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UNDERSTANDING UNLOCKED



ADHD IN CUSTODY

A guide to
police custody
for ADHDers

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GLOSSARY

ADHD: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

An ADHDer: a person who has ADHD.

Criminal Justice System: a collection of groups which deal with crime e.g. Police, courts, prisons.

Custody: when you have been arrested and are being held by the police.

Custody record: a record of: the reasons for your arrest and detention; police actions taken; any checkups.

Detention: the act of lawfully holding you and preventing your freedom.

Masking: behaviour which hides or lessens the impact or visibility of ADHD features.

Neurodivergent: having different brain 'wiring' compared to most people e.g. ADHD, Autism, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia/DCD.

Procedural safeguards: rules which protect you and your rights.

Reasonable adjustments: changes which can be made to help you.

ABOUT ADHD

What is it?

You might want to tell the police about your ADHD, but find it difficult to explain.

ADHD is present **from birth**, throughout childhood and adulthood, in both **males** and **females**.

ADHD is **neurodevelopmental**. This means it affects how the brain is 'wired' (developed and structured).

ADHD is not always obvious. This can be because some people are very good at **masking** (especially females).



ADHD brain 'wiring' falls into 3 types:

- Mainly **inattentive**
- Mainly **hyperactive-impulsive**
- **Combined** inattentive and hyperactive-impulsive



Different brain 'wiring' means ADHDers' brains also **work differently**.

How ADHD presents depends on the **type**, and if you are **male** or **female**.



ADHD is different for every person. We will list **some** of the **many possibilities**.



Common Challenges

Common challenges for 'inattentive' ADHDers include:

- **Attention** and managing **distractions**
- **Focus**
- **Concentration**



Common challenges for 'hyperactive-impulsive' ADHDers include:

- **Impulse control**
- Managing **hyperactivity**



Common challenges for 'combined' ADHDers include a **mix** of the above.



There can be small overlaps between 'inattentive' and 'hyperactive-impulsive' without being 'combined'.

Inattentive challenges commonly look like:

- Being easily distracted and inattentive
- Difficulty focusing and concentrating
- Forgetfulness
- Disorganisation
- Appearing to not be listening
- Difficulty following instructions
- Losing things
- Difficulty with attention to detail
- Boredom



In **females**, inattentive challenges may also look like: ^{1 2}

- Being very chatty, enthusiastic or engaged
- Daydreaming and distractibility
- Impulsiveness
- Fidgeting



Hyperactive-impulsive challenges commonly look like:

- Interrupting others
- Taking risks
- Difficulty waiting and taking turns
- Fidgeting, restlessness, repetitive movements
- Difficulty staying quiet and still
- Being on the go all the time
- Being talkative
- Rushing
- Blurting things out



Combined challenges look like a mix of inattentive and hyperactive-impulsive.

ADHDers may also face challenges managing: emotions; rejection; criticism; relationships; memory; procrastination; time; and hyperfocus.

Why does ADHD matter in police custody?

1 in 4 people in the Criminal Justice System are **ADHDers**.^{3 4}

The CJS **fails** to **spot** ADHD most of the time. This is a huge **barrier** to accessing **support**.⁵

It is **important** that the police know about your ADHD to:

- meet your **needs**;
- **understand** you better, including the ways you **think**, **feel**, and **do** things due to ADHD;
- **protect** your interests, rights, entitlements, and welfare;
- make sure the custody process is **fair** and does what it should do.



Understanding you is especially important because ADHDers may be **more likely** to:

- confess to things they did not do; ⁶
- go along with what others say or do; ⁷
- reply “don’t know” in police interviews; ⁷
- have other neurodevelopmental differences; ⁴
- struggle to get used to being in custody and react disruptively; ⁴
- find police interviews difficult practically and emotionally; ⁸
- cope with stress in unhelpful ways; ⁷
- give vague answers in police interviews, which could be misunderstood as being dishonest, avoidant, or uncooperative. ⁷



MY LEGAL RIGHTS

What are they?

