



# Lifelink Workwell

## Neurodiversity: A guide for employers





## What is neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity refers to the natural variations in how people **think, learn, and process information**; therefore, there is a neurodiverse range in all of us. Neurodivergence is when an individual's brain processes, learns or behaves differently from what is considered 'typical'.

It is estimated that **15-20% of the UK population are neurodivergent\***, although many people go through their childhood and adult lives without any formal diagnosis.

Neurodiversity is not a disability and should not be treated as one. **Nor is it 'one-size-fits-all' - each individual is unique.** Therefore, it is important to understand the differences and support the individuals within your organisation, harnessing their strengths to develop personally and add value to their work.

## What are the common neurodiversity profiles?

There are **several different neurodivergent profiles** such as:

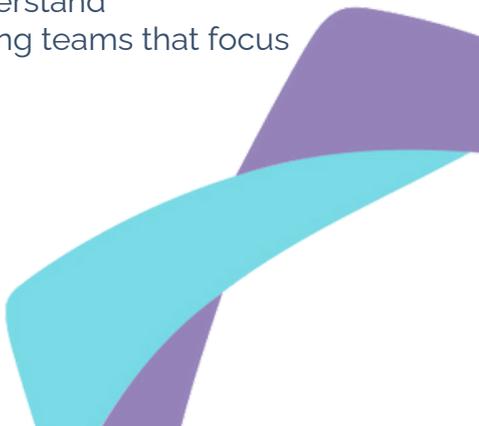
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Dyslexia
- Dyscalculia
- Dyspraxia

It's important for employers to understand the differences between each of these profiles and even the many differences within each type to ensure that all employees feel **included** and **supported**.

## How your organisation can support your neurodiverse workforce:

Businesses that embrace neurodiversity benefit from diverse perspectives, increased creativity, and stronger teams.

**Awareness:** To allow your neurodiverse workforce to feel included and supported by their manager and peers, everyone in the organisation must understand neurodiversity and how to support each other. This means building teams that focus on individuals' strengths to thrive together.





**Create an inclusive culture:** It's not just about sending everyone on a training course; it's about building a genuinely inclusive culture where everyone feels open, honest, and able to be themselves.

**Workplace adjustments:** Conducting a workplace needs assessment for all neurodiverse employees and making suitable alterations for them. What suits one neurodivergent employee may not work for another. Workplace adjustments are about enabling success and comfort and can improve employee performance, reduce stress, and enhance productivity.

**Assistive technology:** Technology can empower neurodivergent employees to work more efficiently and confidently. In a workplace needs assessment, you should consider accessibility needs and what technology adjustments can support each individual. This can vary based on condition and preferred learning and working styles.

**Working environment:** A busy office or too many customer interactions in a day may be overwhelming for some. It's essential to understand what triggers stress for colleagues in their work environment and consider how to alleviate this. This could include hybrid or flexible working hours and breaks, implementing quiet/focus hours or areas within an open-plan office, and setting team schedules that alternate challenging duties.

**Guidance:** It can be helpful to set out a neurodiversity policy. This provides clear guidance on how the business will support neurodiverse employees and also supports managers with any alterations they may need to make. Having simple guide documents available can also be beneficial.

**Coaching:** Coaching sessions can equip neurodivergent employees with practical strategies to leverage their strengths, navigate workplace challenges, build confidence, and support their personal development. Coaching can include time management, social interactions, or adapting to change. Co-coaching sessions can also be helpful for peer-supported learning and collaboration.

**Therapy Sessions:** Challenges in the workplace increase the chance of experiencing unmanageable stress, anxiety, low mood, or burnout. Access to therapy can help employees navigate these challenges. Providing employees with access to neurodiversity affirming therapists if desired can influence individual engagement and therapeutic outcomes.





## Why invest in neurodiversity?

**Attract & retain top talent:** Inclusive workplaces and recruitment strategies empower neurodivergent employees to thrive, boosting engagement and retention.

**Enhance productivity & wellbeing:** Simple adjustments and tailored support help employees work effectively while reducing stress and burnout.

**Innovation & problem-solving:** A diverse workforce brings fresh perspectives, driving innovative and creative business solutions.

## How your managers can help:

**Trust:** Build trusting relationships and environments based on openness, empathy and respect. Managers should adapt methods and use two-way feedback to encourage effective working relationships.

**Check-ins:** Don't always wait for a scheduled 1:1. When appropriate, some employees may benefit from more regular and informal conversation. Carry these out in a suitably private environment where the employee and manager feel comfortable, such as over coffee or walking. Some people's communication preferences might suit a written check-in at the beginning and end of the day.

**Confidentiality:** Ensure managers respect individuals' right to confidentiality regarding their diverse profiles and follow your HR confidentiality policies.

*\*The University of Edinburgh - Equality, Diversity & Inclusion*





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