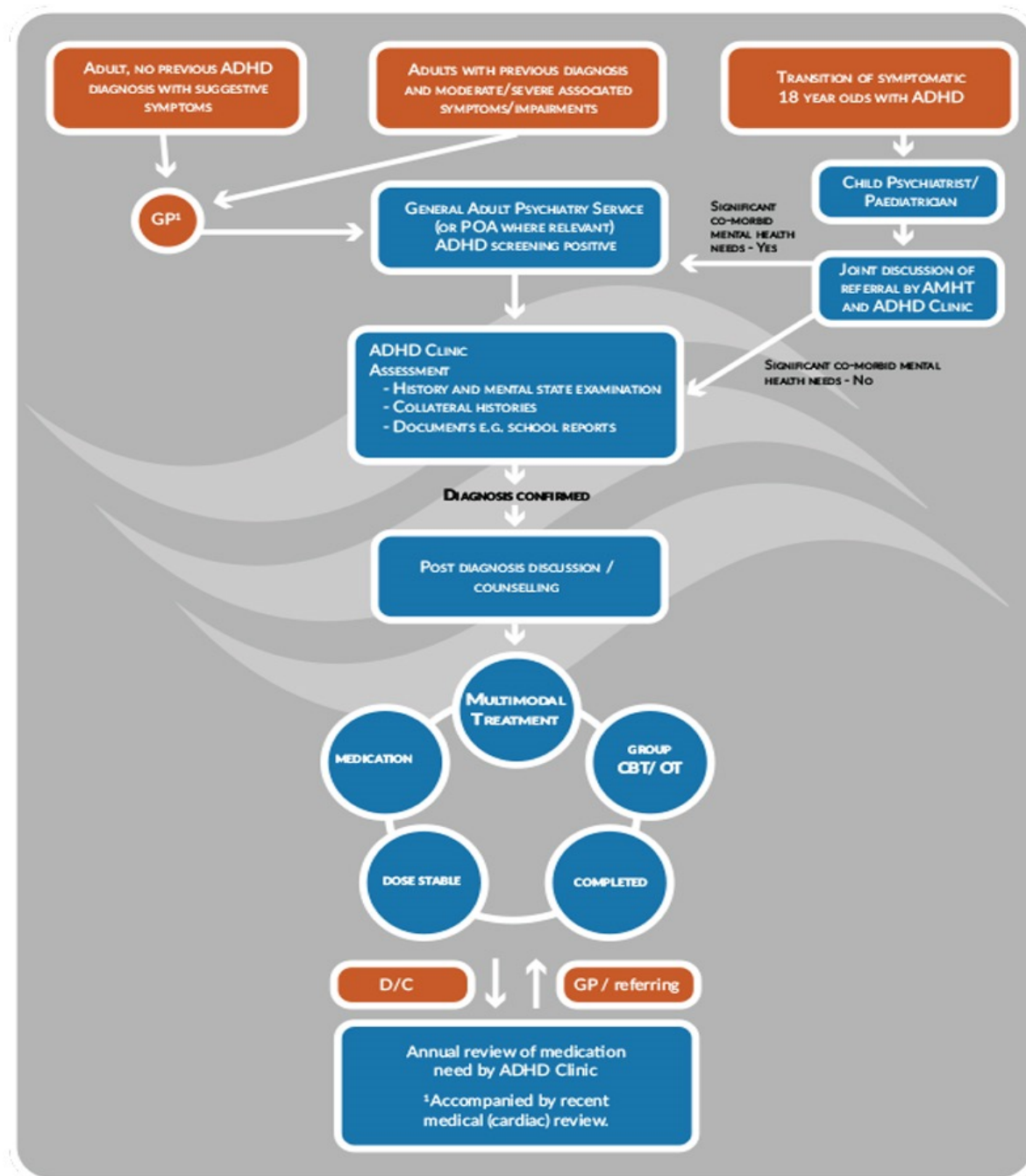


HSE National Clinical Programme for Adults with ADHD



The Clinical Pathway

Figure 1: The Clinical Pathway for Adults with ADHD



Model of Care

- Assessment
 - DIVA
 - including co-morbidities
 - functional impairments
 - collateral history
- Post-assessment discussion
- Multimodal HSE interventions
 - ADHD specific medication
 - Psycho-education
 - ADHD specific CBT
 - OT intervention
- Non HSE interventions:
 - Voluntary organisations (e.g. ADHD Ireland)
 - ❖ information, support, education
 - ADHD specific coaching
 - Finding and keeping a job, e.g. EmployAbility.

