

## **National disruption of medication supplies to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) – advice for schools (October 2023)**

As you may be aware there is a national supply disruption of some types of ADHD medication. The disruption is due to a combination of manufacturing issues and increased global demand. Please see the attached patient safety alert for more detailed information.

ADHD medication can help children in different ways. For some, it may help them move less in class, for others, it will help improve their attention/concentration, so that they are able to listen and engage with learning. For other children, it may help them be less impulsive, e.g., not running out of class, unable to wait their turn etc.

Supplies are not expected to be restored until various times between October and December 2023. Other strengths or brands are not expected to be able to support the excessive increased demand.

This may have an impact upon a number of the young people in your care. The following information will help you support young people and their families while they wait for the medication disruption to be resolved.

### **The advice to parents and carers is:**

- To continue their child on the current medication.
- To continue ordering repeat ADHD medication as usual, but to re-order when there are between 7-14 days of medication left to allow time to source the medication.
- To try to contact other pharmacies in the areas to check they have supplies.
- To contact the GP/specialist service if they have tried but are unable to find the ADHD medication for their child.
- To let the child's education setting know there is an issue with the supply of ADHD medication.
- To agree a plan with the school's SEN team about how to support their child to remain at school if their child is attending without having ADHD medication.

### **As part of the response to the national alert we would ask education settings to:**

- Identify children and young people within their care who may potentially be affected by the ADHD medication shortage.
- Consider what interventions are already in place to help manage ADHD and related behaviours and what further interventions and support needs to be in place if children and young people are off ADHD medication for more than ONE week.
- It is important to continue to show the child that they are a valued member of the class, even if their behaviour is less compliant or settled than usual because they are off their medication.
- For schools who administer ADHD medication, the advice would be to share the medication supply parents have at home and have a system in place to

take and handover the medication at the end of the school day. Due to the current shortages, it will not be possible to provide a separate supply for school and another supply for home.

- Ensure reasonable adjustments are made to accommodate continued access to learning for children with ADHD as per the [Equality Act 2010](#)
- Parents may choose to not provide medication over the weekend and school holidays to make their supply go further.

### Strategies for school

The information below may help develop strategies to support your staff and children at this time. However, please remember that there is not a 'one size fits all solution' and that all neurodiverse children and young people will have varied and differing support needs at different points in their life. Strategies implemented should be personalised to the individual child or young person.

Please educate staff and students at school about neurodiversity using neuro-affirmative language and approaches.

Students with ADHD may require reasonable adjustments to support them to be able to access the school environment (please discuss and liaise with parents and the young person about this).

The ADHD Foundation has collated a comprehensive set of [resources](#) tailored towards supporting children and young people with ADHD. We'd like to draw particular attention to their [Teaching and Managing Students with ADHD Teaching and Managing Students with ADHD](#) resource.

There is advice from Educational Psychologists including classroom strategies: <https://cms.bps.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/DECP%20Nonpharmacological%20interventions%20MAY%202022%20%284%29.pdf>

School staff could also work with students to look at resources designed for children and young people with ADHD and support them to identify alternative strategies which may work for them. For example:

- [ADHD ChildrensBooklet\\_London.pdf \(adhdfoundation.org.uk\)](#)
- [https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/ADHD\\_TeenagerBooklet\\_London.pdf](https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/ADHD_TeenagerBooklet_London.pdf)

**Additionally, please see the following advice:**

### *To support access to learning*

- activities may need to be chunked down into smaller, more achievable sections.

- activities may need to be presented visually or in an alternative format (e.g., task management boards, visual timetables; etc).
- do not change seating arrangements without warning.
- scaffold your child's learning opportunities around topics of interest and motivating factors to support engagement in learning.

### *To support at unstructured times*

- provide a safe place where they can go to eat or relax.
- relaxed lunchbox rules for children with restricted diets and identified safe foods.
- providing special interest groups/ clubs (not social skills groups) where they can meet with other children and young people with similar interests e.g., Pokémon club/ music club; etc.

