

GOOD WORK

Norfolk

GUIDE 6

Supporting Neurodivergent Employees



Understanding different ways of thinking, working and communicating

Neurodiversity refers to the natural differences in how people think, learn, communicate and process information. Neurodivergent employees can bring valuable strengths, perspectives and ways of approaching problems, while some may benefit from adjustments to help them work comfortably and effectively.

There is no single approach to supporting neurodivergent employees, so the starting point should always be an open conversation about the individual's strengths, needs and preferred ways of working.



How Employers Can Help

- Recognise that every neurodivergent person is different. Avoid assumptions and discuss individual needs and preferences.
- Use clear, straightforward communication and provide important information in writing where possible.
- Give instructions in a structured way and check understanding without putting people on the spot.
- Allow flexibility in how tasks are completed, focusing on outcomes rather than one specific way of working.
- Consider adjustments such as quiet workspaces, noise-cancelling headphones, flexible working arrangements or assistive technology.
- Provide advance notice of meetings, changes to routines or new tasks where possible.
- Break larger tasks into manageable steps and clarify priorities and deadlines.
- Encourage the use of planners, reminders, calendars and organisational tools where helpful.
- Respect different communication styles and allow additional processing time during meetings or discussions.
- Be aware of sensory factors such as lighting, noise, temperature or busy environments that may affect concentration or wellbeing.
- Focus on strengths and recognise the unique skills neurodivergent employees can bring, such as creativity, problem-solving, attention to detail, innovation or specialist knowledge.
- Create a workplace culture where employees feel comfortable requesting adjustments and discussing what helps them perform at their best.

Common Workplace Considerations

A neurodivergent employee may benefit from support relating to:

- Organisation, planning and prioritisation.
- Time management and task completion.
- Concentration and managing distractions.
- Processing information and retaining instructions.
- Workplace communication and social interactions.
- Sensory sensitivities.
- Changes to routines, processes or environments.
- Confidence, anxiety or workplace wellbeing.



Key principle



Not all neurodivergent employees will experience these challenges, and many may not require any adjustments at all.

Condition-Specific Examples

ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)

Employees with ADHD often bring creativity, energy, problem-solving skills and innovative thinking to the workplace. However, they may experience challenges with attention, organisation, time management, impulse control and emotional regulation.

- May benefit from structured routines, clear priorities and regular feedback to help maintain focus and reduce overwhelm.
- Provide clear expectations and break tasks into manageable steps rather than giving multiple instructions at once.
- Use visual planners, calendars, task lists, reminders and project management tools to support organisation and timekeeping.
- Schedule regular check-ins to review progress, priorities and any barriers to completing work.
- Allow movement breaks or opportunities to change tasks, particularly during lengthy meetings or concentration-intensive work.
- Consider providing a quiet workspace or reducing distractions where possible.
- Use positive reinforcement and recognise achievements, effort and progress.
- Agree discreet methods of communication if interruptions or impulsive contributions become challenging in meetings.
- Understand that difficulties with organisation or concentration are not a reflection of intelligence, motivation or capability.



Condition-Specific Examples

Autism

Autistic employees often bring strengths such as attention to detail, reliability, specialist knowledge, honesty and strong focus. Autism affects people differently, and support should always be tailored to the individual.

- Use clear, direct and unambiguous communication.
- Provide instructions and important information in writing where appropriate.
- Allow additional time to process information, instructions and questions.
- Give advance notice of changes to routines, workplaces, schedules or expectations wherever possible.
- Support predictable working patterns and clear expectations.
- Be mindful that some individuals may find social situations, networking events or informal workplace interactions more challenging.
- Avoid relying heavily on sarcasm, figures of speech or implied meanings that could be misunderstood.
- Discuss sensory needs, including lighting, noise levels, workspace layouts or strong smells, and make adjustments where possible.
- Check understanding regularly, particularly during induction, training or when introducing new processes.
- Recognise that behaviours such as avoiding eye contact, preferring routines or needing quiet spaces are often strategies for managing information and wellbeing rather than signs of disengagement.



