



Image created by Rosmarie Voegtli.

Tools for Schools: Development and early testing of a school-based toolkit for children with traits of ADHD.

Teacher Information Leaflet

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Thank you for showing an interest in this research, focused on early testing of a toolkit of behavioural strategies and adjustments that will improve the school experience of students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and those with traits of hyperactivity, impulsivity or inattention that are causing impairment at school.

You have received this information sheet as your Senior Leadership Team have agreed to take part in this study, and you currently teach at least one potentially suitable child. Please read this information leaflet carefully before deciding whether you would like to participate. If you decide to participate, we thank you. If you choose not to, there is no disadvantage to you, and we thank you for considering our project.



Background

Every classroom has (on average) at least one child who will struggle to sit still, pay attention and resist impulses to do things like jumping out of their seat. When these problems are significant enough, this can be diagnosed as ADHD. Often, these children face major difficulties at home and in school - being less likely to learn well and make good friendships than other children. They are also more likely to have accidents and other mental health problems.

As you probably know, teaching a child with ADHD can be difficult in any school setting and can impact the learning of other children and increase teacher burden and stress. Strategies are needed to help teachers support their students, but current advice is often complicated and suggest teachers try multiple things at once. Moreover, no child is the same. This can lead to teachers struggling to develop the right intervention for the child. This toolkit aims to overcome these difficulties by being an easy-to-use flexible resource that can be tailored to each child.

Aim of this research study

The toolkit, which has been developed alongside experts, teachers, and parents includes a range of strategies (organised within “modules”) that educators, parents and pupils can use to ensure that students with traits of ADHD have a better primary school experience.

Aims of the current step of the study:

- To refine and assess the feasibility and practicality of this toolkit for use in primary schools (not to ‘treat’ ADHD as the toolkit is currently a prototype)

If the toolkit is found to be acceptable and feasible, it will be further evaluated in a much larger trial to provide evidence that it works.



Summary of the Tools for Schools project

A prototype toolkit has been informed by theories about how children learn new skills, and how symptoms of ADHD come about as well as the best current evidence about what works for these children. It needs to be acceptable and practical for those who will use it, both educators and pupils with ADHD – this will be assessed using what is known as a “feasibility study”.

This is what we are asking you to be involved in. To test whether the toolkit is acceptable and practical for teachers to use, 8 primary schools, each with up to four children with ADHD traits will take part. Children eligible to participate in the study will range from 4–10-year-olds (school years R-5). Each teacher will have a maximum of one child participant in their class. Your school will be using the toolkit for one school term with the children who participate, but we will be collecting information from parents, children, and teachers before this and for one school term after the toolkit is tried. We will ask you to help us identify which children might benefit from the toolkit before we approach their parents for consent.

Overview of the Tools for School toolkit

The Tools for Schools toolkit will be primarily a digital resource with printable components, with the key steps outlined in Figure 1. Alongside this, schools will also be given the option to plan and deliver activities to promote inclusivity. This might involve participating in national events such as Neurodiversity Celebration Week, having a school assembly or applying for the ADHD Foundation “ADHD friendly schools award” for example.

To plan and deliver the toolkit, your Special Educational Needs (and Disabilities) Co-ordinator (SEN(D)Co) will support you and any teaching assistants (TAs) to follow the toolkit steps, and review progress. There are separate information sheets for SENCos and TAs that outline their roles, as well as for parents and guardians.

Primarily, the toolkit will support children to remain in the classroom and allowing the child to access the same education and opportunities as their classmates. It will target ADHD symptoms, classroom functioning, conflict with teachers/peers, quality of life, self-esteem, and skills such as working memory, organisation, flexible thinking and self-control.



