

SUPPORT FOR MANAGERS

ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS

The first step to a neuroinclusive working environment is to encourage open dialogue around neurodiversity. Working explicitly to increase awareness of different neurodivergences and advocating openly for neuroinclusion sends a strong message to neurodivergent staff, potential applicants and other managers who might be unsure of how to approach neurodiversity in the workplace. Awareness days are great opportunities for colleagues to learn about neurodiversity and to promote conversation on the topic.

Staff networks are a key support avenue for neurodivergent staff members as they provide a safe space to discuss experiences and challenges with peers who can relate on a different level. It is important that managers ensure that neurodivergent staff members are made aware of any staff networks that might exist in the organisation and that these are highlighted during induction and over the course of a person's employment through reviews and supervision.

The Neurodiversity toolkit can serve as a point of reference with links to additional information, further reading and support.

LEGAL GUIDANCE ADD TO MANAGERS

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.

A disability can arise from a wide range of impairments which can be developmental, such as autistic spectrum disorders (ASD), dyslexia and dyspraxia. Under the Equality Act 2010, positive effects of treatment are not considered. For example, someone with ADHD should still be considered as disabled for the purposes of making adjustments, even if they take medication that helps them manage their symptoms.

If an employee identifies as having a disability, they are provided with certain rights and protections under the law. Employers must make reasonable adjustments to allow them to perform their best work and protect them from discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

SUPPORTING REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS FOR NEURODIVERSE STAFF

Under the Equality Act 2010, employers must not discriminate against employees or job applicants who have a disability, which is a protected characteristic under the Act. A condition qualifies as a disability if it is:

"A physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the individual's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities."

Many neurodivergent conditions meet this definition, although each case must be considered individually. For example:

- Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) and ADHD often affect concentration, communication, and memory
- Dyslexia may affect reading, processing information, or time management
- Tourette's Syndrome can manifest in physical tics that affect workplace interactions

Reasonable adjustments are changes an employer makes to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to someone's disability. While every employee's needs differ, some commonly recommended adjustments include:

Type of Adjustment	Examples
Environmental changes	Quiet workspaces, noise-cancelling headphones, natural lighting
Flexible working	Remote or hybrid arrangements, adjusted start/finish times
Communication adaptations	Clear written instructions, visual aids, reducing jargon
Job role or process review	Breaking down tasks, extra time for tasks, modified performance metrics
Support aids	Use of assistive technology, job coaching or mentoring

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. Managers should listen to the employee when discussing reasonable adjustments and make suggestions where appropriate.

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

In these circumstances, employers and employees should work together to try out adjustments and regularly review them. Occupational Health can also help to advise what reasonable adjustments may be useful to consider.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Many neurodivergent conditions are hidden disabilities
- It is important not to make assumptions about an individual's abilities based on their diagnosed condition and work collaboratively with them to gain an understanding of the impact of any difficulties
- Ensure shared information about an individual's neurodiversity remains secure and confidential, not disclosed or discussed with other team members
- Ensure equal opportunities for training and continued professional development
- Use inclusive language that doesn't reference impairments and avoid using potentially offensive terms to describe work challenges
- Continually educate your team about neurodiversity to foster an inclusive environment
- Be aware that people with a neurodivergent condition may be more anxious than average when applying for new positions, or pursuing further learning, due to the fear of being discriminated and rejected for the position or being labelled in the workplace.
- Any feelings of incompetence may lead to low resiliency and the feeling of helplessness

Advice on using the Health and Wellbeing Passport:

Health and Wellbeing Passports should be offered to all staff which allows them to discuss and fully explain their disability with managers and team members so they can understand the best ways to support their colleagues. [Health and Wellbeing Passport](#)

ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)

COMMON CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH ADHD

- Difficulty concentrating
- Making deadlines and not completing tasks: Struggle with attention to detail if their brain isn't motivated by the task, or can get lost in their own world
- Impulsive decision making without fully considering the consequences
- Overworking/difficulty relaxing and sleeping
- Forgetfulness
- Jump from one thought or activity to another
- Masking. An individual with ADHD may mask their emotions and feelings and this can cause fatigue and exhaustion

