



Equality & Diversity
in Local Councils

NEURODIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE GUIDANCE

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INTRODUCTION

THE AIM OF THIS GUIDANCE IS TO
OUTLINE COUNCIL'S COMMITMENT TO
PROMOTING EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS,
WHILST RECOGNISING AND CELEBRATING
THE DIVERSITY THAT EXISTS AMONG
OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

This guidance applies to workers, and potential workers, who are neurodivergent, or who believe that they may be neurodivergent. It is also a document to give guidance to managers of neurodivergent staff.

Neurodiversity covers a broad range of conditions, each reflecting the intricate diversity of the human brain. The scope of this guidance covers the commonly recognised conditions but not limited to: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia and Tourette's Syndrome.

A glossary is included at the end of this guidance which provides a helpful introduction to key neurodiversity-related conditions.



WHAT IS NEURODIVERSITY?

Neurodiversity is an umbrella term that refers to all the diverse ways that different people may process information. It encompasses everyone and how each person thinks, learns, communicates, and experiences the world around them, which varies in many ways, and it is therefore important to understand the individual needs of each person.

Within the term 'neurodiversity', people may be classed as 'neurotypical' or as 'neurodivergent'.

Neurodivergence covers a broad range of conditions each presenting in different ways, including Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism, Dyscalculia, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Tourette's Syndrome, amongst others.

ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)

ADHD affects both children and adults. It is characterised by persistent patterns of attention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity, which can impact with daily functioning in various aspects of life, including, work, relationships, and home activities.

AUTISM

Autism is a lifelong developmental condition which affects the social and communication centres of the brain. It can affect the way an individual relates to people, situations and their environment. It is often a non-visible condition and may not be evident to others. Autistic people can be either sensory avoidant/defensive or sensory seeking, or a mix of both. When experiencing sensory sensitivity, it can make the individual feel overwhelmed or anxious.

Autism is not a mental health issue, but it is important to be aware that it is common for autistic people to experience mental health issues such as anxiety.

The phrases "autistic person" or "person who is autistic" can be used, however, it is always best to check preferred terminology with the person.

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) has published Supporting Autistic People in Employment – How to be an Inclusive Employer. For the purpose of this guidance, refer to the further support section for a link to this document.

DYSCALCULIA

Dyscalculia results in differences in learning or comprehending arithmetic, including understanding numbers and how to manipulate them, and performing mathematical calculations. It can also impact tasks such as remembering basic facts, map reading, telling the time, understanding measurements and estimating the passage of time. This can result in not knowing when to move onto the next task, punctuality issues and time management issues.

Dyscalculia can occur singularly but is often experienced alongside dyslexia and/or dyspraxia.

DYSLEXIA

Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. While it primarily affects reading and writing, a dyslexic person may encounter other challenges connected to cognitive tasks, working memory (making them appear forgetful); the speed of processing of information (slower to process and possible difficulty multi-tasking); and rapid naming.

Dyslexia is not linked to intelligence or poor education; it occurs regardless of gender, age, ability, race, ethnicity or background.

Dyslexia can also occur alongside other learning difficulties and can range from mild to severe.

DYSPRAXIA

Dyspraxia may affect motor coordination and occasionally, speech. People with dyspraxia may have difficulty performing movements in a smooth, coordinated way, which can affect their ability to carry out everyday tasks. It can affect how a person learns new skills, thinks and remembers information; their ability to write or type; their organisational skills including time management and planning. The impact of dyspraxia may vary and change over time.

TIC DISORDERS

Tourette's syndrome is probably the most well-known form. Tics disorder is characterised by involuntary and repetitive movement or sounds. The severity of tic disorders varies significantly, meaning milder cases can go undetected. Tics can increase with stress, anxiety or excitement and can be painful and tiring. It can impact executive functioning skills such as organisation and planning.

Neurodivergent individuals exhibit differences in areas such as social preferences, communication styles, sensory processing, learning abilities, and environmental perception.

It's estimated that up to 20% of the population is neurodivergent, highlighting the significant diversity in human brain function.

The language society uses around disabilities and neurodivergence is often shaped by stereotypes and negativity. The words we choose matter greatly, as they can either foster inclusion or create exclusion.

