



Preparing for Your ADHD Assessment

Understanding the DIVA-5 Interview

About This Document

This document explains the areas we will explore during your ADHD assessment. The DIVA-5 (Diagnostic Interview for ADHD in adults) and Young DIVA-5 (for children and young people aged 5-17) are structured conversations that help us understand how ADHD symptoms affect real life across different settings and situations.

Important: This document describes the areas we will discuss, not the exact wording of the questions. The actual interview uses specific questions from the DIVA instruments, but what matters for your preparation is understanding the concepts we will explore together, not memorising particular phrasings.

This is not a coaching document. We are not telling you what to say or what answers we are looking for. Instead, we want to help you prepare mentally for the conversation so that you can provide us with honest, specific examples of your genuine experiences.

Better preparation leads to better assessment quality. When you have thought things through beforehand and can recall specific examples, we get a much clearer and more accurate picture of how ADHD symptoms affect daily life.

For Parents and Carers of Children and Young People

This document is for your preparation, not for coaching your child. During the assessment, you will be answering most or all of the questions based on your observations and experiences as a parent. The clinician will explore your understanding of how symptoms affect your child across different areas of life.

The amount of direct conversation with your child varies depending on their age, maturity, and presentation. Younger children may not be directly interviewed at all, while older young people may have more active involvement. Either way, your preparation is what matters most.

Use this document to:

- Mentally organise your observations and experiences
- Recall specific examples from your child's current life and earlier childhood
- Think about functional impact across home, school, and social settings

- Bring notes if helpful (many parents find this useful)

For Adult Patients

This document helps you prepare for discussing your own experiences. The assessment explores how ADHD symptoms have affected you both in childhood and in your current adult life.

Use this document to:

- Recall specific examples from your childhood and current life
- Think about how symptoms affect work, relationships, home life, and daily functioning
- Identify concrete examples rather than general impressions
- Bring notes if helpful
- Share this with your informant if someone is providing information about you

How the DIVA-5 Interview Works

The DIVA-5 is a semi-structured interview, which means it is not a rigid tick-box questionnaire. Instead, it is a guided conversation that explores 18 different symptom areas. For each area, we will discuss:

- Whether the symptom is present
- How it shows up in real life (specific examples)
- How it affects functioning (what problems does it cause)
- How long it has been present
- Whether it occurs across multiple settings (home, school/work, social situations)

What we are looking for is functional impairment. This means understanding not just that a symptom exists, but how it actually affects daily life and creates difficulties.

The Conversation Will Flow Naturally

The conversation will flow naturally rather than following the numbered sequence you will see below. As we talk, the clinician will move between different symptom areas as topics naturally connect, exploring situations and examples that relate to multiple areas at once.

You do not need to worry about which specific question we are addressing at any given moment. The clinician is skilled at guiding the conversation in a way that feels relaxed and natural while ensuring all necessary areas are thoroughly explored. Afterwards, the clinician will carefully analyse everything discussed, identifying where your experiences align with specific diagnostic criteria.

This is why thoughtful preparation beforehand is so valuable. When you have already reflected on these areas and can recall specific examples, it enables you to provide rich, detailed information during a natural conversation. The clinician can then piece this information together within the diagnostic framework to reach an accurate conclusion.

Time Periods We Explore

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental condition, meaning symptoms must have been present from childhood. Therefore, we explore two time periods:

For Children and Young People:

- **Current Presentation** - How symptoms affect them now
- **Earlier Childhood** - How symptoms presented in early years (typically before age 12)

For Adults:

- **Current Adult Life** - How symptoms affect you now
- **Childhood (ages 5-12)** - How symptoms presented in your early years

Important Reminders

- **There are no right or wrong answers.** We want to understand your genuine experiences, not hear what you think we want to hear.
- **Bring notes if helpful.** Many people find it easier to recall specific examples when they have written things down beforehand.
- **It is okay to say you don't know** or that you cannot remember specific examples. That information is also useful.
- **Symptoms vary.** Not everyone with ADHD has all symptoms, and symptoms can look different in different people.
- **This is a conversation, not a test.** We will explore these areas together, and you can ask questions at any time.

