

Neurodivergence in the Workplace: A session for HR practitioners

Session 1 - Recruitment and On boarding

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Course aims

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- Good understanding of neurodivergence and common neurodivergent conditions
- Understand the Equality Act 2010 and reasonable adjustments in relation to Neurodivergence
- Understand the common barriers neurodivergent people face in securing meaningful careers and employment when unsupported
- Understand how to support self-advocacy and neurodivergent confidence
- Aware of supportive neurodivergent-affirming recruitment and onboarding universal design, practice and processes
- Understand best practice approaches to tailoring adjustments for individuals
- Aware of practical strategies to support anxious or overwhelmed neurodivergent people during the recruitment and onboarding process
- Aware of how to access additional tools and resources to support your neurodivergent-affirming team, and organisation change

Who are we?



Founder
Catherine Leggett

Expertise since 2014 –
Employment, Employability, Mental
Health, Community Participation,
Accessibility

Autism/Dyslexia



Support
Justin Mactavious

Expertise since 2017 - dementia, Autism,
ADHD, Schizophrenia, chronic depression,
personality and perception disorders,
traumatic brain injury and intellectual disability

Autism, Global Majority

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Regular lived-experience contributors



Drew Edwards
Pharmacy Dispenser

*Autism/Dyspraxia
Hypermobility*



Ffion SFX
Special Effects Artist

*Autism/ADHD
Sensory Processing Disorder*



Muttley
Disability Advocate

*Autism/ADHD
Neurofibromatosis, Amputee
Global Majority*



Pip Irving
Data Scientist

*Autism/Dyspraxia
Gender-queer*



Sophie Varley
Education and
Learning Consultant

Autism



Alex Kegie
Founder - Neurologik

*Autism/ADHD
Fibromyalgia/Hypermobility*

Language and terminology

<https://www.autentic.uk/autentic-resources/autism-language-guide>

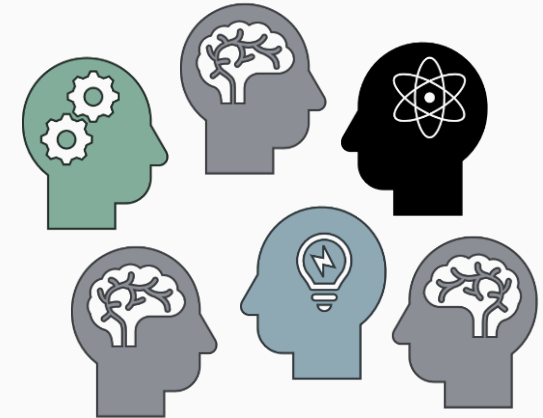
- **Ableism** - often rests on the assumption that disabled people (including those with learning disabilities and autism) need to be 'fixed' in one form or the other.
- **Neuronormative** - refers to the socially accepted and expected neurological and cognitive functioning patterns.

Neurodivergence isn't accepted



- **Neurodivergent affirming** - Neurodivergent people have differences that don't need to be "fixed".

Neurodiversity is natural.



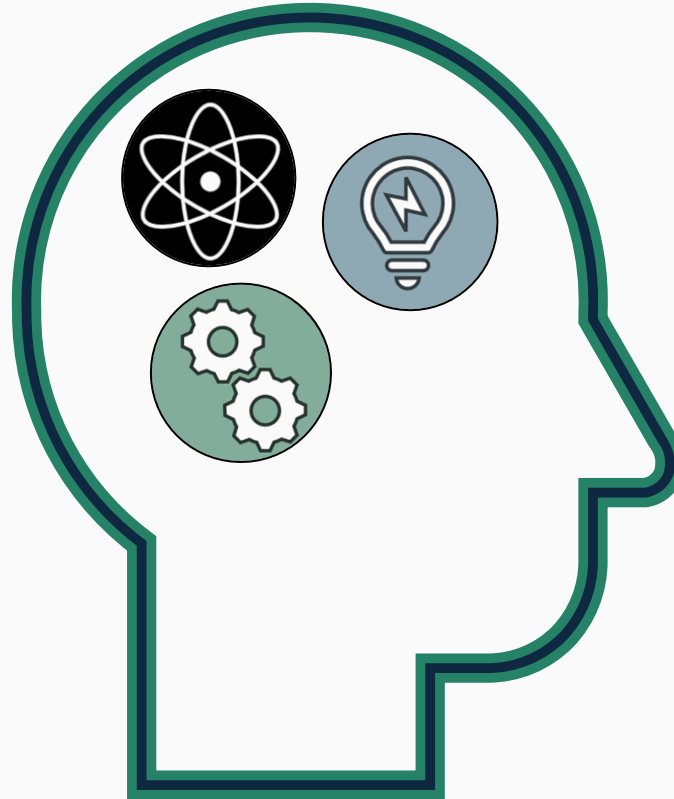
Autentic

Language and terminology

Neurotype =
a type of brain that thinks and experiences the world in a specific way

Neurodiversity or neurodiverse = more than one neurotype in a *group of people*

Neurodivergent, Neurominority, Neurodifferent =
a person, or group of people, who's neurotype is different from 'typical'



This individual is autistic, ADHD and dyslexic.

These 3 neurodivergent conditions make up this person's unique neurotype.

Their neurotype 'diverges' (is different) from the 'typical' (usual) neurotype.

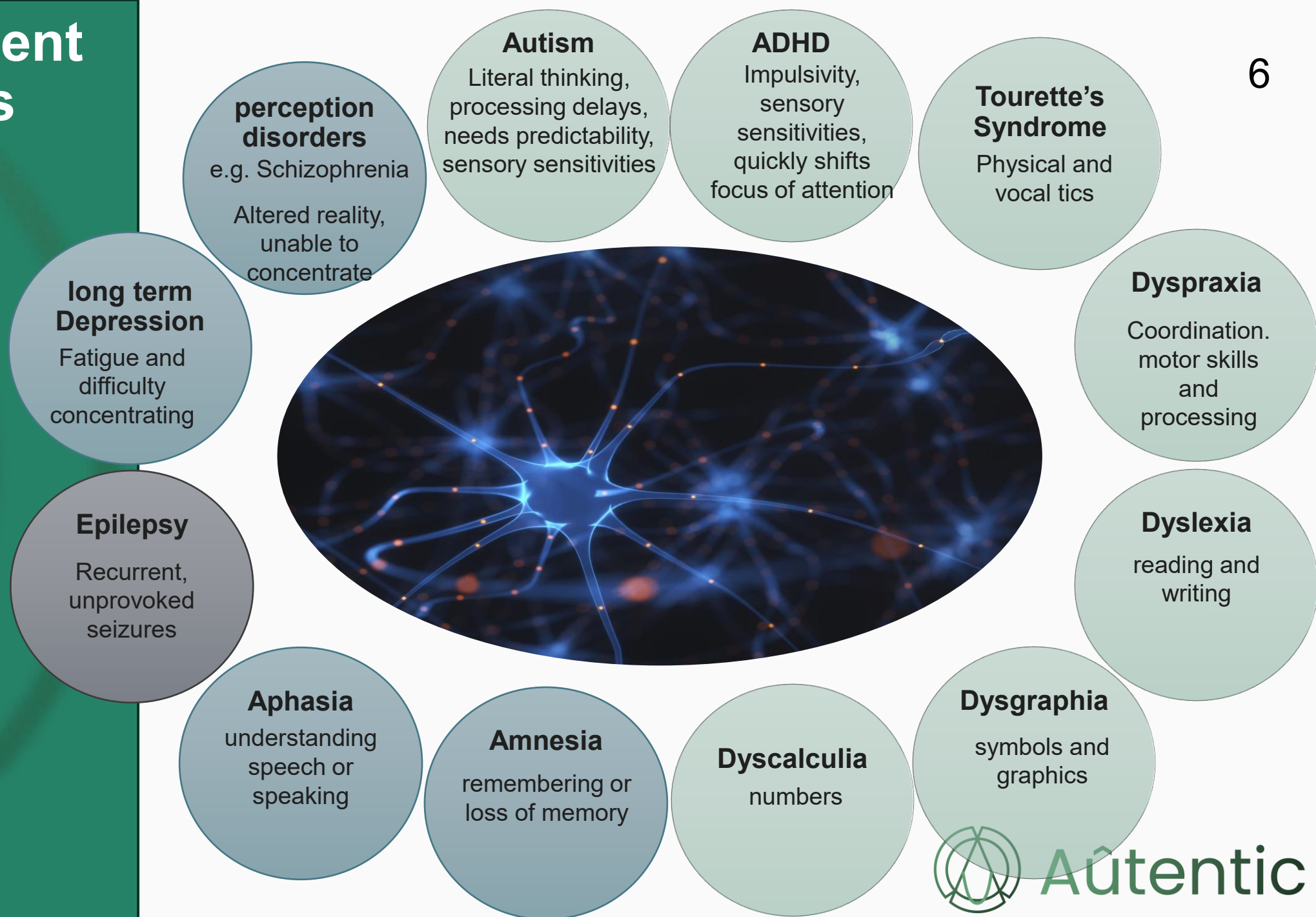
Neurotypical people have no neurodivergent conditions.

This person is neurodivergent.

