



# Neurodiversity toolkit for employers, managers, staff and applicants



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# About this toolkit

## What is the purpose of this toolkit?

Having a diverse workforce and supporting our staff to flourish and be their best at work is a key priority for us. Investing in diversity of thought and lived experience benefits both patients and staff, supports retention and helps us to address the workforce challenges that our NHS faces.

Through our work on inclusive recruitment and through feedback at different forums across the West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership (WYHCP), we heard feedback from our neurodivergent colleagues about challenges they face in their daily work life. Therefore, we have put together this toolkit full of resources to help you navigate neurodiversity in the workplace. Whether you're an employer looking to support a team member, a member of staff looking for support or a potential applicant looking for support through the recruitment process, you'll find helpful information in this toolkit. This toolkit is not an exhaustive resource on neurodiversity, but a helpful guide to the support and rights available for employers, staff and potential applicants in the WYHCP.

**Disclaimer:** The world of neurodiversity is changing rapidly, and it can be difficult to keep up with it. This toolkit is not updated regularly, so please keep in mind that terminology may have changed over time and services may be de-commissioned.

## Benefits of a neurodiverse workforce

The benefits to an inclusive and diverse workforce are plentiful. Different skills, background and experience improves service delivery and make us better mental health professionals. An inclusive and diverse workplace improves retention and strengthens working relationships. Neurodivergent people are great team workers, have excellent caring skills and bring a different and creative perspective to services. Our communities are best served by a workforce that is inclusive and diverse as they can see themselves reflected in those who are there to support them through difficult times.

## Terminology

The word 'neurodiversity' is an umbrella term for a range of neurological conditions which affect how someone processes information and/or communicates with the world around them. Other common terms include 'neurodivergence' and 'neuro-difference'. Another important term is 'neurotypical', a term which represents all those who are not neurodivergent.

It is estimated that around 15-20% of the world population have some form of neurodivergence. Many neurodivergences co-occur, for example some autistic people may also have ADHD.

Neurodivergence covers a wide range of conditions, which includes but is not limited to:

- **Autism, or Autism Spectrum Condition:** Around 1-2% of the population of the UK is autistic and autism can be diagnosed at any age. No two autistic people are the same, but some of the common characteristics are preference for routine, anxiety around change, sensory sensitivity, intense interests, delayed or absent speech and stimming (repetitive behaviour to regulate emotions). [What is autism? | Autistica](#)
- **ADHD: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or ADD:** Attention Deficit Disorder. ADHD is a disorder which affects how a person behaves. It is characterised by inattention, restlessness, difficulty concentrating, impulsiveness and processing of information. Some people with ADHD take medication, but not all are medicated. Approximately 3-4% of adults in the UK have ADHD. [What is ADHD? - About ADHD \(adhduk.co.uk\)](#)
- **Dyscalculia** is a learning difficulty relating to numeracy. It affects how a person processes number-based information and math. [Dyscalculia - British Dyslexia Association \(bdadyslexia.org.uk\)](#)
- **Dyslexia** is a learning difficulty relating to literacy. It affects a person's reading and writing skills. People with dyslexia experience difficulty processing and remembering information. [What is dyslexia? - British Dyslexia Association \(bdadyslexia.org.uk\)](#)
- **Dyspraxia, or Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD).** Dyspraxia primarily affects a person's movement and co-ordination which in turn affects many aspects of a dyspraxic person's life. Co-occurs often with Dyslexia. ([Dyspraxia Foundation](#))

- **Cognitive functioning difficulties or executive dysfunction**
- **Dysgraphia**
- **Misophonia**
- **Slow processing speed**
- **Stammering**
- **Tourette's syndrome**

## Formal versus self-diagnosis

A staff member does not have to have a formal diagnosis of neurodivergence to ask for reasonable adjustments or increased support in the workplace.

As professionals, we understand how difficult and time-consuming it is to pursue a diagnosis and do not wish for this to be a barrier to staff wellbeing. Therefore, a formal diagnosis is not required to receive additional support and reasonable adjustments in the workplace.



# Resources for employers and managers

## Neurodiversity strengths and challenges in the workplace

All too often, neurodivergence in the workplace is discussed as a weakness. As a partnership, we want to emphasise the strengths a neurodiverse workforce can bring to mental health services.

There are many strengths neurodivergent individuals bring to the workforce. Some of these are related to different types of neurodivergence and other strengths acquired from navigating a world shaped by (and for) neurotypical people. For example, many autistic people are great analytical thinkers and problem-solvers.

