

NEURODIVERSITY TOOLKIT SUPPORT FOR STAFF

Understanding Neurodiversity:

The word 'neurodiversity' is an umbrella term which acknowledges that each person's brain is unique. Our brains work and interpret information differently and we all bring individual experience, strengths, and assets to a situation. It incorporates different skills profiles including dyslexia, dyspraxia, autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Tourette syndrome and other conditions. These are 'spectrum' conditions, with a wide range of characteristics, which share some common features in terms of how people learn and process information.

Wellbeing and self-care:

This section is about you exploring the things you can do to support and regularly invest in the foundations of your wellbeing. It may also be helpful to review the employee checklist in the supporting managers document and/or the [Health and Wellbeing Passport](#)

Wellbeing and self-care Ask for help:

Whether it's about workload, uncertainty about how to do something or you just need additional support and understanding, you need to speak with your line manager or a colleague. You can then work together to discuss what support would be helpful. Emotionally, it can make a world of difference knowing that you are not alone at work.

Wellbeing and self-care Consider asking for a work buddy:

Your manager may be able to buddy you up with a team member who you can talk to and who can help other team members understand some of the challenges of being neurodivergent.

Wellbeing and self-care Find a quiet space:

Your ward or department might have a designated quiet space within the office or building which employees can use if they are overwhelmed or overstimulated.

Wellbeing and self-care Occupational Health:

Occupational Health focuses on promoting employee wellbeing and ensuring that work environments do not negatively impact health. Occupational Health can offer tips, advice and suggested workplace adjustments that can be used by individuals and their managers to help resolve challenges at work that result from neurological differences.

Wellbeing and self-care Protect your work life balance:

Leaving work at work can be very difficult but is essential to your wellbeing, so try and practice not taking thoughts of work home with you. This can be especially difficult if you work from home. A way to support this is to make clear distinctions between your workspace and your home. If possible, designate an area of your home as a workspace – keeping the rest of your home as a work-free safe space to unwind in. It is also important to have a clear framework for your work plans each day. Discuss options for flexible working with your manager and ask for further support when needed

Wellbeing and self-care Take breaks:

No matter what kind of role you are in, breaks are essential for your wellbeing. Some neurodivergent people find that taking several smaller breaks works better for them while others feel fewer longer breaks benefit them the most. Depending on your role, discuss with your line manager what works best for you.

Health & Wellbeing Passport:

A Health & Wellbeing Passport is available for to all staff. This passport is very beneficial in helping your manager support any health and wellbeing considerations and can be used to identify any support you need with a neurodiverse condition, disability or long-term health condition. The passport should also take into consideration if you are a carer for a loved one with a neurodiverse condition and the extra challenges this may bring. You can take your passport with you through your career, if you move job roles and change your position. This saves the need for you to have to explain your individual needs all over again and having to start new reasonable adjustments, which could cause unnecessary stress and anxiety. [Health and Wellbeing Passport](#)

Access to Work:

Colleagues with a disability can request additional support via Access to Work who are a specialist disability service delivered by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). Their role is to give practical advice and support and make recommendations for workplace adjustments. Access to work helpline is **0800 121 7479**. The quickest and easiest way to apply for additional support is to apply online. <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>.

Colleagues can contact Access to Work directly to request an assessment. The employee provides some basic personal details and information regarding their condition and how it impacts at work and Access to Work will review the application and contact colleague directly to conduct an assessment. Access to work have access to independent specialist assessors who can identify appropriate solutions to suit colleagues needs. The Advisors work with colleagues and their employer to give the correct support.

The process involves an assessment with colleague and an advisor from Access to Work who then provides a report detailing recommendations.

Once an assessment has taken place the employee will receive a full report containing the assessment findings and recommendations and details of any grant awarded. The line manager will also receive details of the recommendations along with details of suppliers of equipment and any training recommended.

The line manager will then arrange to meet colleague again to review and discuss the recommendations. The line manager may also consider temporary adjustments until the recommendations are received from Access to Work.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR RIGHTS:

It is important for employers to understand that an employee's neurodiversity could qualify as a disability under the Equality Act 2010. However, not all neurodivergent employees will consider themselves to have a disability. Under the law, employees have the right to identify as having a disability, or not to identify. But the legal definition of 'disability' under the Equality Act 2010 means that neurodivergent workers are likely to meet the conditions. This requires employers, to put in place reasonable adjustments to remove or reduce disadvantages faced by neurodiverse colleagues, ensuring they can participate fully in the workplace.

An employee does not need a diagnosis to be considered disabled under the Equality Act 2010. An employer should offer employees support whether or not they have a diagnosis for their neurodivergence. This includes making reasonable adjustments.