Neurodivergent communities

KEY

- Condition that you are born with
- Condition you develop after birth
- Condition that you are born with **or** that you develop after birth



Neurodivergence Prevalence:

primary health care data 2020-2021

Autistica, Learning disability and autism

NHS England -ADHD programme update

*it is likely that there are upwards of 3% of the UK population that is autistic, especially considering that a diagnosis via the NHS is difficult to obtain due to waiting times and overloaded services



Autism

- **2.9 - 3%** of autistic 10–17 year-olds in the UK are diagnosed as autistic without an intellectual disability
- **12%** of autistic and under 19 years old people in the UK have an intellectual disability

Tic Disorder/Tourette Syndrome (TS)

- **1%** of teenagers and 0.05% of adults have tic disorders
- **2.9%** of school age children have transient tic disorders

ADHD/VAST*

- **5%** of children globally have ADHD
- **3-4%** of adults in the UK have ADHD

*Variable Attention Stimulus Trait

Intersectionality:

Autism

Comorbidities in autism,
(Casanova et. al 2020)

Overlap between
autism and gender
diversity (Dettario, L,
2020)

Socio-economic
inequality (Durkin et. al.,
2010)

Autism Stigma and the
role of ethnicity and
culture
(Popadopoulos,
2016).

UP NEXT:
Film:
Monday
morning

Religion

In some religious communities: stigma, shame, no community support

Socio-Economically Disadvantaged

Lack of family or parents' awareness or education and funding for diagnosis/support

Global Majority

no access in own language, lack of community or family support, underdiagnosed or mis-diagnosed

Other neurodivergent (ND) conditions
intellectual disability,
mental health,
acquired ND

Health Conditions

Hypermobility (EDS),
epilepsy, allergies and
intolerances, digestive
issues, POTS, Irlens
Syndrome etc.

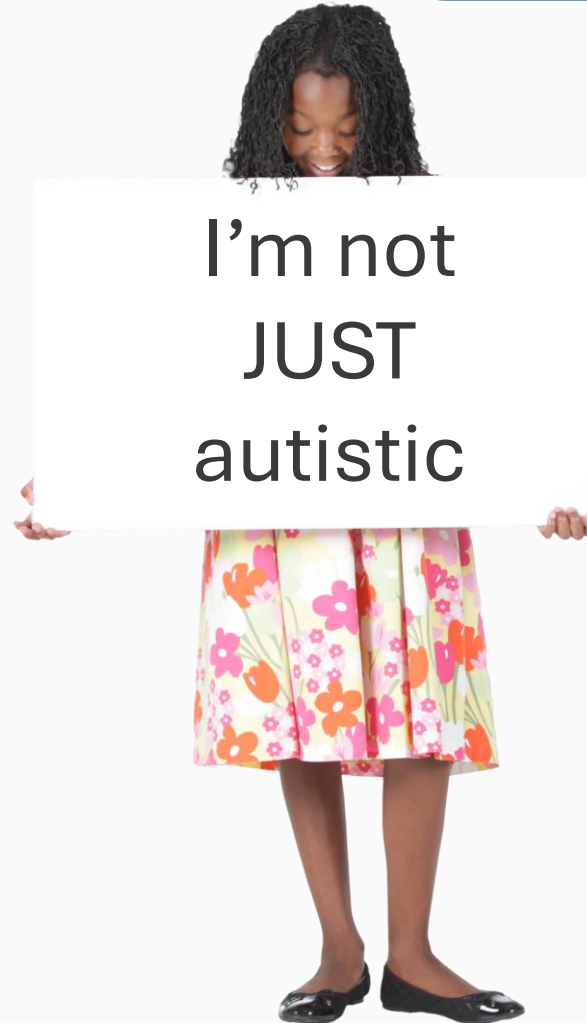
8

Gender

may be disconnected
from family, may not
have gender
transition support

Sexuality

may be disconnected
from family, may be
more confident about
being autistic if confident
about being gay etc.



Intersectionality:

Link to film <https://youtu.be/pa-cjuaw85Q?si=6gnLQIBuxKyd9Fn8>

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Different working
styles

FILM:
Monday Morning



*Video has no sound
after the introduction



Neurodivergence Facts:

Masking, or camouflaging



Some neurodivergent people are masking (suppressing) their natural autistic ways of being, and expressing themselves, around others

The ability to mask is linked with average or above average intelligence

Masking is exhausting and a risk factor for poor mental health and suicidality

Neurodivergence Facts:

Speaking and non-speaking autistic people



Around 1 in 4 autistic people don't speak words, or are able to speak very few words

Many autistic people are less able to speak words when overwhelmed

The ability to speak words, or not, is not connected to a person's level of intelligence or ability to communicate by other means

<https://www.autistica.org.uk/what-is-autism/what-is-autism>

<https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613241230709>

Neurodivergence Facts:

Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria (Autism & ADHD/VAST)

Brain structure results in lower ability to regulate internal communication

“immense emotional pain from real or perceived failure to meet others’ expectations.”

Reactions can be internalized, like feelings of low self-esteem and self-criticism, or they can be externalized, like responding to someone with anger or bursting into tears.

Recognize and validate how debilitating RSD can be. It’s distressing and painful and may negatively impact on mental health, including depression.

- Identify **what triggers strong emotions** (crying, anger, despair).
- What **specific situations or events** lead to perceived or experienced rejection?
- You can support by **anticipating triggers and introducing feedback slowly** and in a phased way, allowing extra time for processing and emotional regulation.
- Be reassuring and **deliver feedback at supportive times of the day, in ‘safe’ spaces for the person.**
- Encourage the person to ask questions, when they sense feelings of rejection, but remember to **provide time to recover before trying to talk through.**



Neurodivergence Facts:

Pathological Demand Avoidance (Autism)

Extreme inability to cope with uncertainty

- **Extreme resistance** to requests
- Higher 'masking'
- **Excuses** for not meeting demands
- Extreme **anxiety around uncertainty**
- Tendency to **catastrophise** and **manipulate**
- Vivid **imagination** and role play skills
- Extreme **need to stay 'in control'** and not have situations imposed on them

Remember anxiety is the root cause, and PDA can be debilitating for the person especially when they want to do the things they are asked to do..

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- **Offer limited choice** – so the person feels in control and calm
- **Less direct**, more subtle, communication around tasking
- **Check in for anxiety** more frequently about new requests, activities or tasks
- **Review adjustments** regularly and action where needed
- **Pick your battles!**
- **Don't challenge fantastical excuses** and **Support autonomy** wherever possible in how and when tasks are done

Neurodivergent Talent

Autism

- Attention to detail
- Absorbing/retaining facts
- Novel approaches
- Accepting of difference
- Deep focus
- Visual skills
- Creativity
- Integrity
- Observation skills
- Methodical approach
- Resilient
- Expertise

ADHD/VAST

- Hyper-focus
- No hidden agenda
- Perfectionist
- Addictive enthusiasm
- Loyal
- People loving
- Relentless drive
- Trusting
- Big picture thinking

Tourette syndrome /Tic Disorder

- Enhanced observational skills
- Empathy
- Self-control
- Ability to predict and plan ahead
- Problem solving
- Will-power and determination
- Cognitive control
- Resilience and humour

Dyspraxia

- Creativity and creative imagination
- Strong verbal communication skills.
- Long-term memory
- Problem solving/strategic thinking
- Persistence and determination.
- Big picture thinking
- Empathy
- Auditory skills, languages/music.

Dyslexia

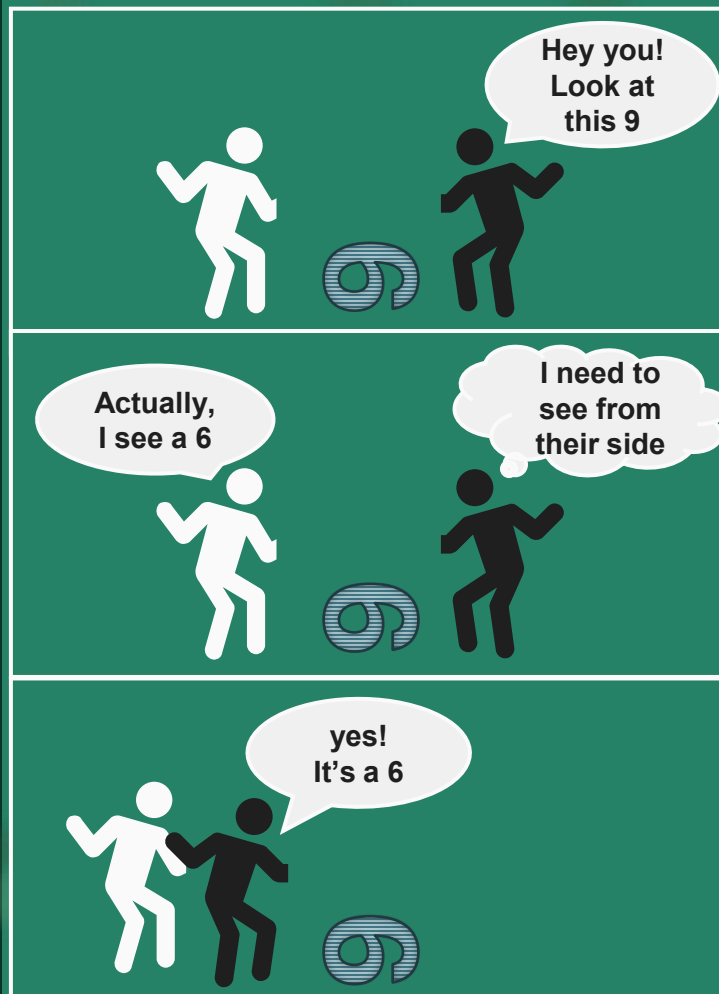
- 3D Visual imaging – great for design
- Verbally articulate – debates, mediation, sales, coaching, presentations, motivational speaking
- Big picture thinkers – creatives, marketing
- Empathic and good at building relationships
- Good long-term memory

Dyscalculia

- Creativity/creative imagination
- Strong verbal communication
- Strategic thinking and problem solving
- Intuitive thinkers
- Good organisational skills and very practical
- Word-smiths

What does everyone need to do to affirm Neurodivergent people?