NEURODIVERSITY AND THE LAW

Whilst there is a moral and business case for being a neuroinclusive employer, there is also a legal one that all Councils should be aware of. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) defines disability as: "A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities." Not all neurodivergent people regard themselves as disabled. But if they meet the legal definition of a disability, they are protected with the same level of protection against discrimination as people with other disabilities, and the duty to make reasonable adjustments applies.

Under the DDA, discrimination in employment occurs when:

- A disabled person is treated less favourably than someone else on grounds of his/her disability - direct discrimination.
- A disabled person is treated less favourably than someone else and the treatment is for a reason relating to the person's disability, and this treatment cannot be justified - disability related discrimination.
- A disabled person is subjected to victimisation - a disabled person is treated less favourable because they have complained about an instance of discrimination.
- A disabled person is subjected to harassment for a reason which relates to their disability.
- There is a failure to make reasonable adjustments for a disabled person.

Further information on the DDA duties¹ is available from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

¹[Copy of DisEmploymentCOP05.pdf](#)

AUTISM (AMENDMENT) ACT (NI) 2022

The Autism (Amendment) Act (NI) 2022² aims to strength support, services and rights for autistic people across Northern Ireland. It builds on the original Autism Act (NI) 2011 by placing greater emphasis on inclusion, accessibility and accountability. The Act introduces new duties for government departments to collaborate more effectively, enhance public awareness, and ensure the development and implementation of robust autism strategies that are responsive to the needs of autistic individuals and their families.

Following on from this amendment, the Department of Health have published an Autism Strategy 2023 – 2028. It sets out the key commitments and actions needed to enhance and improve the support for autistic people and their families. For the purpose of this guidance, refer to the further support section for a link to this document.



²*Autism (Amendment) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022*

FOR THE PURPOSES OF THE GUIDANCE:

- Long-term' impact means a condition that has lasted, or is likely to last, for twelve months or more. Neurodivergent employees are likely to automatically satisfy this aspect of the definition as the conditions covered by this guidance are lifelong in nature.
- A 'substantial effect' means something that is more than minor or trivial.
- There is no comprehensive list of 'normal day-to-day activities' and Tribunals tend to adopt a broad definition of what this may mean.

