

ADHD AWARENESS GROUPS IMPACT REPORT

The findings in this report compile data from seven ADHD Awareness groups run in England from June 2023 to June 2024 run by Find you Spark. A total of 43 people attended the sessions. The primary goal of the ADHD awareness sessions is to raise awareness, gain acceptance of ADHD and provide strategies to manage symptoms.

All attendees were asked to complete a questionnaire at the beginning of the session to capture their reasons for attending and their expectations. They also completed a questionnaire at the end of the session to capture the key takeaways, what they most liked as well as measuring their confidence and awareness of ADHD.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The ADHD Awareness sessions were **rated highly by almost all** attendees. The content was found to be highly informative, engaging and many valued the real life stories.
- At the beginning of the session, almost half of the attendees had little to no knowledge of ADHD (40%), however by the end of the session, almost all attendees reported an increase in **awareness of ADHD (95%)** as well as a significant improvement in their **confidence of ADHD (96%)**.
- There are three types of people who attended the sessions; people experiencing symptoms of ADHD, family members and professionals. The primary audience is **parents (41%)** who want to support their child who has either been diagnosed with ADHD or is showing symptoms. The main goal for parents is to help their child gain a diagnosis and learn strategies to manage symptoms.
- More than half of attendees are **female (65%)**, this may be to do with gender differences in help seeking behaviour. Females are more likely to seek help early on in most health conditions.
- Getting **help with daily living skills, creating and maintaining routines** came out as one of the strongest needs that many attendees expressed. Some people wanted to get a better understanding of the role and importance of medication, however, this was secondary to learning techniques and developing practical skills to manage symptoms.
- Many parents wanted **help in getting a diagnosis**. They are keen to learn more about the routes to getting a diagnosis and the factors they should discuss with their GP.
- Many people left with a **strong positive perception of ADHD** by the end of the session. Some attendees reported having ADHD as a “*superpower*” and felt it had advantages in their life. Many people also expressed gaining a better understanding of how ADHD affects the brain. This suggests the sessions may help to de-stigmatise ADHD and help people feel more comfortable in getting support.

- Almost all attendees (**97%**) **said they would recommend** the sessions to others. The vast majority felt the structure of the sessions met their expectations and was delivered with a good level of information at a good pace. A few suggestions include the use of more real life stories and potentially using more visual aids.

Recommendations:

- **Audience:** Given the different audience types, it may be helpful to find out ahead of time who is attending in order to tailor the session to meet the needs of the majority audience group. For example parents might be more interested in the importance of getting a diagnosis whereas professionals might be more interested in spotting the signs of ADHD in schools or the workplace.
- **Targeting parents:** Given that a significant number of people were attending to help someone they know with ADHD, will be good to consider ways to target the parent population. Either through schools or other voluntary organisations.
- **Basics:** Given that the majority of attendees have little to no knowledge of ADHD, sessions should be geared to focus primarily on the basics, including more information on routes to diagnosis and pro's and con's of medication.
- **Gender differences:** May be helpful to think about gender differences in ADHD and whether it's picked up earlier or later in certain genders. For example, it may be that ADHD is recognised later in males rather than females due to hormonal differences?
- **Daily living/coping skills:** The strategies and coping mechanisms should focus around daily living skills, particularly around forming and maintaining routines which many struggle with as well as how to communicate with people who are struggling.
- **See life through their eyes of ADHD:** Many people wanted to understand what it's like for someone living with ADHD and to see the world through their eyes. May be useful to include **more real life examples** or create an exercise to help people understand what it's like in the minds of those with ADHD.
- **Diagnosis:** Sessions may want to cover whether the pathways for diagnosis differ for young people and adults? Understanding why a diagnosis is important but also the limitations around a diagnosis.
- **Symptoms across the age groups:** It may be helpful to think about the condition and symptoms for children versus adults, what's similar/different? There appears to be a mix of people from different ages, with some getting diagnosed at an earlier age through parents and schools whilst others get diagnosed later.
- **Needs of professionals:** Some people are attending for professional reasons. It will be good to consider what their primary needs are compared to friends and family members and how they can support someone with ADHD in a professional capacity.
- **Community:** Some attendees expressed a desire to connect with others who are on a similar journey with ADHD. Find Your Spark may want to develop an online community that attendees can be part of following the end of the session to carry on the connections and the learnings.
- **Marketing:** Recommendations through friends and family was the most common way that people found out about the sessions. This has implications for growth. The magazine was somewhat effective but very few came through social media. May need to consider other avenues to raise awareness and where to place marketing efforts, for example liaison with schools, GP practices or employers?

KEY FINDINGS

Attendees

- A total of 43 people attended seven ADHD Awareness Groups from June 2023 to June 2024.
- Group size ranged from four to eleven attendees, with an average number of six attendees per group.
- Majority of attendees were female (65%) and 35% male.

Findings from Pre-Questionnaire

Who is attending the sessions?

- Almost half (41%) of attendees are parents, who are seeking help for their son or daughter with ADHD.
- 14% of those attending said they have been diagnosed with ADHD.
- 9% have undiagnosed ADHD symptoms.
- 16% of attendees signed up to learn more about ADHD.
- Other reasons for attending include those who are working with children or adults with ADHD.