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The double empathy problem 10 years on

Organisations and services need to be adapted for neurodivergent people so that they are accessible and **neurodivergent-affirming**

‘Near-typical’* people need to adapt and better understand neurodivergent people

*Near-typical –a person, or group of people, that generally do not need to ask for specific accommodations in neuro-normative environments

Neurodivergence, reasonable adjustments and the law

The Equality Act 2010



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Neurodivergent children, young people or adults may still be disabled without a formal diagnosis and entitled to support and reasonable adjustments.

A child, young person or adult having **substantial and long term (12 months or expected to be longer than 12 months), difficulties with everyday activities**, is disabled.

A person doesn't need to tell you they are disabled, you should ensure everyone can access wherever possible.

You should **notice when someone is disabled** and make **specific adjustments for them** wherever you can.

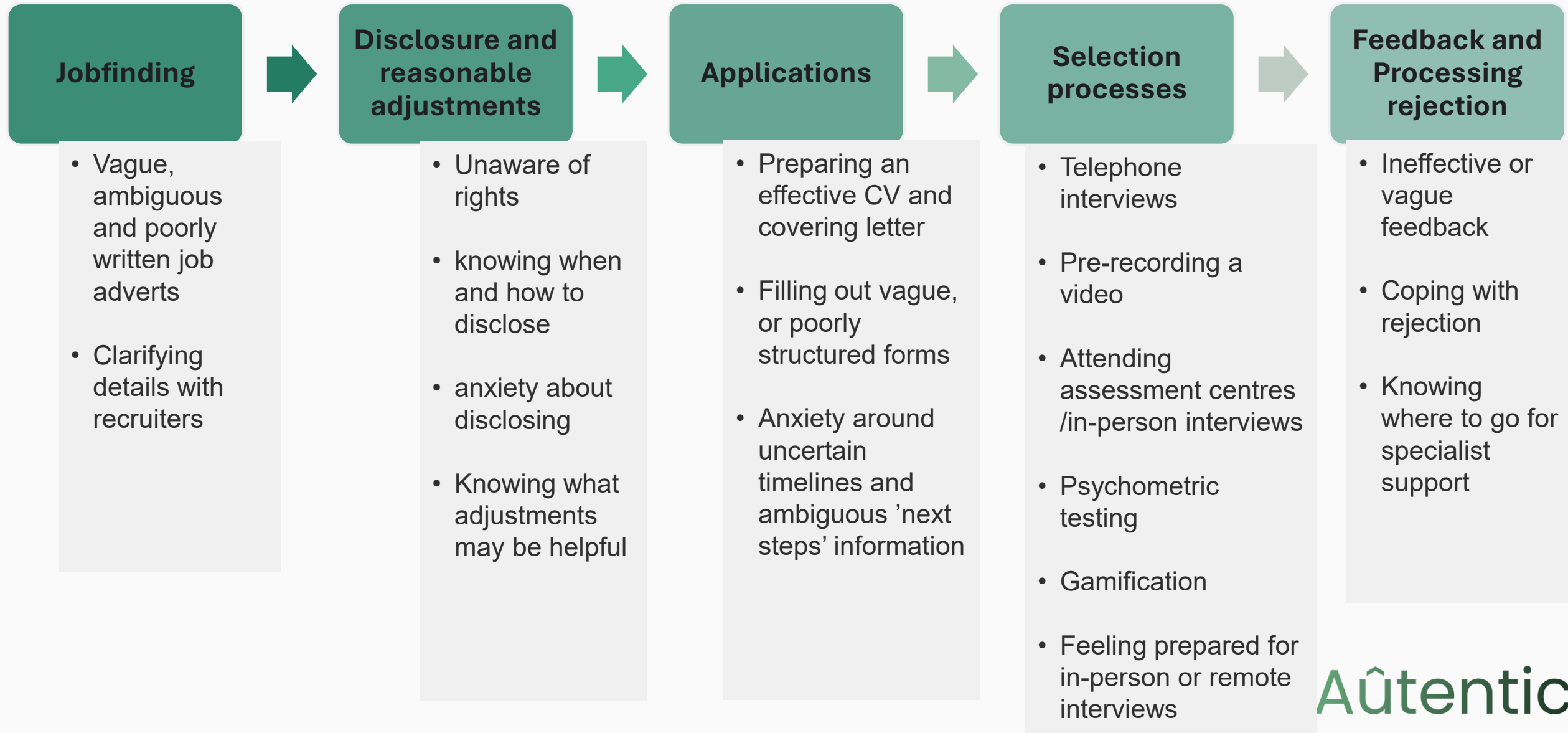
How do you know if someone is neurodivergent and disabled without them telling you?

When an employer does not have 'knowledge', Equality Act 2010

If a person is

- saying that they are sensitive to the light and sound around them, when others find it acceptable, and can't focus or work,
- asking for written instructions and information otherwise they can't process and understand,
- becomes overwhelmed with change or unexpected events, and
- appears to be struggling to socialise in the expected way...

Then a court will likely find that you had enough information to reasonably KNOW that they are autistic and disabled, and therefore entitled to reasonable adjustments.



JOB FINDING:

Accessible and neurodivergent-affirming job adverts

<https://www.autentic.uk/accessible-job-adverts-guide>



JOB TITLE (Avoid jargon when designing the job title, for example say 'bar tender' instead of 'beverage dissemination officer')

LOCATION

State any homeworking options, the estimated amount of travel needed to different locations, the expected office presence and working locations here.

WORKING PATTERN/HOURS

State any shift work patterns, core hours or the expected start and finish times here, including any set lunch or break times.

CONTRACT TYPE

State whether the role is permanent, temporary, or fixed duration etc.

SALARY

State the salary range or starting salary here, avoid stating it is 'competitive' as this will likely exclude many autistic candidate that may feel overwhelmed by having to ask or negotiate a salary. You should as a minimum state that candidates are able to enquire about the salary range before applying and give a named contact for this purpose, offering information by text, email or video/phone.

ADJUSTMENTS PLEDGE

State:

'Please contact (named contact email and phone number) to talk through any reasonable adjustments we may be able to make for you'.

You should also give some information here about standard adjustments that you offer or have tailored for candidates in the past so that they are encouraged to get in touch at this stage and make an early, positive and effective disclosure.

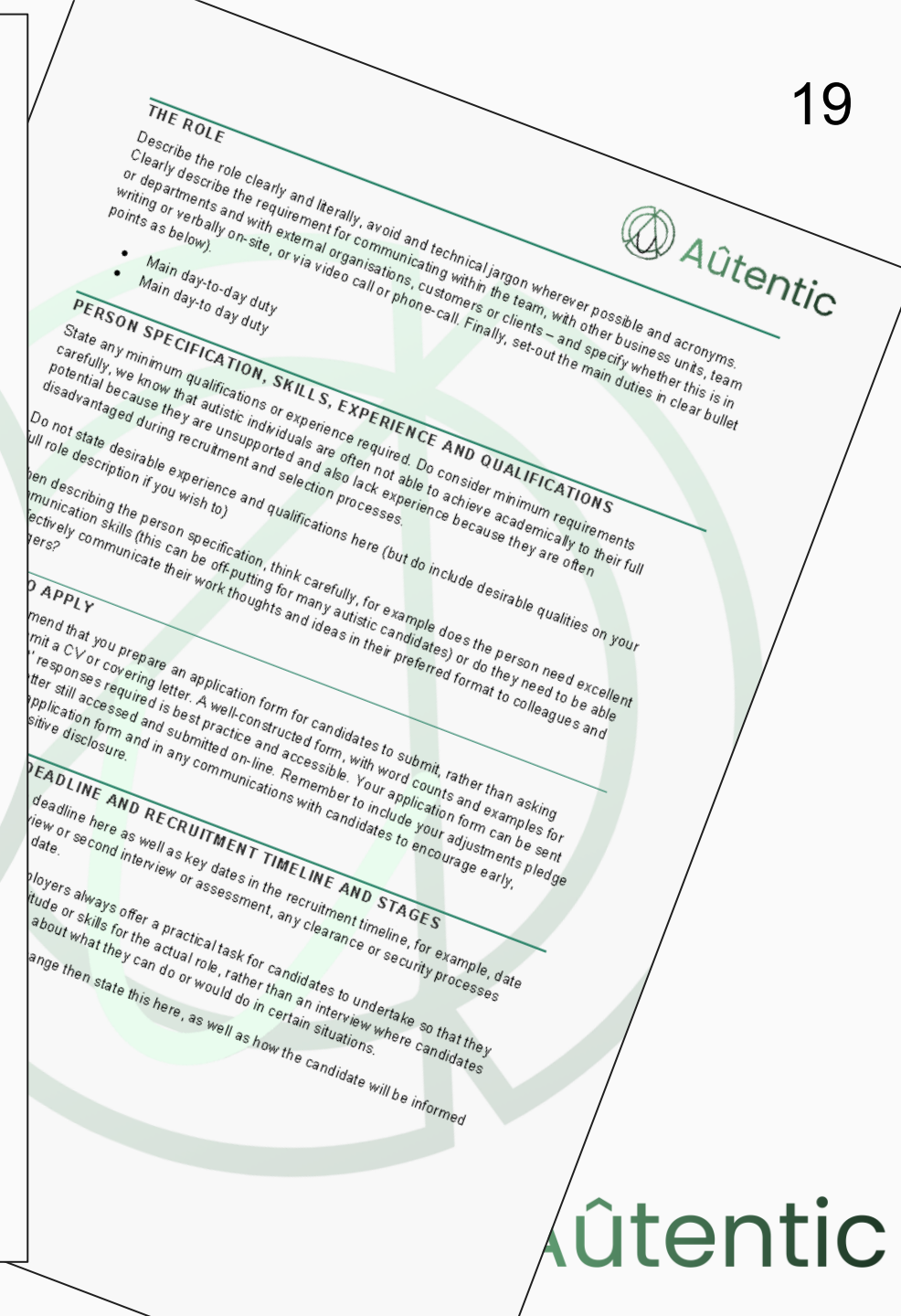
TEAM CULTURE

Introduce key team members and leaders and include links to a one-page bio with a current photo, as well as describing the specific team culture, for example is the team quiet, measured and methodical within a large open-plan office or lively and working at a fast pace to react to demands within a small office? Avoid using vague and subjective phrases such as 'our friendly team'. You should also include links to any visual information such as photos or 360° video tours of any offices or regular workspaces here.