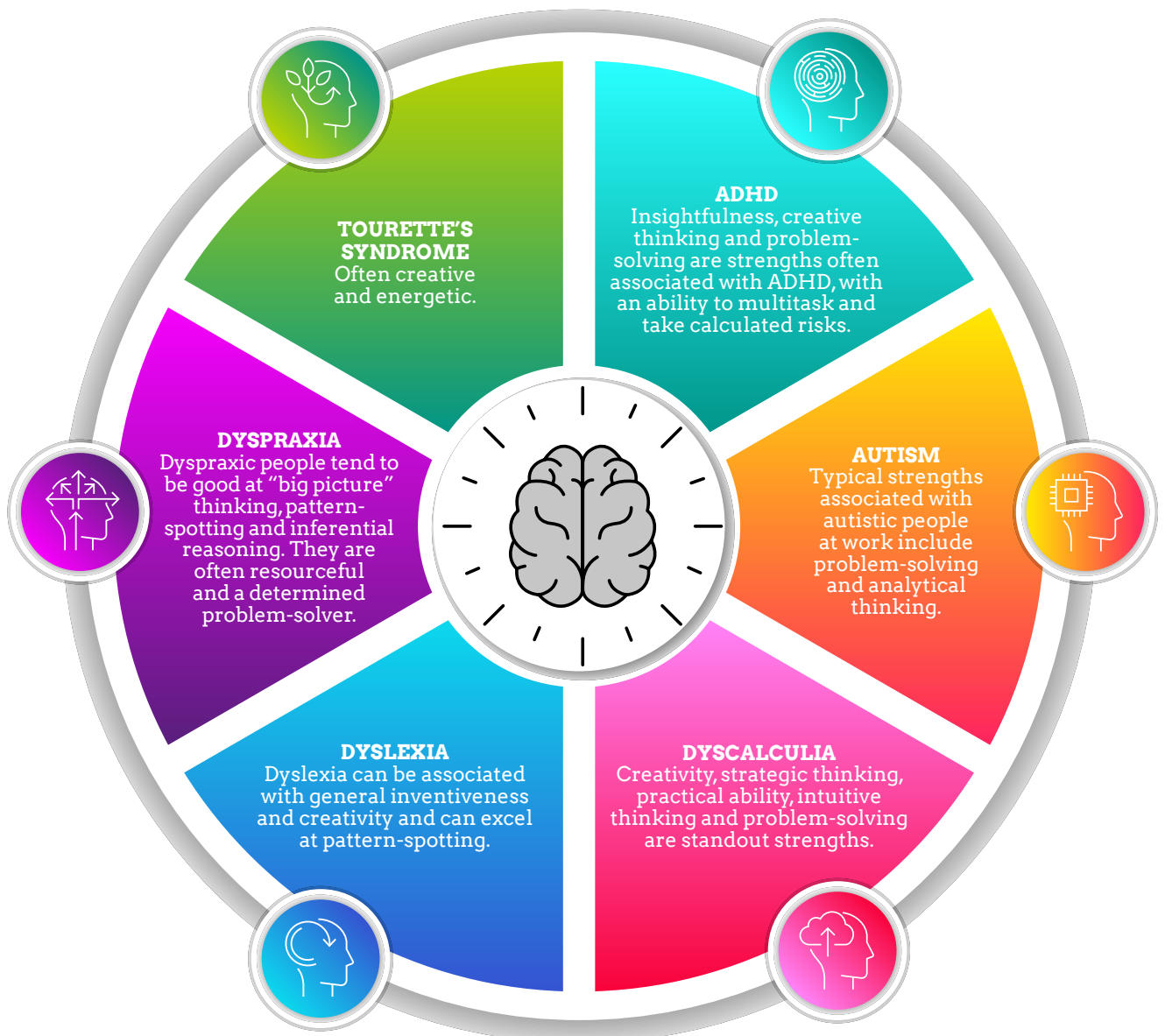
PRINCIPLES OF THIS GUIDANCE

- A diversity of cognitive approaches is a source of great strength and value within a genuinely inclusive workplace.
- All employees deserve opportunities, encouragement and support to realise their full potential.
- All reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that policies, practices and culture do not discriminate against neurodivergent employees.
- Each employee is unique and there can be a high degree of overlap among neurodivergent people, e.g. some may be both autistic and have ADHD or another physical or mental impairment. Consequently, any support needs must be identified and implemented on the basis of personal evaluation and individual consultation – not assumptions or stereotypes.
- Employees must not be subject to unfavourable treatment if they choose to disclose that they are neurodivergent.

STRENGTHS OF NEURODIVERGENT EMPLOYEES

Neurodivergent employees often bring many skills, making them invaluable assets in any workplace. Integrating their unique abilities not only promotes inclusivity but also significantly contributes to the overall success and growth of the Council.

When given the right support and opportunities, these unique strengths can lead to remarkable contributions and innovations.



CHALLENGES FACED BY NEURODIVERGENT EMPLOYEES

Neurodivergence employees may face a range of challenges in the workplace, which can vary depending on the individual and their specific neurodivergence. Some common challenges can include:

Workplace Environment and Sensory Sensitivities

- Difficulty concentrating in busy or distracting environments.
- Open-plan offices can be overwhelming due to noise, lighting, or other sensory stimuli.

Communication and Social Interactions

- Challenges with understanding or interpreting social cues, sarcasm, or indirect instructions.
- Difficulty with verbal communication, especially in fast-paced discussions or meetings.
- Misinterpretation of tone or body language, leading to misunderstandings.

Task Management

- Difficulty transitioning between tasks or handling unexpected changes in workflow.
- Struggles with time management, prioritisation, or staying organised.

Workplace Expectations and Culture

- Bias or misconceptions about neurodivergence from colleagues and managers can lead to stereotypical assumptions and lowered expectations of an individual's abilities.
- Pressure to conform to traditional workplace norms that may not align with their needs.
- Lack of understanding or support from leadership.

Performance and Career Progression

- Anxiety around performance reviews that focus on traditional measures of success.
- Being overlooked for promotions due to differences in communication or work styles.
- Struggles with self-advocacy, leading to unmet needs or underutilised skills.

Access to Reasonable Adjustments

- Hesitancy to request accommodations due to fear of stigma or negative repercussions.
- Lack of clear policies or understanding from employers on how to support neurodivergent employees.

