



Neurodiversity at Work

A primer for all staff, and a practical guide for managers

This resource has two parts. Part 1 is a primer for everyone, what neurodiversity is, the strengths and challenges it can bring, and how to be a supportive colleague. Part 2 is a practical guide for managers on running inclusive meetings, giving clear feedback, working with communication preferences, and avoiding common pitfalls. It is a companion to our Inclusive Recruitment guide.

Part 1 — Neurodiversity primer (for all staff)

What is neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity is the idea that variation in how human brains think, learn, focus, and process information is a natural and valuable part of human diversity. Most people are “neurotypical,” while a significant minority are “neurodivergent”, their brains work in ways that differ from what is considered typical.

Neurodivergence is not an illness or a deficit to be fixed. It describes a different, and often complementary, way of experiencing the world. Many neurodivergent people bring distinctive strengths to their teams when the environment supports them well.

Common forms of neurodivergence

- ADHD — differences in attention regulation, energy, and impulse control.
- Autism — differences in social communication, sensory processing, and pattern recognition.
- Dyslexia — differences in reading, spelling, written processing and working memory.
- Dyspraxia (DCD) — differences in coordination, organisation, and planning.
- Dyscalculia — differences in working with numbers.
- Tourette’s, and others — each person’s profile is individual.

Many people have more than one of these profiles, and experiences vary widely. The golden rule: ask the person, don't assume.

Strengths and challenges

Every profile is individual, but some patterns are common. The point of recognising both columns is simple: with the right support, strengths come to the fore and challenges shrink.

Often-seen strengths	Possible challenges (in unsupportive settings)
Creativity and original thinking	Sensory overload from noise, light, or open-plan spaces
Deep focus and specialist expertise	Difficulty with vague or shifting instructions
Pattern recognition and problem-solving	Working memory load from verbal-only information
Energy, drive, and big-picture thinking	Inconsistent attention or task-switching fatigue
Honesty, loyalty, and fresh perspectives	Reading unwritten social or workplace "rules"

How to be a supportive colleague

- Lead with respect and curiosity — assume competence, not limitation.
- Communicate clearly: say what you mean and put key points in writing.
- Be flexible about how people work, not just what they deliver.
- Don't make disclosure a condition of support — small adjustments help everyone.
- Respect sensory needs (headphones, quiet space, lighting) without comment.
- If someone shares that they're neurodivergent, keep it confidential and ask how you can help.
- Challenge stigma and "jokes" — inclusive language matters.

Build the skills to lead inclusively

Neurodiversity & Inclusive Leadership — Practical CPD Training for Leaders, HR, and Line Managers

Our CPD-certified half-day training and self-paced e-learning equip leaders, HR professionals, and line managers with the knowledge, confidence, and practical tools to support neurodivergent employees. The programme covers the fundamentals of neurodiversity, the strengths and challenges of different profiles (including ADHD, autism, and dyslexia), practical strategies for inclusive management, and legal responsibilities under UK employment law.

- ✓ CPD-certified — 14 sections across 51 lessons
- ✓ Designed for leaders, HR, and line managers
- ✓ Self-paced e-learning plus half-day workshop options
- ✓ Evidence-based, practical, and aligned to UK employment law

From £95 per learner. Book or learn more: neuroempower.co.uk

Part 2 — A manager's guide to supporting neurodivergent team members

Running inclusive meetings

- Share an agenda and any pre-reading in advance so people can prepare.
- State the purpose and desired outcome of the meeting up front.
- Offer more than one way to contribute, such as speaking, chat, or a written follow-up.
- Keep meetings focused and on time; build in short breaks for longer sessions.
- Avoid putting people on the spot; let them come back with considered input.
- Send clear written notes and action points afterwards.

Giving clear feedback

- Be specific and concrete, describe the behaviour and the impact, with examples.
- Separate facts from interpretation; avoid hinting and “reading between the lines.”
- Put key feedback in writing as well as saying it, so it can be revisited.

- Focus on the work and the goal, not personality or communication style.
- Agree clear, realistic next steps and check understanding together.

Working with communication preferences

People process and share information differently. Asking once, “How do you prefer to receive information and feedback?”, saves friction for everyone.

Preference	What it can look like in practice
Written over verbal	Follow up calls and chats with a short-written summary
Processing time	Share questions ahead; allow considered responses
Direct over implied	Be explicit about expectations, deadlines, and priorities
Lower sensory load	Offer quieter spaces, camera-optional calls, fewer interruptions

Common pitfalls to avoid

- Assuming one person’s needs apply to everyone with the same diagnosis.
- Treating adjustments as “special treatment” rather than enabling good work.
- Relying only on verbal instructions in fast-moving conversations.
- Judging engagement by eye contact, small talk, or meeting style.
- Waiting for a formal diagnosis before offering simple, helpful changes.
- Forgetting to follow up, support is ongoing, not a one-off conversation.

Quick manager checklist

- Agendas and materials are shared ahead of meetings.
- Communication preferences are asked about and respected.
- Feedback specific, written down, and focused on the work.
- Adjustments arranged without fuss and reviewed regularly.
- Confidentiality is maintained at all times.
- Team trained, see our CPD-certified leadership training below.

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NeuroEmpower — building workplaces where every mind can thrive. Questions about training, e-learning, or workplace support? Visit neuroempower.co.uk or speak to your People / HR team.