COMPANY INFORMATION

Overview the company, what it does, it's clients and provide a weblink for more information. This ensure that candidates are not overloaded with too much information. Highlight and state any support you have in place for autistic candidates and employees, any autism initiatives or case studies within your company here to encourage applications.

<https://www.autentic.uk/>



EXAMPLE: Visual supporting information about the process

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1st STAGE – 23rd November

13:00-14:00 (timed):

- Complete the virtual activity
- Details of the activity will be emailed to you 1 week in advance
- We will notify you of whether you have progressed to the 2nd stage by 30th November



2nd STAGE 6th December 13:00-15:00

- On-site practical activity – 1 hour, site 360 tours and a sensory map will be sent 30th November, as well as details of the activity
- 30-minute break to prepare
- Structured interview – 30 minutes– questions will be sent 1 week in advance
- We will notify 14th December of the outcome



3rd STAGE 18th December

- Shared workspace tour – 30 minutes
- 3-hour job trial – details of activities will be sent 14th December
- We will notify you of whether you are invited to take up the role by 20th December

See slide 38 also for a process
flow diagram example

DISCLOSURE AND REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS:

Encouraging
early, effective
and positive
disclosure of
ways that you
can support:

The adjustments
pledge

On all communications

'please get in touch with (named contact email and phone number) to discuss any adjustments we may be able to make for you – or support we can provide so that you can take part.

At the start of all conversations

'is there anything else I can try to do that will make the meeting/conversation more accessible for you'?

Reasonable adjustments Process

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Organisation or employer becomes 'aware' of disability

Awareness could be via a direct disclosure, or 'constructive knowledge' whereby an employer or organisation has enough information to reasonably 'know' the person is disabled.

Discuss, agree and document confidentiality boundaries, on W.R.A.P. if in the workplace.

Identify helpful adjustments

Ask the person what they need and quickly assess for reasonableness and implement.

Proceed to offer some informed suggestions based on the self-reported difficulties.

With the person's agreement, seek an autism specialist workplace assessment or advice to further identify adjustments.

Decide what is 'reasonable' to implement

Comprehensively explore funding options internally and externally
Is it possible to do?

Ask the person and seek specialist advice – will it remove the barrier?

Is the amount of disruption it will cause to others or the business realistically acceptable?

Inform what has been deemed reasonable

Any adjustments initially deemed unreasonable, by the line manager, should be referred to a panel of specialist and senior decision makers.

Inform the employee, line manager and relevant stakeholders of what will and won't be implemented, in a timely written format
Provide a clear explanation of why an adjustment isn't deemed reasonable.

Plan and implement adjustments

Design a visual plan showing key target activity dates, then assign actions to relevant staff.

Confirm/obtain budget approval or secure 'Access to Work' funding.

Seek input from employee and line manager, what are the priorities to implement?

Update agreed adjustments on W.R.A.P. if in the workplace.

Schedule reviews of adjustments

Whenever employee requests a review.

For any changes in team, line manager, job role, environment, working arrangements or processes, or the employee's personal circumstances.

Periodically at line manager catch-ups, supervisions, appraisals etc.

Resources

Aûtentic's workplace reasonable adjustments passport (W.R.A.P.)

<https://www.autentic.uk/energy-accounting-guide-for-preventing-autistic-burnout-and-fatigue>



Aûtentic

APPLICATIONS:

The application process

Thinking point?

How could you support someone to apply who has difficulty filling in forms?

- **We recommend that you prepare an application form** for candidates to submit, rather than asking candidates to submit a CV or covering letter.
 - **A well-constructed form, with word counts and examples for any ‘free text’ responses** required is best practice and accessible.
 - **Your application form can be sent by email or better still accessed and submitted on-line.**
 - **The application form should reflect the competencies and skills required for the role**, that have been set-out on the job-advert and supplied with the job description prior to application stage.
 - **Remember to include your adjustments pledge again** on your application form and in any communications with candidates to encourage early, effective and positive disclosure.
- * Offer a call to record a person’s verbal responses to the form questions –
OR – can you receive video or audio responses to the questions and complete the form on behalf of someone?

Provide alternatives and standard adjustments for the following:

- **Telephone interviews** - (video call or written, questions in advance)
- **Pre-recording a video** – (skip, or alternative testing)
- **Attending assessment centres /in-person interviews** - (remote attendance, 1:1 assessment rather than in a group)
- **Psychometric testing** - (skip, offer a role-based practical activity)
- **Gamification** – (assess for any adjustments needed, review language for instructions, consider processing delays, manual dexterity etc. – adjust scoring methodology accordingly)
- **Feeling prepared for in-person or remote interviews** – (offer familiarisation meetings, remote platform tests, pre-tours/meets, questions in advance etc.)

Identifying tailored adjustments for your candidate to participate

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Find out the preferred method of communication and use it.

- this is often in writing using the chat area during remote video meetings they may prefer to have their video turned off and to be able to use the chat function to communicate effectively. Check what communication support they have and make sure it is in place as well as the support that you need to communicate in different ways

Is it difficult to attend in-person at your site?

- can you offer a remote session if needed and seek support or training with the technology you need to support this adjustment if needed?

Does the person need an appointment at a specific time or day of the week?

- you should find out whether the candidate has any sensory or other considerations that mean they need an appointment at a particular time of day or day of the week, for example, an appointment later in the day to avoid rush hour travel etc.

To achieve this best practice, is sign-off from senior managers to change any processes?

One page Candidate Profile

<https://www.autentic.uk/one-page-profile-template>

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ONE PAGE CANDIDATE PROFILE



Name: Feng Li

Support: M Lopez (Support worker) m.lopez@autismservice.org.uk

Next Kin: Chris Jones (Partner) tel; 07923089444

Conditions: Autism/Dyslexia/Anxiety

Pronouns: they/them



Communication adjustments

Breaks every 30 minutes for 5 minutes in meetings

I need written information summarised verbally

I prefer video and picture information/learning

1 question at a time, give me time to process



Interaction adjustments

I prefer to avoid small talk

I don't cope well sitting close to others

I'm very direct

I tend to avoid eye contact



Sensory adjustments

No strong artificial smells/perfume

No harsh white lights/LEDs

One person speaking at a time

No touching or handshakes

Helpful recruitment adjustments

Give honest, direct and clear written feedback, relating to my demonstration of the competencies required, if I am unsuccessful

Allow support to accompany for communication and anxiety

Accessible jobs trials/activities or aptitude testing

Offer a meeting platform test for remote interviews

Provide alternative or adjustments to AI assessment

Provide alternative or adjustments to assessment days/centres

Provide alternative or adjustments to gamification

Provide alternative or adjustments to pre-recorded video submission

Provide alternative to psychometric testing

Provide alternative to telephone screening

you can also overtype these boxes

You can also overtype these boxes

More free, helpful information and downloadable information for employers can be accessed here:

<https://www.autentic.uk/resources-for-employers>

Including guidance on writing an autism-affirming and accessible job adverts, accessible interviews and accessible interview questions.

Download an editable one page staff profile template, to provide in advance to your candidates, from <https://www.autentic.uk/>

OPEN FORUM DISCUSSION ACTIVITY:

Barriers and resources
to designing an
effective job activity
that replaces a
traditional 'questions'
based interview

What barriers do you think that you may have in terms of replacing a traditional 'questions-based' interview with a practical job activity that gives candidates an opportunity to demonstrate rather than talk about what they can do.

**** if you already offer job activities in place of questions, then please share your experience of this now if you are able to**

Accessible interview questions GUIDE

<https://www.autentic.uk/accessible-interview-questions-guide>

GUIDANCE: ACCESSIBLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

EXPERIENCE BASED RATHER THAN 'WHAT-IF' QUESTIONS

Questions should be direct, specific, based on experience and literal. This removes the expectation to interpret ambiguous questions correctly, and the pressure to think hypothetically (predict a situation) which many autistic people find difficult.

SAY:

'Tell us about a problem you have had to solve, what was the process you undertook to find a solution?'

DON'T SAY:

'How do you approach problem-solving?'

AVOID COMPETENCY QUESTIONS

Autistic people tend to have more difficulty with competency-based 'what did you do' type of questions, which are also by nature very vague. Autistic individuals may also find it difficult to recall past events.