Here are some examples of strengths that the most common forms of neurodivergence can bring to the workplace. However, it is important to remember that no two neurodivergent people are the same – even if they have the same neurodivergence(s).

### Autistic strengths in the workplace

- logical and analytical thinkers
- creative perspectives
- great focus and concentration
- ability to retain detailed information
- adept at acquiring new skills
- highly enthusiastic and engaged in interesting tasks
- reliable, dedicated and punctual.

### ADHD strengths in the workplace

- risk-taking
- boundary-pushing
- insightfulness
- creativity
- multitasking
- focus when engages in stimulating tasks.



## Dyslexic strengths in the workplace

- creativity
- insightfulness
- unique perception
- pattern recognition
- big picture thinking
- visual communication.



## Dyspraxic strengths in the workplace

- big picture thinking
- inferential thinking
- pattern recognition
- problem-solving.

## Neurodivergent challenges at work

While neurodivergent staff members have many strengths that are an asset to the workforce, there are also some challenges related to different neurodivergences which may require some additional support or adjustments to navigate. In this toolkit, there are guides to reasonable adjustments and how to support neurodivergent staff members through some of the challenges listed below.

## Autistic challenges in the workplace

- social interaction and anxiety
- finding it difficult to 'read the room' or interpret how colleagues are feeling
- literal thinking
- difficulty navigating change
- communication (i.e. some autistic people are non-verbal or have limited speech)
- difficulty conceptualising abstract ideas
- sensory sensitivity.

## ADHD challenges in the workplace

- restlessness
- under stimulation
- sensory sensitivity
- hyperfocus
- time management.



## Dyslexic challenges in the workplace

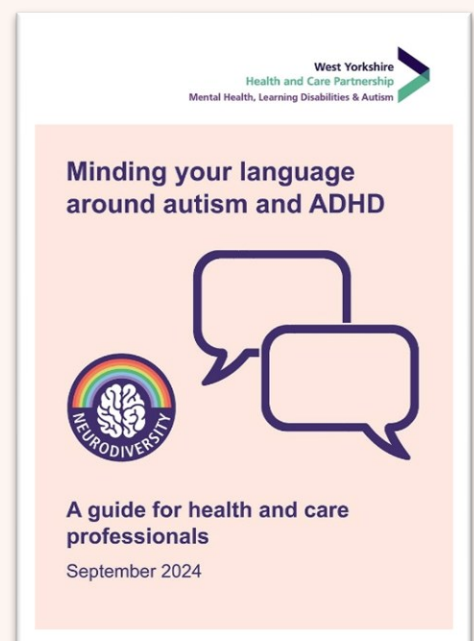
- organisation
- difficulty reading inaccessible documents
- sensory sensitivity.

## Dyspraxic challenges in the workplace

- co-ordination and fine-motor difficulties
- mobility
- difficulty operating machinery
- time management
- sensory sensitivity.

## Accessible content for neurodivergent colleagues

This guide for health and care professionals [Minding your language around autism and ADHD](#) has been produced by people with lived experience of autism and ADHD, based on their experiences of language used towards them, and about them, in health and care settings.



# Access to Work guide for employers

## What is Access to Work?

Access to Work is a government funded employment support programme aiming to support more disabled people to start or stay in work. If staff members have a disability or impairment, Access to Work can provide practical and/or financial support. The size of grant depends on individual circumstances. HR teams should be able to support employees to apply for Access to Work grants. However, it is helpful for managers to also have an overview of the kinds of support available from Access to Work.

An Access to Work grant can pay for practical support to help someone:

- start working
- stay in work
- move into self-employment or start a business.

More information can be found on the official [Access to Work website here](#).

## What support can someone receive?

Access to Work can support a person in several ways, such as:

- support to access aid and equipment for a workplace
- help to adapt equipment to use in work
- financial aid for travel costs to and from work if public transportation is a barrier to someone, or if they need help to adapt their vehicle
- access to interpreter or other support if they have communication difficulties
- various practical support at work, such as a job coach or note taker
- assistance to develop support plans related to mental health conditions.

More information on different kinds of support offered can be found on the GOV.UK website: [Access to Work: get support if you have a disability or health condition](#).

## How to know if someone is eligible for Access to Work

A person can apply for Access to Work if they:

- are normally resident in, and working in, Great Britain
- have a disability or health condition that means they need an aid, adaptation or financial or human support to do their job
- have a mental health condition and need support in work
- are aged 16 or over.

They must also:

- already be doing paid work
- be about to start work or become self-employed
- have an interview for a job
- be about to begin a work trial or start work experience under the Youth Contract arranged through Jobcentre Plus.