AS A MANAGER, OR COLLEAGUE, WHAT CAN YOU DO

There are so many things a manager or colleague can or could do. By making small adjustments not only can you increase productivity and results but also create an open and supportive work culture.

Some Do's and Don'ts that Managers or Colleagues can do to help Neurodivergent Employees:

- Allow employees the opportunity to ask questions.
- Allocate work and manage employees to their strengths.
- Allow a dedicated 'safe space'.
- Allow plenty of time to read information or instructions, if needed.
- Ask employees what works for them.
- Ask employees to pick a challenge or two.
- Be cautious of feelings and trigger words.
- Be mindful of appropriate language.
- Be patient and be an ally to educate other colleagues if you hear incorrect or inappropriate comments.
- Ensure you give advance notice of changes to allow time to prepare and organise, for example if the camera need to be on for a virtual meeting, this should be clearly communicated ahead of the meeting.
- Empower neurodivergent voices and include neurodivergent voices for example in consultations, policy development etc.
- Establish who to contact in the event of emergencies, for example, family members, nominated colleague, employment support workers, if relevant.
- Give advance notice of up-and-coming team meetings.
- Hold regular one-to-one meetings to provide a structured opportunity for discussion and feedback, allow the employee the opportunity to be accompanied by a work colleague or advocate for support.
- Manage your and the employee's expectations.
- Offer flexible working arrangements where possible. For roles that flexibility cannot be provided, have a conversation with the employee to explore alternative accommodations that may be feasible.
- Provide clear communication, structured tasks, written instructions or flowchart of instructions.
- Recognise when employees are needing time away from the stimulant.

- Suggest things to help or assist i.e. suggest making a list of priorities per day, adding or rejugling if needed, create a checklist of tasks with timings and mark once completed, make sure workspace is kept clear and organised this could include colour coding or keeping items used together stored near to each other.
- Training and development (mentorship, support programmes or mandatory awareness training).
- Try to understand the employees' condition(s) and what it means for them. This may help you to anticipate their experiences, reactions and needs so that you can provide each need with appropriate support.

Don'ts:

- Don't assume that an employee is neurodivergent.
- Don't make assumptions on how an employee's neurodiversity impacts them as conditions impact everyone differently. With the appropriate support neurodivergent employees can develop ways to manage this, but neurodiversity is part of an individual's neurological make up.
- Don't ask for evidence of diagnosis.

If there are performance or conduct concerns, managers should offer the employee the opportunity and support to explain reasons behind the issue (as their neurodiversity may be related to this) before considering whether to escalate this matter further. As with all performance concerns this should not be delayed until a formal performance meeting. Identify how to support the employee and implement reasonable adjustments to ensure that any performance or conduct issues are resolved. Open, honest, constructive and professional two-way conversations will bring the best results.

Do not assume your neurodivergent employee is conscious of the overall aim in their day-to-day work. They may struggle to reflect on their own performance and what they want and need to develop.

Some key signs which might indicate performance is dipping or is likely to dip:

- Customer or colleagues raise concerns.
- Distancing themselves from colleagues.
- Increase absence.
- Making mistakes or work dropping below standards.
- Missing deadlines and poor timekeeping.
- Not showing interest in their work.

However, remember these could also be signs that your employee needs some additional adjustments so make sure to find this out before processing to any formal stages.

EXAMPLE OF SUPPORT AVOIDING PERFORMANCE PROCEDURES

Sam regularly gets distracted in the office and misses deadlines. Sam's manager talks to them about this. Sam agrees they're struggling and thinks they might have ADHD.

Sam and the manager discuss what might help. Sam asks for a quiet space to work and regular check-ins to support with time management. Sam's manager agrees for Sam to use a meeting room whenever it's available. They also get noise-cancelling headphones and start weekly catch-ups to check work is on track.

Sam's performance improves. If Sam's manager had started a performance procedure, this could have caused Sam stress and made work more challenging and would not have addressed the poor performance issue.

EXAMPLE OF WHEN A FORMAL PROCEDURE IS APPROPRIATE

Lesley is autistic. Lesley has a designated room to go to when they need time out during the day.

Lesley is annoyed because their football team lost a match. During a team meeting, Lesley shouts abusive language at another employee. Even after some time out, this behaviour continues.

Lesley's manager starts a disciplinary investigation, as this behaviour is considered misconduct.