We advocate that employers offer a task-based interview instead of asking questions so that autistic people can demonstrate, rather than talk about what they can do.

If it's not possible to remove competency-based questions, then make them as clear and specific as possible using the [S.T.A.R. method](#). Using the candidate's CV as a basis for questions is a best-practice approach.

Example:

DON'T ASK

'What would you do, if you were finding it difficult to work with a colleague who consistently missed deadlines for their input into your project, and this potentially would cause the overall project delivery to be delayed?'

DO ASK

(Situation): Describe a situation where colleague or person missed deadlines for their input into a project or piece of work of yours?

(Task): What was the problem, task or project that you needed to deliver?

(Action): What action, if any, did you take to ensure that your colleague met their personal deadlines?

(Result): What was the result of the action you took?

<https://www.autentic.uk/>

DON'T PREFER NOT TO ANSWER BIOGRAPHICAL

Struggle with answering questions which are meant to be direct, such as 'where do you live' or 'what hobbies do you have in your downtime?'

'Yourself' doesn't make it clear exactly what you are asking for. Ask for example 'what is it about your past that you are interested in this role?'

DON'T ASK

'Tell us about a problem you have had to solve?' you are asking for a problem that could have been with a task you had to do at home or work.

ROLE

Employers make the mistake of asking questions that are too specific. For example, you may be looking out for future roles, but asking questions not related to the role can overwhelm many autistic candidates. Design questions that are specific to this is the case.

AVOID TOO VAGUE OR AMBIGUOUS QUESTIONS

'What do you need?' could literally be answered with 'I need a pin'. That's a good answer. What about 'What do you enjoy?'

They may forget all the different parts of the question in asking-down multi-layered questions. Also, they may miss out on some useful responses.

GOOD TO CLARIFY IF THEY NEED TO

Understand the question that this reflects and ask them to clarify when they need to. You can ask them to clarify their answer or ask the question again if the answer is not what you expected.

AVOID USING JARGON

Autistic individuals often think in precise language, and so someone may have a different example below. Many autistic people find it takes effort, and can be exhausted by the inability to respond meaningfully.

DON'T SAY:
'I've put a pin in it.'

SAY:
'talk about that when the appropriate time comes'

The STAR method

DON'T ASK 'What would you do, if you were finding it difficult to work with a colleague who consistently missed deadlines for their input into your project, and this potentially would cause the overall project delivery to be delayed'?

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S

Situation- Describe a situation where colleague or person missed deadlines for their input into a project or piece of work of yours

T

Task - What was the problem, task or project that you needed to deliver?

A

Action - What action, if any, did you take to ensure that your colleague met their personal deadlines?

R

Result - What was the result of the action you took?

Supporting candidates to manage anxiety



Sensory differences or difficulties are common, heightened by anxiety, and also cause anxiety

- under or oversensitive to any sensory input
- struggling to describe or recognise feelings and emotions (Alexithymia)
- sensitive to one type of sound/smell/taste/light/touch etc. but not another - for example, high tones versus low tones
- experiencing changing sensitivity levels with additional stressors such as anxiety or poor wellbeing



UP NEXT:
Sensory film

Sensory film

2 mins 26 sec

01:48
LOUD
NOISE



Notice the cumulative effect of sensory input 'wearing' the person down

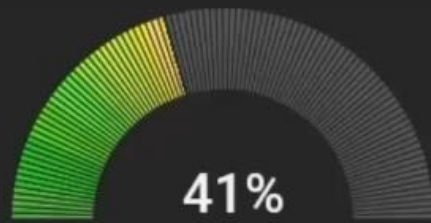
Notice how uncertainty or unexpected situations heighten anxiety and therefore make the person more sensitive to sensory inputs.

Link to full version of film <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9kzsncSdFo>

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I'm 6 minutes early...

www.autentic.uk



Overwhelm meter



Autentic



Autentic

Supportive on-site environments

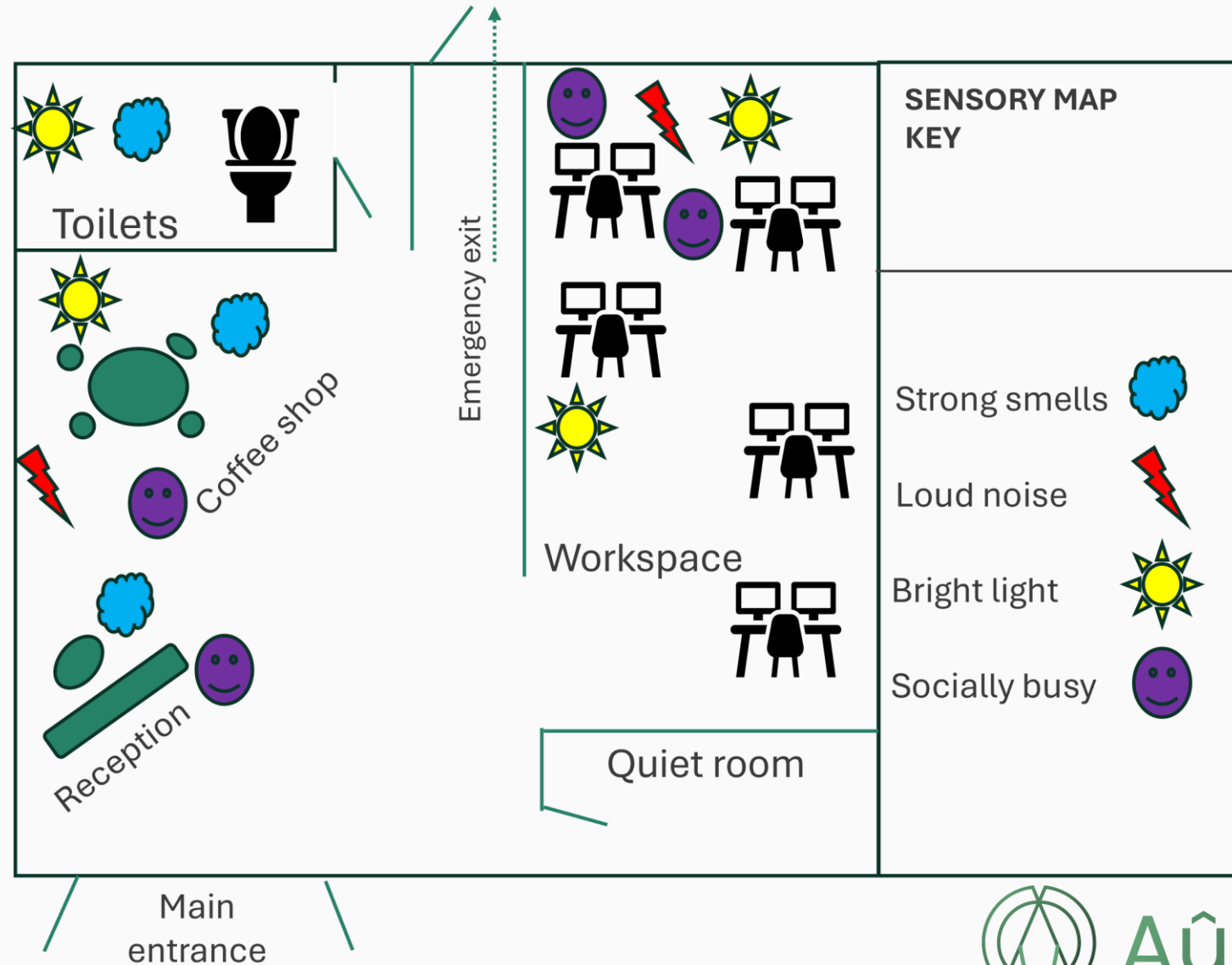
RESOURCE

[Download: quiet room design guide](#)



Sensory

provide a sensory map



Supporting
candidates to
manage anxiety

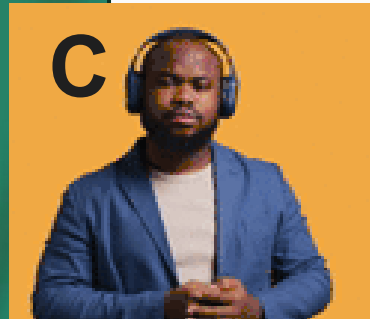
Which of these
people are
neurodivergent
and
overwhelmed?



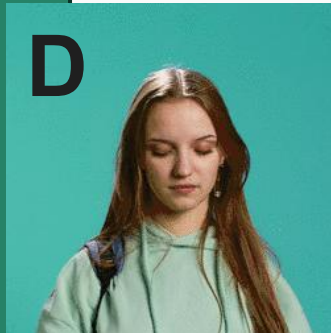
Anxiety or overwhelm may look obvious, like this..



It may also look like this, and the person is hostile or shouting.



A neurodivergent person may have a 'neutral' facial expression but be experiencing very high levels of anxiety internally, like this..



Yawning can also be a sign of stress and overwhelm.

Supporting candidates to manage anxiety

Communication techniques that lower anxiety levels

- adopt a friendly-neutral expression & use quiet and calm gestures
- don't fidget wherever possible
- be consistent, with tone, volume, pitch and intonation of voice
- don't interrupt wherever possible
- 'match' the persons comfortable level of eye contact, lower your gaze if needed
- leave a clear 5 seconds between questions, ask one question at a time
- limit the options provided for them to consider & provide visual supporting information e.g. video's etc to explain what the option is
- avoid big, open questions such as 'what do you want to do with your life'
- don't sit or stand directly opposite, at an angle or to the side is better
- avoid ambiguous, vague or 'subtle' conversational approaches/coaching methods
- use clear and literal language rather than non-verbal communication
- use written and visual supporting information to explore interests, talents and options

Communication examples:

‘Show’ instead of telling, using visuals such as images, videos or on-site tours

Rephrase vague & ambiguous questions and instructions

ask 1 question at a time
allow a 5 second pause
for the person to respond



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✗

“Tell me a little about yourself”

“Tell me specifically about X”

✓

✗

“Let’s shut the door, shall we?”

