

How to support your Neurodivergent colleagues

The most appropriate first step as an employer, manager or colleague is to ask the neurodivergent individual to talk about the challenges they are experiencing and then point them in the direction of further support, so they can decide on what 'course of action' is best for them.

Although the majority of the strategies and tools found below are relatively easy to implement, they will not necessarily be helpful to every neurodivergent individual. The priority, therefore, is to signpost the individual towards appropriate professional support.

However, it may be appropriate to suggest/implement some of the strategies from the list below, which the individual may find beneficial.

Communication:

- Give instructions both verbally and in writing wherever possible.
- Highlight significant points in documents.
- Print information on off-white or pastel coloured paper.
- Allow extra time for reading and processing information
- Use flow charts and process maps where possible.
- Use recorded options such as podcasts if possible.
- Use Ariel or a Sans Serif font, point size 12.
- Alternate between two colours when writing on a flip chart/whiteboard.

Instructions:

- Give instructions one at a time and allow time to write these down.
- Keep instructions clear and concise.
- Demonstrate complex tasks.
- Check the person has understood the instructions given (ask them to repeat instructions back to you).
- Document the plan of action as well as verbalise it.

- Where multiple instructions cannot be avoided, use idea mapping, diagrams or numbered bullet points.
- Do not hint, suggest or make assumptions.

Time and Planning:

- Encourage the person to take short breaks when working on a computer.
- Where possible, provide a workstation where there are minimal distractions.
- Encourage the individual to use planning tools (such as Todoist) to help them prioritise their work.
- Encourage them to use wall planners, calendars, Outlook, mobile phones to remind them of meetings and deadlines.
- Create daily, dated, to-do lists and embed planning into each day.
- Have a backup plan for unforeseen circumstances e.g. staff absence.

Organisation:

- Keep desks tidy and clutter free.
- Colour code documents/items.
- Use number or date filing systems instead of alphabetic.
- Provide maps and clear instructions of how to get to offices/new locations.

Written Work:

- Change the background colour of screens/slides to enhance readability.
- Assign a colleague as a proof reader.

Reading:

- Highlight, embolden, or box important text in emails/documents.
- Use bullet points where possible.
- Provide a summary/overview for lengthy documents.

Directional Difficulties:

- Provide satellite navigation in company/hire cars.
- Always give a map and written instructions of how to get to destination.
- Allow extra time to travel from place to place.

Workplace Culture:

- Encourage Neurodiversity Awareness Training and set up a Neurodiversity Staff Network Group.

NB. This sheet is a reference document and should not be used as a handout for others.