It's common for neurodivergent employees not to have a diagnosis. Reasons for this include that:

- they're worried about a negative reaction from others
- they do not feel they need to have one
- it can take a long time to be diagnosed – there are long NHS waiting times
- getting one can be expensive – if an employee decides to use private healthcare because of the long NHS waiting times

Someone can be diagnosed as neurodivergent at any stage in their life. Things people can go through as an adult can also make neurodivergent traits more obvious, leading to a diagnosis, for example, the menopause. Even if they do not have a diagnosis, employees might have neurodivergent characteristics. And this could mean they need support at work. It can be emotionally difficult for employees who:

- are struggling with a condition but do not have a diagnosis
- have recently got a diagnosis

In both circumstances, having the right support at work can be a big help.

People often experience neurodivergence differently. The strengths and challenges that come with a condition will not be the same for everyone. This means that adjustments that suit one neurodivergent person might not help someone else with the same condition. Employers should listen to the employee when discussing reasonable adjustments and make suggestions where appropriate. Occupational Health can help to advise what reasonable adjustments may be useful to consider. When agreeing reasonable adjustments for neurodivergent employees, it's important to consider both:

- making the most of someone's strengths
- support for things they find more difficult

Someone might not know what support will help them, especially if:

- they have recently been diagnosed and are still understanding it themselves
- they're not sure whether they have a condition

Reasonable adjustments can take a number of forms, and are not always physical and can fall into the following areas:

- equipment - such as a dictaphone to take notes, coloured overlays
- changes to working patterns - such as shift patterns, working from home, working nearer home
- changes to the workplace - such as reducing noise, altered lighting and quiet safe spaces
- training - to educate colleagues and change attitudes, to help the individual develop coping techniques
- redeployment - which means moving to another more suited role that becomes available when the employee can't continue in their current role
- employer policy – such as disability leave in addition to sick leave (to avoid triggering sickness reviews due to regular disability-related activity such as attending hospital appointments)
- You should always be able to ask for assistance with your work without fear of reprimand
- Talk to your manager about creating an environment in which these discussions are accepted and encouraged

GUIDE TO REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS FOR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)

- If it supports you in the workplace, ask your manager to repeat back what's been said in any meetings, discussions or request
- If you are struggling to understand any requests, ask your manager for further support and clarification

- If needed ask your manager to be specific in what they are asking you to do and if possible, give a more specific timeframe
- Discuss with your manager any needs around receiving clear objectives, written instructions on work tasks & timely feedback
- Ask your manager to inform you in advance if a change is occurring, such as change of staff, work tasks or work setting. Ask that your manager describes what will happen beforehand if possible
- Discuss with your manager if you need to be provided with clearer structure for your working day e.g. a regular timetable of tasks, meetings etc
- Talk to your manager about possible changes to your working environment. Are there specific settings that make it harder for you to work, such as background noise, bright lighting or group working? If so, talk to your manager about how your working environment can be improved or adapted
- Discuss with your manager the options for adapting working hours e.g. to allow extra breaks, or to allow you to travel at quieter times
- If needed discuss with your manager the options for locating your desk in an area away from the main flow of 'traffic' in the office, in order to reduce distractions or discuss if there is the opportunity to work from home
- Use dividers between desks or providing noise-cancelling headphones
- Provide screen filters and/or low desk lighting to reduce glare
- Avoid use of 'hot-desking' for autistic staff
- Arrange brief, regular meetings to check progress on tasks

GUIDE TO REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS FOR ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)

- If noisy and / or busy surroundings may make it harder for you to focus or understand important information, discuss what works for you with your manager. This could include being away from the 'mainstream' of traffic, or where appropriate, wearing noise cancelling headphones to reduce external noise when concentrating
- Discuss the option to work from home during times of stress and overwhelm or to finish important projects with your manager
- Discuss flexible working options with your manager
- Ask your manager to be clear about priorities and give objective, clear, timely feedback
- Ask your manager if it is possible to set one task at a time. Multitasking can cause challenges with important pieces of work and effect deadlines. Managing multiple workstreams can be a challenge and can prevent projects being finished
- If too many meetings in a day cause you to feel overwhelmed and cause loss of focus, discuss options with your manager
- If it makes your work easier, ask if your manager could use bullet point notes and follow up meetings with emails
- If you are struggling in your working environment, discuss with your manager the option of having small breaks even for a few minutes, to refocus. It may be worth setting alarms to remind you to do this on a regular basis
- If it supports you, ask your manager where possible, when giving important information, that they choose a quiet setting
- Ask your manager to be clear about your workload priorities
- Ask your manager for support in creating routine and structure
- Utilise assistive technology
- Short, regular meetings can help to set and review goals and will help you stay on task. Request support from your manager to help manage this