“Please close the door”

✓

1 question



WAIT



5 seconds



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- **Accessible jobs trials/activities or aptitude testing** in place of traditional questions based verbal interviews
- **Recruitment professionals, assessors and interviewers using the preferred method of communication**
- **Tailored adjustments for the person** for example, a 'walking-talking' interview..
- **Dedicated contact person** and flexible contact details to discuss adjustments before application or interview
- **Longer processing time** between verbal questions
- **Allow support** to accompany for communication and anxiety
- **Provide alternatives** to telephone screen, psychometric tests/gamification, recorded video's, assessment centres
- **Questions in advance** – ideally at least 2-3 days in advance
- **Clear visual information and structure** about the interview/assessment, timings, location, and people involved
- **Provide a quiet and private place** to wait in or calm down in
- **Offer a meeting platform test** for remote interviews
- **Provide sensory-neutral environments** (in-person and remote)
- **Give honest, direct and clear written feedback** if they are unsuccessful

Summary of best-practice process:

<https://www.autentic.uk/assessment-and-interview-adjustments-guide>

Planning

- Consider the timing and adjust for the person if needed
- Offer remote attendance
- Plan visual resources that are needed
- Plan a quiet room provision (if not already available)

Preparing

- prepare/update one-page profiles of staff (including reception, facilities and security for on-site events)
- refresh training where needed
- Develop visual resources that are needed

1 week before

- Provide structure, format, questions, visual supporting information
- Remember to include adjustments pledge on all communications
- Support candidate to complete one-page profile if needed – provide to assessors/interviewers
- Schedule platform test or pre-tour/pre-meet

3-5 days before

- Last call for providing interview questions, assessment details and activity/test instructions

On the day

- Review adjustments before the start
- Brief the agenda again and provide this in printed form
- Provide handouts of instructions and questions
- Allow to refer to notes
- Prompt to take a break
- Brief the quiet room location and etiquette for accessing it
- Confirm at the end, the candidates preferred method of receiving notice of the outcome

COPING WITH REJECTION:

Feedback & next steps

UP NEXT:
Best practice
support for new
starter starters

Assess, and record, for every competency that is specified on the job-description and job-advert that was provided to the candidate.

Was the candidate successful?

YES

Make offer – and if accepted then schedule in meeting to brief out new starter process and timeline

NO

Feedback in writing how the candidate performed in each area.

Provide constructive feedback in writing on areas where the candidate underperformed so that they can develop a plan for improvement

Provide signposting to national or local organisations/resources that provide into-work support

Best practice adjustments support for new starters: THE W.R.A.P.

Workplace Reasonable Adjustments Passport



EMPLOYEE NAME: Adrian Staff

Employee pronouns: he/him

Latest Review DATE: 04-Sep-2024

Line Manager: Susan Nice

HR Representative: John Help



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1) Dissemination permission:

Meet with Adrian before briefing to any new colleagues or employees

2) Condition(s)/Disability(ies)/Difference(s)

Asperger syndrome

3) Preferred language:

autistic person

4) SUMMARY TABLE

It helps me when people

- ✓ give me extra detail when I ask
- ✓ keep the environment quieter
- ✓ follow up conversation in emails
- ✓ give visuals for new people/places
- ✓ schedule conversations

I have difficulty when people

- × call me unexpectedly
- × ask more than 1 question at a time
- × change plans without explaining
- × don't check-in regularly
- × make too much background noise

5) Strengths:

- attention to detail
- accuracy
- excel, spreadhseets
- analysis

<https://www.autentic.uk/workplace-reasonable-adjustments-passport-w-r-a-p>



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6) Challenges:

- coping with unexpected change
- working in noisy places or open-plan workspaces
- verbal processing
- perfectionism

7) Adjustments

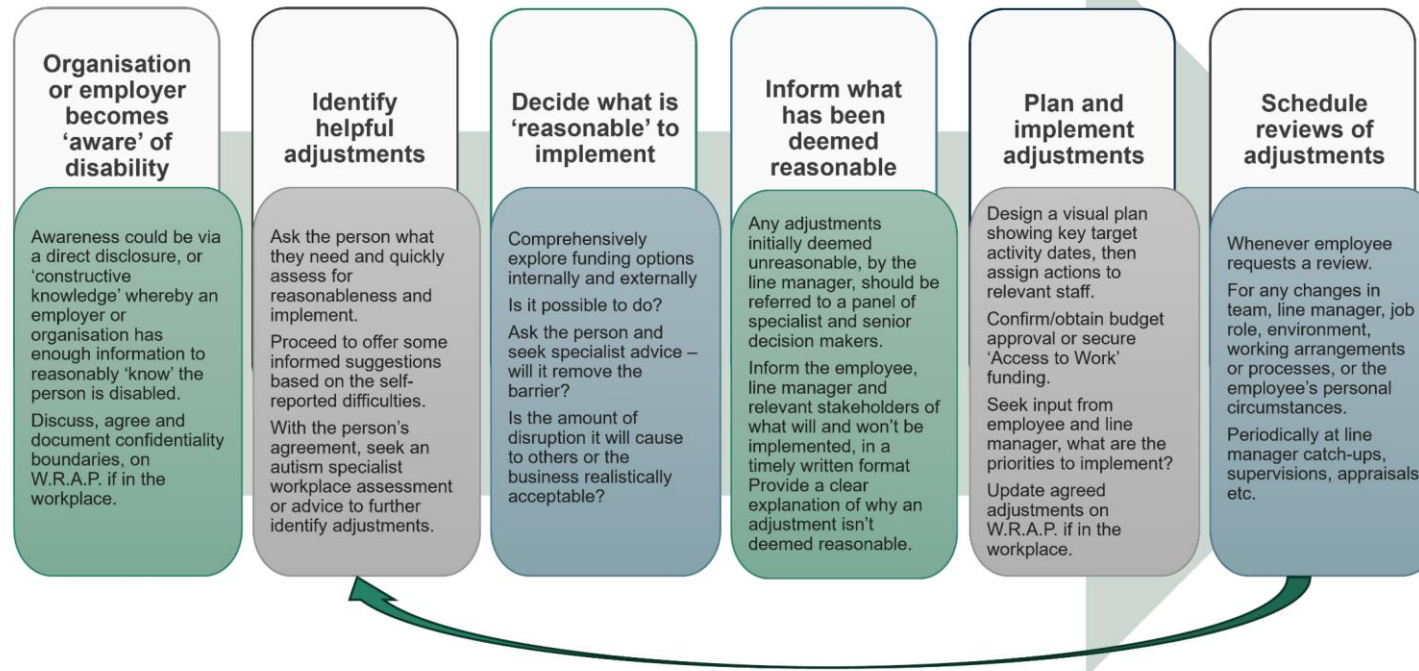
AGREED WORKPLACE ADJUSTMENTS	
Collaboration and tasking	scheduled calls, no matter how informal, agenda's in advance, follow up minutes and actions in an email ask 1 question at a time, meetings in quiet environments
Sensory	quieter environments booked meeting rooms and remote working noise cancelling headphones
Team meetings	remote attendance 1 question at a time, 1 speaker at a time 5 minute break every 30 minutes
Travelling	kept to a minimum travelling outside of rush hour private transport when overwhelmed
Working arrangements	Remote working with remote attendance at team meetings Traveling to clients only when absolutely necessary
Assistive Tech and Equipment	noise cancelling headphones
Wellbeing	Regular check-ins to help steer work, Monday and Friday

Review date:	04-Sep-2024
Next planned review date:	08-Oct-2024
Review date:	
Next planned review date:	
Review date:	
Next planned review date:	
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Next planned review date:	

<https://www.autentic.uk/workplace-reasonable-adjustments-passport-w-r-a-p>

Recommended reasonable adjustments process overview

A basic overview of a recommended process is shown below.



<https://www.autentic.uk/workplace-reasonable-adjustments-passport-w-r-a-p>

GUIDANCE ON FILLING IN THE PASSPORT SECTIONS

1) Relevant Individuals: Cover Page

Record the person's/your name and pronouns, the line managers name and the relevant HR contact who will also have access to the person's/your workplace passport and is supporting the line manager and the person/you.

2) Dissemination permission

It is important to talk through and agree who will have access to the information and in what form the information will be shared, for example,

- a) **by sharing the passport via email or storing the passport digitally in a shared area with restricted access only to agreed individuals.** This is likely most appropriate for line managers, senior managers, HR, occupational health etc.)
- b) **by digitally sharing just the first page, and the line manager/employee briefing out more sensitive information contained on page 2 on a case-by-case basis** and agreed prior between the person/you and line manager/HR contact. This is likely to be the most effective way of briefing immediate colleagues that regularly collaborate with the person/you. A written version should support verbal meetings between the line manager and person/you to discuss what adjustments may be needed fully support the person/you.
- c) **by verbally briefing out relevant points from the profile to colleagues and clients/customers.** This is likely the most appropriate approach for colleagues in the wider team who may have infrequent contact with the person/you and are not collaborating directly. The person/you may wish to brief out on a case-by-case basis or may prefer the line manager to do this if not confident talking about what is needed in terms of adjustments.

