Time for Thriving

NeuroPathways CLINIC

Neurodiversity in Action

Strategies for Self and Others

For Managers, HR and Organisational Leads

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What is Neurodiversity?

Time for Thriving

NeuroPathways CLINIC

Understanding Neurodiversity and Neurodevelopmental Differences

Neurodiversity is a way of understanding that all brains work differently, and these differences are a natural and important part of being human. It highlights that conditions like autism, ADHD, or dyslexia are not problems to be fixed but unique ways of thinking, learning, and experiencing the world.

What are Neurodevelopmental Disorders?

These are conditions that affect how the brain develops and works, leading to differences in how people behave, communicate, and learn.

Here are some examples:

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): Often involves challenges with social communication and repetitive behaviours.

ADHD (Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder): Makes it harder to focus, sit still, or manage impulses.

Dyslexia: Affects reading and writing skills but often comes with strengths in creative or big-picture thinking.

Dyspraxia: Impacts coordination, making it harder to plan physical movements.

Tourette Syndrome: Involves tics, such as repetitive sounds or movements.

1 in 7

people in the UK are Neurodivergent

Doyle, N. (2020). Neurodiversity at work: a biopsychosocial model and the impact on working adults. British Medical Bulletin.

1 in 5

people in the UK have a learning difference

Local Government Association (2020)

60+%

of Neurodivergent Adults were not diagnosed as children

Nylander et al. (2021). Childhood diagnoses in individuals identified as autistic in adulthood. Autism Research.

Recognising Strengths

Common Strengths Neurodivergent Colleagues May Bring:

- Pattern Recognition
- Hyperfocus & Deep Expertise
- Creative Problem-Solving
- Attention to Detail
- Lateral Thinking
- Honesty & Direct Communication

Late diagnosis is more common than you think.
Many adults spent decades being told they were lazy, anxious, or just not trying hard enough. In reality, they were neurodivergent in a world not designed for their brain. A diagnosis at any age can be life-changing, not as a label, but as an explanation.

20%
of Neurodivergent employees report harassment or discrimination at work because of their neurdivergence.
CIPD

Only 38%
of employees felt that their organisation provides meangingful support to neurodivergent individuals
CIPD

1/3
of neurodivergent employees said their experience of work had negatively affected their mental wellbeing
CIPD

Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC)

Autism is a lifelong neurological difference affecting how people perceive and interact with the world. It is a spectrum, no two autistic people are alike. Around 1 in 100 people in the UK are autistic (NHS), and many are undiagnosed until adulthood.

Common Differences

- Differences in social communication and interaction
- Preference for routine, predictability and structure
- Sensory sensitivities (e.g. noise, light, touch)
- Literal interpretation of language and difficulty with implied meaning
- Masking: hiding autistic traits in social settings, often at high personal cost

Common Barriers

- Recruitment and hiring processes not taking into account neurodivergence.
- Communication differences and misinterpretation of behaviours.
- Sensory and environmental struggles
- Social and networking barriers.
- Chronic stress from masking leading to burnout.
- Underestimation of ability due to difference being viewed as deficit.

ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)

ADHD affects how the brain regulates attention, impulse control and activity levels. It is not a deficit of attention - it is a difference in how attention is directed. ADHD presents differently in different people; it is often underdiagnosed in women and girls. Around 5-8% of the UK working-age population are estimated to have ADHD.

Common Differences

- Difficulty sustaining focus on uninteresting tasks
- Impulsivity: acting or speaking before thinking
- Executive function challenges: planning, prioritising, time management
- Emotional dysregulation and rejection sensitivity
- Working memory difficulties; losing track of instructions

Common Barriers

- Performance being viewed through the lens of administrative efficiency rather than overall input.
- Difficulty demonstrating productivity when work processes differ form colleagues.
- Understanding and executing multi-step instructions.
- Sensory and environmental challenges
- Lack of understanding

Dyslexia, Dyscalculia & Dyspraxia

Dyslexia

What it is:

- Affects reading, spelling and processing written language. Approx. 10% of the UK population (CIPD). Unrelated to intelligence.

Common Barriers:

- Taking longer to complete written/reading tasks.
- Errors in work being viewed as careless
- Performance quality being viewed as dependent on ability to handle large amounts of information.