If you are arrested and taken into custody the **law** gives you the **right** to:

- free independent **legal advice**;
- **have someone informed** of your arrest and detention;
- **see the rules** that police must follow;
- **medical help** (including taking your own medication). People with vulnerabilities should get more frequent check-ups;
- **see your custody record.**



APPROPRIATE ADULTS

What are they?

Appropriate Adults are adults who **support**, and **protect** the **interests**, **rights**, **welfare**, and **entitlements** of a child or vulnerable person who has been **arrested** and **detained**, or is being **questioned** by police.



Do I need one?

Under 18s are **required** to have an Appropriate Adult by law.



Adults (18+) are **only required** by law to have an Appropriate Adult if the police have a **reason to suspect** they are **vulnerable**.



What do they do?

Support, **advise** and **assist** you if you are under 18 or a vulnerable adult;



Observe whether the police are:



- acting **appropriately** and **fairly**;
- **respecting** your **rights** and **entitlements**; and **inform** an Inspector (or more senior officer) if the police are **not** doing so.

Help with **communication** between you and the police;



Help you to **understand** your **rights** and **entitlements**, and ensure they are **protected** and **respected**; and



Seek legal advice on your behalf.



Who can be my appropriate adult?

For under 18s: a **parent, guardian, caretaker** or **social worker**.

For adults: a **relative, guardian**, or person **responsible** for your **care** or **custody**.

A **vulnerability experienced** adult, but **not**:

- a **police officer**;
- a person **employed** by the police; or
- a person **controlled** by the police.

Another **responsible adult**.

A **solicitor can** be an Appropriate Adult if:

- the police **cannot** get another Appropriate Adult to attend; and
- they are **not acting** as a **solicitor** when **attending**.



Who cannot be my appropriate adult?

Any person (including **parents** and **guardians**) who:

- is **suspected** of being involved in the offence;
- is the **victim**;
- is a **witness**;
- is involved in **investigating** the offence;
- has **received** an **admission** or **denial** of guilt **before** they attended as the Appropriate Adult;
- you are **estranged** from (no longer have a relationship with);
- is **under 18** years old.



Who is a 'vulnerable person'?

The law says 'vulnerable people' are **adults** who may be **more likely** to:

- **be convinced, confused, or go along** with what **others** do or say;
- give **unreliable, misleading or incriminating** information **without knowing or meaning** to;
- have **difficulty understanding and communicating** about the implications of police procedures and processes;
- **not understand the importance** of what they are told, questions they are asked, and their replies;
- **not understand** or be able to **exercise their rights and entitlements.**



There are a wide range of reasons an adult may be considered 'vulnerable' - it depends on the **individual**. Examples include:

- Age
- Hearing differences
- Sight differences
- Speech and language differences
- Learning disabilities
- Drug/alcohol dependence
- Mental health conditions
- Menopause
- Being neurodivergent (including learning difficulties, ADHD, Autism).



I'm over 18. How do I get an Appropriate Adult?

If *you* think you are vulnerable:

You **arrive** at the Custody Suite.

You **immediately tell** the **Police** or **Custody Officer** about what makes you **vulnerable**. (A diagnosis is not required).

The Custody Officer **decides if** you are **vulnerable** and **tells you why**.

If you are vulnerable, the Custody Officer will **arrange** an Appropriate Adult.

The **Custody Officer** will:

- **Identify** a suitable person;
- **Inform** them; and
- **Ask** them to **come** to the **Police Station**.



If *the Police* think you are vulnerable:

You **arrive** at the Custody Suite.

The police **immediately tell** (or have already told) the **Custody Officer** that they think you are **vulnerable**. (A diagnosis is not required).

The Custody Officer **decides if** you are **vulnerable** and **tells you why**.

If you are vulnerable, the Custody Officer will **arrange** an Appropriate Adult.

The **Custody Officer** will:

- **Identify** a suitable person;
- **Inform** them; and
- **Ask** them to **come** to the **Police Station**.