It is also important to agree what will happen if there are any new colleagues or managers joining the organisation that may benefit from briefings, and what happens if there is new or updated information added to the passport, for example

- is the person/you comfortable with anyone new being briefed in the same way as agreed for other colleagues and managers during initial discussions?
- would the person/you prefer to be informed by the line manager when a new person has been briefed?
- would the person/you prefer to revisit the conversation with the line manager every time a new person joins or the information in the passport is updated?

Discussing and agreeing disclosure boundaries

It is most helpful to talk about reasonable adjustments before the interview, assessment or work start date, and to review any adjustments often after joining an organisation and during the 'settling-in' phase. The discussion environment should be calm and private to encourage an open conversation and the following key points should be discussed;

what – will be helpful for most people to know, and what may be helpful only for specific people to know like the line manager, HR or buddy. **who** - will brief colleagues, for example the person/you, a buddy or line manager.

how – the disclosure will be made, for example, on a 1:1 basis discretely, by sharing a digital copy of a disclosure profile or workplace adjustments passport or by briefing in a group situation during autism training.

when – to check with the person/you before briefing or sharing information with others, for example, for any new colleagues joining the team the person/you may prefer to be asked on a case-by-case basis or it may be ok generally to let all new people know who will be working closely with the person/you.

whether - the person/you are comfortable answering any questions from colleagues about how best to help and support.

A copy of this completed W.R.A.P. should be kept with HR, with the line manager and provided for the person/you.

The passport should be regularly reviewed whenever the person/you asks for a review, during formal appraisals and supervisions, and when there are any changes to

- the team
- the role
- the working environment or arrangements
- personal circumstances resulting in higher support needs

The passport should be version controlled to ensure the most up to date version is available for reference.

<https://www.autentic.uk/workplace-reasonable-adjustments-passport-w-r-a-p>

3) Condition(s)/Disability(ies)/Difference(s)

It is important to note here all conditions for which the person/you needs adjustments for. It is especially important to note whether there are any other cooccurring neurodiverse conditions if the person is autistic, especially PDA or ADD/ADHD which significantly change approaches to supporting and adjustments.

There may also be other health conditions which significantly impact on how adjustments are made for the person/you, and these should be documented here also.

4) Preferred language

The person's/your preferred language should be used and respected by others when talking about the person's/your adjustments. The person/you may prefer 'autistic person' or 'on the autistic spectrum' or 'person with autism'. All autistic people will have varied language preferences.

5) SUMMARY TABLE

This table should be a 'light touch' approach to conveying key information, quickly, about how to best support the person/you (it helps me when people) and what may potentially cause high levels of anxiety or difficulties (I have difficulties when). This is not a list of formal adjustments (these are on page 2 of the profile), but it should reflect the adjustments a person/you need, communication and interaction differences and needs and also sensory needs. This summary table should be a 'quick reference' guide and serve as a reminder of accommodations that everyone needs to consistently make for the person/you. We recommend that no more than 5 concise points, for each column in the table, are documented here.

If the person/you are finding it difficult to identify what the important points are to include here, you may wish to

- **attend training, courses and webinars** on autism and workplace adjustments, to improve self-understanding and advocacy
- **participate in a specialised workplace assessment** if you are already in work (refer to your employer's HR for recommendations of specialist providers)
- **seek support from the line manager** (if the person/you are already in work), a **trusted friend or another professional that supports** the person/you well, to help you identify what the really important 'everyday' things are for people to know and be mindful of, and not the detailed underlying reasons for why the person/you needs this adjustment.
- **refer to examples of adjustments that commonly work for other autistic people.** Examples of adjustments that commonly work well for autistic employees are listed in the DARE adjustments toolkit which can be downloaded here: <https://dareuk.org/dareadjustments-toolkit> and are also summarised in the Appendix.

We recommend that if the person/you are already in work, that line manager and HR representative should have completed a half day training course to better support the person/you.

6) Strengths

It's important that a brief list of the person's/your strengths are included in the passport, for balance and to lend weight to why adjustments are needed (i.e. to ensure that the person/you can demonstrate their strengths to the benefit of the organisation and other colleagues).

7) Challenges

This section may contain sensitive and personal information about the underlying reasons why certain accommodations and adjustments are needed, i.e. the consequences for the person/you of not making the adjustments that are outlined in the summary table 5), or the agreed adjustments table 8).

8) Agreed Workplace Adjustments

This is where the formally agreed workplace adjustments should be recorded.

The Equality Act 2010 stipulates that the employer "must not treat a disabled person less favourably because of something connected with the person's disability, unless there is a fair and balanced reason". The duty to make reasonable adjustments is a "cornerstone of the Act" (*Equality Act 2010 Employment Statutory Code of Practice, para 6.28*) and requires employers to take positive steps to ensure that disabled people can access and progress in employment.

The question of what is reasonable can vary according to the circumstances of the employer. When deciding if the adjustment is reasonable, you should consider:

How effective it will be in helping the person to do their job;

- Whether it is practical to make the adjustment;
- How much disruption, if any, will be caused to your business or other people;
- How much, if anything, the adjustment will cost and how much money you have; and
- Whether you can obtain help with making adjustments and towards their cost

It must be for the employer to decide, in each case, whether an adjustment is reasonable. For the most positive outcome the identification and implementation of adjustments should be carried out in a realistic and open-minded manner by all involved. We recommend that HR professionals and line managers attend a half day training course to fully support their decision making.

<https://www.autentic.uk/workplace-reasonable-adjustments-passport-w-r-a-p>

Identifying tailored adjustments for your employee before they join the team

Find out the preferred method of communication and use it.

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- this is often in writing using the chat area during remote video meetings they may prefer to have their video turned off. Check what communication support they have and make sure it is in place as well as the support that you and your team need to communicate in different ways.

Is it difficult to attend work in-person at your site?

- can you offer a remote collaboration, training and working and seek support or training with the technology you need to support this adjustment if needed?

Does the person need meetings at a specific time or day of the week?

- you should find out whether the employee has any sensory or other considerations that mean they need team or line management meetings at a particular time of day or day of the week, for example, a meeting later in the day to avoid rush hour travel etc.

To achieve this best practice, is sign-off from senior managers to change any processes?

Preparing supporting information (new starter information)

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Share information in advance about what to expect

- Help the person to gain the most from your discussions by sharing information in advance about what to expect from you and team, including any social events, sensory maps, staff profiles, and any processes and procedures they'll be expected to follow.
- Prepare a structured timetable of the first week's activities

Complete any new starter forms over more than one session

- Consider completing any templates or forms over more than one meeting, and in a phased way, to avoid overwhelming the person.

Provide visual information about processes, procedures and social scene

- Many autistic people prefer visual information - Can you produce a flow chart of your processes? (see example on next slide)

Offer familiarisation meetings and pre-tours

- Can you offer a pre-tour and introduction to the workplace and prioritised team members
- You should arrange to meet with your new starter, before their first day of work, to check-in to see if they have any concerns or further questions

New starter checklist

Developing supportive resources for autistic new starters can significantly help to make their experience of joining your team and organisation a positive one..

What time to arrive	
When to start work	
Where to sit, which desk to use	
When and where are the regular team catch-ups and is attendance mandatory	
When and where are line manager meetings and supervisions, what is the agenda	
When and where are the mentor/buddy/coach meetings, who are they	
When are breaks and lunch, where can they be taken	
Where are the kitchen facilities, what is the expected etiquette	
Where are the toilets	
Where is the quiet room	
Is there a place for smokers	
Are there any non-work activities, what are they and when are they	
Where to store bikes, coats, umbrellas or bulky items	
Who is the first aider/mental health first aider/wellbeing officer, how to contact	
Are there regular fire alarms scheduled, when are they, where is the muster point	
What time to start packing up for the day	
What time to leave work	

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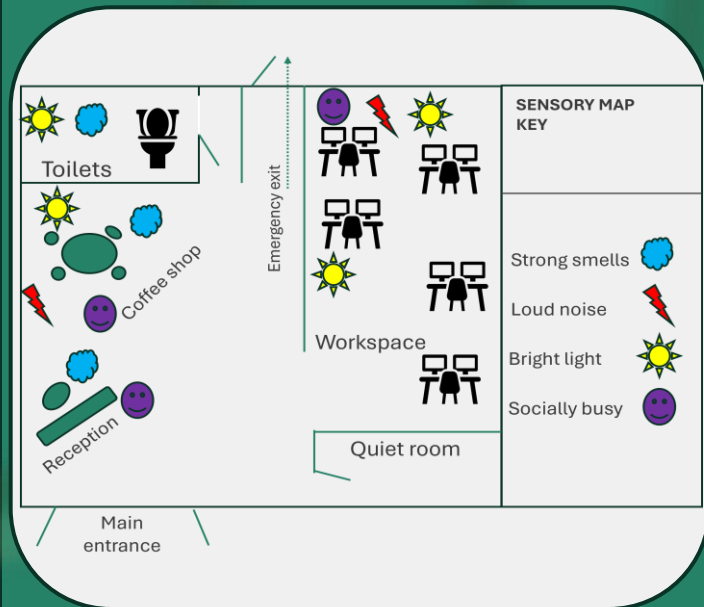
Example checklist, developed for a specific organisation and role.



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Sensory planning and adjustments

Under stimulation or overstimulation due to sensory input can really affect someone's ability to concentrate and remain well whilst working.