People with ADHD may also find that they:

- Fidget, doodle or do something with their hands to help maintain concentration.
- Can be impulsive and act without fully considering the consequences.
- Jump from one thought or activity to another
- Struggle with attention to detail if their brain isn't motivated by the task, or can get lost in their own world

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR ADHD

- Noisy and / or busy surroundings may make it harder for a staff member to focus or understand important information. If possible, discuss what works best for the individual. This could include being away from the 'mainstream' of traffic, or where appropriate, wear noise cancelling headphones to reduce external noise when concentrating
- Consider the option to work from home during times of stress and overwhelm or to finish important projects
- Consider flexible working options
- Be clear about priorities and give objective, clear, timely feedback
- 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
- Too many meetings in a day can be overwhelming and can cause loss of focus
- Use bullet point notes and follow up meetings with emails
- Encourage small breaks even for a few minutes, to refocus. Setting alarms can remind the individual to do this on a regular basis
- Where possible, when giving important information, choose a quiet setting
- Be clear about priorities
- Create routine and structure
- Utilise assistive technology
- Short, regular meetings can help to set and review goals and will help the individual stay on task
- Use colour coding for filing and sorting documents and other information to help to find things more easily
- If an individual is overwhelmed, allow them to take a break in a quiet space to regain composure
- Discuss setting alarms and creating warnings of deadlines using technology, such as MS Outlook, Google, or on their phones

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)

COMMON CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH ASD

- High anxiety, probably because of reduced ability to understand the world
- Repetitive behaviour
- Lack of understanding of facial expressions or tones of voice
- Literal understanding of words: a person with autism may have difficulty in understanding common metaphors such as “it’s raining cats and dogs”
- Difficulty maintaining eye contact
- Difficulty reading non-verbal cues and understanding ‘office politics’
- Sensory sensitivity/altered sensory perception, which can affect concentration and anxiety
- Difficulty in dealing with change/routine
- Increased anxiety, especially in social situations
- Difficulty interpreting the behaviour and intentions of other people, building relationships or keeping a conversation going
- Limited interests and a tendency towards compulsive or repetitive behaviours
- Difficulty talking about emotions

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR ASD

- Address the member of staff by name to ensure they know you are speaking to them
- Ask the individual to repeat back what’s been said to make sure they understand. If they don’t, try and explain differently. Show, as well as tell, where you can
- If a change is occurring, such as change of staff, work tasks or work setting, describe what will happen beforehand if possible
- Ask if there are specific settings that make it harder for the employee to work, such as background noise, bright lighting or group working
- Avoid making jokes and using of metaphors, such as ‘get a grip’ etc.
- Be specific in what you are asking the individual to do. Avoid saying things like ‘in about 5 minutes’
- Maintaining eye contact may be harder and may not indicate the individual is not listening to you
- Avoid using work jargon and acronyms
- Create a list of words and terms used in the work setting
- Adapting working hours e.g. to allow extra breaks, or to allow staff to travel at quieter times
- Locate the employee’s desk in an area away from the main flow of ‘traffic’ in the office, in order to reduce distractions or having the opportunity to work from home can impact productivity and wellbeing
- Give clear objective, written instructions on work tasks & timely feedback
- Provide structure to the working day e.g. a regular timetable of tasks, meetings etc
- 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

COGNITIVE FUNCTION DIFFICULTIES OR EXECUTIVE DYSFUNCTION

COMMON CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH COGNITIVE FUNCTION DIFFICULTIES OR EXECUTIVE DYSFUNCTION

- Feeling overwhelmed by the prospect of planning or scheduling activities
- Struggling to break down tasks into manageable steps
- Difficulty maintaining a tidy and organized environment
- Frequently missing appointments or deadlines due to poor planning
- Feeling stressed or anxious when confronted with organizational tasks
- Procrastination or avoidance of tasks, even when important
- Feeling overwhelmed by the prospect of starting a task
- Difficulty breaking tasks down into manageable steps
- Struggling to prioritize tasks effectively
- Increased stress and anxiety when faced with initiating tasks

