



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

Neurodiversity in the Workplace

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NEURODIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE GUIDANCE

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1. INTRODUCTION

Neurodiverse conditions such as Dyslexia, Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD) Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are each classified as a disability and disability is a Protected Characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, which states "You're disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities". Our aim as a requirement under the Equality Act, is a responsibility to demonstrate due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty, to remove barriers faced by the individual by making reasonable adjustments. The Duty applies in recruitment and during all stages of employment, including dismissal. The Duty relates to all employees with a disability and to any applicant for employment with a disability. Secondly neurodivergent individuals have a *diversity of thought*. This is an area that the Service is committed to as we understand how essential it is to harness the positive contribution the difference makes.

- Neurodiverse conditions are defined as disability under the Equality Act 2010
- It is estimated that around **1 in 7** people (more than 15% of people in the UK) are neurodivergent



- Approximately 10% of the population are **dyslexic**
- About 3 % of the population are **dyspraxic**
- The Adult **ADHD** population is approximately 3.5%
- It is estimated that 40% of individuals with dyspraxia also experience ADHD
- Approximately 50% of individuals with dyslexia/DCD have visual compared to the general public (40%)
- 67% of dyslexic individuals request support for stress at work
- Disabled people are twice as likely to be unemployed than those without a disability
- The National Autistic Society, the UK's leading charity for people with ASC, state that:
Around 1.1% of the UK has a diagnosis on the autism spectrum, which is more than 1 in 100. There are around 700,000 people in the UK living with ASC. If you include their families, ASC touches the lives of 2.8 million people every day.
- Only 10% of adults with ASC receive employment support but 53% say they want it

2. **NEURODIVERSITY CONDITIONS**

Dyslexia - The British Dyslexia Association (BDA) describe dyslexia as involving difficulties which affect the learning process in one or more of reading, spelling and writing. Accompanying weaknesses may be identified in areas of speed of processing, short-term memory, sequencing, auditory and/or visual perception, spoken language and motor skills.

Dyspraxia - Foundation provides this definition: "Developmental dyspraxia is an impairment or immaturity of the organisation of movement. It is associated with problems of perception, language and thought."



Dyscalculia - is a condition that affects the ability to acquire arithmetical skills.

Dyscalculic learners may have difficulty understanding simple number concepts, lack an intuitive grasp of numbers, and have problems learning number facts and procedures. Even if they produce a correct answer or use a correct method, they may do so mechanically and without confidence.

ADHD - has three subtypes:

- Inattentive,
- Hyperactive/impulsive,
- and a combination of inattentive, hyperactive/impulsive.

ASC - is a lifelong, developmental condition that impacts on an individual's ability to understand the world around them. Specifically, this relates to communication and the perception of the world around them. Asperger's and Autism are still used under certain classification ems.

Tourette Syndrome - Tourettes Action give this definition of the condition 'Tourette Syndrome is an inherited, neurological condition, the key features of which are tics, involuntary sounds and movements. Up to 85% of people with the condition will also experience co-occurring features and conditions.'

A Note on Potential Strengths and Challenges of Neurodiverse Conditions

As a force we acknowledge we **cannot, and will endeavour not to, assume** particular associated strengths or difficulties. To unlock a neurodiverse individual's full potential, we will seek to understand their specific strengths and weaknesses as we do with all staff.

Although an individual with a neurodiverse condition might exhibit the ability to think holistically, if the workplace does not expect or cater for this way of viewing the world, associated difficulties can arise. For example, an individual who is thinking holistically



(understanding the gist/general meaning) may find an excellent solution to a problem, but if asked to write a report detailing the idea, they may have difficulties. The report may be poorly structured, lack coherency or appear unfinished/careless. A preference for thinking holistically can sabotage an individual's implementation of their working memory. Working memory is the brain's ability to retain and focus on the information relevant to the mental task at hand; it dictates the amount of information that can be held to complete a task.

Acquired Neurodiversity

It is important to recognise that the neurodiverse conditions are developmental, i.e. present from birth. However, neurotypical individuals may experience brain changes as a result of a medical condition, such as a stroke or head injury, which can result in a manifestation of characteristics such as those present in neurodiverse conditions. In such situations, the individual would be said to have "acquired neurodiversity".

3. REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS TO ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT NEURODIVERSITY

Many individuals with neurodiversity will be highly skilled, qualified and extremely employable. These staff may be able to bring a unique set of skills. However, these skills may be stifled without appropriate reasonable adjustments being considered.

Recruitment Phase - Neurodiverse conditions generally are considered "hidden disabilities" and are often difficult to identify during the recruitment process.

During the application process we will show an open and positive attitude to diversity and ask candidates if they require any reasonable adjustments during the recruitment process if they have disclosed a neurodiverse condition.