Distribution of Clinics

Table 2: Distribution of proposed ADHD clinics

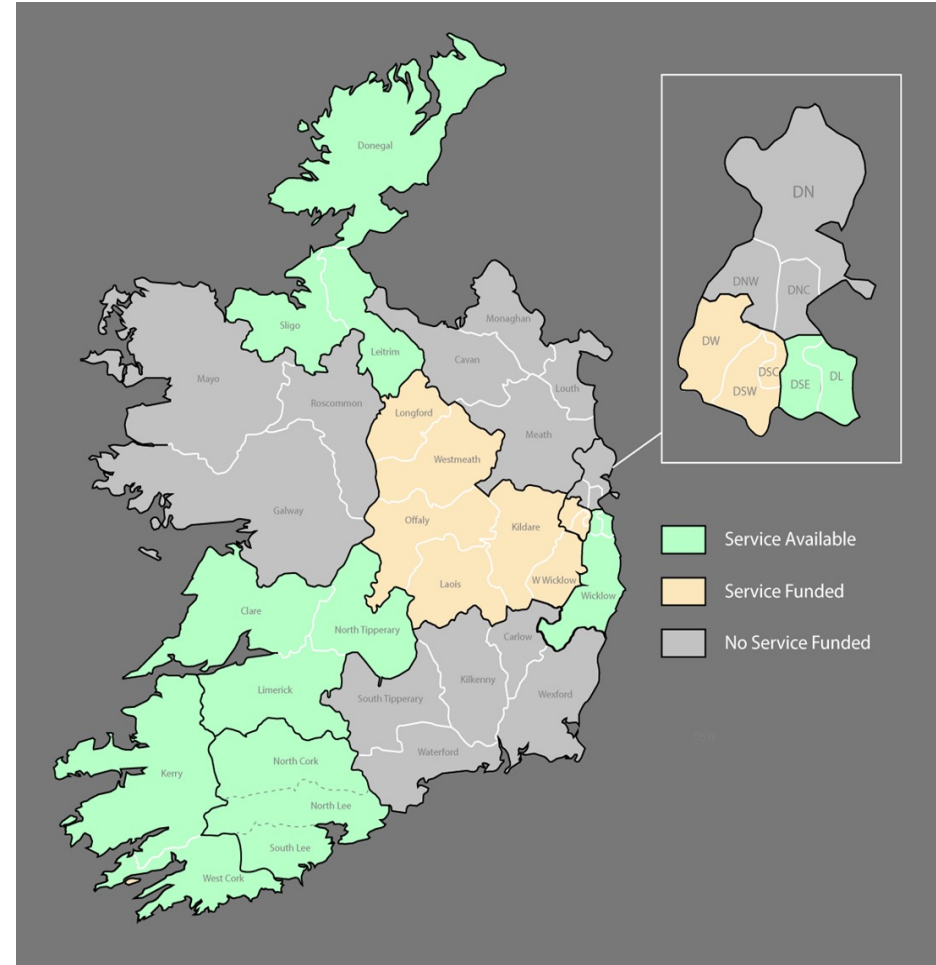
CHO	County	Population 18-64 years	Total Population	Prison	ADHD Clinic Allocation
1	Donegal	86,828	150,279	-	0.5 Team
	Sligo	38,950			
	Leitrim	24,501			
	Cavan Monaghan Louth Meath	43,968 36,245 86,614 108,269	275,096	-	1 Team
2	Mayo Galway/Roscommon	75,630 197,041	272,671	P	1 Team
3	Limerick	120,391	232,797	P	1 Team
	Clare	70,537			
	North Tipperary	41,869			
4	Kerry	88,146	423,156	P	1.5 Teams
	Cork	335,010			
5	South Tipperary	52,522	304,509	-	1 Team
	Carlow	43,289			
	Kilkenny	51,147			
	Waterford	68,980			
	Wexford	88,571			
6	Dublin South East	286,670	286,670	-	1 Team
7	Dublin West	266,497	266,497	P x 2 ¹	1 Team
	Dublin South City				
	Dublin South West				
7+8	Kildare West Wicklow	143,344	318,061	P	1 Team
	Westmeath	53,816			
	Offaly	46,245			
	Longford	23,831			
	Laois	50,825			
9	Dublin North	404,063	404,063	P x 3 ¹	1 Team
	Dublin North Central				
	Dublin North West				
	Total	3,007,142			