Dyscalculia

What it is:

- Affects understanding of numbers, arithmetic and mathematical reasoning. Affects approx. 5% of the population. Not about being “bad at maths”.

Common Barriers:

- Being judged on time management and scheduling ability
- Misconceptions that numerical difficulties reflect low intelligience.
- Reduced confidence

Dyspraxia

What it is:

- Developmental Coordination Disorder. Affects motor coordination and planning. Also impacts organisation, memory and sensory processing. Affects approx. 5% of the population.

Common Barriers:

- New software or hardware challenges
- Being viewed as “lesser than” due to more time taken to complete tasks
- Meetings requiring note taking and fast paced conversation which leads to missing important information

Recognising Difference, Not Deficit.

The brain receives information, processes is, stores it, and uses it to guide behaviour.
In Neurodivergent individuals, some of these processes may operate differently, creating both challenges and strengths depending on the environment.

ND is brain variation that is a natural difference in human wiring

The brain takes in, organises and reacts to information differently

Tasks are handled through a unique, non-linear track

Specialised strengths are common, with the brain often thriving in deep hyperfocus and creative problem-solving.

Attention & Regulation

Attention is often regulated differently rather than simply being 'better' or 'worse.'
The brain is a prediction and prioritisation system that contiuously evaluates where to focus. Rather than being like a spotlight, it allocates resources across different areas and in Neurdivergent individuals, this often operates differently. This can result in scattered focus, hyperfocus or hypofocus.

Sensory Processing

This is the way that the brain receives, organises, interprets and responds to information from the senses. For many Neurodivergent people, sensory experiences are not simply more or less sensitive. It can be that more sensory information is registered, processed with more intensity, information may be unfiltered or sensory inputs may be competing or overloading.

Executive Functioning

This is the brains management system which helps us to plan, organise, start tasks, manage emotions and hold information.
When there are differences in how this information is communicated in the brain or an overload of information on the brain it can lead to cognitive load where the person can struggle to initiate and complete tasks. There is a difference in knowing what to do and actually being able to initiate it - this difference is not an indication of intelligence.

Key Questions

Creating a neuro affirming workplace does not need to be complicated or feel overwhelming. Start by doing some simple reflection...

Work structures & Culture
Is the structure of the work inclusive where it can be? Is diversity celerated?

Communication
Are we being clear and concise in our communication

Sensory
Is our workplace a sensory safe environment?

It is important to note, that individuals may not have a diagnosis of a neurodivergent condition. Before forming an opinion on your experience of a colleague or their work style, try being curious about what their experience is. **This builds understanding.**

Presumed Competence

Means assuming that each individuals approach has meaning, even if it looks different. Rather than requiring someone to constantly prove their competence before being trusted with opportunities, managers and colleagues start from the assumption that the person can learn, perform, and succeed.

What it looks like in practice:

- Giving someone meaningful responsibilities rather than only simple tasks.
- Including employees in meetings, decisions, and professional development opportunities.
- Communicating respectfully and directly.
- Providing support and accommodations without assuming inability.
- Asking what help is needed instead of deciding for someone what they can or cannot do.

Potential misunderstanding

Presumed competence does not mean ignoring performance problems or assuming everyone already has the necessary skills. It means starting from a position of respect and capability, then evaluating performance based on evidence rather than assumptions.

Employees are still accountable for results, and support should be tailored to need.

Assume capability first, provide support where needed, and assess performance based on observable outcomes.

Simple Changes, Big Impact - Behaviour & Communication

Examples of Supportive Behaviors

- Sending meeting agendas in advance.
- Writing down action items and deadlines.
- Being clear about priorities when multiple tasks compete.
- Respecting the use of assistive tools or accommodations.
- Giving colleagues time to think before expecting answers.
- Checking understanding with curiosity.

“Was my explaination clear?”

"Is there anything I can do to make collaboration work more comfortably for you?"