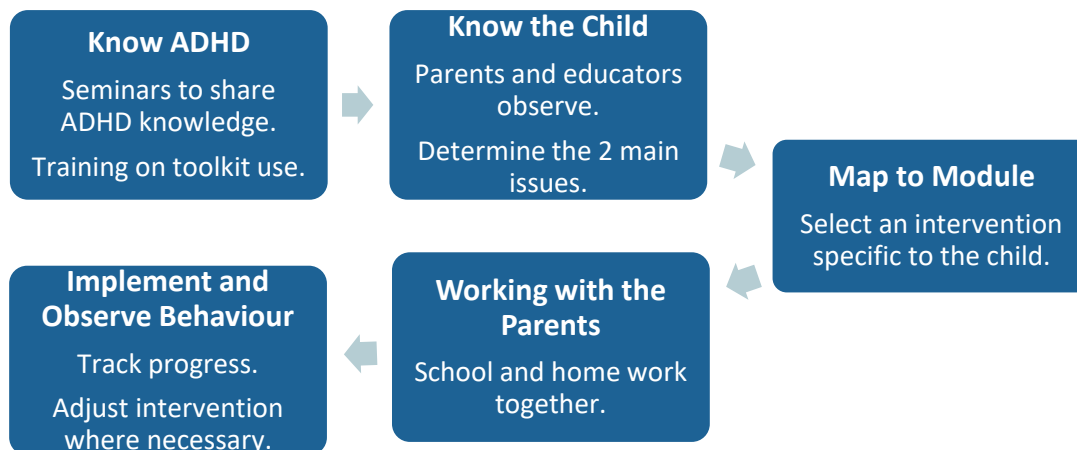


Figure 1: this schematic summarises the process of the Tools for Schools intervention once eligible students have been identified.

If you would like more details on any of the stages in the toolkit please visit our website: <http://blogs.exeter.ac.uk/toolsforschools/>

Your role in the research

After being nominated by the headteacher of your school your roles in the study will include the following:

Completing Know ADHD and Know Me exercises including:

- Receiving online training about ADHD and using the toolkit.
- Identifying whether you teach any eligible students in conjunction with your SENCo. We anticipate that you already have an idea of who will be suitable, and we ask that you include eligible girls as well as boys if possible. We will provide you with brief screening questionnaires for ADHD traits which you can complete to check if a child is eligible.
- Attending two meetings (organised by the SENCo) with other key school staff and the child's parents (either online or in person) to identify two problem areas where the child is currently struggling. Help the SENCo to complete an analysis to understand the pre-cursors and consequences around these behaviours for the child.
- Conducting or supporting a TA to conduct the "know me" child strengths activity.



Using the Toolkit and Observing Progress including:

- Planning and delivering the toolkit strategies, in conjunction with support from parents at home, the SENCo and any TAs.
- Set achievable behavioural goals for the child, select modules and appropriate strategies for the child (supported by your SENCo and any relevant TAs).
- Use the toolkit with the child for one school term (you will have a log-in for the digital toolkit that will allow you to keep track).
- Review child's progress relevant to the toolkit, make decisions to maintain or switch strategies with support from your SENCo.
- Complete questionnaires on ADHD symptoms and classroom functioning for the study child throughout the study (once every 3-4 weeks during the baseline and follow-up terms, once every two weeks during the toolkit term). We anticipate these will take less than 10 minutes each time.
- Completing questionnaires or measures specific to the modules and strategies that you are implementing weekly during the toolkit term. We anticipate these will take up to 15 minutes each time.
- Completing questionnaires about your wellbeing and confidence several times across the study period. Your answers to these questions will only be seen by the research team and not shared with others at your school.

Communicating with others, including:

- With prior arrangement, allow members of the research team to observe the target child in your classroom to assess their symptoms and other relevant behaviour (please note we will NOT be assessing you, your teaching, or behaviour of other students in the class).
- Talking to the research team about the toolkit once you have started using it (a few weeks into the toolkit term, for up to 30 minutes over the phone, online or in person).
- Attending a focus group in person (at your school) or online with all staff involved in supporting the child you teach after the toolkit has been used, to discuss what went well and what needs improving; this will take up to 90 minutes. We ask that what is said in the focus group remains confidential between those present in the room.



- Feeding back to the research team should issues arise with the toolkit that need immediate change or need further instructions.
- Ensure you try to feedback the positives to parents about the study child and not just the negatives.

To show our gratitude for your participation in this study and the focus group, school staff (headteachers, teachers, TA and SENDCo's) will receive £10 each.

