



Neurodiversity

Introduction

This guidance is to support managers and employees who are neurodiverse. This includes advice on reasonable adjustments and considerations. It is important to note that everyone is unique and different, therefore conversations to each employee and manager on any adjustment that can be considered to support them in the workplace.

What is Neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity refers to the way that everyone's brains naturally work differently from one another. There are advantages to having different thinking styles within the organisation to drive innovation, enhance service delivery and productivity.

Everyone is unique and different where they will bring different strengths but may need support with some things but it is important to engage with employees and consider adjustments if they are required.

People all think differently and there are benefits to considering a range of different ideas. These differences often exist on a spectrum and can vary in their effects on different people. Everyone is different and we will all have things that we're naturally good at it. Depending on the individuals, neurodivergent employees may have strengths in:

- Problem-solving
- Creativity
- Innovation
- Consistency
- Thinking outside of the box
- Spotting patterns and trends
- Processing information quickly
- Data analysis
- Seeing things from a different perspective
- Attention to detail
- Taking risks

Some examples of neurodivergent ways of thinking include:

Autism

Autism is a neurodevelopmental difference which can affect people's perception of the world. Autistic people will have differences in the way they interact, communicated, process information and respond to change. Most autistic people will experience varying forms of sensory sensitivity which can lead to burn out or feelings of extreme overwhelm. Autistic people can have excellent problem-solving, analytical skills, very logical thinkers and data driven style free from confirmation bias. They also often have a deep sense of empathy and affinity for those people in society who feel disadvantaged in a variety of ways. Autistic people can have a diverse range of skills including problem-solving, analytical, logical processing and data processing.

**Attention deficit
hyperactivity
disorder
(ADHD)**

Persistent pattern of inattention or hyperactivity and impulsivity. Individuals who have ADHD often are comfortable with taking calculated risks, insightfulness, creative thinking, problem solving, managing uncertainty and pushing boundaries.

Dyslexia

Affects the development of literacy and language-related skills which may affect phonological processing, rapid naming, working memory and processing skills. Dyslexic people may have strengths in general inventiveness, identifying patterns, qualitative reasoning and creativity.

Dyspraxia

Complex neurological condition which affects muscle co-ordination and perception. Perception includes vision, hearing, sensory processing and fine motor skills. Dyspraxic people tend to be good at bold "big picture" thinking, pattern-spotting and inferential reasoning. They may be resourceful and determined problem solvers.

Dyscalculia

Characterised by difficulties with arithmetic calculations such as sizing, ordering and reading and writing numbers. Dyscalculic people often have strengths in creativity, strategic thinking, practical ability, problem solving and intuitive thinking.

Dysgraphia

Challenges with aspects of writing very slowly, having confused writing and experiencing difficulties copying information. They tend to have good listening skills, strong memorisation, social and efficient problem solvers.

**Tic disorders
such as
Tourette's
syndrome**

Can be physical such as shrugging the shoulders, more substantial body motions or can be verbal such as laughing, talking or coughing. They tend to be creative, energetic, quick to complete tasks and empathetic.

There has been an increased understanding of neurodiversity and a stronger focus on understanding and acceptance of neurodivergent thinkers. It is important to ensure employees and individuals are spoken to how they wish to be addressed and any appropriate support identified if necessary. This may also include communicating in writing via email, language including terminology used and the sensory environment that they work in.

Recruitment Practices

Please refer to the [Equalities across Recruitment](#) factsheet for information on reasonable adjustments in recruiting, writing job profiles and interviewing candidates.

Induction

Onboarding processes may be challenging for some neurodivergent new employees as they may emphasise social interaction.

You may wish to consider a more tailored, lower stress and one to one induction with the employee. Information communication during induction will be high, therefore you may wish to consider information provided in advance and available in different formats if necessary. This can also include time to process the information and come back with any questions. It is important to highlight the service's culture, working hours, breaks, any dress code and communication channels.

Working Environment

Line managers should consider the work environment for neurodivergent employees. They might find the office environment challenging or uncomfortable such as bright lighting, lots of noise and interruptions in a busy office may be overstimulating or under stimulating for some neurodivergent employees. Some may work best in quiet spaces with no distractions whilst others will work better in more busy sensory environments.