## Supporting neurodivergent colleagues and prioritising wellbeing

### Wellbeing and environmental considerations for neurodivergent staff

It can be difficult for neurodivergent people to take care of their wellbeing, especially in the workplace. Therefore, it is imperative for employers to ensure a neuroinclusive working environment to support and retain neurodivergent staff. Below are some key factors in workplace wellbeing for neurodivergent staff.

### Get to know neurodivergent staff

A supportive manager and team are key factors in the wellbeing of neurodivergent staff. As no two neurodivergent people are the same, even if they have the same neurodivergence, it is key to get to know staff members and how they thrive best in the workplace. At induction and in supervision, discuss reasonable adjustments, potential stressors and

support needs to ensure staff members receive the support they need from management. It is also helpful to discuss communication styles for both the manager and the staff member to avoid any miscommunication at work. For example, a staff member might perform better when receiving written instructions or when presented with visual data. Likewise, a manager might prefer to receive questions via Teams rather than email as their inbox fills up very quickly. Seemingly small conversations like these can have a big effect on the efficiency and wellbeing of a team.

A great way to get to know staff members and any threats to their wellbeing at work is to use Mindwell's Wellness Action Plans. These plans outline someone's triggers and warning signs of being uncomfortable or unsafe at work, as well as how a manager can support them in those situations. Action plans are a good method of getting to know staff members and their support needs. More information and templates can be found on the [Mindwell website here](#).

## Advocacy and awareness

The first step to a neuroinclusive working environment is to encourage open dialogue around neurodiversity. Working explicitly to increase awareness of different neurodivergences and to advocate openly for neuroinclusion sends a strong message to neurodivergent staff, potential applicants and other managers who might be unsure of how to approach neurodiversity in the workplace. Awareness days are great opportunities for colleagues to learn about neurodiversity and to promote conversation on the topic.

It is important that managers ensure that neurodivergent staff members are made aware of any [staff networks](#) that might exist in the organisation. Staff networks are a key support for neurodivergent staff members as they provide a safe space to discuss experiences and challenges with peers who can relate on a different level. Staff networks can be best brought up during induction or in supervision to encourage open and supportive dialogue.

A neuroinclusive employer stays informed on different types of neurodivergences and what kind of support neurodivergent staff might need. Some of this information is available in this toolkit through our other sections and the [Suggested further reading section](#).

## Induction and training

Some neurodivergent staff members might benefit from adjustments during their induction into new roles. For example, someone with ADHD or dyslexia might not be able to read through long texts like policies without text-to-speech software. Similarly, an autistic staff

member might need very specific instructions during an induction to avoid anxiety. When a new staff member joins the team, have conversations about support needs and communication styles to help them thrive in their new role.

Neurodiversity training is available for managers and staff members in the NHS. It is important that managers uphold this and encourage all staff members to learn and gain awareness of different neurodivergences. In addition to internal training, there are also a range of specialist organisations that offer training, some of which can be found in the [Suggested further reading section](#).

## Mentorship programmes

Many NHS organisations have dedicated mentorship programmes, with some specifically aimed at neurodivergent staff. Mentoring is an effective method of furthering professional development. It is also a great way for staff to have extra support within the workplace, outside of their direct manager or colleagues.

If a mentorship programme is not currently in use at your organisation, consider finding mentors for neurodivergent staff if they are interested in being mentored. This could be someone in a different team or service, or someone on a more senior level. The West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership trialled a reciprocal mentoring project where neurodivergent staff and members of senior leadership exchanged experiences and perspectives to learn from each other. You can read about the outcome of that project in the evaluation report on the [Supporting neurodivergent people at work web page](#) where you'll also find mentoring templates and training resources.

## Environmental considerations

Sometimes smaller environmental changes can make a big difference for staff members, especially for neurodivergent staff. Many autistic people and people with ADHD are sensitive to stimuli such as noise, lighting, or foot traffic. Changes like installing light bulbs with softer lighting or reducing white noise where possible. Some environmental changes fall under the reasonable adjustments umbrella. All managers should familiarise themselves with the adjustments they are able to make to support their staff members. Changes in the working environment, especially in a shared workspace, should be discussed with the staff members who share that space. A change that would benefit one staff member might not work for another. Please find examples of environmental adjustments in our [Reasonable adjustments menu for employers](#).

