

Neurodiversity in the Workplace

What Is Neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity recognises natural differences in how people think, learn, communicate, and process information. It includes autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, Tourette syndrome and more. Around 15–20% of the population is neurodivergent — meaning every workplace is already neurodiverse.

Why It Matters

Embracing neurodiversity:

- Unlocks innovation and creative problem-solving
- Improves retention and morale
- Strengthens team performance and diversity of thought
- Broadens access to an often-overlooked talent pool

Common Strengths Neurodivergent Employees Bring

While every person is unique, common strengths include:

- Autism: focus, reliability, pattern recognition, analytical thinking
- ADHD: creativity, high energy, rapid problem-solving, hyperfocus
- Dyslexia: big-picture thinking, communication strengths, innovation
- Dyspraxia: strategic thinking, empathy, resilience

Common Barriers in the Workplace

Most challenges come from the environment, not the individual:

- Sensory overload (noise, lighting)
- Ambiguous or changing instructions
- Social expectations or unstructured meetings
- Traditional interviews favouring social performance
- Rigid schedules or unclear priorities

Simple, Low-Cost Adjustments

Communication:

- Provide written instructions and clear expectations
- Break tasks into steps
- Share agendas or questions before meetings

Environment:

- Offer quiet spaces or noise-cancelling headphones
- Allow flexible lighting or desk adjustments
- Support hybrid or flexible working where possible

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Workload & Planning:

- Give advance notice of changes
- Make timelines visible (e.g., project tools)
- Prioritise predictability

Meetings:

- Cameras optional
- Avoid putting people “on the spot”
- Provide follow-up notes

Recruitment:

- Offer task-based alternatives to interviews
- Share criteria and expectations upfront
- Focus on capability, not social style

Legal Considerations

Neurological conditions may be covered by the Equality Act (2010) if they have a substantial, long-term effect on daily life. Employers must:

- Make “reasonable adjustments”
- Foster a non-discriminatory, inclusive culture

Disclosure is personal — but supportive environments make it more likely.

Building a Neuroinclusive Culture (ACAS Guidance)

- Ask: “What helps you do your best work?”
- Offer support for everyone: Put flexible practices in place so staff can access help without needing to disclose a diagnosis.
- Review recruitment: Remove unnecessary barriers by using clearer job ads, structured interviews, and practical task options.
- Train managers: Give managers the skills and confidence to support different working styles.
- Raise awareness: Promote understanding of neurodiversity across teams to reduce stigma and build inclusion.
- Create a neurodiversity policy: Set clear expectations and ensure staff know what support and adjustments are available.

The Bottom Line

Neuroinclusion isn't a special initiative, it's a smart, modern business strategy. Small adjustments can unlock exceptional talent and create a workplace where everyone thrives.

Resources:

<https://www.neurodiversityweek.com/employees-and-organizations>

<https://www.acas.org.uk/neurodiversity-at-work>