¹ Served by proposed separate forensic ADHD Clinic

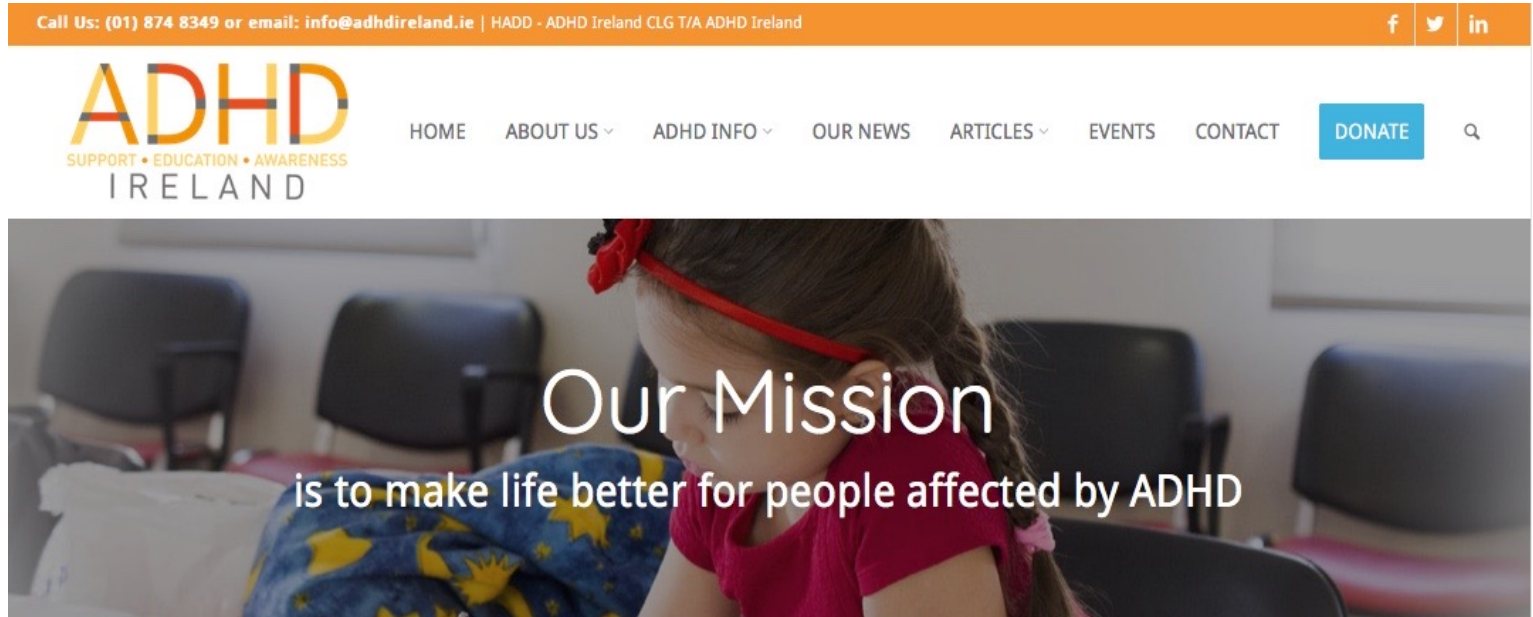


Implementation in 2022/23

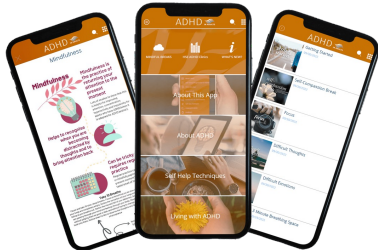
- ❑ 2022 €1.8m allocated
- ❑ 4 new sites - in recruitment
- ❑ 2 of 4 sites now operational
 - CHO4 Cork
 - CHO4 Kerry/West Cork
 - CHO7 Dublin
 - CHO8 Midlands/CHO7 Kildare West Wicklow.