## Make meetings more neuroinclusive

Workplace meetings can be a source of stress and anxiety for many neurodivergent staff. The pressure to be engaged, avoid distractions and navigate social norms can be overwhelming. A neuroinclusive meeting:

- sets a clear agenda for the content of the meeting and why the meeting is being held
- ensures the agenda is in an accessible format, i.e. on a lightly coloured background and in a word document compatible with text-to-speech software
- understands that not everyone will engage in small talk at the start of the meeting
- understands that some people would prefer to keep their cameras off and use the chat function to participate instead of talking
- sticks to the agenda where possible and makes it clear when the meeting moves on to the next agenda item
- has breaks included in the agenda
- allows attendees to bring fidget toys or allows them to stand up and move around if needed in long meetings
- summarises next steps and actions at the end of the meeting
- provides attendees and those who sent apologies with output of the meeting
- welcomes feedback on the format of the meeting (this is especially important if meeting regularly).

## Encourage breaks and promote work-life balance

Achieving a work-life balance can be difficult for all employees, not just neurodivergent employees. It is important for managers to encourage all staff members to take breaks and to leave work at work whenever possible. This is particularly important for those staff members who work from home where it can be more difficult to create clear boundaries between workspace and home.

Managers should have conversations with staff during supervisions on how they are handling this balance and how their managers can help. For example, many people with ADHD can sometimes 'hyperfocus' (intense concentration on a task or topic) at work and they might forget to take breaks. Their manager can support them by reminding them to take breaks or helping them set up a system to alert them to take a break.

## Create a quiet space

Many neurodivergent people experience overwhelm and overstimulation when in noisy, bright or crowded surroundings. This can be difficult to avoid in fast-paced environments like wards or crowded offices. Having a designated quiet space at work is very helpful in these situations. Quiet spaces with lower lighting can give staff members some breathing space to take a break and stave off overstimulation. When a quiet space has been designated, it is important that staff members are made aware of where it is and any etiquette around using it.

## Discuss workplace norms

Neurodivergent people can struggle to understand and pick up on the unwritten social norms of the workplace. Examples of such unwritten rules are washing up after using utensils, contributing to the supply of tea bags or offering to make others a drink if making one for yourself. If a neurodivergent person has not picked up on these social norms, they may be perceived as rude by their colleagues despite having no intention to be.

Social norms can often be related to progression in the workplace. For example, expectations of networking with colleagues or other organisations to advance within a workplace. If a neurodivergent staff member is not engaging in networking or outreach, they might be perceived by management as unambitious even if that is not the case.

To avoid these situations and to promote progression for neurodivergent staff members, it is important to have conversations within teams about what kind of unwritten norms might exist in the workplace and discuss these with neurodivergent staff who might express a desire to know.

## Guide to reasonable adjustments for hiring managers

Reasonable adjustments are changes an employer can make to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to someone's disability. All applicants and staff members have a legal right to request reasonable adjustments in the recruitment process and in the workplace. This can be adjustments such as allowing extra time in an interview or introducing flexible working hours. Hiring managers should ask candidates if they require any adjustments in the recruitment process to ensure equity and promoting an inclusive workplace.

For further information please read the [government guidance reasonable adjustments for disabled workers](#).

If there is any uncertainty in what is reasonable or what is possible to adjust in the recruitment process, speak to the recruitment or HR team at the relevant organisation.

## Positive action and the Equality Act

Positive action enables employers to support an individual who may face disadvantage in accessing employment due to a protected characteristic. Positive action is legal under the Equality Act 2010. Employers have a legal responsibility to make workplace adjustments for disabled applicants or those with long-term health conditions. Under the Equality Act 2010 a person is recognised as disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment or condition that is either visible or hidden, that has a substantial and long-term (12 months or longer) impact on their ability to do normal daily activities.

[Read more about the Equality Act \(2010\) here](#).

**Note:** Applicants can ask for reasonable adjustments for any part of the recruitment process by emailing the recruitment team or contacting the hiring manager directly. This can be at any stage of the recruitment process, before applying or ahead of the interview. There is no minimum number of days or deadline to do this.

## Hiring manager's responsibilities

Hiring managers should consider adjustments for individuals applying for a job within the organisation and tell the organisation that they are thinking of applying for a job. Hiring managers need to consider adjustments for a range of individuals who will be working in a variety of ways:

- permanent staff in clinical and non-clinical roles
- bank staff, contractors
- apprentices
- trainees who may be on placement within the organisation.

Whilst it is important to consider the legal context, putting in place some simple adjustments can have a positive impact on the wellbeing, experience and performance of the workforce. The hiring manager does not need to inform all candidates that a reasonable adjustment request has been put in place for another candidate.

