



Playing Attention

Helping those in the games industry understand and accommodate
ADHD in themselves, their peers, and their employees

Introduction	2
Mission Statement	3
Beliefs	3
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	4
Management and Decision-Making	4
Community	4
Games Industry	4
Values	5
Pillars	5
Educate	5
Facilitate	5
Accommodate	5
Intentions	6
Actions	6
How Can You Help	7
Organisation	7
Founder	7
Board Members	7
Supporters	7
Advisory Board	8
References	9

Introduction

In the most recent survey by UKIE, it was found that 1 in 10 respondents considered themselves to have ADHD (UKIE, 2022) . Current estimates suggest that the UK video game sector employs roughly 30,000 people (Clement, 2021). That would suggest at least 3,000 people working in the industry are aware of having ADHD, but, compared to the number of people who may actually have ADHD, that figure is considered extremely conservative. The reason for this conservative number is due to a number of factors:

- Education about the signs of ADHD is minimal to non-existent in the UK. It is generally considered as a hyperactivity disorder found only in children (Agnew-Blais, 2016)
- Women are ludicrously underdiagnosed across the world, let alone the UK. Whilst some estimates suggest the ratio could be 3:1 or even 4:1 boys to girls (Hire et al., 2015), this is representative of those who are diagnosed, and as women tend to have ADHD Inattentive type and have been found to learn how to mask/hide their manifestations from an earlier age (Quinn, 2014), figures based on existing diagnosis alone cannot be considered accurate or representative.
- Along with the above, ADHD is generally considered by society as synonymous with "hyperactive and difficult young boy" (Trotman, 2021), meaning anyone who doesn't fit this bracket may not consider themselves to have ADHD and will not seek diagnosis.
- ADHD is often not considered as a "serious" condition and is treated as though it just means you can be a little hyperactive, as opposed to being appreciated for the neurodevelopmental condition that it actually is (#AttentionUK, 2018)
- The NHS diagnostic process for ADHD is both completely overwhelmed and ineffective. With over 21,000 patients waiting for a diagnosis and average waiting times ranging from 1-2 years (Lindsay, 2020), the entire process at best delays and at worst prevents people from seeking diagnosis, especially where the extended delay can be seen as "not worth the hassle".
- Alongside a complete lack of education, because children with ADHD are almost twice as likely to exhibit more addictive behaviours with respect to video games (Hersson et al., 2021), it is logical that people with ADHD are drawn to video games and games industry. This is especially true for those who played games as a child, the likelihood of which is increasing year on year (Clement, 2021)
- The survey only captured the opinions of 15% of the industry (around 3600 people) (UKIE, 2022), and thus is not fully representative of the industry as a whole
- Equally, many people who self-diagnose or are only vaguely aware of signs of ADHD may not be comfortable with stating that they have or even might have ADHD, especially in a formalised environment, e.g. an industry census (Stolzenburg et al, 2017)

Even using a conservative estimate without the above assumptions and proposing that there are an estimated 3000 people in the games industry who have ADHD, currently this group has no

direct means of support or community. To put this into perspective, that is roughly the same number of people in the UK games industry who consider themselves an artist (2D/3D) (UKIE, 2022).

There is currently little to no easily accessible education or information available specifically for the games industry on how to support or accommodate people with ADHD as employer, community manager, event organiser, or even as a peer. With vast swathes of ADHD people forced to align to neurotypical standards without help, studies show that they are less likely to be promoted (UKIE, 2022), are less likely to hold down a position long term (UKIE, 2022), are more likely to burnout (Legg, 2019), hold a lower opinion of the industry as a whole (UKIE, 2022).

As the number of people with ADHD in the industry (diagnosed and undiagnosed) continues to grow, if the industry does adapt to support this both significant and growing proportion of people, there could be a major burnout crisis in the years to come (Brattberg, 2006). In short, action has to be taken now.

Playing Attention is an organisation set up to help educate those working in the games industry about ADHD:

- To support those struggling to identify the signs of ADHD
- To guide those going through the education and diagnostic process to learn about conducting their ADHD
- To teach both individuals and organisations how to better accommodate ADHD people/people with ADHD

Mission Statement

Our mission is to help those in the games industry understand and accommodate ADHD in themselves, their peers, and their employees.

Beliefs

Playing Attention is built on top of several core beliefs that are central to everything actioned, performed, held, or otherwise supported by, for, and with the Playing Attention community:

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is an example of neurodivergence; it is a term used to describe a large number of people who process the world in a similar, atypical manner (when compared to those considered to be neurotypical)

- ADHD as a name/title is not a clear way of defining those who are ADHD, but is currently the globally recognised term
- ADHD is not a problem to be fixed, but a way of perceiving and experiencing reality that needs understanding and careful, considered management
- Self-diagnosis is valid.
- ADHD is an integral part of a person that affects every aspect of their life.
- ADHD is not inherently an affliction, it is a way of processing the world that is widely misunderstood. It should not be eradicated or expunged, it should be recognised, understood, and supported.
- Medication is a valid form of symptom management