The 18 ADHD Symptom Areas

The following sections describe the 18 areas we will explore during your assessment. For each area, we have provided prompts to help you think about how the symptom might show up in real life. Use these as a starting point for reflection, not as a checklist.

Section A: Attention and Concentration Problems

A1. Difficulty Paying Attention to Details or Making Careless Mistakes

What we will explore:

We will discuss whether there is a pattern of missing important details, overlooking small but important elements, or making mistakes due to not processing information carefully enough. This is not about lack of intelligence or ability, but about attention to detail.

Think about examples of:

- Silly mistakes in schoolwork or professional tasks despite knowing better
- Skipping over important information in instructions or forms

- Submitting work with obvious errors that were not noticed
- Having to double-check and triple-check everything
- Others finding mistakes that were completely missed

Consider the impact on:

- Academic or work quality
- Need for constant checking and proofreading
- Confidence in own work

A2. Difficulty Sustaining Attention in Tasks or Activities

What we will explore:

We will discuss difficulty maintaining focus on tasks that require sustained mental effort, especially when the task is boring, repetitive, or not immediately rewarding. This is different from choosing not to do something or being distracted by more interesting activities.

Think about examples of:

- Tasks that should be doable but feel impossible to stick with
- Starting tasks with good intentions but finding attention wandering
- Having to reread the same page multiple times because nothing is going in
- Homework or work tasks taking much longer than they should because of losing focus
- Struggling through meetings, lectures, films, or activities that require sustained attention

Consider the impact on:

- School or work performance
- Completion of daily tasks
- Feelings of frustration or inadequacy

A3. Not Listening When Spoken to Directly

What we will explore:

We will discuss whether the mind wanders or seems elsewhere even when someone is speaking directly. This is not about deliberate ignoring or defiance, but about attention drifting away despite trying to listen.

Think about examples of:

- People having to repeat things multiple times
- Realising there is no idea what someone just said despite looking at them
- Missing important information in conversations or instructions
- People saying 'you never listen' or 'I just told you that'
- Feeling present physically but absent mentally

Consider the impact on:

- Relationships (people feeling unheard or unimportant)
- Missing important instructions at school or work
- Making mistakes due to missed information

A4. Not Following Through on Instructions or Failing to Finish Tasks

What we will explore:

We will discuss starting tasks but not completing them, or not following through on instructions despite understanding them. This is about difficulty with task completion, not about understanding or ability.

Think about examples of:

- Multiple half-finished projects or tasks around the home
- Starting homework or work tasks but getting sidetracked before completion
- Understanding what needs to be done but somehow never getting it finished
- Chores or responsibilities that remain perpetually incomplete
- Good intentions but poor follow-through

Consider the impact on:

- Academic or work performance
- Household functioning
- Others' perception of reliability or commitment

A5. Difficulty Organising Tasks and Activities

What we will explore:

We will discuss struggles with planning, organising, and managing time. Difficulty breaking tasks into steps, prioritising, or keeping track of what needs to be done when.

Think about examples of:

- Feeling overwhelmed by tasks that have multiple steps
- Chronic lateness or difficulty judging how long things take
- Messy or chaotic living or working spaces
- Struggling to plan ahead or prepare for upcoming events
- Missing deadlines despite having enough time

Consider the impact on:

- Meeting commitments and deadlines
- Managing daily responsibilities
- Stress levels and feelings of being overwhelmed

A6. Avoidance of Tasks Requiring Sustained Mental Effort

What we will explore:

We will discuss putting off or avoiding tasks that require concentration or mental effort, not because of inability to do them, but because they feel unreasonably difficult or draining. Procrastination that feels beyond control.