## Examples of reasonable adjustments

Below are some examples of adjustments that can be made at different stages in the recruitment process. Please find a more detailed list in our [Reasonable adjustments menu for employers](#).

### Application stage

- application form in a different format – large print, braille, offline application, dyslexia-friendly layout – see the [Accessible content section](#) for more information
- additional time for submitting applications
- additional support with face to face or telephone conversation before applying.

### Interview stage

- changing the time, location or format of interviews
- providing interview questions in written format
- breaking questions into smaller sections
- providing interview questions in advance of the interview – this can be up to 24 hours prior to an interview
- a sign language interpreter – please contact the Recruitment
- additional time in timed tests, interviews or other assessment activities
- advice about assistive technology.

## How to decide what reasonable adjustments are needed

- both the hiring manager and the applicant can suggest what reasonable adjustments might help
- all candidates are asked if they need any reasonable adjustments put in place for their interview at the point they book an interview, at this stage the hiring manager will be notified of this request via email
- hiring managers should take the lead from the person asking for reasonable adjustments. This is because they might have a better idea of what changes would be helpful to them.
- some adjustments might be straightforward to discuss and agree together.
- candidates do not need to provide evidence of their disability

- hiring managers must ensure that all candidates are treated fairly and may decide to use a reasonable adjustment request as an opportunity to make changes to the recruitment process.

## Reasonable adjustments menu for employers

[This guide](#) covers what reasonable adjustments might look like for your autistic employees or applicants, or employees or applicants with ADHD.

## Inclusive recruitment case studies

We have developed a series of case study film that show how important adjustments are to neurodivergent people in the workplace and how managers can support them. These films feature people from across our organisations who share their experiences and the adjustments that have supported them. You can watch the films on this web page [Diversity in the workforce](#).

## Neurodiversity videos

Through our work on inclusive recruitment and feedback from different forums, we heard from our neurodivergent colleagues about the challenges they face in their daily work life. These [videos on our Supporting neurodivergent people at work page](#) show how important adjustments are and how managers can support staff to be the best that they can be.

## Suggested further reading

Please see the [Suggested further reading pages](#) for links to a range information and articles covering employment and neurodiversity.

# Resources for staff members

## Neurodiversity strengths

All too often, neurodivergence in the workplace is discussed as a weakness. There are many strengths neurodivergent individuals bring to the workplace and as a partnership, we want to emphasise those strengths.

Some of these are related to different types of neurodivergence and other strengths acquired from navigating a world shaped by (and for) neurotypical people. For example, many autistic people are great analytical thinkers and problem-solvers.

Below you will find some examples of strengths that the most common forms of neurodivergence can bring to the workplace.

## Autistic strengths in the workplace

While no two autistic people are alike, there are some common autistic characteristics which are a great asset in the workplace:

- logical and analytical thinkers
- creative perspectives
- great focus and concentration
- ability to retain detailed information
- adept at acquiring new skills
- highly enthusiastic and engaged in interesting tasks
- reliable, dedicated and punctual.



## ADHD strengths in the workplace

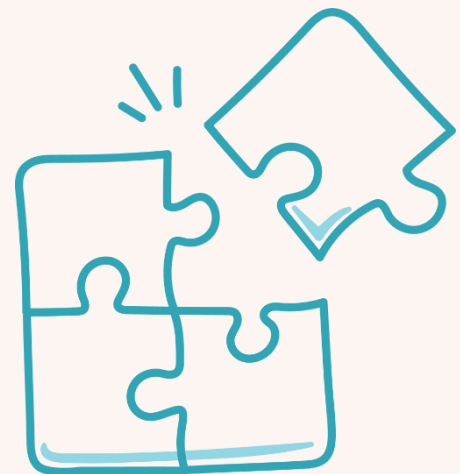
People with ADHD experience characteristics differently:

- risk-taking
- boundary-pushing
- insightfulness

- creativity
- multitasking
- focus when engages in stimulating tasks.

## Dyslexic strengths in the workplace

- creativity
- insightfulness
- unique perception
- pattern recognition
- big picture thinking
- visual communication.



## Dyspraxic strengths in the workplace

- big picture thinking
- inferential thinking
- pattern recognition
- problem-solving.

## Reasonable adjustments menu for staff and applicants

[This guide](#) covers what reasonable adjustments might look like for you as an autistic employee or applicant, or as an employee or applicant with ADHD.

## Neurodiversity videos

Through our work on inclusive recruitment and feedback from different forums, we heard from our neurodivergent colleagues about the challenges they face in their daily work life. These [videos on our Supporting neurodivergent people at work page](#) show how important adjustments are and how managers can support staff to be the best that they can be.