Other Supports for Adults with ADHD



- Information/self-help App



- UMAAP - Understanding and Managing Adult ADHD Programme

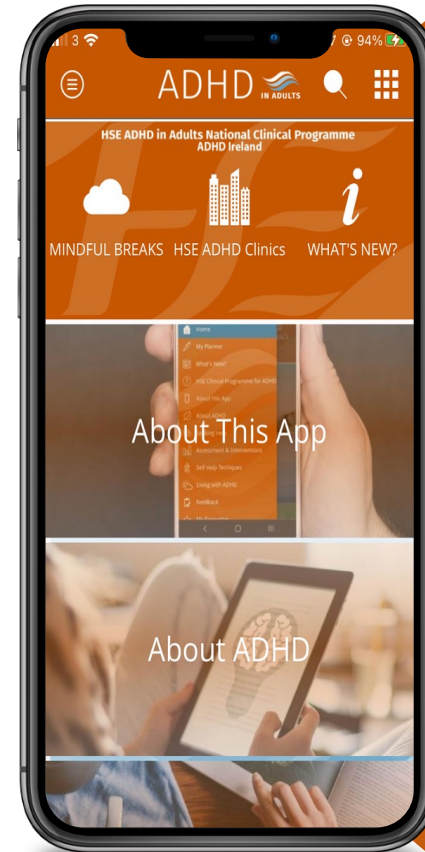


Adult ADHD App Launch, 8th of November 2022

Developing the Adult ADHD App

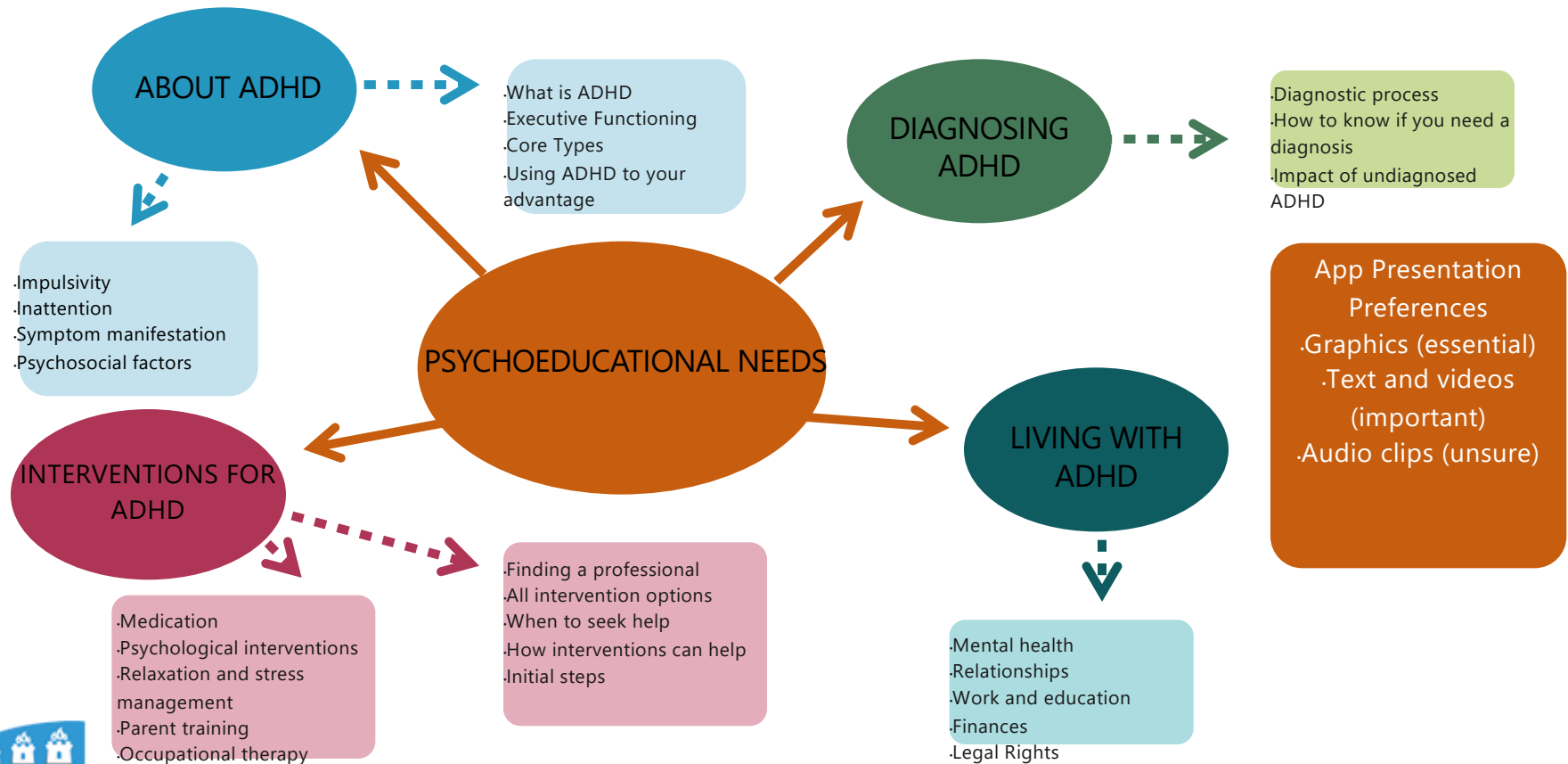
Christina Seery, PhD Candidate, UCD School of Psychology