Think about examples of:

- Putting off homework, paperwork, or administrative tasks
- Finding any excuse to delay starting difficult tasks
- Last-minute panic to complete things that have been avoided
- Choosing easier or more immediately rewarding activities instead
- Guilt and stress about avoidance but still unable to start

Consider the impact on:

- Academic or career progression
- Completing important life tasks (finances, healthcare, etc.)
- Self-esteem and feelings of laziness or failure

A7. Losing Things Necessary for Tasks or Activities

What we will explore:

We will discuss frequently misplacing or losing items needed for daily activities. Keys, phones, glasses, wallets, school books, tools, or other essentials going missing regularly.

Think about examples of:

- Spending significant time each day searching for misplaced items
- Repeatedly buying replacements for lost items
- Being late because of not being able to find what is needed
- Leaving possessions behind in various places
- Others having to help locate belongings

Consider the impact on:

- Punctuality and reliability
- Financial cost of replacements
- Frustration and daily stress

A8. Easily Distracted by External Stimuli

What we will explore:

We will discuss attention being pulled away by things happening around, even when trying to focus. Background noise, movement, or other activities capturing attention involuntarily.

Think about examples of:

- Being unable to work or study in busy or noisy environments

- Losing train of thought when something catches eye or ear
- Difficulty in classrooms, offices, or public spaces due to distractions
- Noticing everything happening around when should be focusing
- Needing complete silence or isolation to concentrate

Consider the impact on:

- Productivity in typical work or school settings
- Ability to concentrate in group situations
- Need for accommodations or special arrangements

A9. Forgetfulness in Daily Activities

What we will explore:

We will discuss forgetting routine tasks, appointments, commitments, or daily responsibilities. This is different from occasionally forgetting something, and instead represents a persistent pattern of memory problems.

Think about examples of:

- Missing appointments or meetings despite writing them down
- Forgetting to complete promised tasks or chores
- Needing extensive reminder systems just to remember basic tasks
- Forgetting to pass on messages or important information
- Relying heavily on others to provide reminders

Consider the impact on:

- Reliability and trustworthiness
- Relationships (people feeling let down)
- Daily functioning and independence

Section B: Hyperactivity and Impulsivity

B1. Fidgeting or Squirming

What we will explore:

We will discuss physical restlessness that is difficult to control. Fidgeting with hands or feet, squirming in seat, or being unable to sit still. In adults, this might be more subtle, such as tapping, leg bouncing, or constant small movements.

Think about examples of:

- Constantly moving hands, feet, or body even when trying to be still
- Fidgeting with objects, pens, phones, or anything within reach
- Leg bouncing, foot tapping, or other repetitive movements
- Difficulty sitting through meetings, classes, or cinema films
- Others commenting on restlessness

Consider the impact on:

- Ability to sit through required situations
- Distraction to others
- Internal discomfort or tension

B2. Leaving Seat in Situations Where Remaining Seated is Expected

What we will explore:

We will discuss getting up and moving around when expected to remain seated. In children, this might be getting out of the chair in class. In adults, it might be needing to get up frequently during meetings or meals.

Think about examples of:

- Frequently leaving seat in class or at work
- Finding excuses to get up and move around
- Feeling trapped or uncomfortable when required to stay seated
- Volunteering for tasks just to have a reason to move
- Being unable to sit through entire meals or events

Consider the impact on:

- Classroom or workplace behaviour
- Social situations and family meals
- Following expected social norms

B3. Running About, Climbing, or Feelings of Restlessness

What we will explore:

We will discuss physical overactivity that is inappropriate for the situation. In children, this might be literal running or climbing. In adults, this usually manifests as feelings of restlessness or being physically uncomfortable staying still.