# Guide to reasonable adjustments and how to ask for them

## What are reasonable adjustments?

Reasonable adjustments are changes an employer can make to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to someone's disability. All applicants and staff members have a legal right to request reasonable adjustments in the recruitment process and in the workplace. However, it can be daunting and uncomfortable to ask for what you need to make the processes accessible to you. The West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership is dedicated to providing reasonable adjustments in recruitment processes and workplace.

## Equality Act of 2010

Reasonable adjustments are made to ensure that you are treated equally, that you have access to the things you need, and that your wellbeing needs are met. The Equality Act of 2010 is the legal framework that requires employers to make these adjustments so that people with disabilities can access a workplace where their wellbeing is prioritised and be on equal footing with other applicants or colleagues.

On the UK government's website, you can find this [Summary guide to your rights](#) related to disability and other conditions.

## What is reasonable?

There is no definition of 'reasonable' when it comes to adjustments made in recruitment or the workplace. Therefore, each employer will decide based on how effective, practical, costly, and feasible an adjustment will be. Have a conversation with the recruitment team about reasonable adjustments to find out what they can implement. If you are currently in work, you can discuss reasonable adjustments with your line manager or HR. Different roles will have different frameworks for what is 'reasonable'. Below is an example of how reasonable adjustments may differ from role to role.

**Example:** Josie just started her job as a crossing patrol officer (lollipop person) at a school. She's autistic with some sensory processing issues and requires some adjustments to make work accessible for her. If school starts at 9am, but Josie asks to start work at 10am because she takes medication that makes her sleep in late, this would be an unreasonable adjustment. This is because her job is to help pupils cross the street when they arrive at school. However, if Josie asks to not wear the hat that's part of her

uniform because she finds having things on her head uncomfortable, this would be a reasonable adjustment as she will still be wearing a high-visibility jacket to make her recognisable to the pupils. This small change makes a big difference to Josie's comfort and wellbeing while doing her job but does not impact her ability to perform her duties.

## Reasonable adjustments in the recruitment process

All employers are required to ask if you need any reasonable adjustments during the recruitment process, for example for interviews, or when having started a role.

Organisations will offer adjustments during the application process, such as providing a paper copy of the application form if this is more accessible to you. Ahead of an interview you should be asked directly if you require any adjustments to be made such as requesting a location on the ground floor if you have mobility issues or being given a paper copy of the interview questions if issues with auditory processing would put you at a disadvantage. If you are not asked directly, you have a right to contact the interviewer with any questions or adjustments you need to do your best in an interview.

## Reasonable adjustments in the workplace

It's not just in the recruitment process you have a right to ask for reasonable adjustments. You can also ask for adjustments when you start a role or when your circumstances change in a role you're already in. This can range from changing work patterns to modifying your work environment such as using different lighting. This can also mean asking for adapted equipment such as text-to-speech software. Adjustments like these often go through the Access to Work system (read our [Job application guide](#)).

## How to ask for reasonable adjustments

When asking for reasonable adjustments in the recruitment process or in the workplace, the employer might ask for the following information:

- the reason you need an adjustment
- possible adjustments which could help
- previous adjustments you have had (if any).

Many worry that asking for reasonable adjustments in an interview will put them at a disadvantage or put them in a negative light for the interviewers. This is not the case, and

you are fully in the right to ask for the adjustments that you need. You are not required to provide evidence of having a disability, impairment, or long-term condition.

Please see our [Reasonable adjustments menu for staff and applicants](#) to see examples of different adjustments you can ask for.

**Example:** Kaja, who has academic, professional and lived experience in the mental health field, including studying for a PhD in Psychology, applied for several roles in the NHS. She was offered an interview for every application she made but did not get the jobs because her dyspraxia made the interview process harder. After seeking out support from employment advisors, she felt able to ask for reasonable adjustments and began sharing her disabilities in applications and interview booking forms.

At her last interview, Kaja was given the questions half an hour before and a copy of the questions during the interview. This helped her dyspraxia enormously. She was able to process the questions better and give detailed answers based on her extensive experience. This time, she did not leave the interview thinking about everything she should have said. She was elated to finally feel she had answered to the best of her ability. She was offered the job shortly after.

## Tips on taking care of your wellbeing at work

It can be difficult to protect your own wellbeing as a neurodivergent person in the workplace. We have collected some advice from specialist organisations to give you some ideas to ensure you feel safe and comfortable at work.