ADHD Awareness prior to session

- Attendees were asked to rate their awareness of ADHD on a scale from 1 - 10, with a higher rating signifying greater awareness.
- 40% of attendees had very little to no awareness of ADHD, giving a rating between 1-3.
- Around half, 54%, of attendees had some awareness of ADHD at the beginning of the session.
- Only 7% of attendees gave a higher rating of ADHD awareness between 8 - 10, indicating good knowledge of the condition. But this was very few.

Stage that attendees are at in the ADHD journey

- 51% of attendees are there to learn more to support someone close who has ADHD.
- 23% have an ADHD diagnosis.
- 12% of attendees haven't started the process.

Hopes for the session

- Most people's hopes for the session focused on gaining a better understanding of ADHD (35%) and how to manage symptoms either for themselves or others.

“Help manage my daughter’s behaviour and understand how her mind works.”

- Attendees want to understand how ADHD impacts thinking and life skills.
- Most are seeking to gain practical skills and strategies to manage symptoms such as day to day mood swings, better routines with some emphasis on medication.

“Learning more about living well and thriving with ADHD. Learning how I can live in a way that doesn’t work against my abilities and difficulties.”

- Some people talked about the need to understand the benefits of medication for ADHD , however most of the focus tended to be on coping strategies to manage symptoms.
- A few people also talked about connecting with others who are on a similar journey.

What burning question do you have?

- All attendees completed this question which suggests that people have many questions about the topic.
- Majority of the questions focused on getting an understanding of how to help someone with ADHD and developing daily life skills. This includes creating routines to develop skills to manage life independently.

“How can I help A to manage his day to day life without either nagging or having to micro manage.”

- Some attendees wanted to understand more about the role of medication and what it does for ADHD.
- Others wanted to understand how a person with ADHD sees the world and how their symptoms change over time.

“How does it change/develop as the person grows up?”

How did people find out about the sessions

- Word of mouth is the primary way that attendees have found about the sessions.
- 23% of attendees found out about the groups through a friend or family member.
- 16% found out through Michelle, 14% through the Mersea magazine, 12% through The Chill Out Centre, 7% through Facebook and 2% LinkedIn.

What else the sessions can assist with

- Getting help with a diagnosis came out as the strongest issue people wanted assistance with. Sessions should consider issues around diagnosis, how a diagnosis can help and explore the different pathways to diagnosis for young people and adults.
- Some people are seeking to connect with others with ADHD.

- Those that are coming from a professional perspective are seeking information to enable them to provide advice and support to people with ADHD.

About the structure of future session and confidentiality

- No suggestions were made for things to accommodate in future sessions.
- All attendees agreed for their data to be processed.
- Around half of attendees were happy for their photos to be used, whilst 28% did not want their pictures to be used.

Findings from Post Questionnaire

Top 3 takeaways

- The top three takeaways are;
 - *Understanding symptoms*, different types of ADHD, challenges and behaviour.
 - *Develop organisation skills*, such as routines, planning and taking notes. Some attendees found the use of mind maps helpful to organise ideas and picking days to do housework to make more achievable.
 - *Routines of diagnosis and treatment* options.
- Other takeaways include learning about the positive benefits and strengths of ADHD, the strategies to communicate better and learning the importance of exercise for managing ADHD symptoms.

What attendees liked most about session

- Most attendees felt the information presented and the facts were interesting and informative.
- Attendees liked the size and structure of the group, the opportunity to meet with others who understood them.
- Many attendees also highlighted the facilitator's (Michelle) passion, delivery and life story as engaging and one of the elements they liked most about the session.

"The session was brilliant - Michelle is a superstar and I am extremely grateful for this as it feels it is life-changing for me."

- Others also noted they liked hearing the stories and experiences of others as well as looking at ADHD from a positive standpoint.

Feedback on structure of session (structure, venue, pace)

- Most attendees rated the structure, venue and facilities highly. 81% of attendees felt it was suitable.
- Some suggestions included different chairs, better lighting, the use of IT and more visuals would have been helpful, but these were not seen as pressing needs.
- Similarly, most attendees felt the structure, pace and duration of the session was suitable (84%). A few recommendations included giving handouts at the start of the

sessions, incorporating more real life stories and a slightly longer session to cover the depth of material.

How attendees described ADHD at the end of the session

- The majority of attendees described ADHD in a positive way by the end of the session. Many expressed viewing ADHD as a strength and “a *superpower*”.
- Some expressed that the diagnosis doesn't have to define you.

“It doesn't have to define you and there are many strengths.”

- Others explained that they now understood ADHD as a difference in how the brain works for some people.
- Nobody saw ADHD in a negative way.
- Overall by the end of the session most people expressed gaining a positive and more informative view of ADHD.

Recommend to others?

- Of the people who answered this question, all said they would recommend the session because they found it helpful and it increased their awareness of ADHD.
- Almost half of attendees said they would like to take the ADHD Coaching session.
- Almost everyone (97%) of attendees said they would recommend the session and found it engaging.

Awareness of ADHD and Confidence in ADHD

- Almost all of the attendees (95%) who rated their awareness of ADHD at the end of the session felt they had gained more awareness of the condition.
- Almost all of the attendees (96%) who rated their confidence, felt the session increased their confidence of understanding ADHD by the end.