# Advice For Managers

The most useful way to support autistic individuals in the workplace is to increase your knowledge and understanding of autism. A basic introduction to autism can be found here:

https://autismwales.org/en/i-am-neurodivergent/i-am-autistic/what-is-autism/

*Orientation*

Starting a new job can be disorienting for everyone. Autistic people may need a little extra time and patience to understand the workplace and become familiar with the people and patterns within it.

Some things that might help:

- Invite the individual to visit the workplace and be introduced to other staff members before starting work.

- Provide written information outlining expectations including what to wear, start and finish times and conduct.

- Discuss any adaptations to the workstations that would be useful for the individual. A seat in a less busy area may be useful if applicable.

- Ensure the individual knows who to speak to about any concerns. Be specific about the type of concern and contact person.

- Provide information about breaks, lunch options and 'unwritten rules' about eating / drinking at work.

- Allocate a coworker to 'buddy' the individual during their induction period. Be aware that it is the choice of the autistic individual as to whether they wish to disclose their autism to colleagues.

- Be specific about induction activities, don't use phrases such as 'go and find out about...'

*Allocating Tasks*

Autistic people may need clear directions about expected tasks within their new role. Where possible, be explicit about your expectations around tasks and timelines. Set clear boundaries and offer an open dialogue to encourage the autistic employee to ask questions. Regular supervision is a great way to provide tailored support for all employees and generally works well for autistic people – it offers an opportunity to

discuss and review individual work tasks, monitor progress and set clear goals together. When setting work or tasks it is important that you:

- Are clear and precise about the work you want them to undertake.

- Say what you mean, do not use phrases such as 'would you mind...' or 'if you have a moment could you...' when you mean 'I want you to....'

- If the task is complex or involves several steps, write them down.

- Support the individual to prioritise, be clear if you want a task to be prioritised over others.

- Give clear end points, so that the individual can recognise when the task is complete

- Provide additional structure when needed. Break down tasks into smaller ones, specify what is needed at each stage.

### *Feedback*

Autistic people process information differently. These cognitive processing differences may mean that you consider avoiding asking open ended or general questions.

- If asking for feedback about an issue, ask specific questions rather than for general feedback.

- Provide a 'structure template' for feedback so that the individual has structure to follow.

- Where appropriate, offer a limited number of choices to help the individual verbalise feedback.

- When giving feedback to and individual with ASD be specific. Avoid terms such as 'quite', 'maybe' or 'normal', 'average'.

- Provide a structure for the feedback you are giving, offer a plan to address any issues and follow up in concise written form.

- If meeting with an individual to address an issue, ensure the individuals understands what the meeting is about, what will be expected of them and any employment rights / policies that are related to the meeting.

- Allow the individual to have an advocate or co-worker for support.

*Predictability and Routines*

Many autistic people need time to plan and prepare for change so often prefer the predictability of structure and routines. Where change needs to happen, take time to explain what will be happening and why, and ask the individual if there is anything that will help ease this process. Some things that may help:

- Be understanding of the individuals need for predictable routines.

- Do not move items or furniture without discussing it with the individual first.

- Be aware that changes to staff, management structure or systems can cause anxiety – be supportive.

- Use calendars, timetables and planners to support the individual.

- Keep the environment free of clutter and distractions where possible.

- Be aware that sudden loud noises such as fire alarms can be distressing.