- It may be useful to use colour coding for filing and sorting documents and other information to help to find things more easily
- If you are feeling overwhelmed, request a break in a quiet space to regain composure
- Discuss with your manager the use of setting alarms and creating warnings of deadlines using technology, such as MS Outlook, Google, or on their phones

GUIDE TO REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS FOR COGNITIVE FUNCTION DIFFICULTIES and EXECUTIVE DYSFUNCTION

- If needed ask your manager to provide agendas for long or complex meetings to assist with preparation and moving between items. Ensure these are provided with enough notice to review and absorb the content and make any preparations necessary. Ensure action items to be covered and the responsible parties are indicated clearly as part of the agenda
- Discuss with your manager the options around booking similar or related tasks together to assist with transitions between different types of activities
- Ask your manager to discuss the options for setting times for your breaks to take time away from the desk to stretch and move around
- Request notice for changes in the work environment so assessments can be made for adjustments needed to meet sensory needs
- Request that your manager does not change the steps on the day or mid-process, especially if there is an urgent deadline. Save improvements for a less busy time in which the process can be reviewed for issues more easily and there is opportunity to practice and review any complex steps
- Ask your manager about regular check-ins on long term projects can assist with continued attention, prioritisation, and meeting deadlines
- Checklists, procedural documents, templates. These aids may assist you in keeping track of what you need to do and the step you are up to. They can also reduce impact of emotional overwhelm as you can be guided by the documents in place
- Ask your manager to separate complex processes into smaller steps that are more manageable.
- Ask for clear instructions rather than generalisations
- Clear labels. Locations should be clearly labelled for both physical objects and digital storage (inboxes, shared folders, and other locations)

GUIDE TO REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS FOR DYSCALCULIA

- The use of technology to support, including googling percentages, using the calendar and note functions on a smart phone, using sat nav systems, using different keys or shortcuts on the keyboard
- Set up templates in Excel for specific tasks
- Help your manager to understand that you may develop your own way of doing things which might look different but still has the same outcome
- Be able to call on colleagues to double check things to ensure errors aren't made

GUIDE TO REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS FOR DYSGRAPHIA

- Where possible, request the reduction in the expected amount of written work to be completed
- Request that written tasks to be completed with alternate response formats, e.g. audio, graphic, verbal, multiple-choice or video responses
- Request the use of wide-lined or graph paper if needed
- Discuss with your manager if the use of a tablet would assist with planning and completing written tasks
- Request that important points in documents are highlighted
- If it helps, ask for the use of voicemail rather than written memos

- If needed request a quiet space available away from distractions such as doors, busy phones, loud machinery
- If needed request a private workspace if possible
- If needed request to work from home occasionally, if possible
- If needed request a “do not disturb” sign when tasks require intense concentration
- If needed request screen-reading software or a Reading Pen
- If needed request printed resources on coloured paper, and change background colour of computer screens and presentations

GUIDE TO REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS FOR DYSLEXIA

- Request from your manager advance notice of tasks whenever possible, in particular, giving out reading materials well in advance of meetings. Have “easy read” materials available, where possible
- Request from your manager the use bullet points and ensure text is spaced out well in documents and emails
- If it helps, ask your manager on the options of using work with flow charts or diagrams rather than lots of text
- Suggest that key areas of text are highlighted when sending out important messages
- Utilise text-to-speech and speech-to-text software, which are often built into computer systems as standard, or discuss trying free versions online. Discuss options with your manager
- Spell-checkers can also be very helpful tools for individuals
- Request the use of cream or pale blue paper, or another colour which is easier for you. You can also alter PC preferences to replace white backgrounds with colour
- Use an easy-to-read font, such as Arial, Verdana, Comic Sans and size of 12+
- Use short sentences and leave plenty of space between lines of text. Discuss options with your manager
- If reading out loud in a group causes difficulties or anxieties discuss other options with your manager
- Ask your manager if you can have already created templates to work from rather than having to start documents from scratch
- If it helps, ask your manager to write down instructions and use visual prompts to act as reminders
- Request more time to read information.
- Print or copy text on coloured paper (rather than white) or provide a plastic overlay. You can also alter PC preferences to replace white backgrounds with colour
- In written communication, prioritise important tasks first; bullet point, making sure things are well spaced out and highlight important bits of text

GUIDE TO REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS FOR DYSPRAXIA and DEVELOPMENTAL COORDINATION DISORDER (DCD)