App Working Group: Christina Seery, Fiona O'Riordan, Ken Kilbride, Nicola Coss, Margo Wrigley, & Jessica Bramham



Planning & Designing

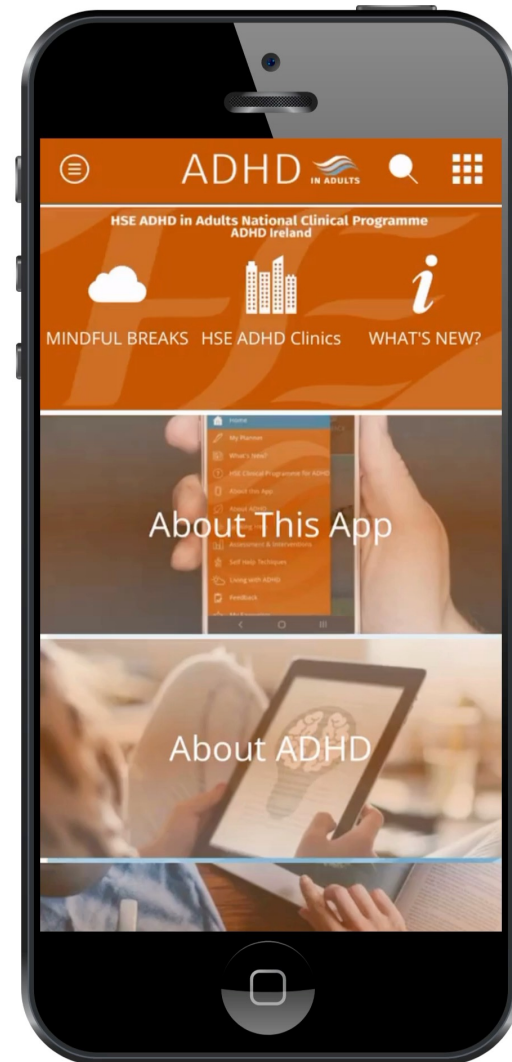
What information is essential for the app?



(Seery et al., 2022).