Things to consider, following discussion with the individual;

- Investing in adjustable lighting or desk lamps
- Using partitions and room dividers or providing a larger personal working space
- Providing standing desks
- Clear instructions next to office equipment
- Allowing employees to work from home or flexible working arrangement where possible
- Using pens, sticky notes, whiteboards, lockers, and boxes to help with memory and organisation
- Provision of assistive technology, such as handheld organisers to assist with time management and prioritisation
- Role adjustment where possible; non-core aspects of an employee's work tasks are reassigned
- Providing desk trays to assist with personal organisation



Managing a Neurodiverse Team

It is important to be understandable and approachable so your employees can talk to you and ask for help when needed. It is important to learn about your team and any member neurodivergence so you can see how you can support. It is important to not make any assumptions as individuals will vary and have different needs or may not require any adjustments. **It is important to find out how you can best support the team's characteristics, strengths and challenges.**

As managers, you can recognise the unique skills of neurodivergent employees including supporting them with any challenges they may face. Most of the neurodiversity conditions are considered a disability under the Equality Act 2010 where reasonable adjustments may need to be considered to support and enable neurodivergent employees at work.

Considerations:

Support & Feedback

- Regular one to one in a confidential space to see how they're doing and make any adjustments to their working practices and environment. Review regularly but always with the employee's approval before making any adjustments.
- Coaching and mentoring can be helpful and any other training. It is important to remain patient and empathetic towards their employees and ensure that the rest of the team have an awareness and understanding of neurodiversity to avoid any discrimination. It is important that information is only shared with the individual's consent. Many neurodivergent people chose not to disclose to their colleagues and this must be respected at all times.
- Structured positive feedback where both employee and manager can review their progress and assist where necessary. The employees would benefit from feedback and developed their confidence if needed. This would also give the manager an opportunity to learn how they can better manage their employees.
- A personalised plan of action can help support neurodivergent employees in the workplace. It is important that they contribute and own their action plan as they would know their own needs and optimum working environment.



Communication & Task Flexibility

- Appreciate your employee's communication or social preference. Some neurodivergent employees may communicate in different ways. For example, autistic people may not find it ways to read facial expressions or interpret your tone of voice and may take what you say literally. They may not understand sarcasm or metaphors so try to make direct language to say exactly what you mean.
- Assign work tasks appropriately which would work best for the individuals which plays to their strengths instead. Ensure all employees are not overloaded, stressed or under pressure at work.
- Introduce change carefully by taking time to communicate notice of change and employees participate in the process.
- Consider providing communications materials in a range of formats (audio or visual formats).

ICT technology or software can be supportive to neurodiverse employees.

Examples can include:

- Mind mapping software or dictation tools and resources to help them be comfortable at work and optimise performance
- Speech-to-text, text-to-speech, or mind-mapping software
- Dictation tools
- A digital recorder
- A daily planner
- A screen overlay
- Dual screens

This can facilitate both the inclusion and performance optimisation of neurodivergent people.

If you require any further advice or guidance, please contact your HR Advisor.



Support

- Access to Work: government programme to support people with disabilities in employment. This is assistance for when an individual work's needs are not covered by the employer reasonable adjustments. It may be possible to get help for special equipment, transportation, adaptations, a support worker or job coach.
- Disability Confident: government led-initiative designed to support employers to make their workplaces more open, accessible, diverse and inclusive. It's designed to help employers recruit and retain disabled people and people with health conditions for their skills and talent
- [Autism Understanding Scotland](#) - reframing the narrative around autism
 - [Glossary](#) — Autism Understanding Scotland
 - [Language](#) — Autism Understanding Scotland
- Scottish Autism and Autism Initiatives
- [SWAN](#)
- National Autistic Society – UK's leading charity for people on the autism spectrum and their families. They provide support, guidance, advice including campaigning for improved rights, services and opportunities to help create a society that works for autistic people.
- British Dyslexia Association
- Mental Health at Work for Managers [ALDO](#) Workshop
- Stress Management & Reduction Workshop
- [Health, Safety & Wellbeing Team](#)

Document Revision History

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Rev No.	Rev Date	Summary of Changes	Reviewing Team	Reviewers	Next Review Year
001	11 Mar 2024	New guidance	HR Ops	E Anderson	2025