### Environmental changes

Sometimes, to ensure your wellbeing, you may have to make or request some small changes in your working environment. This can include things like changing the lightbulbs to a softer light or reducing white noise wherever possible. Some environmental changes fall under the reasonable adjustments umbrella. It might be worth talking to your colleagues about their preferences and needs as well before making too many changes. You can find examples of reasonable adjustments here [Reasonable adjustments menu for staff and applicants](#).

## Wellness action plans

Mindwell developed a tool for managers to use with staff members to learn how best to support their wellbeing at work. [Mindwell's Action Plans](#) can outline your triggers and warning signs that signal that you might be uncomfortable or unsafe at work. It might be useful for you to discuss a Wellness Action Plan or similar plans with your manager to support your wellbeing.

Action plans like these can help you communicate little changes in environment or communication styles that would make the workplace feel safer and more comfortable for you. They allow you to share potential triggers, how your neurodivergence might impact your work, or warning signs for your manager to be aware of such as if you are becoming overstimulated at work. Sharing this information about yourself with a manager can be daunting, but letting your manager get to know you properly can be key to your wellbeing.

Even if your manager has not mentioned a Wellness Action Plan or how they can otherwise support your wellbeing, you can initiate the conversation yourself. If it is uncomfortable to bring up, try using the space of a supervision to discuss whether a plan can be put in place for you. Lots of managers support staff with plans and discussions like this. Let your manager know how they can best support you to thrive at work.

## Take breaks

No matter what kind of role you are in, breaks are essential for your wellbeing. Some neurodivergent people find that taking several smaller breaks works better for them while others feel fewer longer breaks benefit them the most. Depending on your role, discuss with your line manager what works best for you.

## Join a staff network

Staff networks are a great place to find peer support and a safe space to discuss issues you may be having at your work. Some workplaces have Neurodiversity Staff Networks dedicated to supporting colleagues, reviewing policies and raising awareness of various issues. Many workplaces have several staff networks dedicated to supporting LGBTQ+ staff, disabled staff and/or ethnically diverse staff. If your workplace has a staff network, you can find information on their website or talk to your line manager or colleagues.

## Protect your work-life balance

Leaving work at work can be very difficult but is often essential to your wellbeing. If your work allows for it, practice not taking thoughts of work home with you. This can be especially difficult if working at home.

A way to support this is to make clear distinctions between your workspace and your home. If possible, designate an area of your home as a workspace – keeping the rest of your home as a work-free safe space to unwind in. Many organisations are dedicated to supporting staff to not take their work home with them, so it might be worth having a conversation with your manager about how to support this.

## Don't be afraid to ask for help

Asking for help takes confidence but it is also a major part of ensuring your wellbeing at work. Whether it's about workload, uncertainty about how to do something or you just need to bounce some ideas around – talk to your line manager or a colleague. It can make a world of difference knowing that you are not alone at work.

If you are having other issues in the workplace such as unrealistic expectations, bullying, or harassment, speak to the HR team or a union representative from your organisation.

## Find a quiet space

Your workplace might have a designated quiet space within the office or building which employees can use if they are getting overwhelmed or overstimulated. If not, see if you can find a quiet space which makes you feel calmer and use it when needed. It might also be a good idea to communicate with your employer about the need for a designated quiet space for you and other neurodivergent employees to use.

## Consider asking for a mentor

Mentoring is a great way to get more insight into the work you are doing and to further your professional development. Mentoring can also give you a designated person to come to with difficulties or obstacles you may be facing in your work. This can be someone other than your manager like someone in a different service or someone on a more senior level.

Some workplaces already have mentorship programmes which could greatly benefit neurodivergent staff. The West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership Mental Health,

Learning Disabilities and Autism Programme has developed this training and resources pack [Reciprocal mentoring for neurodivergent colleagues across West Yorkshire](#). If there is no mentorship programme in place, you can still talk to your line manager or the HR team about appointing a mentor for you.

## Unwritten workplace norms

A source of anxiety for many neurodivergent people in the workplace, particularly for autistic employees, is navigating the social norms of the workspace. This can be unwritten rules such as washing up after using utensils, contributing to the supply of tea bags or offering to make others a drink if you are making one for yourself. These norms often extend to social expectations outside of the workplace such as joining after work-drinks.

There are also social norms that are often related to progression in the workplace such as an expectation to network with colleagues or other organisations to develop in your career. It can be helpful to discuss these social norms with a mentor or your line manager to alleviate anxiety in the office.

## Job application guide

This comprehensive [job application guide](#) can help you apply for jobs in mental health trusts using TRAC and NHS Jobs. It has been created by the recruitment and inclusion project at the Partnership's Mental Health, Learning Disability and Autism Programme in collaboration with Touchstone.