Lesley already had a reasonable adjustment in place that could have helped in the situation. It is appropriate for Lesley's manager to start an investigation.

Managers are expected to provide the necessary support and reasonable adjustments to enable neurodivergent employees to thrive. It is important to recognise that managers have a range of responsibilities and must balance the needs of all employees within their teams. The focus should be on fostering an inclusive and supportive environment where neurodivergent employees feel empowered to work autonomously while having access to the guidance and accommodations they may require.

IF A MANAGER SUSPECTS AN EMPLOYEE IS NEURODIVERGENT

If a manager notices that an employee, who hasn't disclosed that they are neurodivergent is having difficulty at work it may be worth considering alternative strategies or support noted in this guidance. For more detailed practical tips refer to pages 10-12 of this guidance or reach out to one of the organisations noted in the further support section.

The manager should approach this situation sensitively. They should not ask directly about what they suspect. They should:

- Talk to the employee about what they've noticed.
- Frame the conversation positively by focusing on what support and reasonable adjustments might help.
- Keep anything, discussed confidential unless the employee agrees otherwise.

USING APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE AND MANAGEMENT STYLE AROUND NEURODIVERSITY

Language can affect how neurodivergent employees feel. Using appropriate language when talking about neurodiversity can:

- Avoid causing someone distress.
- Make employees feel more comfortable during conversations.

Everyone should be sensitive in the terms they use.

For example, when talking about neurodivergence, avoid terms like 'suffering from', 'symptoms' or using generalising statements such as 'Everyone is on the Spectrum/abit ADHD'.

Language in this area is constantly changing, and some employees will have different preferences. It can be tricky to know what's appropriate.

Some good ways to know what language to use include:

- Asking the neurodivergent employee what terms they prefer.
- Listening to what neurodivergent employees say.
- Matching a neurodivergent employee's language when appropriate – for example, in a one-to-one conversation.

Managers and employees can show respect and sensitivity around language by:

- Acknowledging if they get it wrong and taking steps to resolve it.
- Being open about not knowing things and making the effort to learn.
- Remembering that every neurodivergent person is different.

A one size fits all management style will not get the best from employees. Managers should adopt a flexible and individualised approach to managing and supporting neurodivergent employees. Managers should ask neurodivergent employees about their preferred communication methods e.g. some neurodivergent employees may prefer email or Teams video call. On the frequency of one-to-one meetings, some may prefer weekly check ins over daily check ins.

CONSIDER THE WIDER WORKING TEAM

Understanding how to communicate and support colleagues will be important for all teams, however, not everyone who is neurodivergent may be ready or wish to share this information with their wider team. Providing training on supporting neurodiverse employees in the workplace may be a good starting point. This will allow for an environment where neurodivergent employees may feel more comfortable to disclose, with relevant colleagues supports that work best for them.

In the event that they do not wish to share this information with colleagues creating a Neuroinclusive workplace will benefit the entire team.

Managers must not tell other employees about an employee's neurodivergence without their agreement.

HOW TO CREATE A NEUROINCLUSIVE WORKPLACE

Making your Council more inclusive for neurodivergent employees can have many benefits.

It can:

- Attract employees with a wider range of skills and experience.
- Enhance problem solving capabilities.
- Improve employee wellbeing.
- Reduce absence levels and employee turnover.
- Reduce the risk of disputes and legal claims, for example in relation to discrimination.

It can also make employees feel comfortable talking about neurodivergence.

Discuss with the employee what barriers exist in the work environment or within their role which present challenges and explore together how they could be overcome through the implementation of reasonable adjustments. Reasonable adjustments will be specific to the employee – you should not adopt a one-size-fits-all approach.

There is no legal or professional obligation for an employee to share their neurodivergence – it is up to them to decide how much personal information, if any, they share with you. The aim is to create an inclusive workplace to foster an environment where neurodivergent employees can thrive!

Celebrate achievements and profile neurodivergent employees, with their consent.

CONTINUOUS SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

- Be flexible.
- Consider providing training modules on the e-learning portal to create a better understanding for all employees on neurodiversity.
- Help to structure their day so they can work on tasks which need more concentration during quieter periods.
- Mentorship can also provide valuable guidance and support.
- Provide templates which can be reused or can provide guidance.
- Provide software or online tools i.e. screen readers, reading pens to help with processing reading material.
- Regular check-ins with managers.

FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

- Allowing employees to work in environments that minimise sensory overload and other stressors can significantly enhance an employee's productivity and wellbeing.
- Allow for regular short movement breaks throughout the day.
- Examples include flexible working hours, remote working options and personalised workspaces.
- Provide time and space if the employee feels stressed to reduce anxiety.

FOSTERING AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE

- Creating a truly inclusive culture requires commitment from all levels of the Council, especially senior leadership.
- Employee resource groups (ERGs) focused on neurodiversity can also play a pivotal role in promoting understanding and advocacy within the Council.
- Leaders should model inclusive behaviours and ensure that neurodiversity is a visible part of the Council's diversity and inclusion strategy.
- Senior leaders need to ensure that culture changes from the bottom up; and that Neurodiversity is a visible part of the work of Council's equality programme.

INCLUSIVE RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

- Ask about one issue at a time, avoiding multiple questions.
- Choose tasks for the interview that accurately reflect what is expected in the job.
- Ensure interviewers are trained in neurodiversity awareness to reduce bias.
- Offer candidates the option to request reasonable adjustments during the application process i.e. ensure that materials are available in alternative format, large print, braille.
- Provide clear instructions and ample preparation time to help neurodivergent candidates showcase their true abilities at assessment centre and interview stage.

RAISING AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

- Create a positive work environment that encourages open communication, collaboration, mutual respect as this helps in reducing stress and increases job satisfaction, leading to lower absenteeism rates.

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

The Council recognises that neurodivergent applicants and employees may require extra support in relation to their employment. The Council should be committed to upholding its values on transparency, equality and innovation, and valuing its employees. Therefore, where reasonable adjustments are necessary, and can be accommodated, the Council will support these. Reasonable adjustments are about being inclusive and fulfilling our duties under the DDA. Reasonable adjustments aim to 'level the playing field', by removing any substantial disadvantage a disabled colleague may face when compared to those who are not disabled.

Reasonable adjustments should be made on a case-by-case basis and should be agreed with line managers in relation to an employee's job role. These may include specific work-related software or equipment, differently presented documents, documents in a larger font size, finding different ways to carry out tasks, allowing extra time to complete tasks, flexibility in working hours/patterns or other recommended adjustments. Reasonable adjustments can generally be low or no cost:

- Allocating job duties which align with the employee's strengths as much as possible.
- Providing noise-cancelling headphones or specialised software that assists with reading and writing or for outdoor environments offering noise-cancelling headphones can help the employee to remain focused.
- Offer alternative methods of assessment (such as practical tests).
- Offering extra time for interviews and practical tests.
- Offering workplace mentoring and counselling can help employees develop strategies to cope with challenges, enhancing the employee's ability to thrive.
- Task Rotation for manual workers allowing flexibility in rotating tasks to prevent monotony or overstimulation from repeating the same task for long periods.
- Use clear and straightforward language in job advertisements.

Agreed reasonable adjustments are subject to regular review as this will ensure they continue to meet the needs of the employee and the Council. Often, minor adjustments to an employee's work environment can make a significant impact, enabling them to perform their job effectively and remain in or return to work.

In recent years many organisations have offered a reasonable adjustment passport scheme. The passport scheme provides a confidential live record of adjustments agreed with the organisation. The passport is for employees to keep and share with anyone they think may need to know about the barriers they face within or outside the workplace and the adjustments that have been agreed to prevent or reduce its impact in the workplace.

For the purposes of this guidance, further information on the TUC Reasonable Adjustments Disability Passport – Model Passport can be accessed by clicking on the below link.

[*Reasonable_Adjustments_Disability_Passports_2019_WIP5_Model_Passport_secure.pdf*](#)

For information on external organisations who can offer support on possible reasonable adjustments refer to further support in this guidance.

RAISING AWARENESS OF NEURODIVERSITY

Raising awareness of neurodiversity allows Council to fully harness the strengths of their diverse workforce. Promoting understanding and ensuring equal opportunities for all employees. It can help make talking about it feel normalised and comfortable. This can reduce problems and lead to more employees getting the support they need.