Management and Decision-Making

- **Nothing About Us Without Us.**
- When working to accommodate people with ADHD, people with ADHD must be an integral part of the decision making process.
- ADHD can affect anyone, and so decision making and support must reflect and represent as many forms and manifestations of ADHD as possible, from the specific ADHD types to the different types of people who could be impacted by ADHD

Community

- Whilst the focus of Playing Attention will be on ADHD, membership will not be limited to only those with ADHD.
- People who wish to understand more about ADHD are a welcome part of the community
- Safe spaces must be established, prioritised, and consistently reinforced.
- For stigmas to be broken down, people must feel safe to discuss their ideas and views. Only through open and honest conversation can falsehoods be eliminated.
- There are no bad questions, only bad intentions. Someone trying to break down stereotypes and misrepresentations should not be confused for someone attempting to reinforce those stereotypes, and vice versa

Games Industry

- Anyone who works in the games industry and/or contributes to a game in any form can be considered a games developer.
- Whilst the focus will be on the games industry, membership will not be limited to only those working the games industry

Values

- It is wrong to impose a diagnosis on someone.
- Everyone has the right to draw their own conclusions with regards to their own mind based on the information and evidence available to them.
- Person-first language (i.e. “people with ADHD”) and identity-first language (“ADHD people”) will be used interchangeably. The stigma is the problem, not the order of the words. However, people's preferences should be respected.

Pillars

The work of Playing Attention is split into three clear pillars of action:

Educate

Playing Attention will seek to provide access to and improve the quality of informative and educational content about ADHD, especially in relation to the games industry. This will be achieved by helping people learn more about ADHD, guiding them towards identifying signs (where appropriate), and supporting people in developing a greater understanding of the many facets and aspects of ADHD.

Facilitate

Playing Attention will facilitate the ongoing research of individuals looking to find out more about how they can support themselves as individuals with ADHD. This will be achieved through providing information and knowledge for those either processing the information they have learnt or working through an early stage diagnosis/self-diagnosis. For many people, the early stages of the (self) diagnostic process can be a difficult and distressing time, thus Playing Attention will work to support individuals with finding systems and solutions for managing their ADHD for both the short and long term.

Accommodate

Playing Attention will work with studios, institutes and all other organisations of any size to encourage better understanding and support for their employees with ADHD, to offer resources and detailed information on the best practises for supporting ADHD individuals in the workplace, and to generally improve awareness and understanding of ADHD in the wider games industry, thus helping people with ADHD feel supported and safe within the games industry as a whole.

Intentions

Playing Attention is here to help all people develop a greater and more in-depth understanding of ADHD. This includes:

- Dispelling the myths and stereotypes that have held back public understanding for decades
- Helping those who have/are ADHD, as well as those are unaware, to discover the information and guidance to support them on the process of self-discovery
- Bringing ADHD people together to create a network of support and understanding

We want people who are/have ADHD to feel like a valid and significant part of the games industry as well as making sure that their ADHD is both understood and accommodated. The intention is that everyone in the games industry has access to the tools they need to become and support their partners in becoming the best version of themselves, however that may appear in the world.

Actions

Playing Attention has determined a number of actions that will support the realisation of the aforementioned intentions. These actions will be carried out by Playing Attention in the first instance to support the ongoing and continued growth of support for people with ADHD in the games industry. These actions will be to:

- Create a publicly accessible bank of information full of resources across education, facilitation, and accommodation to help those interested to find out more about ADHD
- Create a networking platform (e.g. a Discord server) to allow ADHD people to connect, share information and knowledge, and support each other through their time with the industry.
- Provide interviews and accounts with people in the games industry about their experience with ADHD, ranging from the process of discovery to the impact of medication and beyond
- Host events and provide networking opportunities for those with ADHD to meet within safe environments, to allow people to express themselves openly
- Work with any group looking to develop their understanding of ADHD and/or further support ADHD people in the games industry
- Advocate for better treatment and accommodations for ADHD people at all levels of the games industry
- Provide opportunities for anonymous feedback from individuals within the games industry to develop a clearer picture of ADHD in the games industry
- Work with wider ADHD groups to help develop an understanding of the games industry specifically with regards to the impact of ADHD

How Can You Help

We cannot do this alone, so all support is greatly accepted. Below are some suggestions of how you can support us:

- **Donate to us directly:** help us do more to support those with ADHD in the games industry! Your donation could allow us to: create more information for our resource bank, host events to help connect individuals with ADHD, or even bring in expert speakers who could advise on ADHD topics.
- **Sponsor our events:** help us bring people together! With your sponsorship we could: provide travel bursaries to community members to attend key events, provide printed information for people to take away and learn from, or allow us to provide more opportunities for people with ADHD to connect with their peers
- **Support our Patreon:** help us keep the lights on and our website running! In return for your support, you'll get access to unedited and special interviews with experts and coaches, as well as in-depth articles and posts about ADHD support and management. All support will help develop resources to educate and support our community further.