I'm under 18. How do I get an Appropriate Adult?

All under 18s **must** have an Appropriate Adult.

The Custody Officer **identifies** anyone who **appears** to be **under 18**.

The Custody Officer **must** then:

- **tell you** you need an Appropriate Adult;
- **contact** an Appropriate Adult as **soon as possible**;
- **ask** them to **come** to the **police station**.

I don't want an Appropriate Adult.

Under 18s and **vulnerable** adults **must** have an Appropriate Adult and **cannot refuse**.



I'm waiting for an Appropriate Adult

You (or your legal representative) can **ask** the Custody Officer if an Appropriate Adult has been **contacted**.

Usually, **without** an Appropriate Adult **present**, the police **must not**:

- **interview** you;
- **ask** you to give or sign a **written statement under caution**;
- **ask** you to sign a **record of interview**;

Without an Appropriate Adult **present**, the police can **only** do those things in order to **avoid** the **likely risk** of:

- **interference** with or **harm** to a person or to evidence;
- **serious loss** of or **damage** to property;
- **alerting suspects** who have not been arrested yet;
- making it **harder** to **recover** property.



MY NEEDS

What might be difficult for me?

Being in custody can be stressful for anyone. Some ADHDers find certain parts harder e.g.:

- Not knowing what is going to happen;
- Keeping track of time;
- Absorbing and remembering important information;
- Making important decisions;
- Concentration, focus, attention, distractibility;
- Managing boredom or hyperactivity;
- Waiting around;
- Not having your usual coping mechanisms;
- Sitting still and not fidgeting;

- Managing how you feel e.g. stressed, overwhelmed, anxious, frustrated;
- Being away from your support network e.g. family and friends;
- Making sure you can get and take your medication (if you take medication usually);
- Change in routine;
- Following instructions and processes;
- Not being able to 'switch off' or relax;
- Sound, smell, sight, touch, taste;
- e.g. it is too noisy, lights are too bright, it is too cold, overwhelming smells, clothing feels scratchy etc.
- Being in a busy and unpredictable place;
- Ignoring other people's behaviour;
- Managing impulsiveness;
- Stress making ADHD challenges more pronounced and harder to manage.

What help can I get?

You have a **right** to **reasonable adjustments** if you have a **mental** or **physical disability** or an **impairment**. What is 'reasonable' depends on the individual circumstances.

Some examples which may be useful include:

- Regular breaks;
- Reminding the police how ADHD affects you (e.g. communication, memory, focus);
- Communicating to you clearly, concisely, and slowly;
- Giving information verbally and in writing;
- Accommodating taking medication;
- Prioritising giving/requesting information at times of day when concentration, memory, hyperactivity etc is better;

- Step-by-step explanation of what will happen in custody, and reminding you throughout;
 - e.g. you will be booked in by the Custody Sergeant who will ask you questions and do a risk assessment, you will be taken to a cell, you will be interviewed.
- Checking your understanding of information before giving you new information;
- Providing accessible/alternative formats e.g. large print, pictures/diagrams;
- Quiet cells/custody areas;
- Sensory stimulation e.g. fidget spinner, stress ball, tangle;
- Distractions e.g. books, puzzles, games;
- Avoid long waits;
- Consistency - same point of contact throughout, regular updates, routines;
- Respecting personal space.

THE LAW

A list of some of the most relevant guidance.

The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) Code C

- **1.0** (reference to the Equality Act 2010)
- **1.4** (treating as vulnerable)
- **1.5** (appearing under 18)
- **1.7** (defines the role of Appropriate Adults)
- **1.13(d)** (defines vulnerable)
- **3.1** and **3.2** (rights in custody)
- **3.5** and **3.15** (police obligations regarding Appropriate Adults)
- **11.1** (exceptions to not interviewing without Appropriate Adult)
- **11.15** (restrictions without Appropriate Adult)

Crime and Disorder Act 1998 section 38(4) (Appropriate Adult for under 18s)

The Equality Act 2010 section 149 (public sector duty not to discriminate)

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