Condition-Specific Examples

Dyslexia

People with dyslexia are often highly capable and may demonstrate strong problem-solving, creative thinking and verbal communication skills. Difficulties are commonly associated with reading, writing, spelling, information processing and organisation.

- Provide documents in clear, accessible formats using straightforward language and uncluttered layouts.
- Allow extra time to read, review and respond to written information where required.
- Provide important documents electronically so they can be used with assistive technology.
- Encourage the use of text-to-speech, speech-to-text and other assistive software.
- Supplement written information with visual aids, diagrams, flowcharts or verbal explanations.
- Clearly explain new terminology, acronyms or technical language.
- Provide written instructions separately from other information to improve clarity.
- Support organisation through templates, checklists, colour coding and digital reminders.
- Focus on the quality of ideas, knowledge and performance rather than spelling or grammatical errors where these are not essential to the role.
- Recognise that reading, writing and information processing may take longer, particularly under pressure.



Condition-Specific Examples

Dyscalculia

Dyscalculia primarily affects a person's ability to understand, process and work confidently with numbers. It may also affect time management, sequencing and navigation.

- Break numerical tasks into clear step-by-step processes.
- Use visual aids, diagrams, colour coding or practical examples to explain numerical information.
- Allow the use of calculators, spreadsheets or digital tools where appropriate.
- Provide additional time for tasks involving calculations, budgets or numerical data.
- Avoid placing unnecessary pressure on speed when accuracy is more important.
- Support understanding of financial information using visual or practical examples.
- Encourage the use of written procedures and reference guides for numerical tasks.
- Provide support with time management through digital calendars, reminders and scheduling tools.
- Recognise that anxiety around numbers can significantly affect confidence and performance.



Condition-Specific Examples

Dyspraxia (Developmental Coordination Disorder)

Dyspraxia affects coordination, organisation, planning and information processing. Individuals may experience challenges with movement, sequencing tasks, memory or managing multiple demands simultaneously.

- Provide clear, structured instructions and allow additional time to process information.
- Support organisation through calendars, checklists, reminders and task-management tools.
- Allow flexibility in how tasks are completed where practical.
- Consider workplace adjustments such as ergonomic equipment, specialist keyboards, voice recognition software or alternative seating arrangements.
- Provide opportunities for employees to practise new tasks and routines.
- Avoid rushing individuals when accuracy is more important than speed.
- Break complex activities into manageable stages and provide written guidance where helpful.
- Be aware that some employees may have difficulty navigating unfamiliar environments or remembering routes.
- Recognise that coordination challenges may affect practical tasks but do not reflect intelligence or commitment.
- Provide encouragement and constructive feedback that builds confidence and independence.



Condition-Specific Examples

Visual Stress (Meares-Irlen Syndrome)

Visual Stress can affect reading, concentration and the way written information is processed. Individuals may experience discomfort, headaches, eye strain, blurred text or sensitivity to light.

- Discuss what adjustments help the individual work comfortably and effectively.
- Consider screen adjustments such as tinted backgrounds, reduced brightness or alternative colour contrasts.
- Support the use of coloured overlays, tinted lenses or specialist eyewear where appropriate.
- Reduce glare from screens, lighting or reflective surfaces where possible.
- Provide information electronically so font size, colour and display settings can be personalised.
- Use clear layouts, appropriate spacing and easy-to-read fonts in workplace documents.
- Allow additional time for reading and processing written information if required.
- Consider lighting levels within the workplace and make adjustments where possible.
- Recognise that concentration and reading accuracy may be affected by visual discomfort rather than ability.



Key principle

Neurodiversity is a difference, not a deficit. The most effective approach is to understand each employee as an individual, build on their strengths, and make reasonable adjustments that help them succeed in the workplace.