Think about examples of:

- Running or being overly physically active when it is not appropriate (children)
- Internal restlessness or feeling like constant movement is needed (adults)
- Difficulty engaging in quiet activities
- Always on the go, as if driven by a motor
- Choosing active pursuits over sedentary ones, even when rest would be better

Consider the impact on:

- Safety (particularly for children)
- Ability to relax or rest
- Energy levels and exhaustion

B4. Difficulty Engaging in Leisure Activities Quietly

What we will explore:

We will discuss being unable to do things quietly. Making noise during activities that should be quiet, or being the loudest person in the room without realising it.

Think about examples of:

- Being told to be quieter or keep the noise down
- Making noise without realising (humming, tapping, talking to self)
- Disrupting quiet environments like libraries or cinemas
- Having a loud voice or being unable to control volume
- Struggling with activities that require silence

Consider the impact on:

- Social situations requiring quiet behaviour
- Relationships with others who need quiet
- Settings like workplaces, libraries, or places of worship

B5. Being On the Go or Acting as if Driven by a Motor

What we will explore:

We will discuss feeling constantly driven to be active or busy. Difficulty relaxing or being still, as if there is an internal motor that never stops. This can be physical or mental restlessness.

Think about examples of:

- Always needing to be doing something
- Feeling uncomfortable or anxious when not busy
- Unable to just sit and relax without feeling restless
- Others describing being always on the go
- Difficulty winding down at the end of the day

Consider the impact on:

- Ability to rest and recharge
- Sleep quality
- Stress and burnout

B6. Talking Excessively

What we will explore:

We will discuss talking more than is appropriate or necessary for the situation. Difficulty controlling the amount of talking, even when aware that stopping would be better.

Think about examples of:

- Dominating conversations without meaning to
- Others having difficulty getting a word in

- Talking even when there is nothing important to say
- Being told about talking too much
- Difficulty staying quiet when aware that silence would be better

Consider the impact on:

- Relationships (others feeling unheard)
- Professional situations
- Social interactions and friendships

B7. Blurting Out Answers Before Questions are Completed

What we will explore:

We will discuss difficulty waiting for a turn or letting others finish. Jumping in with answers or comments before it is appropriate, interrupting the flow of conversation or classroom activities.

Think about examples of:

- Answering questions before they are fully asked
- Shouting out answers in class or meetings
- Finishing other people's sentences
- Difficulty waiting for turn in conversation
- Being told about interrupting or not listening

Consider the impact on:

- Classroom or workplace participation
- Social relationships
- Others' perception as rude or impatient

B8. Difficulty Waiting Turn

What we will explore:

We will discuss struggling to wait turn in games, queues, conversations, or any situation requiring patience. Impatience that goes beyond normal frustration.

Think about examples of:

- Extreme frustration when having to wait
- Pushing ahead in queues or trying to skip turns
- Choosing not to participate rather than wait
- Difficulty playing games that require taking turns
- Road rage or impatience in traffic

Consider the impact on:

- Social situations and games
- Daily frustration levels

- Relationships with peers or colleagues

B9. Interrupting or Intruding on Others

What we will explore:

We will discuss butting into conversations or activities without being invited. Difficulty respecting others' space, time, or conversations. Intruding on others even when aware it is not appropriate.

Think about examples of:

- Interrupting conversations or activities
- Barging in without knocking or checking if it is a good time
- Taking over what others are doing
- Not picking up on social cues that indicate intrusion
- Being told about being too pushy or invasive

Consider the impact on:

- Relationships and friendships
- Professional boundaries
- Others' perception as intrusive or disrespectful

Final Preparation Tips

As you prepare for your assessment:

- Do not worry if you cannot think of examples for every area. Not everyone with ADHD has all symptoms.
- Focus on honest, specific examples rather than vague generalisations.
- Think about how symptoms affect functioning, not just whether they exist.
- Bring any notes, old school reports, or other documentation that might help.
- Remember that this is a conversation, not a test. We will explore these areas together.

If you have questions about the assessment process or what to expect, please do not hesitate to contact us before your appointment. We are here to help.

Contact Information

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This document follows NICE guideline NG87 for ADHD assessment and management.