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR COGNITIVE FUNCTION DIFFICULTIES OR EXECUTIVE DYSFUNCTION

- Provide agendas for long or complex meetings to assist with preparation and moving between items. Ensure these are provided to the employee 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
- An employee should always be able to ask for assistance with their work without fear of reprimand
- Build an environment in which these discussions are accepted and encouraged
- Booking similar or related tasks together to assist with transitions between different types of activities
- Set times for employees breaks to take time away from the desk to stretch and move around.
- Provide notice for changes in the work environment so assessments can be made for adjustments needed to meet sensory needs
- Do 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
- Check-ins on long term projects can assist with continued attention, prioritisation, and meeting deadlines
- Checklists, procedural documents and templates These aids can assist an employee to keep track of what they need to do and the steps taken. They can also reduce impact of emotional overwhelm as the employee can be guided by the documents in place
- Separate complex processes into smaller steps that are more manageable
- Provide clear instructions rather than generalisations. For example, if papers must be printed, tell the employee if 2 sets or 5 sets are needed rather than saying 'a few'
- Clear labels. Locations should be clearly labelled for both physical objects and digital storage (inboxes, shared folders, and other locations)

DYSCALCULIA

COMMON CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH DYSCALCULIA

- Difficulty doing mathematical equations or to retain numerical information
- Lack of confidence with numbers
- Difficulty giving or following directions
- Walking with someone to the right place

People with dyscalculia may also find that they:

- Find it difficult to do mathematical equations or to retain numerical information
- Have a lack of confidence with numbers / dealing with finances
- Find it difficult to give or follow directions – but can walk with someone to the right place.
- Keep track of time
- Struggle to improve in areas of weakness which can be stressful and damaging to confidence

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR DYSCALCULIA

- Use 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
- Create learning opportunities based around practice and replication rather than theory
- Enable opportunities so they can develop their own way of doing things which might look different but still has the same outcome
- Have access to colleagues who are comfortable to double check things to help ensure errors aren't made

DYSGRAPHIA

COMMON CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH DYSGRAPHIA

- Difficulty writing legibly and efficiently
- Regular tasks may take longer than anticipated causing additional stress that prohibit the ability to organize time efficiently
- When using spell-check on a computer, a person with dysgraphia may have difficulty picking out the correct word from a list of similar words
- Trouble filling in routine forms by hand, particularly if they require fitting words into set boxes
- Illegible handwriting; a person with dysgraphia may not be able to read their own meeting notes. Colleagues may complain that emails and written communications are indecipherable
- A person with dysgraphia mixes lowercase and uppercase letters, or print and cursive letters, seemingly randomly
- A person with dysgraphia often leaves out individual letters or the ends of words, particularly when writing quickly. In some cases, a person with dysgraphia may have trouble with typing as well
- Experiences hand cramps or pain when writing
- Has trouble telling when words are misspelled
- Often uses grammatically incorrect sentences in emails or reports
- May be overly reliant on simple sentence structures
- Prefers to give or get directions orally, instead of in writing
- Has trouble “getting to the point” in written communication; emails may be rambling, or reports may repeat the same ideas several times
- Able to explain self clearly when speaking, but not when writing

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR DYSGRAPHIA

- Where possible, reduce the expected amount of written work to be completed
- Allow written tasks to be completed with alternate response formats, e.g. audio, graphic, verbal, multiple-choice or video responses.
- Suggest the use of wide-lined or graph paper.
- Suggest the use of writing implements that are more comfortable, e.g. gel pens, softer pencils and pencil grips.
- Consult with the staff member to see if the use of a tablet would assist with planning and completing written tasks.
- Highlight important points in documents
- Use voicemail rather than written memos
- Make sure there is a quiet space available away from distractions such as doors, busy phones, loud machinery
- Allocate a private workspace if possible
- Allow an employee to work from home occasionally, if possible
- Use a “do not disturb” sign when tasks require intense concentration
- If interrupting, allow the person to pause and write down what they are doing to refer to when resuming work
- Supply screen-reading software or a Reading Pen
- Print resources on coloured paper, and change background colour of computer screens and presentations