- Ask for support if needed with organisation and sorting paperwork, filing, organising your calendar and setting deadlines for work. Different coloured folders for different tasks can help with organisation
- Routines work well. Ask for support setting these up if needed
- Consider if you may benefit from the provision of a structured timetable and the opportunity for training in time management, then request this support from your manager
- Ask your manager about regular breaks to allow the concentration of effort to be targeted correctly
- If needed, request that instructions are concise and wherever possible timetables, mnemonics and mind maps are provided as these can help with dyspraxia, in terms of prioritising workload and meet deadlines
- If it helps, you can be encouraged to write instructions down clearly and keep them for easy reference
- Write a list of actions /tasks down with the support of your manager, so you can see what needs to be done and cross them off as they are completed
- If new skills are introduced, ask for additional time for practice if needed

- It may be useful to list actions or tasks that need to be done at the beginning and end of every day and discuss this with your manager
- Ergonomics keyboards can be of great benefit as can changing or slowing down the mouse. Keyboard shortcuts can also be used as an alternative to the mouse

GUIDE TO REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS FOR MISOPHONIA

- If needed ask about the options to provide space enclosures, sound absorption panels, or a private office
- Discuss the options to reduce distractions in the work area with your manager
- Discuss the options for use of white noise or environmental sound machines
- Discuss the options for providing a noise cancelling headphones/headset
- Plan for uninterrupted work time
- Discuss the options to increase natural lighting or provide full spectrum lighting
- Request a flexible work environment if possible
- Discuss the options around the use of stress management techniques to deal with frustration
- Request telephone calls during work hours to doctors and others for needed support
- Discuss the options for restructuring your role to include only essential functions during times of stress
- Identify and remove environmental triggers such as particular smells or noises
- Discuss with OH/HR and your manager about counting one occurrence for all misophonia-related absences
- Ask your manager about providing misophonia awareness to coworkers and supervisors, so that they can understand the challenges associated with misophonia

GUIDE TO REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS FOR SLOW PROCESSING SPEED

- If needed request extra time for tasks
- If needed request technology such as text-to-speech software or time management apps can aid productivity.
- Visual aids can be very helpful: Charts, diagrams, and written instructions can help process information more effectively. If needed request from your manager
- If needed request support with developing executive functioning skills such as planning, organisation, prioritisation and breaking tasks into smaller, manageable steps
- Slow processing speed can impact upon relationships and mental health, with high levels of anxiety or low self-esteem. It is important to seek professional mental health and emotional support if needed. Discuss this with your manager so they are aware of any additional support that you may need
- If needed request timeout breaks as they can help you recharge and stay focused
- Do not set unrealistic time demands. Request your managers support and understanding if you are struggling with completing tasks on time
- Ask your manager to work with you to develop a plan to help and support you in the areas where you are struggling
- Break Down Tasks: Don't overwhelm yourself with lots of tasks. Break them down into smaller chunks and discuss the options with your manager
- If needed request more time to take in information
- If needed request more time to make decisions or give answers

GUIDE TO REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS FOR STAMMERING

- The option to use a quiet room when using the phone
- The option to work flexibly and from home when speech is difficult
- 'non-speaking days' where interaction is mainly via email or Teams
- Being allocated a mentor or senior champion to check in with and reverse mentor
- A manager or colleagues to offer to introduce a member of staff with a stammer in situations that are stressful or trigger a stammering episode

- Pre-arranged times for calls so that both people know who's calling and what it's about.
- Use of a pre-recorded greeting and introduction when working on the phone.
- Flexible options to meet face-to-face, via video call or use emails instead of using the phone
- In online meetings, the option to use the chat function to support, or use instead of, speech. Typed contributions to be given equal weight with spoken contributions.
- Use of visual and written materials as well as or instead of speech. This information to be valued as much as talking.
- Agendas in advance
- Option to contribute in writing before or after meetings

GUIDE TO REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS FOR TOURETTE'S SYNDROME (TS)

- If needed, discuss the option of flexible working: You can ask your manager to consider pain, injury and fatigue caused by tics and the changeable nature of TS
- Request strategies to support organisation, memory, and well-being, such as workplace coaching.
- A socially accepting work culture is one of the most protective factors to someone with TS. Discuss how to create this environment within the team you work in and how your manager can talk to teammates to support with this
- Suggest to your manager that awareness training for colleagues to inform and educate on what TS is and what it is not, may support you in your working day
- Hybrid working can enable people with TS to work from a space they feel comfortable which accommodates for the fluctuating nature of the condition. If possible, discuss the options with your manager
- Request a calm and safe private space when tics occur and cause you stress and anxiety if this will help. Providing a safe and private space will reduce the anxiety of ticking in public and prevent the rebound effects that suppression can cause
- Sensory adjustments such as movement breaks can increase productivity by enabling you to get the sensory input you need to focus and function. Discuss your needs with your manager