Organisation

Playing Attention has been founded by individuals who wanted there to be more support in the games industry for people with ADHD.

Founder

- Adam Clewes-Boyne - He/Him

Supporters

- Caoimhe Roddy - She/Her
- Anna Hollinrake - She/They
- BetaJester Ltd
- Playing Attention

Advisory Board

Whilst it may not be possible for an advisory board to accommodate representatives of all people in their community, it is important that any organisation that wishes to improve strives to include representatives of all aspects of their members.

As such, Playing Attention recognises the ideal board would have a representative for each aspect on this (inexhaustive) list. Playing Attention cannot commit to always having each area represented due to the large number of areas and early stage of the community, but commits to always striving to do so. Playing Attention also commits to never making a decision specifically involving a group without their involvement in the decision making process, regardless of whether there is a representative of that group on the board at that time.

Presently, Playing Attention believe a board containing representatives of the following aspects would be ideal:

- ADHD Representation
 - ADHD/IT - Inattentive Type
 - ADHD/HIT - Hyperactive-Impulsive Type
 - ADHD/CT - Combined Type
 - Self-DX - Self-Diagnosed
 - Additional Variations
 - Medicated
 - Unmedicated
 - Newly Diagnosed (as an adult)
 - Diagnosed (as an adult)
 - Diagnosed (as a child)
 - Comorbidity Representation
 - Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
 - Anxiety Disorder
 - Depression/Dysthymic Disorder
 - Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
 - Gender/Identity
 - LGBTQIA+ Representatives
 - Ethnicity
 - Extended Minority Representation
- Game Development Representation
 - Disciplines and Experience i.e. Veteran, Senior, and Junior
 - Studio owners of all sizes

References

- Agnew-Blais, J. (2016, November 16). *ADHD: not just a childhood disorder?* Mental Health Foundation. Retrieved April 16, 2022, from <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/blog/adhd-not-just-childhood-disorder>
- #AttentionUK. (2018, 06 19). *Understanding ADHD Stigma – Will you pay #AttentionUK ? Will you pay #AttentionUK*. Retrieved April 16, 2022, from <https://attentionuk.org/frequently-asked-questions/understanding-adhd-stigma/>
- Brattberg, G. (2006, 05 21). *PTSD and ADHD: underlying factors in many cases of burnout*. PTSD and ADHD: underlying factors in many cases of burnout. Retrieved April 17, 2022, from <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.820.4855&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Clement, J. (2021, July 21). • *Online gaming among children by age UK 2021*. Statista. Retrieved April 17, 2022, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/274427/online-gaming-among-children-in-the-uk-by-age-group/>
- Clement, J. (2021, Dec 21). • *Computer game industry employment UK 2011-2019*. Statista. Retrieved April 16, 2022, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/285005/computer-game-industry-employment-in-the-united-kingdom-uk/>
- Hersson, F., Reoch, J., & Gagnon, J. (2021, March 12). *Video Games in ADHD and Non-ADHD Children: Modalities of Use and Association With ADHD Symptoms*. Frontiers. Retrieved April 16, 2022, from <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fped.2021.632272/full>
- Hire, A. J., Ashcroft, D. M., Springate, D. A., & Steinke, D. T. (2015, November 23). *ADHD in the United Kingdom: Regional and Socioeconomic Variations in Incidence Rates Amongst*

- Children and Adolescents (2004-2013) - Adrian J. Hire, Darren M. Ashcroft, David A. Springate, Douglas T. Steinke, 2018. Retrieved April 16, 2022, from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1087054715613441>
- Legg, T. J. (2019, October 5). *Burnout: Why it's so common with ADHD?* The Mini ADHD Coach. Retrieved April 17, 2022, from <https://www.theminiadhdcoach.com/blog/adhd-burnout>
- Lindsay, M. (2020, July 28). *ADHD assessment system 'broken' with five-year waiting times*. BBC. Retrieved April 16, 2022, from <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-53526174>
- Quinn, P. O. (2014, 10 13). A Review of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder in Women and Girls: Uncovering This Hidden Diagnosis. Retrieved April 16, 2022, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4195638/>
- Stolzenburg, S. (2017, December). *The Stigma of Mental Illness as a Barrier to Self Labeling as Having a Mental Illness*. The Stigma of Mental Illness as a Barrier to Self Labeling as Having a Mental Illness. https://epub.ub.uni-greifswald.de/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/2764/file/Paper_3.pdf
- Trotman, J. (2021, February 1). It's time to talk about reducing the stigma around ADHD | NCMH. *National Centre for Mental Health*. <https://www.ncmh.info/2021/02/01/its-time-to-talk-about-reducing-the-stigma-around-adhd/>
- UKIE. (2022). *UKIE Diversity Census Report 2022* [the second UK Games Industry Census to provide deeper insight into the demographic make-up and working habits of the UK games industry.]. UKIE Diversity Census Report 2022. <https://ukie.org.uk/download/4nxb3gvjfh5yvwqpqsaf4chjx9/0>