



# NEURO-DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE A GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS

This guide aims to raise awareness of the support employers can provide to their employees, including apprentices. Please note, this general advice is unlikely to help in all instances, as individual circumstances are likely to be more complex - we would recommend seeking advice from further sources in relation to employee rights and your responsibilities.

## THE EQUALITY ACT

If an individual employee (or apprentice) has a disability that falls under the terms found in the Equality Act (2010), employers are required to make reasonable adjustments to jobs and tasks that place that person at a disadvantage, compared to those without a disability.

A disability can include specific learning difficulties, such as:

- Dyslexia
- ADHD
- Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC)

### Reasonable Adjustments:

Additional costs, resources and practicality of adjustments are some considerations to be aware of when deciding what is reasonable.

## DYSLEXIA

Dyslexia mainly affects reading and writing and how the brain processes information differently. In addition to reading and writing, those with dyslexia can struggle to process new information and retain it, often finding it difficult to remember things later on. It can also have an impact on organisational skills (British Dyslexia Association).

Common adjustments:

- Give people plenty of time and opportunity to understand new information.
- Help employees with organising tasks and priorities.
- Provide access to a personal calendar and/or schedule.
- Provide instructions in small steps, both written and verbal.
- Provide written information in a simple, easy-to-read format.
- Explore what assistive technology can offer individuals (eg text to speech software is becoming more freely available).
- Avoid pointing out grammatical or spelling errors in front of others.

## ADHD

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), is a neurodevelopmental condition affecting 5% of the population. Those with ADHD commonly experience difficulty in maintaining concentration and focus, becoming easily distracted, stopping and starting tasks and sometimes having excessive levels of energy (ADHD Foundation).

Common adjustments:

- Flexible working patterns.
- Planning tasks and jobs in manageable chunks ahead of deadlines.
- Providing opportunities to take short breaks that are active and away from the employee's normal work-space.
- Allowing music (even headphones) or ambient noise to help block out distractions.
- Providing personal workspace, where available.

## AUTISM SPECTRUM CONDITION (ASC)

Autism is a spectrum condition that has a very varied impact on each individual and, in some instances, can go unnoticed by others. These can range from difficulties in understanding social communication, in which a person may misunderstand humour or appear awkward around others, to those that experience sensitivity to light, sound or touch. For some with ASC, forming new relationships in the workplace may take time to get used to and this is not always easy.

Common adjustments:

- Providing a coach or mentor to support your employee.
- Promoting a regular workplace routine.
- Reducing sensory stimulation e.g. noise, bright light, temperature.
- Providing a comfortable area for lunch and breaks.
- Avoid making general requests. Give straightforward advice and instruction with little ambiguity.
- Provide encouragement and reassurance.

## FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

In general, workplaces can adopt a more open approach to neuro-diversity by promoting awareness and celebrating differences. Encouraging a culture where individuals are made to feel accepted and able to approach managers with issues, can help employees express what they find challenging. In addition, having the opportunity to learn from minor mistakes and errors without fear of feeling like they are failing, will also help individuals learn more effectively.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Employees have the right to keep their personal information confidential and employers have the responsibility to respect and maintain this. Therefore, it is the employee's own personal choice to inform those at their workplace about any underlying conditions, should they wish to.