“I’m happy to hear from you later on today, I’m free at 4 to discuss”

“Can we divide this work up in a way that aligns with our skillset”

Recognise Strengths

Many neurodivergent colleagues bring valuable strengths, such as:

- Creative problem-solving
- Pattern recognition
- Deep subject expertise
- Attention to detail
- Innovative thinking
- Persistence on complex tasks

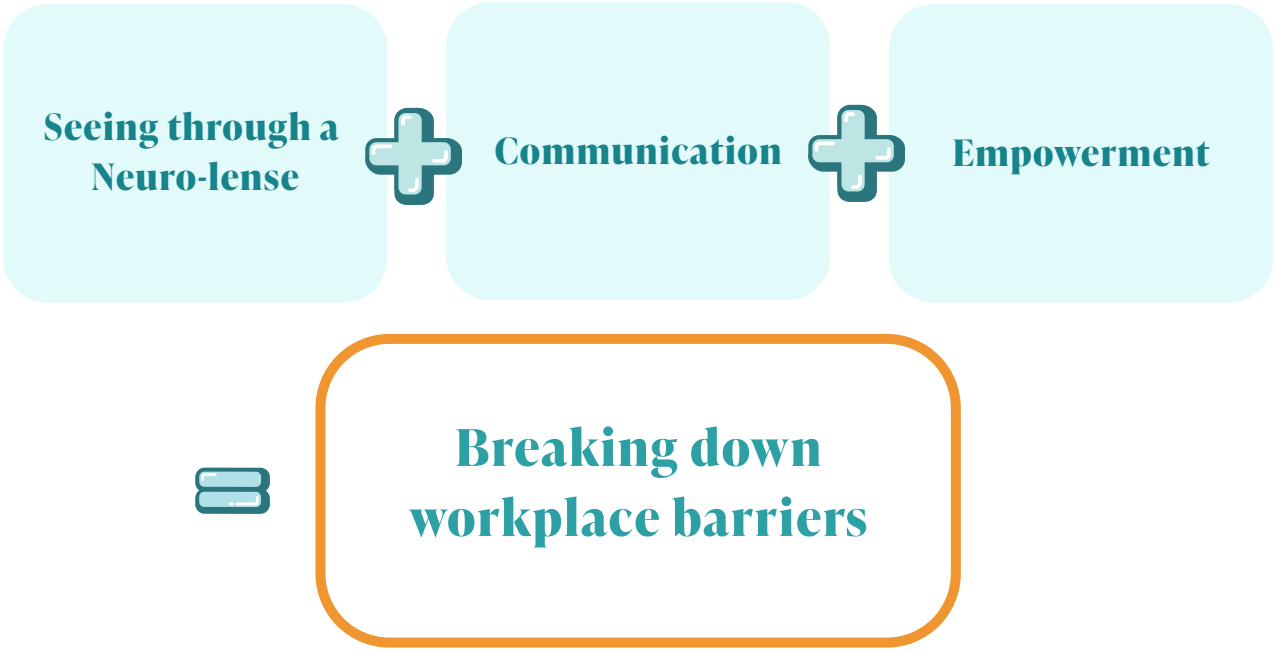
“Your attention to detail has been crucial throughout this project”

"You have deep knowledge in this area, your feedback on the content and flow of second slide would be appreciated"

“We are having trouble with the task log. Your problem solving skills are valuable to us finding a solution, would you work with me on this?”

"The changes you suggested have made this process much more efficient for everyone."

Noticing makes all the difference



Tips for daily inclusion

Be aware of difference, and what that might mean for individuals

Observe the work environment, and explore what sensory and environmental barriers there may be

Challenge current work practises, to ensure inclusion is a priority

Presume competence, and promote a positive attitude to all

Offer opportunities for teams to learn and develop, ensuring knowledge and understanding is shared

Acknowledge difference is variety and not deficit, and utilise the diverse skillset of your colleagues

Remember that a colleague doing things differently, doesn't mean they are doing it worng

Understanding how your people think, work and learn - so they can thrive with clarity, confidence and the right support

Delivered by accredited professionals, our assessments offer:

- A detailed clinical interview exploring strengths, challenges and developmental history
- Evidence-based diagnostic tools
- Consideration of workplace environments and daily functioning
- Clear explanations, tailored recommendations and next steps
- A comprehensive report to guide reasonable adjustments (with employee consent)

Accurate, compassionate assessment is the first step in helping neurodivergent employees understand themselves and receive appropriate support in the workplace.

Have you enjoyed this toolkit?

Visit our websites to book a Discovery Call

TIMEFORTHRIVING.CO.UK

NEUROPATHWAYSCLINIC.CO.UK

Get in touch

Call: 0330 202 0283

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