Disclosure – We will continue to encourage disclosure to facilitate discussion about strengths and difficulties as it begins the process of accessing funding and IT support. It can alleviate workplace-related anxiety and can help raise general awareness about neurodiverse conditions.

The Job Advert – An advert which is considerate of neurodiverse conditions, is considered good practice and has benefits for all applicants. The force will remain conscious of being precise and explicit when detailing role criteria.

Interview - The interview process may not be the best way to assess the ability of a candidate with a neurodiverse condition, especially those conditions that have short-term (working) memory and sequencing difficulties, difficulties with organisation, listening and speed of response to questions. There may be problems speaking succinctly, and they may participate less, interrupt the interviewer or find maintaining eye contact difficult.

In order to help support a candidate who has a neurodiverse condition, we will, where appropriate and reasonable make adjustments on a case by case basis.

Assessments and Selection – we will consider additional arrangements based on an applicant's individual requirement. Possible adjustments include:

- 25% extra time
- A reader
- A scribe
- Use of a computer to write test answers
- Use of assistive technology (e.g. text to speech software)
- Test breaks
- Use of a separate room.



Staff Awareness – A neurodiverse member of staff may feel they work hard, but that their hard work is not paying off. To managers they may appear lazy or incompetent or even rude. Colleagues might think they are unco-operative/disagreeable or withdrawn and aggressive. We will continue to improve awareness of neurodiversity and specific conditions through our culture work, training as appropriate and individual support to help alleviate perceived and actual problems.

4. REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS AND SUPPORT FOR NEURODIVERSE INDIVIDUALS IN THE WORKPLACE

The differences listed below may map on to specific neurodiverse conditions more than they do with others. However, it is more useful to consider the potential adjustments in terms of areas of difficulty rather than related specifically to a particular diagnosis as an individual may have co-occurring conditions, and similar difficulties occur across conditions. Reasonable adjustments can be easy to provide and are often free.

- Organisational Difficulties
- Difficulties with Working Memory
- Literacy difficulties
- Difficulties with Social Skills and Communication
- Difficulties with Concentration, Attention and Hyperactivity
- Difficulties with sense of direction and co-ordination
- Experiencing Stress and Anxiety
- Sensory Difficulties.

Six Benefits of Reasonable Adjustments

- Help unlock the strengths in the workforce
- Improve efficiency and the service we offer to communities



- Encourage staff to access training
- Increase motivation and maintain loyalty of staff
- Reduce stress, staff turnover and sick leave.
- Adjustments made for some staff will often benefit all staff.

The Force will Endeavour to provide:

- Understanding. Provide staff-specific awareness training on the condition. Understanding is key
- Clear communication. Be clear in our communication and ultra-precise
- Be consistent. Always do what we promise
- Communication style. Find out individuals preferred method of communication
- Stay in regular contact. Book in and maintain regular 1:1 meetings
- Allow extra time. Give time to process information – especially change
- Provide structure. Routine is key
- Provide timescales. Give deadlines
- Provide boundaries. Be clear about the unwritten rules of the workplace
- Reasonable adjustments. Be creative in our thinking for adjustments
- Train. Train managers and teams
- Provide a developed Reasonable Adjustment passport.



Myths and Facts

Myth: **Dyslexic people have a low level of intelligence.**

Fact: Dyslexic individuals tend to have average or above average intelligence.

Myth: **Dyslexic people read backwards.**

Fact: Some, not all, dyslexic people flip or miss letters/ numbers/ punctuation and/or words. Although binocular instability/visual difficulties (previously referred to as visual stress) often co-occurs with dyslexia

Myth: **Dyslexia means difficulty with reading.**

Fact: While a person with dyslexia may have difficulties with reading, they can also have difficulties with writing, spelling, speaking, organisation, sequencing, concentration and social skills.

Myth: **Individuals with neurodiverse conditions have a poor quality of life**

Fact: Neurodiverse people are just like those who are neurotypical and aim for a high degree of quality of life. It is society that disables people not the disability.

Myth: **There is a cure for neurodiversity.**

Fact: Neurodiversity is not an illness, it is a different way of viewing the world. An environment can be adjusted to suit a neurodiverse individual's way of thinking. Individuals can also learn strategies for living in a non-neurodiverse world.

Myth: **Children grow out of ADHD**

Fact: ADHD does not go away, it is a different way of thinking. Some adults may not experience the hyperactivity element. Sometimes ADHD is not identified until adulthood.

Myth: **People with dyspraxia are just clumsy**

Fact: Not all people with dyspraxia are clumsy. Individuals with dyspraxia move through and perceive space differently to others, but can also often perceive and move through time (e.g. seem to have no concept of time) and thought (appear illogical) in a different way to others.