To raise awareness of neurodiversity:

- Consider whether an employee network for neurodiversity could provide support to employees.
- Include in mandatory training.
- Run awareness days and campaigns.

MANDATORY TRAINING

Where possible, you should include neurodiversity in your Council's mandatory training.

This can help you:

- Set out your commitment to being inclusive as soon as employees start.
- Provide a supportive environment for neurodivergent employees without them having to share their conditions.

Mandatory training on neurodiversity does not have to be long or complicated. For example, you could include it as part of other equality and inclusion training.

AWARENESS DAYS AND CAMPAIGNS

Neurodiversity campaigns or awareness days can help educate employees.

There might be neurodivergent employees in your Council happy to share their experiences. For example, talking about challenges they face at work and how they overcome them.

They could share this in the way they feel most comfortable. For example, writing a blog post or presenting in a meeting.

EMPLOYEE NETWORKS

A neurodiversity network is a group for neurodivergent employees to:

- Raise issues that need addressing.
- Share experiences.
- Support each other.

A neurodiversity network might be part of a staff disability network. If establishing a network, it may be useful to note that employees with neurodivergent family members may also benefit, as would Allies as supporters in establishing a neuro inclusion workplace.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES

ACCESS TO WORK SCHEME

The Council should take reasonable steps to assist employees with applications for Access to Work Scheme and to facilitate Workplace Needs Assessments which may be conducted by Access to Work or independent consultants. It may also be recommended that the employee has a consultation with the Council's Occupational Health Provider to identify reasonable adjustments and support.

For the purposes of this guidance, further information on the Access to Work Scheme can be accessed by clicking on the below link.

[Access to Work - practical help at work / nidirect](#)

WORKABLE (NI) SCHEME

Offers a flexible range of long-term support to help employees with disabilities, to keep working, support is tailored for individuals to meet their specific needs in the workplace and will include a 1-2-1 support from a job coach for the employees, their colleagues and Council.

For the purposes of this guidance, further information on the Workable (NI) Scheme can be accessed by clicking on the below link.

[Workable NI / Disability Support / Northern Ireland](#)

FURTHER READING

The CIPD report on Neuroinclusion at work 2024 provides valuable insights into the state of neurodiversity in UK workplaces, highlighting the significant gaps and opportunities in promoting neuroinclusion within workplaces.

Neuroinclusion at work report 2024 (cipd.org)

Mental health in the workplace / CIPD

FURTHER SUPPORT

Autism NI / Autism NI - Autism NI is Northern Ireland's longest serving autism charity and training provider. Autism NI support autistic people and their families, and campaign for autism acceptance within society.

Autism Strategy 2023-2028 published / Department of Health - This cross-departmental strategy, which runs until 2028, sets out the key commitments and actions needed to enhance and improve support for autistic people and their families.

Disability Action Northern Ireland - Disability Action is the largest Northern Ireland wide pan-disability organisation working with disabled people with various disabilities: physical disabilities, learning disabilities, sensory disabilities, hidden disabilities and mental health disabilities.

ECNI - Equality Commission for Northern Ireland - The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is a non-departmental public body established by the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and has a wealth of resources on discrimination and reasonable adjustments.

DisDisShortGuide2010 – Disability Discrimination Short Guide.

Supporting Autistic People in Employment - How to be an Inclusive Employer – Supporting Autistic People in Employment.

About - EFDNI – All employees from a member organisation can contact Employers for Disability Northern Ireland to discuss any disability related issues, including Neurodiversity and get information/advice and support directly.

Disability Discrimination Act 1995 – Legal Definition of Disability.

How can we help? / NI Dyslexia Centre - As a centre of excellence for Dyslexia in Northern Ireland, the team can offer unrivalled advice and guidance to individuals, parents, teachers or employers.

ICTU Neuro Diversity Guide (1).pdf – Irish Congress of Trade Unions Northern Ireland Committee has published a Neuro Diversity Guide to help union officials and workplace representatives to represent Neurodivergent members.

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission – Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission. Their job is to make sure government, and other public bodies protect the human rights of everyone in Northern Ireland. They also help people understand what their human rights are and what they can do if their rights are violated.

Neurodiversity in the Workplace / Labour Relations Agency - Official - provides a free, impartial and confidential employment relations service to those engaged in industry, commerce and the public services.