### *To support understanding of new situations*

- use Social Stories™ to share accurate social information in a patient and reassuring manner that is easily understood by the child. The goal of a Social Story™ is never to change the child's behaviour but is there to support them to understand what usually happens in certain events.
- Comic Strip Conversations™ are simple visual representations of conversations that can be used to show:
  - things that are actually said in a conversation.
  - how people might be feeling
  - what people's intentions or thoughts might be
- five Point Scales are used to help children visually explore how they might be feeling in different situations. A five-point scale should be individualised to each child and is used to help them identify how they are feeling in situations.

### *To accommodate sensory differences*

- relaxed uniform regulations.
- movement breaks timetabled into the school day.
- allowing use of fidget toys
- providing the young person with a 'timeout' or 'break' card they can use when they need a break.
- use of ear defenders or noise cancelling headphones (with or without music playing)

### **Advice for children who become overwhelmed.**

Sometimes children become overwhelmed which leads to emotional outbursts that historically may have been described as having a 'meltdown'. An emotional outburst is an intense response to an overwhelming situation. It happens when someone becomes anxious and completely overwhelmed by their current situation and temporarily loses behavioural control. A young person may have an emotional outburst if they feel overwhelmed. An outburst is not a choice and children are not in control of their behaviour during an outburst. An outburst is not the same as a tantrum. It is not bad or naughty behaviour.

### ***Preventing sensory outbursts before they start:***

While certainly not all emotional outbursts can be prevented, there are things you can do to reduce the intensity and frequency of them.

- Make sure that the young person is always well hydrated by keeping a water bottle filled and reminding them to drink from it often.
- provide healthy snacks often throughout the day.
- keep an event log to identify potential triggers.
- allow access to noise cancelling headphones or ear defenders in class and for places that might be an issue.

They may benefit from implementing deep pressure activities throughout the day (every 2 hours). This could be helping move furniture, handing out water bottles/recourses, carrying folders to another class or wearing a weighted ruck sack.

### ***How to respond to an emotional outburst***

- Control your own response – remember that the young person is having a neurological response. You cannot help a child calm down if you are not calm yourself.
- Talk as little as possible. Once they are having a fight, flight, freeze response, their ability to access the part of the brain that processes language is essentially shut down. What works best is to say the same thing repetitively in a very calm, soft voice such as "let's breathe".
- Remove the young person from the environment to a place with very little sensory stimuli.
- If possible, provide a sensory area for them to go to with calming music, a soft or weighted blanket, noise cancelling headphones, chew, fidgets, a vibrating palm massager, and low lighting.
- Use a calm down kit. Be sure to have practised while they are calm so that the items and techniques will be familiar.
- Help them focus on regulating their breathing. Blowing bubbles, blowing a pinwheel or placing their hand on their stomach to feel it rise and fall are good techniques to try.

### Strategies at home

Both young people and their families may be feeling overwhelmed and uncertain at this time. If families are concerned, please signpost them to:

- their healthcare provider (note that the medicine shortages are national so alternatives may not be prescribed). The contact information will be on their clinic letter.

MPFT CAMHS Contact Details (Children and Adolescents)		NSCHT CAMHS Contact Details (Children and Adolescents)	
Stafford (09:00 – 5:00pm)	01785 221665	Dragon Square, Newcastle (09:00 – 5:00pm)	0300 790 0235
Tamworth (09:00 – 5:00pm)	01827 51183	South Stoke, Blurton (09:00 – 5:00pm)	0300 1230977
Burton-on-Trent (09:00 – 5:00pm)	01283 505820	North Stoke, Tunstall (09:00 – 5:00pm)	0300 123 0987
Litchfield (09:00 – 5:00pm)	01543 442012		
Cannock (09:00 – 5:00pm)	01543 479099		
MPFT Access Team (out of hours) <b>All ages</b>	0808 196 3002	<b>All age</b> Crisis Care Centre (out of hours)	0800 0328 728 (option 1)

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service:

- Staffordshire: [SENDIASS SEND IASS - Staffordshire Family Partnership \(staffs-iass.org\)](http://staffs-iass.org)
- Stoke: [Home – SENDIASS \(sendiass-stoke.co.uk\)](http://sendiass-stoke.co.uk)

[MoodSpark](#) – A space created by young people for young people to help navigate and learn about emotions.

[Resources Archive - ADHD Foundation : ADHD Foundation](#) – parent, family and child resources.