The Adult ADHD App in Action

Free on App Store – ADHD in Adults





UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING ADULT ADHD PROGRAMME

Self-referral process

Email : UMAAP@adhdireland.ie



All welcome – with or without a diagnosis



UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING
ADULT ADHD PROGRAMME



ADHD
SUPPORT • EDUCATION • AWARENESS
IRELAND

UMAAP

Aims of UMAAP

- Increase understanding of adult attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Provide skills and techniques to help with managing ADHD
- Help improve self-esteem and quality of life



I CAN'T



UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING
ADULT ADHD PROGRAMME



ADHD
SUPPORT • EDUCATION • AWARENESS
IRELAND

1) PSYCHOEDUCATION

Learning about ADHD - understand and gaining expertise in how ADHD affects an individual

2) THIRD WAVE CBT – ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY SKILLS (ACT)

Aims to address how a person relates and responds to their inner experiences (i.e. thoughts, emotions, urges) in order to live in a way that is meaningful for them





UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING
ADULT ADHD PROGRAMME



ADHD
SUPPORT • EDUCATION • AWARENESS
IRELAND

TOPICS

Psychoeducation and ACT Psychology Skills

1

Introduction

2

Inattention and impulsivity

3

Daily Life

4

Emotions and Mood

5

Accepting and Thriving



- Webinar style (participants can post questions in the Zoom chat)
- Six weekly workshops
- HSE funding for 20 roll outs in 2023!

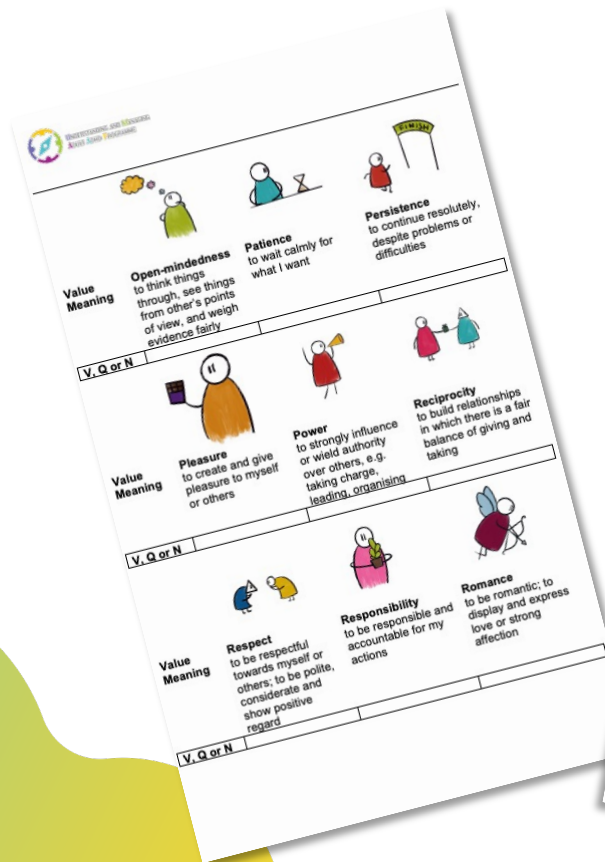
Companion workbook with summaries and exercises



UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING
ADULT ADHD PROGRAMME



ADHD
SUPPORT • EDUCATION • AWARENESS
IRELAND





UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING
ADULT ADHD PROGRAMME



ADHD
SUPPORT • EDUCATION • AWARENESS
IRELAND



- Support groups
- Focus time - Body doubling technique

Other online resources

- How to ADHD – YouTube series

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rfcdx3qm77M>

- ADDitude

<https://www.additudemag.com/category/manage-adhd-life/>



Thank you for listening

Any questions welcome!

Contact details- jessica.bramham@ucd.ie

Resources:

Diagnostic Interview for Adult ADHD (DIVA)

<https://www.advancedassessments.co.uk/resources/ADHD-Screening-Test-Adult.pdf>

Adult ADHD Rating Scale (WHO) (AARS)

<https://add.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/adhd-questionnaire-ASRS111.pdf>

Wender Utah Childhood ADHD Rating Scale

[https://psykiatristod.se/download/18.298d3d1f16d8b550c9444287/1571821789691/WURS_ADHD .pdf](https://psykiatristod.se/download/18.298d3d1f16d8b550c9444287/1571821789691/WURS_ADHD.pdf)

ADHD Ireland

<https://adhdireland.ie>

UK Adult ADHD Network – Training events

<https://www.ukaan.org>

