



# Energy Accounting in the Workplace

## A Guide for Employers

Energy accounting is a simple but powerful way for neurodivergent people to manage their capacity throughout the working day. It treats energy as a limited resource that needs budgeting, just like money. When workplaces understand this, they can prevent burnout, improve performance and create genuinely inclusive environments.

### What is Energy Accounting

Energy accounting is the practice of tracking how much mental, emotional and sensory energy, tasks cost. Making decisions that protect and replenish that energy.

For many neurodivergent people, energy levels fluctuate quickly due to sensory load, executive function demands and constant masking. Without conscious management, burnout hits fast and hard.

This framework supports people to:

- recognise what drains them
- recognise what restores them
- set boundaries
- pace themselves
- work more sustainably

### Why It Matters at Work

Neurodivergent people often use extra energy just to operate in a typical workplace, interpreting unclear instructions, navigating bright or noisy environments, masking social behaviours, switching tasks and managing expectations.



When workplaces ignore energy needs, the result is predictable:

**exhaustion → overwhelm → burnout → absence → attrition.**

When workplaces respect energy needs, the result is just as predictable:

**better wellbeing → productivity → creativity → loyalty → retention.**

### **Common Energy Drainers for Neurodivergent Employees**

These vary person to person, but common examples include:

- Back-to-back meetings with no breaks
- Sensory overwhelm (noise, lighting, temperature, smells)
- Task-switching or unclear priorities
- High social interaction
- Ambiguous instructions or shifting expectations
- Monitoring and masking behaviour
- Emails, Teams messages, and constant digital interruption
- Last-minute changes
- Unpredictable schedules
- Complex admin systems



## Common Energy Restorers

Not everything needs to be a full break - small resets matter.

- Quiet space or noise-managed zones
- Predictable routines
- Solo working time
- Clear written instructions
- Structured meetings with agendas
- Longer breaks for recovery
- Flexibility to work from home
- Moving around or stimming
- Reduced admin load
- Assistive tech or tools that automate tasks
- Lighting or sound adjustments

## How Workplaces Can Use Energy Accounting

This is where the change actually happens. These adjustments don't cost much but they pay off massively.

### 1. Encourage staff to identify their energy costs

A simple scale works:

- Low cost = quick, easy, minimal stress
- Medium cost = requires effort or focus
- High cost = exhausting, overwhelming, or unpredictable

### 2. Build energy-aware workload planning

Avoid piling high-cost tasks into a single day.

Example: don't expect someone to attend a noisy meeting, deliver a presentation, and complete detailed admin on the same afternoon.



### 3. Allow for recovery time

After a high-energy task, schedule time to decompress or work quietly.

### 4. Reduce unnecessary energy drains

This is good management;

- fewer meetings
- clear agendas
- written follow-up instructions
- predictable deadlines
- consistent communication channels

### 5. Support flexible working styles

Energy levels vary. Some people work best early; others after a slower start or in short bursts. Flexibility protects capacity.

### 6. Include energy in 1:1 conversations

Ask:

- “What tasks drain you the most?”
- “What helps you restore energy during the day?”
- “How can we pace your workload better?”

### 7. Use energy accounting as part of reasonable adjustments

It's absolutely legitimate under the Equality Act to support someone with pacing, rest, sensory changes, or workload shaping.

etc.)

End of day energy rating (0–10):

What worked?

What needs adjusting?



## **A Simple Daily Energy Accounting Template**

Employees can use this privately or share it with their manager if they want.

Morning (energy balance: 0–10)

How am I starting the day?

What's my expected load?

### **Today's high-cost tasks:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### **Today's medium-cost tasks:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### **Today's low-cost tasks:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### **Planned recovery points:**

e.g break, quiet space, movement, WFH afternoon, no-meeting block  
(please note this will be different for everyone).

### **End of day energy rating (0–10):**

What worked?

What needs adjusting?



## Key Message for Employers

This isn't "special treatment. "It's smart management that ensures neurodivergent people can thrive in the work place. This helps you manage in an effective, empathetic way.

Energy accounting prevents burnout, supports wellbeing and enables neurodivergent employees to thrive.

When staff aren't wasting energy fighting their environment, they can put it into creativity, problem-solving, innovation and meaningful work.