Potential benefits

We hope that access to the Tools for Schools toolkit will:

- Reduce stress for teachers and be less burdensome than strategies you currently use. However, as we are testing a prototype in this study, you may end up spending extra time on the toolkit without saving time in other areas (please let us know if this is the case!).
- Help you to work effectively with children who are inattentive, impulsive, or hyperactive
- Help improve relationships between you and your target student, them and their peers, and you and the students' family.
- Reduce disruptive behaviours, allowing for easier classroom management.
- Provide training on ADHD and related neurodevelopmental differences that will be of benefit to you as part of the toolkit, and we hope that you will gain from using the strategies suggested both with the target child but also with other children in the class.



Potential unintended consequences

It is possible that the toolkit will lead to children feeling singled-out from their peers due to being treated differently, although we aim to avoid this and any other negative impacts where at all possible.

Through the use of the toolkit children in the study will hopefully develop social skills and greater self-esteem which may help them build stronger relationships. However, the students are also free to withdraw at any time if school staff, parents or the child feel that the intervention is causing them any problems or negative impacts.

Possible negative impacts of the toolkit will be monitored throughout the study and participating school staff will follow a defined procedure for reporting of negative impacts as soon as possible after they come to light. The research team will abide by any existing safeguarding protocols your school has as well.

Should a child or other participant of the study report severe worsening of ADHD symptoms or distress, the lead researcher (Dr Abby Russell) will consult with members on the study advisory board to decide on the most appropriate course of action. This may include: a clinician speaking directly to staff and families to ascertain whether the adverse effects are caused by the toolkit or research study or are external to this; the child and family withdrawing from the study; or individual plans being put in place to monitor and manage the situation.

Should a child or family withdraw from the study due to this, their existing data will not be used unless express consent is given at the time of withdrawal, and they will be able to continue to access the prototype intervention (as long as the study team are confident that this is not the cause of adverse effects) if they wish.

Data protection and confidentiality

The University of Exeter processes personal data for the purposes of carrying out research in the public interest. The University will endeavour to be transparent about its processing of your personal data and this information sheet should provide a clear explanation of this. If you do have any queries about the University's processing of your personal data that cannot be resolved by the research team, further information may be obtained from the University's Data



Protection Officer by emailing informationgovernance@exeter.ac.uk. or at <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/ig/>

The data we will collect from you includes recordings of the group discussion and interview, notes taken by the interviewer at the time, and any questionnaires that we ask you to complete. Recordings will be transcribed and made anonymous. These will be analysed along with other interviews and focus groups we are conducting. The data collected will be securely stored and only the researchers working on the project will be able to access it. In the interview if you feel hesitant or uncomfortable, you are reminded of your right to decline to answer any particular question(s).

The results of this project may be published, but any data included will not be individually identifiable to a school or student. A summary of the study findings will be sent to your school. You will be provided with a copy of your transcript and the findings of the study if you wish. Additionally, the anonymised data you provide may be used other related research – however this is optional.

Withdrawing your consent

You (and anyone else involved in this study) may withdraw from the study without needing to provide a reason at any point. This includes choosing to withdraw your participation and/or any data you provide – up until the point where the data have been anonymised, as it will no longer be possible to identify your information for removal. Should you be considering withdrawing, we would ask that you also discuss this with your SENCo and SLT, although this is not compulsory.

Funding

This research is funded by the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR): the research arm of the NHS. Specifically, it is funded by an Advanced Fellowship – Stage 2, Dr Abigail Russell, NIHR300591. The funding currently covers the project for 5 years, which began in July 2020.



Ethical approval

This study has received ethical approval from the University of Exeter College of Medicine and Health Research Ethics Committee (reference Jan22/B/300).

Contact details

If you have any questions about the Tools for Schools project, either now or in the future, please feel free visit [our website](#) for further information, or to contact Abby directly: she leads the research team:

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Our website:

<http://blogs.exeter.ac.uk/toolsforschools/>



Complaints

If you have any complaints about the way in which this study has been carried out, please contact the Chair of the University of Exeter Medical School Research Ethics Committee:

cmhethics@exeter.ac.uk