Working from home: Some time working from home can be beneficial for many autistic people, and the amount of time will depend on the person. Be sure to provide them with the support, equipment, and tools that they need they need to be productive in their home environment, and schedule in regular catchups to help with work tasks, planning workload and to check on wellbeing. 48

Adjusted working hours: You should consider adjusting working hours so that for example, your employee can avoid busy rush-hour commutes, or times when the office is generally noisier and busier if this is beneficial for the person.

Desk position: It is important to identify with your employee if they have any sensory sensitivities and plan the desk space accordingly. An autistic person should never be expected to hot desk, and meetings rooms should be included as additional quieter spaces available for a person to use if helpful. Provide a sensory map to help with planning desk-location.

Sensory Equipment: Equipment can be used to manage sensory sensitivities, increasing performance, and decreasing anxiety. For example, allowing a person to wear suitable noise cancelling headphones, have desk dividers, sound baffle boards, shades to block out intrusive light sources or computer screen covers.

Quiet space: It is important that a quiet space in the office is identified for the autistic person to use when they become anxious, overwhelmed, or unwell due to sensory sensitivities. Guidance on designing and furnishing a fit-for-purpose quiet room can be downloaded here: [download: quiet room design guide](#)

Dress code

It is important to clearly define the dress code in your workplace.

Avoid phrases like 'smart or business casual'

Instead say 'in this office we don't expect you to wear a full suit but you should wear a smart and clean pair of trousers, shoes and a shirt'

Provide pictures of the expected dress and clothing.



Let your employee know, that if they need an exception to what's expected, then you'll schedule a supportive conversation.

Team structure and introductions

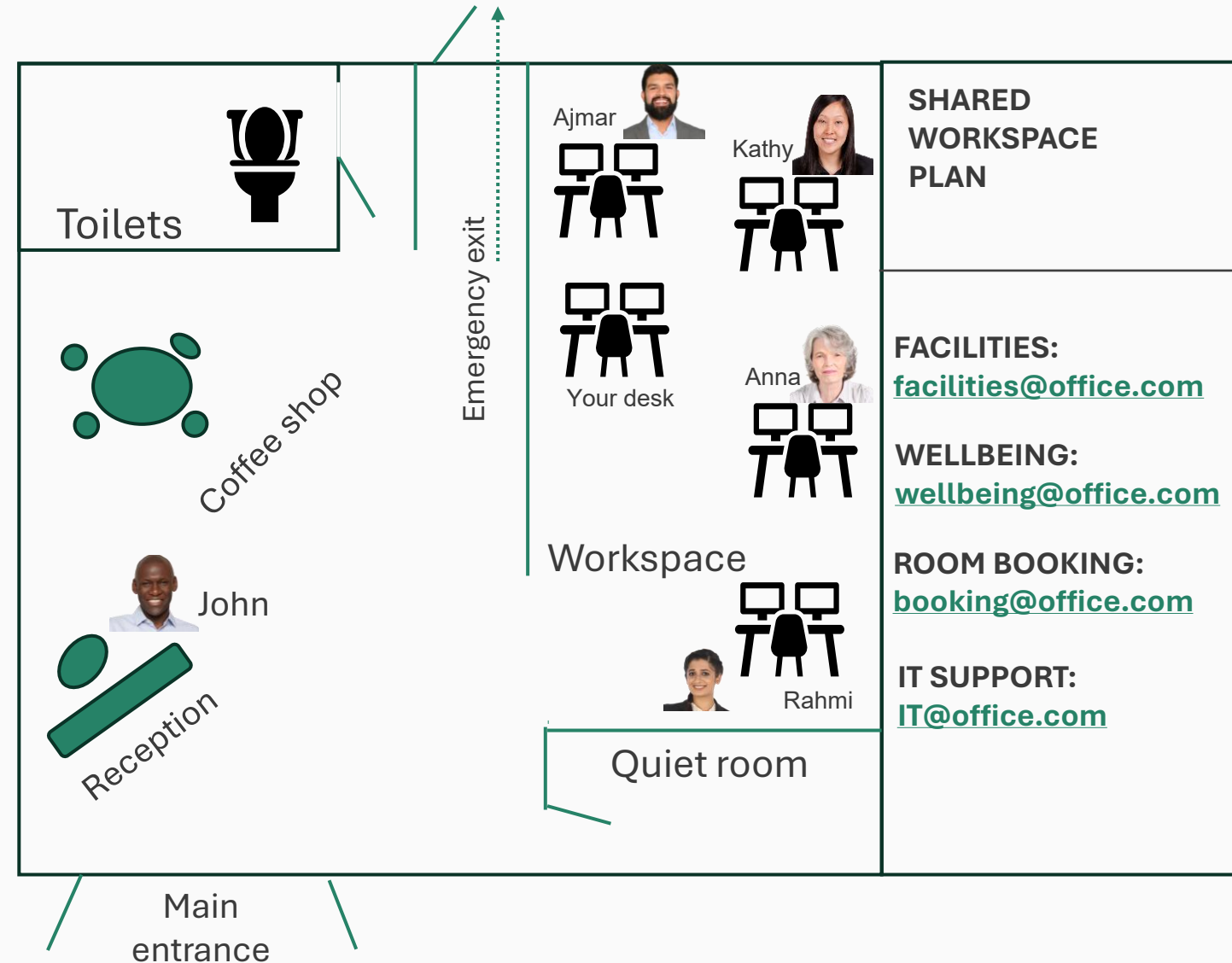
Phase in introductions slowly, don't overwhelm.

Schedule 2 or 3 a day, 1:1 basis,

Provide one-page profiles in advance, and a **meeting agenda** for introductions, for example, this could include talking about a colleague's role, their availability, and how they can support the new starter.

Prioritise meetings on who will be providing the most amount of support.

Example visual resources



SIMPLE staff profile example

<https://www.autentic.uk/one-page-profile-template>



EMPLOYEE PROFILE



Name: Anna Brown

Role: Senior architect

HR Rep: Manuel Lopez

Line manager: Zainab Barakat

Pronouns: They/them

Specialisms/specific skills

infrastructure migration strategies
training and assistance to all employees
working with corporate clients
virtualisation technologies



Things that interest me and are important

gardening and painting
the 'detail'
my cat 'John'
honesty and reliability



Best ways to work with me/support me

Schedule calls in advance using my calendar link
Remote working and internal meetings
Follow up important points with written summary
Be patient when I ask for additional detail and time



Shared workplace etiquette

Use effective signage and write any rules down - be sure to include any expected etiquette with clear examples, in you staff policies and handbook.

No strong smelling food to be heated in the kitchen microwave

Drinking alcohol during work social occasions, outside of office hours – is ok

If a colleague brings in treats to share – take one item or piece

Check with colleagues before adjusting the heating or cooling, take layers on or off before doing this

Let your buddy know if you are in the quiet room – we'll check on you after 20 minutes to make sure you're ok

It's ok to use the internet for bank and checking personal emails during breaks – if you need an exception, talk with your line manager about it

The milk in the fridge is for everyone to use



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buddy's, mentors and coaches

Identify and brief them BEFORE the new starter joins

Mentors - offer advice and support at the employees request, about topics such as career progression or planning and networking. Mentors will often be senior more experienced employees within the organisation and play a vital role in helping to develop and fulfil career goals.



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Buddies - offer help and advice to new starters as they get to understand and know their workplace and colleagues. Buddies may be colleagues within the same team, but may not necessarily carry out the same role. Buddies play a vital role in providing support with the social aspects of the workplace for many autistic new starters.

Coaches – teach and train employees on specific aspects of their role, such as technical skills, and also on other workplace skills such as communication and time management. Coaches play a vital role in providing the skills needed for success at work within a current role.



Further resources

- **Guides on accessible interviews, questions and job interviews:** <https://www.autentic.uk/resources-for-employers>
- **Guide on accessible services and appointments:** <https://www.autentic.uk/resources-for-employers>
- **Quiet room design guide:** https://www.autentic.uk/_downloads/bef612b82ee3a42c4cabb822865e0f41
- **Short learning videos:** <https://www.autentic.uk/autentic-learning-free>
- **Consultancy services, assessments and reviews:** <https://www.autentic.uk/services>
- **Training and talks:** <https://www.autentic.uk/training-and-talks>
- **Aûtentic YouTube channel:** <https://www.youtube.com/@Autentic-uk>
- [Aûtentic's workplace reasonable adjustments passport \(W.R.A.P.\)](#)
- <https://www.autentic.uk/energy-accounting-guide-for-preventing-autistic-burnout-and-fatigue>
- [Make your own one page profile by downloading our editable template here](#)

Course Summary

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- Explored neurodivergence and common neurodivergent conditions
- Understood the Equality Act 2010 and reasonable adjustments in relation to Neurodivergence, with examples
- Identified the common barriers neurodivergent people face in securing meaningful careers and employment when unsupported
- Understood how to support self-advocacy and neurodivergent confidence, with examples
- Know of supportive neurodivergent-affirming recruitment and onboarding universal design, practice and processes, that can now be applied in specific workplaces
- Explored best practice approaches to tailoring adjustments for individuals
- Know of practical strategies to support anxious or overwhelmed neurodivergent people during the recruitment and onboarding process
- Understand how to access additional tools and resources to support your neurodivergent-affirming team, and organisation change

**Parting
thought...**

**What is the
best way to
build trust
with a
person?**

**say what you mean
and mean what you say***

*Be clear and literal when you communicate, and deliver your commitments in the way, and at the time you say you will