Neurodiversity SPARK - an Northern Ireland-based neuroinclusion initiative, providing training, advocacy, and community support for neurodivergent individuals and organisations.

National Autistic Society (autism.org.uk) - The National Autistic Society is a UK charity that provides information, guidance and support to autistic people.

Neurodiversity and Co-occurring difficulties - British Dyslexia Association (bdadyslexia.org.uk) - offers a wide range of information to help families, professionals and neurodivergent individuals.

Tourette's Action - UK's only national charity dedicated to supporting individuals with Tourette's syndrome and their families.

GLOSSARY

The following list is not exhaustive but provides a helpful introduction to key neurodiversity-related terms. Language and terminology preferences can vary between individuals, so it's important to follow their lead in how they self-identify and the terms they prefer. Always respect their choices, and if you're unsure about what language to use, simply ask.

ADHD: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (Attention Deficit Disorder) includes persistent patterns of inattention and/or hyperactivity and impulsivity. It affects people's behaviour and causes difficulty with concentration levels and may make the person seem restless and /or make them act on impulse.

Asperger syndrome: was an assessment previously given to some autistic people. It is no longer given, people who might previously have received this assessment now receive an autism assessment.

Autism: Autism may affect how individuals communicate, interact socially, and perceive the world around them.

Disability: "A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities." Further information can be found on the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's publication "Definition of a Disability" available on (www.equalityni.org). Neurodivergent conditions may meet this definition depending on the impact on the person.

Diversity: Diversity is recognising that each and every one of us is different. Diversity recognises and understands differences between people including those of different races; ethnicities; genders; ages; religions; disabilities; sexual orientations; education; socio-economic backgrounds; personalities; skill sets; experiences; and knowledge bases.

Dyscalculia: is characterised by an individual's difficulty in understanding numbers and arithmetic. Dyscalculia is not determined by age, level of education or experience, it occurs across all ages and abilities.

Dyslexia: mainly affects reading and writing skills. As it relates to information processing, it can cause difficulties with memory, speed of processing and organisational skills.

Dyspraxia: is a neurodevelopmental condition that makes it difficult to perform motor skills. It also causes issues with coordination.

Neuroaffirmative: is a term used to describe neurodiversity-affirmative approaches, language and practices.

Neurodivergent: is the term for a person whose brain differences affect how their brain functions and differ from what is considered "typical".

Neurodivergence: is the state of being neurodivergent. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) highlights that a common misuse of language is to talk of 'an individual's neurodiversity' whereas it should be 'an individual's neurodivergence'.

Neurodiversity: refers to the concept that brains function in different ways which determine how we think, act, feel, process information and experience the world. Neurodiversity can be broken down into two categories of people: those who are neurodivergent and those who are neurotypical.

Neurominority: a group who share a similar form of neurodivergence, for example autistic people, dyslexic people.

Neurotypical: describes a person who is not neurodivergent.

Reasonable adjustments: in an employment context are changes to working conditions including equipment, duties, hours of work or communication methods which are tailored to the individual disabled person to ensure no barriers exist to them fulfilling their duties and progressing their career. Failure to make reasonable adjustments may amount to discrimination under the Disability Discrimination Act (1995).

Self-stimulation/stimming: is comforting repetitive actions, for example pacing, folding paper, humming and rocking back and forth which can help neurodivergent people self-regulate and stabilise their emotions. Stimming is not always a sign of distress as some people may stim because they are excited or extremely happy.

Sensory avoidant / defensive: someone who is sensory avoidant/defensive will experience sensory input (taste, smell, hearing, sight, touch, body movement and awareness) more intensely than the average person and avoid it because it is overwhelming to them. Other terms which may be used are hyper-responsive, over-responsive or hypersensitive.

Sensory seeking: someone who is sensory seeking will be under-sensitive to sensory input (taste, smell, hearing, sight, touch, body movement and awareness) and will seek more sensory stimulation. For example with body movement, they may continually tap their feet, sway, or fidget.

Spectrum: was the term previously used to refer to the varying ways a condition shows itself in a person. More commonly now the term continuum is used. Neurodivergent conditions will have different traits and characteristics and to different degrees - they occur on a continuum and no two people with the same condition will be the same.

Tourette Syndrome/Tourette's Syndrome: is a neurological condition characterised by tics and involuntary sounds and movements.



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