DYSLEXIA

COMMON CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH DYSLEXIA

- Difficulty reading quickly and accurately
- Making spelling errors or missing out information/key words in written documents
- Slow processing speed
- Poor organisational skills e.g. prioritising tasks, meeting deadlines
- Poor short-term working memory
- Data processing
- Difficulty in structuring writing

People with dyslexia may also find that they:

- Spell or read words incorrectly, or don't identify when something has been autocorrected to a different word
- Sometimes struggle to think of the right words to say or write to express themselves.
- Find it difficult to take in lots of instructions without breaking it down
- Lack confidence in their abilities, especially anything perceived to be academic

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR DYSLEXIA

- Give advance notice of tasks whenever possible, in particular, giving out reading materials well in advance of meetings. Have “easy read” materials available, where possible
- Use bullet points and ensure text is spaced out well in documents and emails
- Work with flow charts or diagrams rather than lots of text
- Highlight key areas of text when sending out key 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
- Spell-checkers can also be very helpful tools for individuals
- Avoid printing on bright white paper. Use cream or pale blue instead. 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
- Avoid asking the individual to read out aloud in a group, unless this has been discussed beforehand
- Create templates to work from rather than having to start documents from scratch
- Write down instructions and use visual prompts to act as reminders
- Allow more time to read information. Explain the meanings of words if not clear
- 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

DYSPRAXIA and DEVELOPMENTAL COORDINATION DISORDER (DCD)

COMMON CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH DYSPRAXIA

- May find it difficult to plan work to meet deadlines
- May work more slowly as a result of challenges with motor skills
- Struggle with some physical tasks or activities such as driving, hospital corners when making beds or writing for example
- Often misinterpreted as clumsy

Other traits

People with dyspraxia or DCD may also find that they:

- Find it difficult to plan work to meet deadlines
- Work more slowly as a result of challenges with motor skills
- Struggle with some physical tasks or activities such as driving, hospital corners when making beds or writing

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR DYSPRAXIA

- Help the individual become organised by sorting paperwork, filing, organising their calendar and setting deadlines for work. Different coloured folders for different tasks can help with organisation
- Establish routines
- Provide a structured timetable and the opportunity for training in time management
- Regular breaks to allow the concentration of effort to be targeted correctly
- Make sure instructions are concise and wherever possible provide timetables, mnemonics and mind maps as these help people with dyspraxia to prioritise their work and meet deadlines
- Employees should be encouraged to write instructions down clearly and to keep them for easy reference
- Write a list of actions /tasks down so they can see what needs to be done and cross them off as they are completed
- If new skills are introduced, allow additional time for practice
- Encourage the individual to list actions or tasks that need to be done at the beginning and end of every day
- 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

MISOPHONIA

COMMON CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH MISPHONIA

- Loud chewing, loud rustling sounds, loud breathing, pen clicking, paper shuffling, mobile phones ringing or beeping frequently cause negative emotional responses
- Those with misophonia can experience anger and panic as a reaction to specific sounds
- The three main types of sounds that disturb people with misophonia are eating, nose and throat sounds and repetitive environmental sounds like keyboard tapping and rustling paper
- Whilst many people find these noises annoying, individuals with misophonia describe an intense feeling of disgust, anger, distress, or panic that escalates while the sound is still present. This can happen even when the sound is at a very low volume
- Misophonia sufferers can experience physical sensations similar to a flight or fight response, including racing heart, shortness of breath, tension, feeling hot and anxious. Misophonia sufferers can feel trapped, helpless, and out of control when they can't get away from these sounds
- Experiences can cause serious challenges in the workplace and Misophonia sufferers can find certain workplace environments unbearable to the point of having physical reactions
- Misophonia sufferers cannot ignore these noises and it can make life debilitating