## Support organisations

This [directory of relevant support organisations](#) is a non-exhaustive list of organisations that support individuals in different aspects of life including employment. Some are specialised in supporting neurodivergent people. This list includes both organisations located in West Yorkshire and organisations that operate on a national level. Please be advised that this list will not be updated, so services may have stopped running since the creation of this directory.

# Access to Work guide for staff

## What is Access to Work?

Access to Work is a government funded employment support programme which aims to support more disabled people to start or stay in work. If you have a disability or impairment, Access to Work can provide practical and financial support. The size of the grant would depend on your individual circumstances.

An Access to Work grant can pay for practical support to help you:

- start working
- stay in work
- move into self-employment or start a business.

You can find the official Access to Work website here: [Access to Work: factsheet for customers](#)

## What support can you receive?

Access to Work can support you in several ways, such as:

- support you to access aid and equipment for your workplace
- help you adapt equipment to use in work
- financial aid for travel costs to and from work if public transportation is a barrier to you, or if you need help to adapt your vehicle
- access to an interpreter or other support if you have communication barriers
- various practical support at work, such as a job coach or note taker
- support to develop support plans related to mental health conditions.

You can find information on different kinds of support you can receive here: [Access to Work: get support if you have a disability or health condition.](#)

## How to know if you're eligible for Access to Work

You can apply for Access to Work if you:

- are normally resident in, and working in, Great Britain
- have a disability or health condition that means you need an aid, adaptation or financial or human support to do your job
- have a mental health condition and need support in work
- are aged 16 or over.

You must also meet one or more of these criteria:

- already be doing paid work
- be about to start work or become self-employed
- have an interview for a job
- be about to begin a work trial or start work experience under the Youth Contract arranged through Jobcentre Plus.

## How to request Access to Work

Speak to an HR or occupational health representative if you're unsure of how your employer can support you in your Access to Work application. You can apply for an access to work grant at any time in your role, not just when you are recruited as your circumstances both in work and related to your health may change throughout your role.

You can [apply for an Access to Work grant here](#).

## Suggested further reading

Please see the [Suggested further reading pages](#) for links to a range information and articles covering employment and neurodiversity.

# Suggested further reading

## Employment

- Employing Autistic People and People with a Learning Disability in HCSW Roles: Practical Support for employers [Employing Autistic People and or People with a Learning Disability.pdf](#)
- National Autistic Society's Employment Hub [Employment \(autism.org.uk\)](#)
- Neuroinclusion at Work [Neuroinclusion at work | CIPD](#)
- Autistica's Neurodiversity in Employment Resources [Neurodiversity in Employment | Autistica](#)
- CIPD Inclusive Recruitment [Inclusive recruitment: Guide for employers | CIPD](#)
- What do we mean by reasonable? [What do we mean by reasonable? | EHRC \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](#)
- Neurodiversity Guidance for Managers [Guidance for managers | Neurodiverse RCN | Peer Support Service | Royal College of Nursing](#)
- Ambitious About Autism's Resources for Employers [Employers | Ambitious about Autism](#)
- Recruiting Autistic Employees [Recruiting autistic employees - Employment Autism](#)
- Managing Autistic Employees [Managing autistic employees - Employment Autism](#)
- DWP Autism and Neurodiversity Toolkit [Autism and Neurodiversity Toolkit | DWP](#)



## Neurodiversity

- Unmasked: Blogs About Neurodiversity [Unmasked | Community For Busy Brains | Neurodivergent Blogs, Resources & Events \(weareunmasked.com\)](#)
- BBC Article on Neurodiversity Celebration Week [What is neurodiversity, how do we celebrate it, and what does neurodivergent mean? - BBC Newsround](#)
- MindMate Neurodiversity Information Hub [Neurodiversity information hub - MindMate](#)
- National Autistics Society's Advice and Guidance [Advice and guidance \(autism.org.uk\)](#)
- Leeds Autism Services Information Page [Information, Links and Resources | Leeds Autism Services](#)
- Ambitious About Autism's Information Hub [Understanding autism | Ambitious about Autism](#)
- What does Dyspraxia mean? [Dyspraxia Foundation](#)
- Dyspraxia in Adults [Dyspraxia in adults - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)
- Occupational Therapy [Occupational therapy - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)
- BBC Article on Living with Dyspraxia [Dyspraxia: My life with the misunderstood condition - BBC News](#)
- Dyspraxia UK [Dyspraxia UK - Specialist occupational therapy](#)