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR MISPHONIA

- Reduce distractions in the work area:
- Provide space enclosures, sound absorption panels, or a private office
- Allow for use of white noise or environmental sound machines
- Allow the employee to listen to soothing music
- Provide a noise cancelling headphones/headset
- Plan for uninterrupted work time
- Increase natural lighting or provide full spectrum lighting
- Allow flexible work environment:
- Encourage use of stress management techniques to deal with frustration
- Allow telephone calls during work hours to doctors and others for needed support
- Assign a supervisor, manager, or mentor to answer the employee's questions
- Restructure job to include only essential functions during times of stress
- Provide backup coverage for when the employee needs to take breaks
- Allow flexible work environment:
- Allow the employee to take a break and go to a place where s/he feels comfortable to use relaxation techniques or contact a support person
- Identify and remove environmental triggers such as particular smells or noises
- Count one occurrence for all misophonia-related absences
- Encourage the individual to walk away from frustrating situations
- Consider flexible working and working from home
- Provide partitions or closed doors to allow for privacy in noisy environments
- Provide misophonia awareness to coworkers and supervisors, so that they can understand the challenges associated with misophonia

TOURETTE'S SYNDROME (TS)

COMMON CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH TS

- Increased risk of anxiety, sleep problems, mood disorders, and even suicide
- Attention problems
- Higher risk for learning, behavioural, and social problems
- Sloppiness, frequent erasing, time-consuming efforts for neatness, and difficulty with writing
- Long-term side effects of medications, social isolation, and complications in financial and legal matters for those who carry TS into their retirement years

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR TS

- Allow flexible working: consider pain, injury and fatigue caused by tics and the changeable nature of TS
- Put in place strategies to support organisation, memory, and well-being, such as workplace coaching.
- Adopt a person-centred strength and needs based approach
- A socially accepting work culture is one of the most protective factors to someone with TS
- Create a culture of acceptance by maintaining equality and diversity
- Offer awareness training to colleagues to inform and educate on what TS is and what it is not
- Where possible, offer hybrid working – this can enable people with TS to work from a space they feel comfortable which accommodates for the fluctuating nature of the condition
- Provided a calm and safe private space for the employee to tic if they require. In providing this you 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 employees to get the sensory input they need to focus and function
- Consider the sensory environment when designing office spaces, bright lights, loud noises, strong smells, and the layout of a room are just some of the sensory components which can impact on employees' tics

SLOW PROCESSING SPEED

COMMON CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH SLOW PROCESSING SPEED

- Getting overwhelmed by too much information all at once
- Needing more time to give answers or make decisions
- Frequently missing social cues
- Needing to read information repeatedly to understand it
- Having trouble keeping up in conversations
- Having difficulty following routines and directions
- Having problems finishing tasks in a reasonable amount of time
- Difficulty following conversations or instructions
- Trouble multitasking or switching between tasks
- Decreased productivity and efficiency are often consequences of slow mental processing
- Social interactions and relationships can also be affected
- Personal safety and risk assessment can be impacted by slow processing. Quick decision-making in potentially dangerous situations might be challenging

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR SLOW PROCESSING SPEED

- Allow extra time for tasks
- 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
- Support the individual 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. Ensure the individual has this support if needed
- Timeout breaks when needed can help an individual recharge and stay focused
- Do not set unrealistic timing
- Develop a plan for them
- Break Down Tasks: Don't overwhelm them with lots of tasks. Break them down into smaller chunks
- Allocate the individual more time to take in information
- Allow more time to make decisions or give answers

STAMMERING

COMMON CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH STAMMERING

- Stammering can have a negative impact on workers' job performance and job satisfaction This can precipitate feelings of stress and anxiety and can affect self-identity at work.
- The staff member may fear the stammering undermines their perceived professional competency and capability
- Answering the phone and speaking up in meetings can cause great anxiety. Any negative speaking performances can stay with a member of staff with a stammer for a long time and this could cause constant worry about upcoming presentations or group discussions
- certain situations can trigger stammering such as unfamiliar meetings and rounds of introduction

At stressful times, knowing the increased risk of stammering, a member of staff may not attend meetings or complete phone calls instead relying on their colleagues to complete these pieces of work

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR STAMMERING

- The option to use a quiet room to use 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